

CHRISTMAS 2025 NEWSLETTER

Pencaitland Parish Church

Christmas is fast approaching, yet to the average child it seems so far away. Waiting is hard for youngsters; candy canes, sweets of all kinds, exciting looking presents, the promise of all kinds of new toys, it's almost unbearable!

But waiting is the theme I've chosen for advent this year. We wait in hope for Jesus who came that first Christmas to return. We wait expectantly, in the light of the promises of Scripture delivered by the prophets. We wait preparing, as John the Baptist urged the people of his day. We wait patiently like Mary the mother of our Lord.

Waiting is far from passive and the preparation to celebrate Christmas can be so exciting and fun. So may I wish you a joyous Advent and a very Merry Christmas.

Andrew



PASTORAL CARE

Kathryn Reid (340654) or (07749 262040) is our pastoral care co-ordinator and can arrange to provide pastoral assistance if the need arises.



www.pencaitlandparishchurch.org.uk

Diary dates

Saturday 29 November

Christmas Fair 11.00 – 2.00
Carriage House

Sunday 7 December

Communion 11.00
Pencaitland Parish Church

Sunday 14 December

Cluster churches carol service
15.30
Ormiston Parish Church

Sunday 21 December

Christmas Lessons and Carols
11.00
Pencaitland Parish Church

Christmas Eve

All age service 15.30
Ormiston Parish Church

Christmas Eve

Watchnight Service 23.30
Pencaitland Parish Church

Christmas Day

Morning Service 10.30
Pencaitland Parish Church

Sunday 28 Dec

Morning Service 10.00
Ormiston Parish Church



Christmas Fair

We look forward very much to seeing you at our Christmas Fair on **Saturday 29 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, juice, shampoo, sauce, wine but no spirits) for the bottle stall and small gifts for the children's lucky dip (we sell for £2 each). 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.

Contributions can be handed in at church on **Sun 23rd November**, to the café or to the Carriage House on Friday **28 November 10am – 4pm**, **Sat 29 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 with us once more! Lots of decisions to be made...to have a full on traditional Christmas dinner?... to have a traditional Christmas dinner courtesy of Markie Sparks... to have a fresh or frozen turkey/goose? ... to have an Indian/Chinese take away...to book a hotel /restaurant and celebrate there? Other decisions concern a real tree or an artificial one, not to have one at all? To buy individual presents for friends/ family/ or to have a lucky dip? To have a price point for gifts? To accept every Christmas invite or not?

The list goes on and on and on!

However, for so many people, families, single folk, pensioners, couples, the only decision is whether to eat, pay the rent, heat the house. There are so many hungry people all around us, and, as I have said before, as Christians, we are called to help.

The last day this year for donations to be delivered to Dunbar Parish Church Foodshare is 10th December. Colin and I are heading to London that day to spend a few days with our son and family...lots of delicious food, some fine wine and, of course, the London Palladium Pantomime!! Are we blessed?!

However, we will be making a pit stop the Dunbar Foodshare on our way, to deliver PPC food donations.

All the usual items, tinned soup, tinned meat (if you are able, the Fray Bentos pies are much loved), tinned vegetables, tinned rice, custard, fruit, pasta, pasta sauces, packets of rice, really any food that is in a tin, or dried in a packet, NO fresh food. Toiletries for men, women and children and cleaning items, nappies, baby wipes. Ask me if there is anything you are unsure of.

As I said at the beginning, Christmas is almost with us and we as Christians have much to rejoice about so let's try to spread the joy, and donate a bar or two of chocolate, some fancy biscuits, maybe a wee selection box, a bag of Marshmallow (or my favourite, a bag of Liquorice Allsorts) a chocolate Santa, a Christmas pudding, a wee Christmas cake - again the list is endless and it doesn't need to cost much. The Spar often have things on offer as do other stores.

Please help those who, for so many reasons, won't have much to cheer about this Christmas.

Thank you,
Annie

Our four legged friends at Christmas

Has your dog scoffed the turkey? Did your cat get stuck at the top of the Christmas tree? What have your 4-legged friends done to disrupt the festivities? Unfortunately, I cannot contribute to this article as the only pets we have had are hamsters and they stayed in their cages, grateful for carrots to nibble if they were lucky! Sounds as if it hasn't been so peaceful in other households.

There's no question how amazing guide dogs are and how wonderful and life changing their work is. They are, however, still dogs and have different characters of their own. Surely though, at Christmas, they will be obedient and not go near anything - what could possibly go wrong?

Orange Down

My first guide dog, Star, had been super good at Christmas for a few years, so had clearly decided she'd got bored with that and had to change it. We always have gifts on the floor at Christmas and hadn't thought anything of it...until I was woken up one morning to be told that dad's chocolate orange was missing and some random cardboard and plastic was left! Chocolate is really bad for doggies so off to the vet we went! Star completely recovered and we asked Dad if he could keep the chocolate up higher next time.

Raisin Ridge

Another Christmas, another doggie. We did have to be careful with food around Flora and were hoping that after the chocolate disaster, nothing else would go wrong - but not again! Chocolate had accidentally been left lying around and this time it was a Toblerone which also had raisins in it! Off we went to the vet again, apologising for bothering him. However, he had two other labs to look after: one who had eaten sixteen painkillers and another who had eaten a turkey with the foil still on it. Apparently, Flora was straightforward compared to the others! She fully recovered and I just had to have a word with the person who'd left the chocolate on the floor - any ideas who?

Gillian and Eire

Although I have never had a four-legged pet as my mum thought that four children were enough, I can however contribute. We often spent Christmas with my gran and papa and my aunt. She was widowed young and had always been dog daft, having had dogs all her life. This did not rub off on her brother, my dad. I remember one dog in particular, a champagne poodle called Cham! He was the most spoilt dog on the planet. He tried to go for your nose if you dared to sit on his seat, but he never scoffed any of the Christmas dinner. This was probably because he ate better than us! Despite all this I remember him fondly as he was part of Christmas and made my aunt so happy.

Linda

A few years ago, I was marzipaning and icing the Christmas cake; all peaceful in the kitchen, low lighting and seasonal music playing quietly in the background; I was having a lovely time. The front doorbell rang and I went to answer it. I was only out of the room for 2 minutes and when I came back there was a small section of the cake looking decidedly nibbled. When I looked down, Flora, Gillian's guide dog, was slinking out of the kitchen, looking slightly crumby round the whiskers. She must have been waiting for her chance to get to the cake when my back was turned. Well, you can imagine my reaction! All my handiwork spoiled? No, I cut a huge wedge off the cake and iced the remainder, leaving me with a semicircular cake. Fortunately, Flora had no ill-effects, but I haven't made that mistake again. Everything gets pushed well out of reach - just in case!

Eileen

Tom and I returned from early Christmas Eve service to find 2 trays of shortbread left covered on cooling racks scattered on kitchen floor, 2 very guilty looking dogs and not as much as a crumb left ... they had scoffed the lot! At least it wasn't anything worse and didn't necessitate an out-of-hours visit to the vet!

Marjorie

Have yourself an eco little Christmas

As a society we've never been more aware of our impact on the planet and the importance of taking eco-friendly measures where we can, but do all our good intentions go out the window when Christmas comes along?

Will you be sending Christmas cards this year to reconnect with old friends and send some Christmas cheer or are you breaking with tradition to save the trees? (and save yourself the postage)

Do you make your own Christmas gifts and save the airmiles associated with gifts made in China, do you avoid plastic, would you consider giving a pre-loved item from a charity shop or online Vinted?

Do you plan meals carefully to avoid food waste? Do you have any good ideas for using up the leftovers. Do you have any good suggestions for eco decorations, foliage rather than tinsel?

We asked you to share your tips for a fun but eco-friendly Christmas in our times of excess consumption.

Christmas in Number 6!

There are only two of us in number 6 now, so Christmas Day is fairly quiet. Always morning worship, I love when the children show what Santa has brought them! We come home, open some champagne, then any gifts we have been fortunate to receive, obviously, our open fire is keeping us cosy, we nibble throughout the day, delicacies bought from various places, enjoy the television ... always the King's speech, or read books if T.V. doesn't entice us. We have our two grandsons on Boxing Day, so we have turkey and all the trimmings then followed by party games and generally mayhem!

I do send Christmas cards, I love writing them, receiving them. We have a wonderful friend who is an artist and we give her our theme and she works her magic, has them printed, ready for me to write and Colin to print address labels, 2nd class stamps now or hand delivered. This year our theme is the Mad Hatter, thanks mainly to our new sofa ... which is certainly in that vein!!!

As we have a much-loved rescue cat, Slinky (named after one of the cats from Hairy McClary from Donaldson's Dairy) we are considering having an upside down Christmas tree this year which will prevent Slinky knocking off the baubles then hiding them throughout the house! Such a tree will fit in with our Mad Hatter theme!

There is always a gift from Santa for Slinky and usually he can sniff it out himself and is very good at opening the packets if it is cat treats!

Not entirely sure this is what the newsletter team asked for ... however, as has been mentioned, it is a Mad Hatter Christmas in number 6 this year!

Annie

I like to keep my Christmas decorations as natural as possible and I think there is nothing nicer than going for a walk in the woods to gather foliage. I usually find fallen branches of fir trees, ivy and pinecones. I have a friend who provides me with holly from her garden. It is an added bonus if the berries are still on the branches and not eaten by the birds. Everything I gather I put in a vase. We have a contorted willow tree in the garden. I cut branches from it and put them in a container and hang little baubles, sweet treats and fairy lights on it. The treats disappear long before Christmas!

Throughout the year I try to collect biscuit tins and at Christmas I make meringues with egg whites and lemon curd with the yokes and fill the tins and give them as gifts.

Moir

I tried about ten years ago not to send cards to neighbours and just put a note through their doors saying I was contributing to charity and could they not give us a card. This didn't work! Anyway, I always buy my cards from Cancer Research and probably this year also from Heart and Stroke Scotland. I have a lot of friends abroad so like to send them cards and a note. Also my great aunties love a card so I don't like to disappoint. Hopefully they will recycle. However, my young nieces and nephews scattered across the globe are happy with a What's App message. I think that they have the right idea!

I haven't bought new decorations in years and also use the ones we have inherited from our parents. They give us such happy memories of childhoods past. I will also be passing on some much-loved tree decorations to our

sons, but I will not part with the decorations they made as wee boys - too precious. I love to use foliage gathered from our beautiful woods too.

I hope that everyone has a Happy and Joyful Christmas.

Linda

Unfortunately, neither of us is gifted in crafting but we try our best at recycling. We have an Adventkranz (Christmas ring with four candles) from our first Christmas as a married couple which was spent in our little flat in Vienna. Obviously, we have had to renew the candles but otherwise it is still intact after 52 years! For a number of years now we have had an artificial tree - we miss the scent of the pine but at least no tree has been felled on our behalf! We rarely need to purchase Yuletide decorations - we still have baubles from Robert's mother and they must be 70+ years old. Another Scholze tradition is displaying a snow scene Kelly painted in P6 - we call it The Pig People (our offspring are as craftless as we are) - and other wall art from that period at Pencaitland Primary. The girls are 47 and 45 now so are we talking antique pieces now? We see some signs of artistry in the grandchildren (obviously from the paternal side) so when our priceless pieces from last century finally fall to bits we may turn to them for replacements.

Marilyn & Robert

I've always loved writing Christmas cards, taking time to include a thoughtful, meaningful message for each one. It feels so important to pause and connect with dear friends at this truly special time of the year. George, however, says I tend to waffle on which means the whole process takes quite a while! Sadly, that means I don't always manage to send cards to all friends I see regularly. You simply can't reach everyone. Throughout the year I make sure to visit elderly friends who live alone or in care homes and reminisce. At Christmas I especially enjoy delivering their cards and a small gift in person. It would be lovely to have the talent and patience to make my own Christmas cards and gifts but instead I'll stick with my real passion, singing with our much-loved Community Choir. There's nothing quite like sharing music and hopefully bringing a little joy to others at this magical time of the year.

Jennifer

Our most eco Christmas (apart from the air miles getting there) was 2019 when we headed to Meribel ski resort to see our daughter and husband who were working there for a ski season. There was no room to take lots of presents so we decided that the 5 of us would do a secret Santa there and spend 10 Euros max on one of the group. The gifts had to be wrapped in a piste map (a paper map of all the ski runs in the area) that we got from the tourist information office (free of course). You don't get much for 10 euros in a ski resort but we all came up with extremely inventive gifts and we had such a laugh working out who bought what! The gifts still reappear every Christmas to remind us of the fun we had. Ski resorts up in the mountains don't have many supermarkets and certainly no M&S so Christmas dinner was selected on what was available rather than the expectation that there would be turkey with all the trimmings. We all did our bit and had one of the best Christmas meals ever. It really proved that we could celebrate Christmas without consumer excess.

This year I have discovered Facebook marketplace and Vinted (online buying and selling places) so our main presents for the grandchildren will be preloved. So many children get so many toys that most are hardly used so there are great bargains to be had as well as doing our bit for the planet.

Margaret

Finally, here's a reminder that if you are looking for lovely original Christmas gifts that are made by talented local people come along to our Christmas Fair on Saturday 29th November.

Connections Café We all stand together ribbit ribbit

And my point is ... it's been a great year for supporting one another. Four fundraisers during 2025 added up to over £1500 – Babies & Toddlers in January, a defibrillator for outside the Carriage House in May, the Pencaitland & Winton Bowlers in September and lastly Pencaitland School Nursery in October. So, a massive **SHOUT OUT** and **THANK YOU** to all who contributed – our wonderful customers and of course our fantastic volunteers who keep everything shipshape and tickety boo.

Of course, it's not going to stop there – 2026 is fast approaching and we'll soon be gearing up for the next fundraiser. But we're not there yet, Christmas is just a few weeks away and, on that very subject, it's the PPC Christmas Fair on Saturday 29 November 11am-2pm when the Café will also be open serving up soup, bacon rolls, mince pies/shortbread and refreshments.

Now follows the annual plea – we still need more folk to join our happy band of volunteers. Whether you can make a regular commitment or come on our ad hoc helpers list, we'd love to hear from you. We've room for more people in-house waiting tables (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 via 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 *souperb* treat for you –

Pea, Courgette & Mint Soup

2 small courgettes, thinly sliced, 1 small onion, chopped, 300 grams frozen peas
500 mls vegetable stock (top up with water to cover if necessary), 4 tablespoons of olive oil, a pinch of salt, a handful of mint (torn) and a handful of watercress (torn).

Put the oil into a pan on a medium heat, saute the onion until soft, but without colour, then add the courgettes, season and cook for about five minutes. Stir in the peas, add the stock, boil, then simmer for a few minutes. Check the seasoning, blend the mixture, thinning it with water if necessary.

Garnish with the mint, watercress, a little olive oil and as an optional extra add some cream (dairy-free alternative if you prefer).

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 2026.

Marilyn (07759224340, email scholzemr@aol.com)

[PS closed Friday 26 December and 2 January.](#)

Connections Café is open in the Carriage House Fridays 10am-2pm for soup, filled rolls (all freshly prepared) and delicious home-baking.

**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 2026**