
CHRISTMAS 2024 NEWSLETTER

Pencaitland Parish Church

What was I doing 25 years ago as a new millennium began? We went up to Princes Street to see in the New Year since it was our first year back in the Edinburgh area having been about 14 years in Tullibody near Alloa. It really doesn't seem that long ago. As for last Christmas it seems like the mere blink of an eye.

But if 25 years does not seem long ago then what about the timescale between Jesus and the accounts of his life that we have in the Bible. I'm writing this round about Remembrance Sunday and on television there have been several veterans telling their stories about things like the D Day landings and the Dunkirk evacuation, no one seriously doubts the veracity of their accounts of events now more than 70 years ago! By contrast the account of Jesus birth we will be reading more than once next month was most probably written around 30 years after Jesus' crucifixion and as for Paul's letters some of them were written around 25 years from what happened at Calvary.

As some of us were reminded in the Exploring Hope course, Luke tells us that he interviewed witnesses (quite possibly Jesus' mother) and researched Jesus' story before writing it up, almost like an 'investigative journalist'. So, as we approach another Advent and Christmas can I invite you to remember that what we are celebrating is something that we have 'hard evidence' for. Jesus is no fairy story, but was a living breathing human being, whose birth in Bethlehem was followed by a remarkable set of events.

Luke's Gospel is not strictly speaking a biography, it is a Gospel, an account of the good news that God took human form in the person of Jesus son of Mary. Something well worth celebrating joyfully!

May I wish you a very happy Christmas

Andrew

PASTORAL CARE

Kathryn Reid (340654) or (07749 262040) is our pastoral care co-ordinator. The Rev John Hunter (341677) is also available to provide pastoral assistance if the need arises.



www.pencaitlandparishchurch.org.uk

Diary dates

Saturday 30 November

Christmas Fair 11.00 – 2.00
Carriage House

Sunday 1 December

Communion 11.00
Pencaitland Parish Church

Sunday 1 December

Café Church 18.30
Carriage House, Pencaitland

Sunday 22 December

Christmas Lessons and Carols
11.00
Pencaitland Parish Church

Christmas Eve

All age Christingle service
16.30
Ormiston Parish Church

Christmas Eve

Watchnight Service 23.30
Pencaitland Parish Church

Christmas Day

Morning Service 10.30
Pencaitland Parish Church

Sunday 29 Dec

Morning Service 10.00
Pencaitland Parish Church

Please note that to help Andrew travel between Pencaitland and Ormiston all Sunday services will be at 11.00 from now on.

Parish News

It is with great sadness that we share the news of the deaths of 2 of our much loved members, Jane Rae and Greta Auld. We are grateful to their families for allowing us to include the following tributes to these wonderful ladies.



My mum, Jane, was a remarkable and tenacious character, one who left an indelible mark on everyone who knew her. She lived an amazing 97 years, a life rich with God, love, purpose, and joy. As one of three sisters—Morag, Ellen, and Jane—she was the middle child, and her sense of adventure and compassion truly made her stand out.

Mum spent most of her life in Edinburgh alongside George, whom she loved dearly. Together, they built a life filled with love and laughter, shared with their son, Alexander, and daughter, Sandra. Upon retirement, they moved to Kinross, embracing a slower pace of life. They spent 15 happy years there, cherishing each other's company, until George passed away. Mum then returned to Edinburgh and moved into my flat, where she stayed for another decade.

During that time, Mum joined Liberton Church, where she became a beloved member of the congregation. She also volunteered at the nearby Faith Mission, offering her time and energy to serve others in any way she could. One day, I mentioned that the house beside ours was for sale, and I'll never forget her enthusiasm—she immediately wanted to move. This was the beginning of her new chapter in Pencaitland, living close to Sandra and Ian on Huntlaw Road. Here, she found renewed joy and embraced her community.

At Pencaitland, Mum became an active part of the neighbourhood, joining the local oldies club every Wednesday, which she loved, volunteering at the church café, and attending services at Pencaitland Church. She found so much happiness in those connections. Her passion for serving others had deep roots, though, long before her time at Pencaitland. In Hamilton, she was the Akaila for the Cubs and Scouts, organized the gala and Davidson Mains, joined the children's panel, and served as a Samaritan volunteer. She even started several mother-and-baby groups. Mum was also a dedicated member of the Women's Guild, where she continued her lifelong commitment to faith and community service. Her commitment to the church was unwavering, and her community work was tireless.

Mum's life was a testament to selfless love and enduring faith. She gave of herself wholeheartedly—whether it was in church, in her community, or in our family, she was always there with an open heart and willing hands. She poured out love in simple, thoughtful acts, and her kindness left a lasting legacy on everyone around her. Her story is a reminder to us all of what it means to live a life rooted in faith, generosity, and love. She showed us how to truly serve, to care deeply, and to embrace each day with joy. We are so blessed to have known her, and her legacy will continue in all those she touched.

Mum even got one of the poems she wrote published in a book at the age of 92, which is quite amazing. Her creativity and spirit continued to shine, even in her later years.

As you all know, my mum ended up going to Fidra Care Home in North Berwick. Now, this may sound a bit depressing, but to Mum, it was anything but. She loved it there. She adored the staff and carers, and she found joy in the company of others. She was always someone who thrived on being around people, and that didn't change in her later years. Mum actually enjoyed the care she received, and it became a place where she felt truly loved and valued. She even started doing a walk for Chest, Heart, and Stroke Scotland around the garden at the care home during COVID, donating the money raised to the needy. Her generous spirit never wavered.

In celebrating Mum, we celebrate a life well-lived, a spirit of grace and resilience, and a legacy of faith that we will cherish forever. She will be missed by many for a long time. She always made everybody smile that she came into contact with. She loved a giggle, and she always found ways to make others laugh. Her joyful spirit and infectious laughter will never be forgotten.

Thanks to Sandra (Jane's daughter)

Parish News



Well big sister, you have given me a challenge indeed, how do I sum you up in a few short minutes.

Greta was a rock, an inspiration, a loving mother and a true and dear sister, sister in law and friend to so many. She was a hard worker with a steely determination, but was also gentle, loving and helpful to everyone and had a great sense of humour.

Greta would recall, when our mum went into labour with Greta, her mum, Margaret, had to help push the neighbours car to get it started on a cold December day. Similarly, her father Robert was away in the Army at the time, and he received a telegram saying he had a new baby Son! This story always cracked her up and she kept hold of that telegram.

Being the eldest of seven children, Greta was soon providing a helping hand to her parents with the smaller children – a quality for helping and caring for others she would continue all her life.

Greta attended the local school in Pencaitland and then on to Ross High School in Tranent and left at the age of 16. Greta first worked in an office in Edinburgh, but was not fond of the travel “up to the toon “.. and moved to Ranco (now LEMAC) in Haddington. She then worked in the office at Glenkinchie Distillery, a job that she loved. She occasionally had to do holiday cover in a sister distillery on the Isle of Islay and they would fly her over. She enjoyed telling us about these trips. She met her husband George Auld when she worked at Kennedy’s garage in Haddington, where he was serving his time as a mechanic. Their relationship blossomed and they were married in September 1966. Their first home was at Blackhouse, just outside Haddington on the Pencaitland Road. Their son, George, was born in December 1967 and the family then moved to Pencaitland in 1971. Their family was completed when Lynda was born later the same year.

Sadly, George Snr passed away in January 1974. Greta was now a single parent, but her family rallied round and helped her as much as they could, especially her mum and dad who were combined babysitters and taxi drivers. But it was Greta’s strong character and sense of motherhood that pulled her and her small family through this very tough period. Greta took on part-time work in various local places when Lynda went to school and friends and family would help with the school run and holidays. She saved up for a wee Mini – her pride and joy - and this gave her greater independence. She then worked at the local Maltings for 10 years in the lab, more or less full time. George and Lynda were growing up and Greta then decided to take a night school course in Higher Secretarial studies at the same time as her daughter Lynda. With a cheeky smile Greta would remind people she got a higher pass mark than Lynda. She then got a job at Dalkeith Police Station in the typing pool, then joined the community team, putting information into a new Police computer system and stayed until the system was up and running. She then applied for a Station Assistant job at Bonnyrigg Police Station where she remained until she retired in 2007. She was famous for her contribution to scone making in the Scottish Police Force... amongst other things, I’m sure!

Greta loved Pencaitland and spent a lot of her time supporting village community life. She had been a Sunday School Teacher and was a member of Pencaitland Church as well as the secretary of the WRI Rural. She was a local Justice of the Peace and ran the Pencaitland Cub Scouts with Agnes Moretta. Greta also volunteered at the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games 1986 – she had a wonderful time meeting lots of volunteers and athletes. She went on to become the Area Commissioner for Scouts in East Lothian with Graham Coe. She was subsequently awarded a Silver Acorn which is a very high honour in Scouting. Greta was also on the Community Council, the school PTA committee and helped on Gala days with dad and the rest of the family. She was the secretary of the Bowling Club, a member of the Patchwork Group and treasurer at the local Day Centre.

Greta had 5 grandchildren, Indya, Poppy, Lucy, Aidan and Libby and doted on them all. She was a wonderful hands-on Granny to all her grandchildren – Indya and her Granny loved their Saturday nights watching Strictly and Casualty in their PJ’s with their sweeties. Indya gave birth to Rory George on the 13th February 2024 - Greta’s Great Grandson She fell in love instantly and had a new favourite boy in her life

Greta was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease in January 2019, although this was a devastating diagnosis Greta did not let it define her, she continued with her life and hobbies. As the disease progressed Greta needed more assistance at home and with her mobility, she embraced all the support and technology offered to her and was quite the whizz on WhatsApp and Eyegaze, which ensured she could continue to communicate with those around her; she always has a prepared list of tasks for any visitors and to ask for chocolate! She also enjoyed a fish supper and occasional McDonald’s or Domino’s Pizza.

Greta was determined to stay in her home although there were a good few challenges, her “can do” attitude and immense powers of persuasion overcame every obstacle foreseen. She did love her wee hoose.

So Greta, you have filled our hearts with so many happy memories, you have inspired us all with your courage and fortitude in meeting whatever life presented to you. You would often say how lucky you are, you had a great support network - family, friends, neighbours, carers and professional support. Greta I would say we are the lucky ones, we're all the better for knowing you and for you being part of our lives. While we mourn your passing, we can honour the life you led by being a bit like yourself, think the best of others, do the right thing, be kind to each other and always keep a sense of humour.

Greta received a lot of support from MND Scotland and Doddie Weir was one of Greta's heroes. A collection at her funeral raised £2074.94 for these wonderful charities.

Thanks to Robert (Greta's brother)

Christmas Fair

We look forward very much to seeing you at our Christmas Fair on **Saturday 30 November** 11am – 2pm.

Enjoy some Christmas shopping at our crafts, gifts and cake and candy stalls. Contributions will be most welcome. We are also looking for donations of bottles (anything water, shampoo, sauce, wine, no spirits etc) for the bottle stall and small gifts for the children's lucky dip. Our adults' Lucky Dip stall this year is 'What's under Santa's hat?' If you have any small gifts suitable to wrap and hide under the hats please donate. You can hand them in at church on Sun 24th November, to the Carriage House on Friday 29 November 2-4pm, Sat 30 November from 9am or to Margaret or Eileen. Our festive café will also be open at the Fair serving delicious home-made soup and bacon rolls.

Most of all please come along to the Fair and enjoy some fun! See you there!

Reaching Out ... Helping Others

"Christmas is coming, the goose is getting fat, Please put a penny in the old man's hat,
If you haven't got a penny, a half penny will do, If you haven't got a half penny, God bless you!"

These words were written in 1885/86, author unknown. In 1960, The Kingston Trio recorded a version of these words, then in 1979, John Denver and the Muppets released yet another version. A loose, jazzy, piano based arrangement featured in the musical "A Charlie Brown Christmas"

Bing Crosby and many others recorded "Christmas Is Coming" including, I believe, Manhattan Transfer.

So, where am I going with this? Well, words from 1885/86 are, sadly, as relevant today in 2024 as ever they were. Numerous musical stars have raised attention to the words in the intervening years, yet still we have hungry folks all around us! For many, putting food on the table at any time is heartbreakingly difficult, at Christmas, when so many others are eating to excess, that heartbreak is multiplied x100.

As we shop for Christmas provisions, we need to remember those less fortunate.

So, yet again, I ask that you support the Church foodbank by donating any of the usual items required, (tinned foods, dried foods, biscuits, personal hygiene items for both male and female, cleaning products, diluting juice, tea, coffee etc). Can I ask that we go a little further at this time of year, and pop in a selection box, a bar of chocolate, a pair of socks, (again male, female, child) a sticker book for a wee one, just something to make Christmas a wee bit brighter for those with so very little.

The organisers at the foodbank are always so very grateful for all we donate, as a church we are exceptionally generous, please let us continue to be so.

Annie

Gratitude at the Time of Giving

Christmas is looming ever closer, for some a wonderful time of year and for others treated with some trepidation. Whilst we know that it is supposed to be a time of generosity toward one's fellow man, we also know that after Christmas is when family lawyers are at their busiest. What is really the key to the Christmas spirit?

The tradition of exchanging gifts predates even Christianity, and the Romans celebrated the winter solstice celebration of Saturnalia with gift giving. Not only that, they partied and masters would wait table on their slaves as it was a celebration for all. Roman stoic philosopher, Seneca the Younger, who lived at the same time as Jesus Christ, wrote;

'The wise man... enjoys the giving more than the recipient enjoys the receiving...'

Marcus Tullius Cicero, the Roman statesman wrote;

"...there is nothing which I can esteem more highly than the being and appearing grateful. For this one virtue is not only the greatest, but is also the parent of all the other virtues."

Then there is Jesus himself who told us, 'Give thanks in all circumstance' (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

Skip forward two thousand years and psychologists and neuroscientists began to study this phenomenon of gratitude. Famous psychological pioneer and one-time student of Sigmund Freud, was Carl Jung. He wrote;

"The word 'happiness' would lose its meaning if it were not balanced and contrasted and compared to sadness. In comparing how an experience could have been worse we develop gratitude and happiness, while if we compare it how it could have been better we develop bitterness and sadness."

Ancient wisdom and modern thinkers alike recognised the absolutely vital role of gratitude in an enjoyable life. Indeed, as a therapist I will often advise clients to develop a gratitude habit to work as a counterweight to the seductive pull of the 'victim' mentality. In this victim role we tend to think of how hard done by we are, our parents were not loving enough, our teachers too strict, or uncaring. Our partners don't understand us and our bosses exploit us. We are the unlucky victims of everyone else's apathy or enmity.

It is no surprise that this mindset leads to constant unhappiness and misery. If instead, we can count our blessings, and understand the many unrecognised small acts of kindness that have allowed us to reach this point in our lives, we begin to see the world very differently.

However, there is an extra surprise for us therapists, as it turns out that the most profound effect on our lives can be achieved by concentrating on the receiving of gratitude.

Antonio Damasio, an eminent neuroscientist, has conducted studies on this very subject. In one study they put their subjects into an fMRI scanner (think of the big tube into which you are inserted). Once inside the scanner the subjects then watched specially made films of true stories from the holocaust during the second world war. These stories were all about heroic acts of kindness, saving the life of the recipient. In turn, the person who carried out the incredible act of kindness then received the gratitude from the person whose life they had saved. All the while the brains were scanned to see which areas of the brain were lighting up. Areas such as the anterior cingulate cortex were lighting up, an area we know has much to do with our ability to feel empathy.

However, the story does not end there. Damasio's studies revealed further benefits. They found that people who experienced a strong emotional experience of receiving gratitude, which could either be their own experience, or a powerful story which evoked the same emotions, could experience genuine benefits in their state of mind – reducing anxiety, alleviating depression.

The gratitude protocol was developed further, so that once an individual had found the story that could evoke the emotions associated with receiving gratitude, they would then create bullet points of the key elements of this story:

- what led to the gratitude
- the act of gratitude itself
- the emotional change it created.

These notes will serve as quick reminders of the story to help induce the gratitude experience. Then 3 times a week for as little as 60 seconds, participants would use these bullets to feel their way back into the story.

Feeling the emotions of receiving gratitude were then demonstrated to not only help with mental health problems, reducing the activity in the fear pathways, helping individuals overcome past traumas, but also to inoculate individuals in future traumatic or stressful situations, making them stronger and more resilient. It also activates the prosocial areas of the brain, making individuals nicer to be around. It also has physical outcomes, affecting heart and lungs, improving breathing. It was found to alleviate the symptoms of physical problems, such as Irritable Bowel Syndrome and Fibromyalgia. One study even

demonstrated that this practice reduced inflammatory cytokines (these are molecules given off during inflammatory diseases) – effectively reducing the severity of these diseases.

Our great psychologists and neuroscientists have shown what our ancient wisdom already perceived – that gratitude is the basis for a good and happy life with less illness and suffering. However you feel about Christmas, try approaching it with gratitude and the desire to give what is important to your loved ones. This is not an iPhone or games console – it is time, attention, love and respect. Have a grateful Christmas!

Cassian Hall
Goodthoughts.uk ,Counselling & Coaching.

Christmas Fun and Games

You've had the turkey and the pud and maybe a snooze, the parcels are all open, and it's games time. What's your go to game that the family always play on Christmas Day or maybe Boxing Day? Is it a rowdy game of Twister or a competitive round of what is known as 'bowl game' in our house (Each team member writes a person, place, film, book and object on a piece of paper, divide people into teams. First round 30 seconds to describe as many things as possible drawn out of the bowl, second round act the word, third round same things described in one word. Lots of local worthies and in-jokes can appear and it gets VERY competitive). When I was a child it was always Monopoly. During COVID we had to make do with a zoom quiz and one year we had relatives who brought the Guardian Christmas quiz. They won't be reading the newsletter so it's safe to say it was the most boring Christmas activity ever!!

In Gillian's house they usually play games on Boxing Day after tea and they started with Trivial Pursuit. Gillian thinks the version they had might have been from the eighties so Mum won quite a lot of those games! After a couple of years they have added dog bingo (a row of dog breeds instead of numbers), a Friends quiz game and thankfully a more recent version of Trivial Pursuit to their collection. They still don't know the answers, but they're more recent ones!

As children, Linda used to play Monopoly on Boxing Day but with 4 children and 3 of them being very close in age, it was very competitive. It usually lasted days and often there were a few "disagreements". As adults it was always Charades; there were usually about 18 of them so they were in teams. Great fun and usually her dad's efforts were hilarious. At New Year they played carpet bowls at her aunt and uncle's. They played for a proper trophy called the Carmichael cup as that was her aunt's surname. Her cousins and Danny and Linda still play whenever they meet up and Danny and Linda are the current holders.

The game that springs to mind for Moira is Twister. As a child Christmas Day was spent with her dad's family. He had two brothers and one sister so there was quite a gang of them. The first time they played Twister was such fun as everyone was so competitive and wanted to win. Adults, teenagers and children got involved and got tied in knots, not to mention the sore backs the next day!

As a child, for Marjorie it was Charades. Now with the grandchildren the favourite is a board game, this year being the patiently waiting for Horse-opoly or Farm-opoly with the big decision as to whose is played first! Advance to Giddy-Up or Advance to Grow!

Marilyn's go-to family game at Christmas is Charades. This of course invariably starts with arguments (could have said 'discussion' but that's not quite correct), firstly with its pronunciation, followed by who's in whose team! The version they use is Guesstures (other makes are available of course). This year will be even more exciting as Howie can now read! They've also tried Taboo (a vocal version of Charades) but this proved arduous at Robert's turn, well arduous for his team, hilarious for the other (video evidence is available). At present they're all obsessed with Uno so this may be the 2024 alternative as it's a game for up to 10 players which is the size of their family. Well, as long as the dogs don't play!

**Wherever you are, and whoever you may be with,
we wish you Happy Christmas
and best wishes for a Happy New Year
Every Blessing for 2025**

Our new millennium so far ...

Do you remember what you were doing 25 years ago this month? Not just preparing for Christmas but getting ready for an extra special Hogmanay party as we were about to enter the new millennium! Can you believe that 25 years have passed since then and we are nearly a quarter through this century. Please can someone explain to me why time speeds up as we get older? Back then we were all panicking about the millennium bug and the possible technology failures that would occur when the computers rolled over to a new date. Would the computers controlling our vital water and power supplies fail? Did you stock up with water and candles just in case?

Apart from your personal milestones what do you think the major events have been that have affected our world. For me 9/11 stands out as a life changing event that pulled the rug from under our feet. We no longer felt safe going about our daily business and easy travel became a thing of the past. Airport security became a new industry. The first I-phone was released in 2007 and like me, with the trusty Nokia 3310, you probably wondered why anyone would need a phone for more than phoning and at a push maybe for texting. I had a camera for photos and a screechy modem for connecting to the internet. Why would I need anything else on a phone? None of us could have imagined the impact social media and online shopping would have on our lives. 2020 a global pandemic of biblical proportions. Would you ever have believed you would be locked in your house for 4 months and banned from seeing your nearest and dearest?

Eileen vividly remembers hearing about the planes flying into the World Trade Centre in New York as she drove home from work. She sat in front of the TV, incredulous that this was actually happening and wasn't a far-fetched plot in a film. Having been on these streets only a few years earlier, she could imagine the panic of the people running away from the scene as the dust clouds from the falling debris chased them up the streets and ducking into doorways to escape the worst of the blast. A teacher who she worked with had a brother working in New York at that time and she had spent the day and the next night trying to contact him. Fortunately, he had been late heading into work that day so hadn't been near that part of town, but the worry and panic she had felt when she couldn't contact him was a stark reminder that all the people who lost their lives were someone's brother, sister, son, daughter or parent, just going about their daily business. The world we knew changed that day.

Linda celebrated the year 2000 with her extended family at their house. They had fireworks in the garden. She remembers filling the bath with water as we were told all sorts of strange things might happen. Nothing did! Linda agrees that 9/11 did change the world. Another memorable date for Linda and Danny was the London bombings in 2005. Danny was in London at the time and the mobile phones were out and Linda was worried sick as she knew that he was using the underground. Luckily, he was not affected as by then he was at a meeting in Oxford. No planes were operating so he had to hire a car to drive back to Scotland. A very small price to pay. Linda agrees that none of us could have predicted the impact that mobile phones would have, both good and bad. However she would not be without hers as it is a wonderful way of keeping in touch with her grandchildren in London.

Robert remembers having a party with a number of friends, waiting for 2000 to appear. Not sure what the fuss was about really, in hindsight just another Hogmanay. A lot of things have happened since then, especially on the technology front (Broadband, smart TVs, phones) which are supposed to have enhanced our lives. Thinking of Twitter (X), Instagram, TikTok and social media in general, available to all via Smart phones, he is not so sure that all lives have been enhanced, more like controlled by this wretched device.

But unfortunately, what mostly sticks in his mind is the human misery suffered by millions all over the world. The 9/11 attacks, the following Afghanistan attacks/invasion by the US and GB and the latterly disastrous withdrawals. The Iraq invasion and the following terrorist attacks to western cities, London specifically sticks in his mind. Then Libya happened and the Syrian civil war started with hundreds of thousands killed by the regime and the West was watching which was followed by the Russia's annexation of parts of Ukraine.

We waved goodbye to Europe, Brexit unfortunately in his view had happened and then Covid came. It makes him angry now to think about the pontification and actions of certain political leaders. The passing of the Queen had a profound effect on him, the dedication, commitment she had given to the country will never be repeated, regardless of whether one is a supporter of monarchy or not, surely this needs recognition. And now, more wars, more suffering in Ukraine since 2022 and in Israel, Gaza and Lebanon, I do hope and pray that it will end soon.

On a happier note, our PPC cafe is going strong, servicing and bringing the community a bit closer, the sun is shining today and hopefully will tomorrow, the Christmas fair is coming and then we celebrate Christmas, onwards and upwards!

In 1999 a lot was happening in Rhona's life. For 18 years I had been working in the Pathology Lab at the Sick Kids Hospital in Edinburgh which was sited near the Meadows. In summer 1999 we moved, as a lab, to a site in the Western General Hospital at the opposite side of Edinburgh. For some people this made getting to work easier and for others, not. My working pattern changed and I decided that, since I have never enjoyed driving, I would get the bus. So 1999 was the start of a routine that went on 5 days a week for 12 years of leaving the house at 6.30 am and getting home at 5.30 pm. This also made a big difference to Gordon who was by this time self-employed and now also found himself as "chief cook and bottle washer" as they say. I remember that one of the big concerns in the lab was that our, now growing, use of the internet might suddenly go wonky over the New Year holidays. I think some of the more computer literate people stayed "on call" in order to help if needed. Thankfully "normal service" was resumed when the holidays were over.

During that New Year break Gordon, Michael, Rachel and myself joined the Church's weekend at Whithaugh near Newcastleton. This was our second church weekend there, the first time was the previous year when 40 folks went. It was always a fun time for kids and adults alike, and a very different way of bringing in the New Year. Also in people's minds was PPC 2000 and the plans we had there. As a Church we were in interregnum, the Donaldsons having retired and Mark Malcolm had not yet been selected so we just did our own "thing" and the elders organised a special event to which a renowned Christian speaker Derek Bingham was invited. The young people had a competition to create the "logo" for this event. Maybe someone can remember who the winning designer was?

Stay Connected with Connections Cafe

Christmas is a-coming – surely not! I'm still waiting for Spring and Summer!! Plus it's almost a quarter of the 21st century behind us!

The saying is that time moves more quickly as you get older. Well, let me tell you – I've spoken to lots of younger folk and they ALL say the same – where has this year gone?! Anyway, as Robert would say "it is what it is". So let's move on...

It's been another fantastic 12 months of dedication from our stalwart band of volunteers, and it's eight years since we first opened our doors (no more references to tempus fugit). Thanks to all our customers we've had another year of fantastic fundraising – donations to Tyneholm Care Home Residents' Fund, Scottish cancer charity LoveOliver, 1st Pencaitland Guides, Pencaitland School PTA and Pencaitland Playgroup.

Now comes the plea – we desperately need more folk to join our happy band of volunteers. Whether you can make a regular commitment or come on ad hoc dates (particularly over the busy lunchtime period 12-2), making soup (even just 9-11am), preparing the rolls and for folk to bake at home. If you are able to assist us in any way (we're very flexible!), please get in touch with me or message us on Facebook.

On the subject of Facebook, you can check out the Connections Café page for the soups on the menu each week – usually posted on a Wednesday. In the meantime, here's a winter warmer for you –

Carrot and coriander soup – serves 4

1tbsp vegetable oil, 1 onion, sliced, 450g/1lb carrots, peeled and sliced, 1 tsp ground coriander, 1.2 litres/2 pints vegetable stock, large bunch fresh coriander, roughly chopped, salt and freshly ground black pepper.

Heat the oil in a large frying pan and add the onions and carrots. Cook for 3–4 minutes until starting to soften. Stir in the ground coriander and season with salt and pepper. Cook for 1 minute. Add the vegetable stock and bring to the boil. Simmer for 10–15 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Whizz with a hand blender or in a blender until smooth. Reheat in a saucepan, stir in the fresh coriander and serve.

Finally, the Café team all wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year. And we look forward to serving you again in 2025.

Marilyn (07759224340, email scholzemr@aol.com)

[PS closed Friday 27 December and 3 January.](#)