

The Presbytery of Lochaber

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News from Lochaber Presbytery - Winter 2005/06

Edited by the Presbytery Clerk, Rev David M. Anderson, email: akph62@uk.uuemail.com

Christmas Greetings

The Presbytery Clerk would like to wish everyone an enjoyable Christmas.

Presbytery Web Site

In November our web site received 3910 "hits". For the first time, details of Christmas services have been placed on to the web site by all congregations. If you are made aware of anyone who attends these services as a result of the web site, please let the Clerk know. Congregational activities and information could easily be placed on to the web site. This might be especially important for congregations who are currently, or are just about to become, vacant charges. Experience has shown that prospective applicants look carefully at the web site.

Christmas Dinner

Thirty five attended the annual Presbytery Christmas Dinner at Caol on 6th December. Thanks to the Kilmallie ladies for their excellent meal which was enjoyed by all.

Ban on smoking

The ban on smoking in all enclosed public places will come into force from 6 a.m. on 26th March 2006. To enable organisations to "gear up" for the new legislation, the Scottish Executive has issued a Guide giving advice on the premises included, the obligations, for example, about putting up No Smoking signs, what to do if someone ignores the ban etc.

Included under "No Smoking Premises" are "premises used for, or in connection with, public worship or religious instruction, or the social or recreational activities of a religious body". Churches and Church Halls are, therefore, clearly covered whereas Manses and clergy houses will come under the exemption for residential premises.

New Food Regulations

New regulations come into effect on 1st January 2006. These should be read by all congregations. They can be downloaded from the Presbytery Web site – look in the "News" page.

Property Matters

At the December Presbytery meeting, permission was given to: **Acharacle** to lease part of their glebe land to Highland Council for use as a recreational playing field; **Arisaig** to renew the roof of the church; **Morvern** to sell part of their manse garden to the adjoining neighbours; **Glencoe** to upgrade their hall kitchen facilities.

Vacancies

Presbytery has been pleased to learn that it is hoped that **Arisaig & Mallaig** would be advertising for a new minister soon.

Readers

At the December meeting, the Moderator thanked the Readers for their efforts during the past year. Presbytery heard that the two Readers in training who recently moved into Lochaber, Eric & Pat Walker, are now undertaking a placement at Duncansburgh and Kilmonivaig. Our other Reader in training, Morag Muirhead, continues in her placement at Fort Augustus and Glengarry.

Prayer Section from John Maitland

"Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was king. Soon afterwards, some men who studied the stars came from the east to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him." Matthew 2:12.

"When the first spark of a desire after God arises in your soul," says William Law, "cherish it with all your care, give all your heart unto it... Follow it as gladly as the wise men of the East followed the star from heaven that appeared to them. It will do for you as the star did for them: it will lead you to the birth of Jesus, not in a stable at Bethlehem of Judea, but to the birth of Jesus in your own soul."

Come the 31st January 2006 the Rev Ann Winning, minister of the historic parish of Morvern and the Rev James Carmichael, minister of the linked parishes of Ardgour and Strontian, are both due to retire after long and successful ministries in these parishes. Give thanks for the way both these ministers showed a true love for the people committed to their care, leading them gently, teaching them wisely and bringing them to maturity of spirit and holiness of life.

May Ann and James both have a long and happy retirement. Ann in her home in Glencoe and James and Elizabeth in their home in Ardgour. Pray that they are prepared in mind and spirit for this change in their life's pattern, that their future days and years may bring happiness and contentment, and that they continue to enjoy God's richest blessing.

Continue to pray for the vacant charges in our Presbytery, Mallaig St Columba's and Knoydart and Arisaig and the Small Isles, Acharacle and Ardnamurchan, and added to these at the end of January, Ardgour and Strontian, also the parish of Morvern.

Please pray for all those who have responsibilities for these parishes that they are sensitive and responsive to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, thus ensuring that God's will may be done.

Jesus said " Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them". Luke18.16.

Father God, we place our children in your hands.
We ask, not that You will shield them from difficulty,
But that You will give them the strength to face it,
Not that You will protect them from making mistakes,
But that they may be able to learn from them,
Not that their lives will be easy,
But that they will deal with challenges courageously.
Be with them when they are vulnerable,
Protect them from lasting harm,
And keep them always in your love. Amen.

There was once a family that celebrated Christmas every year with a birthday party for Jesus. An extra chair of honour at the table became the family's reminder of Jesus' presence. A cake with candles, along with the singing of "Happy Birthday" expressed the family's joy in Jesus' presence. One year a Christmas afternoon visitor asked five year old Ruth, "Did you get everything you wanted for Christmas?" After a moments hesitation she answered, "No, but then it's not my birthday!"

Every blessing at Christmas and throughout the New Year to one and all.