



December 2024

### The Manse

Christmas is just around the corner. It's the season of expectation, of hope, of anticipation. But, for some, it's a season to dread, to fear.

It's a season of heavenly messengers, dreams and shepherds (oh, and a donkey!)

For Christians it is also a season when humanity is confronted with God's intention for God's creation—redemption and salvation for all. Traditionally the four Sundays of Advent point us in this direction and each is way-marked by *Hope, Peace, Joy and Love* – each representing a different aspect of the spiritual journey towards the birth of Jesus Christ—the prophetic Word of God becoming the Word made flesh.

And so the world waits . . . “sometimes holding its breath in fear of what tomorrow may bring, sometimes in a haze of busyness or boredom, in which we hardly know what we are waiting for. Yet we still wait in hopefulness. The birth of a baby invariably stirs deep well of hope in the human heart. Perhaps in this generation, things will get better. Perhaps this child will make a difference.”

That quotation comes from the cover of the book *Lighted Windows*. It was first published more than 20 years ago, yet how fresh these words seem.

*Lighted Windows* is an Advent book. Whilst much has happened in the world since its publication the message under-pinning the book has remained the same and whether the “issue of the day” has been climate change or faltering financial markets or turmoil within political or religious institutions or refugees and border crossing, the Light of the World will shine.

Faith trusts that the “life and light to all He (Jesus) brings” will prevail over all that is wrong and un-godly.

The beginning of Advent is a good time to announce that our website is up and running. It is one of Dalriada Mid Argyll Church's windows. In common with most windows, it works in two ways—to look in and to look out.

Looking in – it allows folk to see what is going on, what we are about and what we get up to.

Looking out – it allows us to show folk about God's love of them and how we might meet with the looker-in.

One of the challenges Dalriada Mid-Argyll Church has is communicating with our congregation. Five places of worship scattered throughout Mid Argyll across a fairly challenging geographical area makes it difficult to tell everyone the same message at the same time. On top of that, not everyone is able to travel and some would rather not.

The website is one more way to reach out beyond the “bricks and mortar” of our congregation.

We also have a FaceBook page and *The Link* is available on line as well as in print form.

One of the useful features of the website is the Calendar which can be linked to your phone, iPad or Tablet, if you are sufficiently tech-savvy and make use of an online diary

However, to keep all these windows open we need help. Can you help to keep the website refreshed or update our Facebook page or help compile *The Link*?

If you access the internet you will find us at:

[dalriadamidargyllchurch.org.uk](http://dalriadamidargyllchurch.org.uk)

There you will find a contact button to leave a message. The more familiar ways of getting in touch still work and some contact details can be found in the ‘Contacts’ box on the back page.

As you prepare for Christmas may you find an Advent window that enables you to see God in a new light.



## **Cherished Memories of Christmas**

It was December 1999 and all leave was cancelled!

We had to be on permanent call in the run up to the turn of the new century. There was an expectation of some form of global catastrophe, all linked to computer technology.

Nothing happened and we were stood down on January 1<sup>st</sup> but that's another story.

I worked long hours and was secretly pleased to have some time quietly at home and not have to travel to be with my family. I lived alone with my West Highland Terrier, Hetty.

Neighbours and others in the community didn't like the thought of me being alone over the festivities so I was flooded with invitations. I honed them down to Christmas dinner at the Manse and supper with neighbours and crossed my fingers that I hadn't offended anyone.

It started well. I joyously slipped and slid down the icy hill to Tobermory Parish Church and I was warmly welcomed by the Session Clerk. The church was in darkness apart from a huge Christmas tree adorned with festive lights. It was magical. There was a wonderful smell of pine mixed, I admit, with the fumes of whisky from the back pews. No-one minded. We were all together, neighbours, friends and families. The lights came on and the carol singing began—loud and glorious.

The next day continued in that vein and the five course Christmas dinner at the Manse was quite spectacular. A wee rest and a dog walk later, I was ready for the final event, supper with neighbours. Perfect but, in fact, not so perfect. Supper to me meant a sandwich and a cup of tea. To my dear neighbours it meant a beautifully dressed table laden with another full Christmas dinner . . .

My favourite Ardrishaig memory also featured Christmas Eve. It started whilst having a coffee with friends. I told them that I was going to a Christmas Eve service on my own and that was fine—I was used to going to church alone. However, they both decided to come with me.

The minute we stepped into Ardrishaig Church, the joy and magic was palpable. Linda and Graham Dick were hosting it along with our Minister David Carruthers. It was just the wee touches, the atmosphere and joyousness. As it became dark, we lit candles and sang our last carol by candlelight. My two friends must have been as affected as me by the service as they are now very much part of our current congregation.

Two happy, lovely memories with Church and God at the centre.

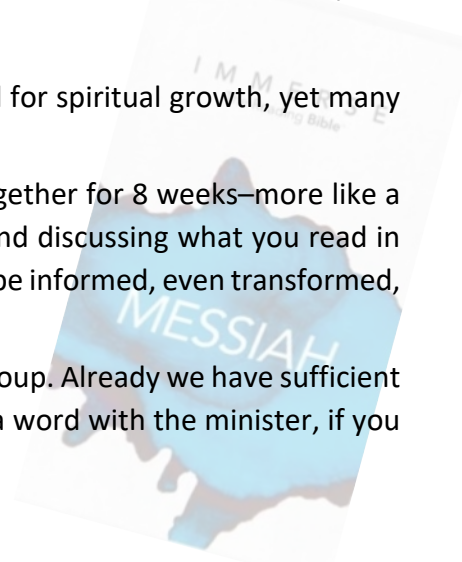
Moira Thompson

### **Immerse—The Bible Reading Experience**

Does Bible reading ever feel like a chore? Spending time in Scripture is vital for spiritual growth, yet many people struggle with confusion and boredom when they open the Bible.

Immerse is designed for groups to encounter large portions of the Bible together for 8 weeks—more like a book club, less like a Bible study. By meeting every week in small groups and discussing what you read in open, honest conversations, you and your community can come together to be informed, even transformed, through an authentic experience with the Scriptures

In January 2025 there will be an opportunity for you to join such a reading group. Already we have sufficient people interested to start with two groups but there could be more! Have a word with the minister, if you are interested in joining a group.



## The UP, IN, OUT Pattern.

At the Mission Group meeting on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November we had a review of the teaching from the Cairn Learning Circle which Jim Malcolm and David Logue attended from Dalriada Mid Argyll Church.

One of the sessions looked at patterns and habits which Jesus revealed in His lifestyle. By example and demonstration He taught the disciples; and, from the Gospels, we too can pick up on patterns of life which help us to follow His example.

In particular, we looked at Luke chapter 6 verses 12 to 19:

*Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day He called His disciples to Him and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; James and John; Philip and Bartholemew; Mathew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus and Simon called the Zealot; Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot who also became a traitor. And He came down with them to a level place with a crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases, as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits. And they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all.*

This passage shows Jesus looking out in three directions:

**UP** to God in worship – “He went out to the mountain to pray.”

**IN** community with His close friends - “He called His disciples to Himself...and He came down with them”

**OUT** in mission to others: - “a great multitude of people who came to hear Him”

We can also see this pattern in the life of the disciples in Acts Chapter 2 verses 42 –47:

*“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. Then fear came on every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. Now all who believed were together and had all things in common and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all as anyone had need.*

*So continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.”*

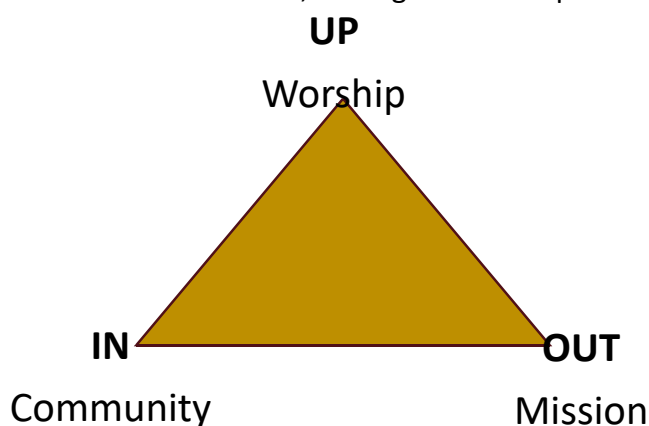
Can you pick out the three directions in this passage? Where is the UP, IN and OUT?

Can we now think of our own patterns of life?

Where are these three?

Do we follow one direction more than the other two? Or are we well balanced?

Jesus practiced all three equally, but maybe we are stronger in one or two and need to practice the other more? No matter what, Jesus gives us this pattern to follow as best we can.



The next meeting of the Mission group is on the **6<sup>th</sup> December** at 2.00pm.

(The venue is still to be arranged).

Please come along to find out more.

## Ardrishaig Craft Club

The Craft Club meets in the Church Hall in Ardrishaig on Monday afternoons from 2 o'clock till 4 o'clock. So far this year we have welcomed four new members to the group. If you would like to join us, you would be very welcome. We will soon be stopping the Craft Club for 2024 but will be restarting in January 2025. Come and join us.

Fiona Macfarlane



## Christmas on Iona

Last century, during my time as Domestic Supervisor, working for the Iona Community on Iona, I spent 4 Christmases on the island. The first one, I'd no idea what was happening but by the last one, well I think I knew what I was doing. We tried to make it a more relaxed week compared to some of the other programmed weeks. It was the only time where the guests were selected to ensure a mixture of families, couples and singles. One year, though, we had rather too many 'needy' people so it was rather hard work. Between staff and guests there would be about 50 people and we all ate our meals together in the Refectory. Christmas dinner included all the trimmings and there was usually a special Boxing day buffet. All the other meals were just our usual menu.

It was wonderful being on the island during what, I believe, has become a commercial racket. You could escape it all, apart from one day when a few of us went out to Oban to do a big shop and get some extra treats for the guests and the staff.

We never had many guests staying during Advent, so the staff used to worship in the smaller and warmer(!) Michael Chapel; moving back in to the Abbey church when the guests arrived and helped put the decorations up.

Being on an island off an island also meant you had to plan ahead in case the weather caused ferries to be cancelled. This was especially so at the end of the house party when folk were worried the guests wouldn't get away and there wasn't a huge amount of food left!

As well as the Morning and Evening Abbey Services we had loads of carol singing, including round the island. People staying on the island and islanders were invited to join in some events as well as the usual Services. I used to make about 400 mince pies to cover all the events. I've never made any since!

One year it started snowing as we set off carolling round the island. It was quite magical. However, it didn't get a chance to melt— a gale came and blew it away.

The Watchnight Service involved ringing the actual bell up in the tower rather than just the clapper. Somehow that task fell upon my shoulders. It took a minute from starting to pull the rope till the bell actually chimed, so we may not have been completely accurate at times. One year I took the notion of letting it 'snow' from the hatch. (chopped up scrap paper). Thankfully the warden was amused, so it was a tradition repeated, until I left. It was a special time and I'm glad I had the opportunity to serve the Community in that way.

Ealasaid MacKay

## Heirlooms by Amy Grant, Bob Farrell, and Elliott Bannister

Up in the attic, down on my knees  
Lifetimes of boxes, timeless to me  
Letters and photographs, yellowed with years  
Some bringing laughter, some bringing tears.

Time never changes the memories, the faces  
Of loved ones who bring to me  
All that I come from and all that I live for  
And all that I'm going to be  
My precious family is more than an heirloom to me.

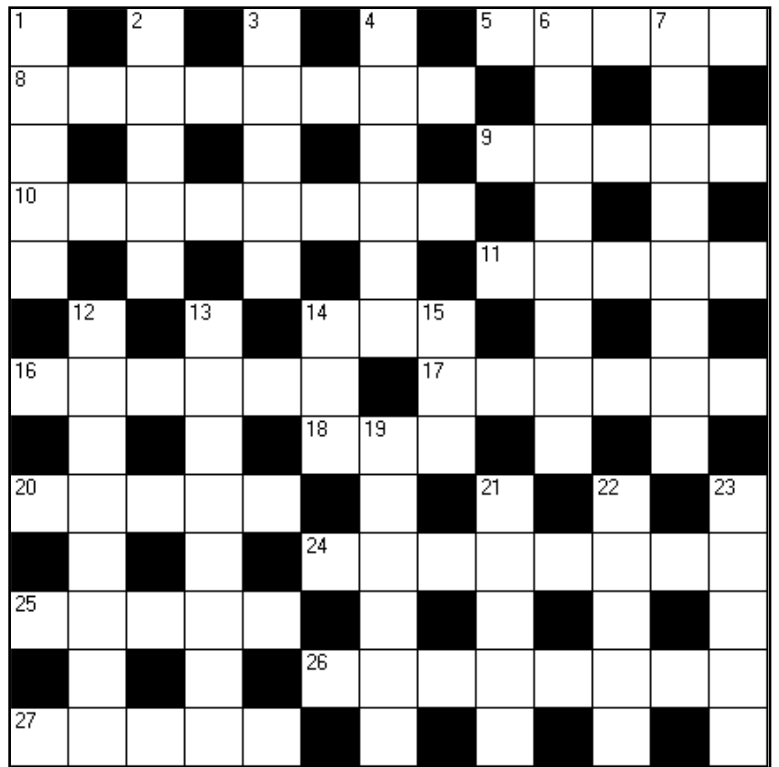
©: Uncertain

Wisemen and shepherds down on their knees  
Bringing their treasures to lay at His feet  
Who was this wonder, baby yet King?  
Living and dying, He gave life to me.

Time never changes the memory, the moment  
His love first pierced through me  
Telling all that I come from and all that I live for  
And all that I'm going to be.  
My precious Saviour is more than an heirloom to me  
My precious Jesus is more than an heirloom to me .

### Christmas Quiz

1. The name of Scrooge's deceased business partner in *A Christmas Carol* was?
2. In the song *The Twelve Days of Christmas* what did my true love send me on the 11<sup>th</sup> day?
3. How many gifts would you receive if you received all of the gifts in the song *The Twelve Days of Christmas*?
4. In the song *Winter Wonderland* who do we pretend the snowman is?
5. In the song *All I Want for Christmas is my Two Front Teeth*, why do I want my two front teeth?
6. In the song *Go Tell It On The Mountain* what are you supposed to go tell on the mountain?
7. According to the song *Frosty the Snowman* what kind of soul does Frosty have?
8. In the Christmas song, who did I (the narrator) see kissing Santa Claus under the mistletoe last night?



### Can you unscramble the Christmas-related Words?

1. DOHLPRU
2. TASNA LCUSA
3. LGAEN
4. TSRA
5. EMHEBLHTE
6. SESTPNER
7. ZNBLETI
8. TSAMCRHIS EETR
9. YTSO
10. ESLEV

### Across

- 5 Christmas song (5)  
 8 See 9 across  
 9&8ac. His name has transformed into Santa Claus (5,8)  
 10 One of the first visitors to the infant Jesus (8)  
 11 ..\_\_\_\_\_ your feet and cry out (Ezekiel 6:11) (5)  
 14 Where there was no room for Mary and Joseph (3)  
 16 Feed trough used as a cradle for the infant Jesus (6)  
 17 Season leading up to Christmas (6)  
 18 Shelled reproductive body (3)  
 20 Wireless (5)  
 24&27ac Stage productions performed in many schools around Christmas time (8,5)  
 25 Comparatively unimportant (5)  
 26 Traditionally, the name of one of the Magi (8)  
 27 See 24 across

### Down

- 1 Grind the teeth (5)  
 2 Threaded fastener (5)  
 3 Small hut (5)  
 4 Incapable of having children, like Elizabeth in Luke 1 (6)  
 6 Having a tendency to change (8)  
 7 an \_\_\_\_\_ to grace your neck (Proverbs 3:22) (8)  
 12 He made his offering on the eighth day in Numbers 7 (8)  
 13 Yellow flowered wild plant (8)  
 14 Anger (3)  
 15 Incessantly find fault (3)  
 19 Small beard (6)  
 21 With which the papyrus basket in Exodus 2 was coated (5)  
 22 Polite (5)  
 23 A gift of the Magi (5)

Items for the next edition of *The Link* should be sent to:  
 moirathompson176@gmail.com by 16<sup>th</sup> December

## The Weather Man

A long time ago, in Communist Russia, there was a famous weather man named Rudolf. He had a 100% accuracy rate for his forecasts of the Russian weather. The people loved him and respected him for his faultless foresight.

He was particularly good at predicting rain.

One night, despite clear skies, he made the prediction on the 6 o'clock news broadcast that a violent storm was approaching. It would flood the town in which he and his wife lived. He warned the people to take proper precautions and prepare for the worst.

When he arrived home that evening, his wife met him at the door and started arguing with him that his weather prediction was the most ridiculous thing she had ever heard. This time, she said, he had made a terrible mistake—there wasn't a cloud anywhere within 10 miles of the town. As a matter of fact, that day had been the most beautiful day that the town had ever had and it was quite obvious to everyone it simply wasn't going to rain.

Rudolf told her to be quiet and listen to him. If he said it was going to rain, **it was going to rain**. He had all of his Russian heritage behind him and he knew what he was talking about.

She argued back that although he came from a proud heritage, **it still wasn't going to rain!**

They argued back and forth for hours; so much that they went to bed mad at each other.

During the night, sure enough, one of the worst rainstorms hit the town; the likes of which they had never seen.

In the morning when Rudolf and his wife arose, they looked out the window and saw all the water that had fallen. "See," said Rudolf, "I told you it was going to rain."

His wife admitted: "Once again your prediction came true. But I want to know, just how were you so accurate, Rudolf?"

To which he replied,  
"Rudolf, the Red, knows  
rain dear!"



## Star over Loch Gilp

The star sits lightly over Loch Gilp  
Peace floats on rippling waves,  
And waits calmly as people hurry by.

A young man walks unsteady down Union Street  
Cans quietly clunk in jacket pockets.

"Is this all, is this life? Is there no more?"

He looks up from the wavering pavement

He sees the star

Christ will gently steady him

And join him on his slow walk home.

Lady of uncertain age eats alone.

Family long gone, or never was.

Looks uncertainly at the door,

ears long to hear a knock

"Any one there? Anyone to talk? To listen?"

To sit...Any one to share?"

Looks out the front window,

the star shimmers on the tide

Christ pulls out a chair, sits to listen

To hear her story and to tell her his.

"Come on, no you can't, I don't have time. Stop it!

Stand up, sit still, don't cry, O please don't cry.

I'm trying, I'm trying, I am trying!"

Young mother, baby in crowded pushchair,

Child in hand, spilling shopping and dodging cars.

Christmas weighs with the dead weight of debt

On her bowed head.

Peace catches her by surprise

as she glimpses the star,

Sparkling above. "O that is beautiful."

Her heart stills, the children pause,

As Christ bows to pick up a spilled toy.

Christ calms the fractious child

And smiles gently on the baby.

Christ is come. Peace, goodwill, reality.

Christ is here, on the street,

under the star.

David Logue

**Quiz Answers:** 1 Jacob Marley 2 Eleven Pipers Piping 3 364 presents 4 Parson Brown 5 So I could wish you "Merry Christmas" 6 Jesus Christ is Born 7 A Jolly Happy Soul 8 Mummy  
**Crossword Solution:** Across: 5 Carol 8 Nicholas 9 Saint 10 Shepherd 11 Stamp 14 Inn 16 Manger 17 Advent 18 Egg  
20 Radio 24 Nativity 25 Minor 26 Melchior 27 Plays Down: 1 Gnash 2 Screw 3 Bothy 4 Barren 6 Adaptive 7 Ornament 12 Gamaliel 13 Agrimony 14 Ire 15 Nag 19 Goatee 21 Pitch 22 Civil 23 Myrrh

It is very hard for me to put into words what Christmas means to me as my brain instantly becomes chaotic with joy.

My mother used to say I was born with a Christmas gene—I drove everyone up the wall when my 6 year old feet would patter into my mum's room for the 10<sup>th</sup> time to ask if he had been yet!!!

When we became a family of three (me, my mum and younger brother), there wasn't much money. My joy was opening gifts so my Mum would wrap 10 coloured pencils individually—10 presents to open, not just one!

Later, when my Mum re-married, I had two step-brothers and a step-sister. Christmas for them had been money from their Dad and a quiet day. What a difference. My Mum often tells people of our first Christmas together, when at 5:00am I had the house full of half-asleep teenagers sitting in the hall outside my Mum's bedroom, as no one was allowed in the living room before Mum was up and all wondering what had happened!

Years ago when I stayed in High Bank Park folks used to complain that they had to drive past my house when they were out shopping so their children could see our lights.

Being brought up in the Salvation Army, Christmas was always lively and busy with nativity plays and carolling with the band. We were often out singing in the local nursing home and maternity hospital. It was such a joy to sing all the lovely carols all month. When I was down home, listening to the Paisley Citadal band playing in the shopping centre I made my request for *Away in a Manger*. It cost me a tenner, but it was well worth it to listen to all the wonderful parts played by the instruments.

During my time as worship leader at St. Andrews in Barrhead I was heavily involved in all the Christmas music preparation. I also hosted a Christmas lunch and carol concert in my house at the beginning of December. This brought me joy—singing carols, having lots of people round and feeding them. My daughter Linzi always says I'm in my element doing just that.

I love living in Argyll as I get to see family altogether. I also love sharing all we do in Mid Argyll Dalriada Church over Christmas. Through Bethlehem's small door came the love we waited for. It was when Love was born—the Son of God for me and for you.

Two of my favourite sayings for Christmas, (apart from 'Has he been yet?') are: "The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear" and "Peace on Earth will come to stay when we live Christmas every day."

Please remember the choir is open to everyone and a huge thank you to them for all the dedication they show and beautiful blessings they bring in their song.

Wishing everyone a healthy and happy Christmas

Linda Dick

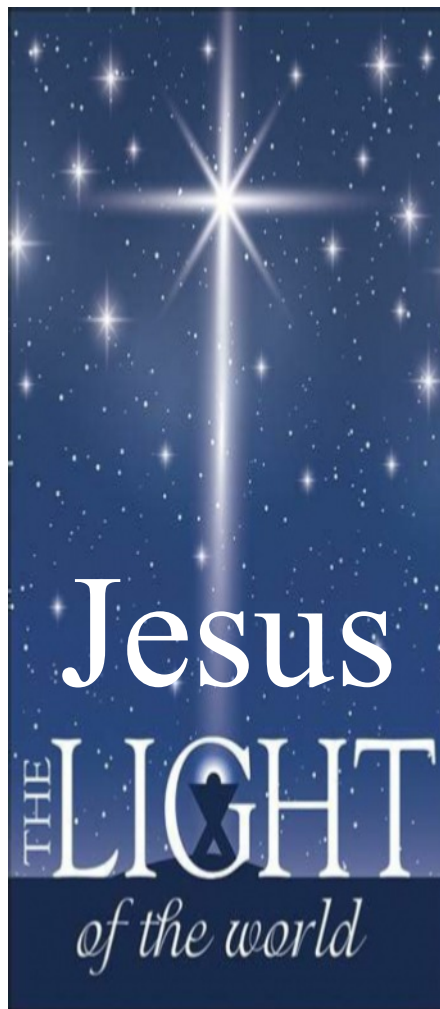


# tearfund

Dorian and Laura Stone hosted a quiz in Lochgilphead Church Hall, on 10<sup>th</sup> November, in aid of Tearfund.

Tearfund is a Christian charity that partners with local churches and organisations in more than 50 of the world's poorest countries to tackle the complex challenges of poverty. Tearfund endeavours to do this through sustainable development, by responding to disasters, and by challenging injustices. They believe an end to extreme poverty is possible.

It was a fun afternoon that saw young and old alike sharing their general knowledge (or lack of) for a good cause. £250 was raised.



Since its launch in 1993 Blythwood's Shoe Box Appeal has seen more than 2.6 million boxes distributed. Each one of them different. Each one personal. Each one an expression of your care and kindness towards a stranger in need.



This year 40 boxes were sent from Dalriada Mid Argyll Church for distribution in Ukraine.



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| Dec 1 <sup>st</sup>  | Advent Carol Service for Christian Aid in Christchurch, Lochgilphead at 4:30pm  |
| Dec 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Advent Lunch for Dalriada Mid Argyll Church following the 11:30am Service in Ardrishaig   |
| Dec 24 <sup>th</sup> | Carols on the Green, Tayvallich at 4:00pm<br>Carol Service in Ardrishaig Church at 4:00pm<br>Christmas Eve Carol Service in Achahoish Church at 7:00pm<br>Watchnight Service in Lochgilphead Church at 11:15pm<br>Watchnight Service in Kilmartin Church at 11:30pm |
| Dec 25 <sup>th</sup> | Christmas Day Service in Tayvallich at 10:30am  |
| Dec 29 <sup>th</sup> | All Together End of Year Communion Service Ardrishaig Church at 11:00am   |

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