

Church Diary for December



Wednesday 3 December	12.30pm Prayers for Peace 5pm Bruntsfield Christmas Event
Friday 5 December	1pm Napier Uni Lunchtime Concert
Sunday 7 December	11 am Worship led by Rev Mary Taylor
Sunday 7 December	5 pm Polish Christmas Concert
Wednesday 10 December	12.30pm Prayers for Peace
Thursday 11 December	10.30am Coffee Morning in the Small Hall
Saturday 13 December	4pm Romanian Orthodox Christmas Carols
Sunday 14 December	11am Worship led by Rev Sarah Moore with brass band 'Brass Tracks'
Wednesday 17 December	12.30pm Prayers for Peace
Wednesday 17 December	7.30pm Octavoce Christmas Concert
Sunday 21 December	11am Worship led by Rev Sarah Moore
Wednesday 24 December	5pm Worship led by Rev Sarah Moore
Thursday 25 December	10am Christmas Service at Christchurch
Sunday 28 December	11am Worship led by Rev Mary Taylor (with Christchurch)

cover photograph by Sarah McKernan

To get in contact, please email: churchoffice.muc@gmail.com

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A message from Rev Sarah...

Dear friends,

This month we conclude the series that we have been exploring in the last few editions of the Link where we have reflected our way through the Nicene Creed.



The Nicene Creed is a core articulation of the Christian faith and was accepted by the Ecumenical Council of Nicea in 325 CE. It explores in some detail what Christians understand about God, and then in its final whirlwind section: of the Church, of baptism and forgiveness, something about death and mortality, and lastly about ultimate hope.

Today we recall the last lines of the creed:

*We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come. Amen.*

Sometimes Christians who are not part of the Roman Catholic tradition express concern about aligning ourselves with a statement with the word 'catholic' in it. Here, the word 'catholic' simply means universal. The council wished to emphasise that there is but one Church of which all local expressions of church are part. No individual congregation or single denomination is an island.

What about the term 'apostolic'? What does that mean? We speak about the apostles who are understood to be those who were the twelve disciples of Jesus without Judas Iscariot and including Matthias recorded in Acts 1 as Judas' successor. Some other parts of the catholic or universal Church explicitly describe themselves as apostolic churches. What might we understand this to be about? Essentially this is about being in the tradition of the apostles, those people who had known Jesus personally and participated in his ministry and teaching, who were witnesses to his death and encountered the risen Jesus. Apostolic concerns the passing on of the stories that form our faith. The Hebrew Bible and New Testament help us to do that along with in a lesser way

*A Candlelit
Christmas Concert
with Octavoce*

*Award-winning a cappella
vocal ensemble sings
Christmas classics...
Mulled wine provided!*

17 Dec, 7.30pm
Morningside United Church,
Edinburgh

18 Dec, 7.30pm
Stockbridge Parish Church,
Edinburgh

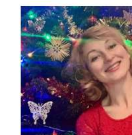
Tickets (£15/£13):
www.octavoce.org.uk/concerts

Octavoce

Scottish Polish Cultural Association presents

Christmas Carol Concert

Sunday 7th December 2025 at 17:00



performed by

Magdalena Durant - Soprano

and

Tamsin Dearnlay - Harp

at Morningside United Church at Bruntsfield
15 Chamberlain Rd, Edinburgh, EH10 4DH



Tickets: £7.00, children under 16 years free

Please book on our website: www.scotpoles.co.uk

Limited number of seats, early booking recommended.

Refreshments: mulled wine and mince pies.

Morningside United Church

We invite you on the journey to Christmas with us, at the following events:

Bruntsfield Christmas Event: the church will be open for teas and coffees, with carol singing and Christmas readings
Wednesday, 3rd December - 5pm

Carol service with Brass band 'Brass Tracks'
Sunday, 14th December - 11am

Christmas Eve service
Wednesday, 24th December - 5pm

Christmas Day service at Christ Church, Holy Corner
Thursday, 25th December - 10am



Display of Paintings

Euan Cameron, a local artist who displays his paintings in our small hall, came along recently to one of our Thursday Coffee Mornings. He gave a most interesting talk about his paintings, painted on his travels around Scotland.

He has gifted a painting of MUC which hangs in the McLeish Room. If you have not been in the small hall for a while I can recommend you view his paintings sometime.

Yvonne Burnett

Edinburgh Napier Lunchtime Concerts

The final Autumn lunchtime concert will be held here at MUC, in the Church, on Friday 5 December at 1pm. Please join us to support the up and coming musicians at Napier University.

Event posters – please see diary as well

Morningside United Church

open from 5pm
for teas and coffees
with Carol singing and
Christmas readings



the further retelling and reflection on the story of Jesus and the reception of the Holy Spirit in the centuries since.

The link between baptism and forgiveness perhaps made more sense in a Church where more people were baptised as an outworking of their own faith rather than that of their family. Is this some sort of get out of jail free card since Christian people tend to commit as many or more sins after baptism than they did before it. Here we might think about what we understand as sin and what it is in our lives for which we might seek forgiveness. Our sins are not another description for that which we have done wrong although the categories overlap. Not everything the world understands to be wrong is necessarily a sin (although that's no reason to ignore earthly moral codes). Sin is what separates us from God and what breaks and damages community. Those matters which prevent us loving God with heart, mind, soul and strength and loving neighbour as self. Baptism is once only action. Most of the Church understands it to be a sacrament. A physical action and intentional commitment that is a sign of a divine act. The once bit is because we are not God and God's acts stand no matter what we might do.

Lastly, we look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Perhaps this is the most mysterious part of all. Put most simply whatever happened for Jesus is available for us too. We look forward to a time when the brokenness of this work is transformed into something better. Amen. So be it.

I hope that you have found some value in reflecting in this way with me on one of the central statements of the Christian faith. It is what the Church believes. Our own beliefs, depending on all sorts of things: our experiences, what we have been taught by all sorts of people, the scriptures, might overlap with it. It is worth our time and energy to attend to what the Church believes for this is the core of the faith that we are called to proclaim and to share.

Much of the Creed is about Jesus. Whatever else, Jesus is at the centre of the Christian story. None of it makes much sense without him. As we observe Advent and celebrate Christmas once again, we remember how God became one of us, incarnate, Emmanuel, God with us.

With love and prayers.

Sarah
Rev'd Sarah Moore

Musings from Mary Taylor, pastoral assistant

Two words which I have been musing about are "Remembering" and "Reconciliation".

There are several crosses and stained-glass windows in Morningside United Church which folk spent time looking at during the Open Day. One cross is the huge wooden cross behind the communion table which is frequently on orders of service. If you go up and look closely there is a small metal plaque underneath which reads *"This cross is in memory of Rev. James MacEwan Mackenzie Neave (Mack) and of his beloved wife Babbie both members of this church having served the London Missionary Society in China 1940 – 50 and in Malaya 1951 – 55."*

Mack and Babs Neave were faithful and much-loved members of this church. Mack Neave travelled around churches in Scotland enthusing many people, including myself, with a lifelong interest in the World Church. He was connected to the London Missionary Society which is now the Council for World Mission, which is a partnership of 36 churches in mission. The 36 members are committed to sharing their resources of money, people, skills and insights globally to carry out God's mission.

"CWM's vision is of "Life-flourishing Communities, living out God's promise of a New Heaven and a New Earth".

www.cwmission.org

Thinking globally, acting locally.

I was delighted to hear some folk from Morningside United Church have visited the Great Tapestry of Scotland in Galashiels this year. If you have then you may have admired the work of Dorothy Wilkie. Dorie Wilkie is the daughter of Babs and Mack Neave.

"The Great Tapestry of Scotland began with a vision by author Alexander McCall Smith inspired by the Prestonpans Tapestry. Inspiration and the

Christmas Carol Service

The Romanian Orthodox Church is hosting a Christmas carol evening on 13 December at 4 pm. The event will feature carols in both English and Romanian, performed by small groups from our parish and invited guests. Alongside the carols, our clergy will offer brief Christmas reflections.

Advent Collection

Our advent collection this year is to go to the Eric Liddell Community for a specific project called the Friday Living Room project. The South Wing is 'open to all' on a Friday Afternoon as a place to get together for a light sandwich lunch with tea, coffee and cake. To just meet and chat or to play board games. It's very popular. Cash and cheques in the bucket here at church, by post or electronic payments to the church account are all welcome. Any cheques should be payable to MUC. If posting and you want to make clear the cheque is for this rather than general church funds, please put a note on the back of the cheque. Electronic payments are to our new bank account:

Morningside United Church

Sort 08-92-99 Account 67452879. Please add the reference *Advent*.

If you already have a Gift Aid declaration, gift aid will be claimed on your advent donation. Cheque or electronic are easily identified for this. For gift aided cash, please put in the bucket with an envelope with your name.

Lesley Donald, MUC Treasurer

Digital Advice Sessions

The digital advice sessions organised by Southside Faith Care that finished at the end of November have been very popular. We will host more next year on a fortnightly basis, starting on Thursday 22 January. One particularly useful and well attended session was a Frauds and Scams talk given by the police. We have kept some leaflets from this if anyone would like to have a look. Southside Faithcare hope to arrange other talks next year. Folk from MUC will be invited to attend.

Reading and Flower Rotas for December/ Early Jan

	Readers:	Flowers:
7 December	Pam Brindley	Christmas Tree
14 December	Rev Mary Taylor	Christmas Tree
21 December	Elizabeth MacGregor	Christmas Tree
24 December	members of congregation	Christmas Tree
28 December	Judy Wagner	Christmas Tree
4 January	David Donald	Christmas Tree
11 January	Lesley Donald	tbc

Timetable for Ministers – December / January

7 December	Rev Mary Taylor
14 December	Rev Mary Taylor
21 December	Rev Sarah Moore
24 December	Rev Sarah Moore
25 December	Christchurch at 10am
28 December	Rev Mary Taylor, communion
4 January	Rev Mary Taylor
11 January	Rev Sarah Moore
18 January	Rev David Coleman
25 January	Rev Dorothy Anderson, communion

On 14 December the congregations of Duke Street and Saugtonhall URC churches will join us as before. This year Granton will join us. Like us they are a local ecumenical partnership, but with the Methodist Church. On 28 December members of Christ Church will join us.

Coffee Morning Dates for your Diary

Our final coffee morning of 2025 will be held on Thursday 11 December at 10.30am in the Small Hall. There will be warm drinks and mince pies (and other cakes I'm sure). Please come and join us for our final festive coffee morning. We will be back after the Christmas and New Year celebrations on Thursday 8 January.

skills of artist Andrew Crummy and historian Alistair Moffat have brought this wonderful work of art to life.

The historical story of Scotland is depicted thanks to “master stitcher” Dorie Wilkie’s organization of hundreds of volunteers and coordinating contributions across the country. Together thousands of hands created a vast collaborative masterpiece, weaving Scotland’s heritage, people and landscapes into one extraordinary story of cultural heritage.”
www.greatapestryofscotland.com

We are just coming into the season of Advent with Advent candles and Advent calendars. This Advent I am delighted to tell you that Embrace the Middle East is becoming an international partner of the Community of the Cross of Nails in Coventry Cathedral. The Christmas carol sheets are from Embrace the Middle East.
<https://embraceme.org>

A Christmas gift with a difference is the “Blessing of Animals” from Wild Goose publications, Iona Community.

“It is a celebration of God’s creation in all its furred, feathered, scaled and occasionally slippery glory. It is a gift for the dog-walker, the bird watcher, the soft-hearted cat-cuddler or yourself, as a reminder that every creature is a small miracle.”

Peace and joy to all readers of this Link throughout Advent, Christmas and throughout the New Year.

Mary Taylor

MUC Living Document

Many regular members and attendees will be aware that the August and November Congregational Meetings have worked on our fellowship’s Living Document that is produced as a result of the Mission and Ministry Review process from the United Reformed Church. Everyone connected with MUC is invited to look through the document, set out under five headings, and consider how we might use this as our foundation for our next steps as a congregation in our mission and ministry with our local community.

Our Context

Morningside United Church (MUC) is a local ecumenical partnership (LEP) between the Church of Scotland and the United Reformed Church overseen both by the Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian and by the National Synod of Scotland. We are proud of our ecumenical links and history, and the stories of Morningside Congregational Church and North Morningside Parish Church whose union created us. Our congregational life is structured primarily according to the practices of the Church of Scotland.

Our church is sited on the busy Holy Corner crossroads between the Bruntsfield and Morningside inner suburbs of south west Edinburgh. We are a Church of Scotland geographical parish for which we have particular oversight and in URC terms are both a gathered and local congregation with members and attendees joining us from across the City of Edinburgh and beyond. Holy Corner is named because there are church buildings on each corner of the junction. Across from us are our friends at Christ Church, a congregation of the Scottish Episcopal Church, and Edinburgh Elim Church; on the fourth corner the former North Morningside Parish Church building is now the home of the Eric Liddell Community, a close community with whom we work.

Many other Christian and other faith traditions have a presence in Edinburgh, some with whom we have a closer relationship than others. Closest to us we host the Edinburgh congregation of the Romanian Orthodox Church who meet in our building. We have a close relationship with Christ Church with several joint services during the year. We also maintain links with Marchmont St Giles and St Catherine Argyle, the other parishes in our presbytery grouping, and with the four other United Reformed Church congregations in Edinburgh.

The area around our church is largely residential along with one of the three campuses of Edinburgh Napier University and a traditional high street stretching north and south to Bruntsfield and Morningside respectively. There is a significant student population with students at Napier and other local universities. The core population is middle class and affluent albeit with significant pockets of poverty. We work closely

Apart from the journeys (one of our friends calculated it was about 23 trains in total during the week) Brigitte and I had time to explore some of the music culture of Switzerland. The Abbey of St. Gallen is a UNESCO World Heritage site, and we were fortuitously able to visit an exhibition of some of the world-famous manuscripts which are in the Abbey Library.

On our other free day we went to Sion, in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, and we were able to see what is the oldest playable organ in the world in the Basilique de Valiere on a hill high above the town -quite a strenuous climb, but well worth it not just to see the organ but also the Romanesque Basilica itself.

So now we are properly settling into Kent life; we have met up with many old friends and acquaintances, and have been worshipping at Canterbury Cathedral, as well as deputizing in a number of the local parish churches. We are looking forward to what comes next and the new opportunities which will arise.

We will undoubtedly be back in Edinburgh from time to time and look forward to keeping up with all the news from St. Giles”.

Michael and Brigitte Harris



Our core values are those of welcome, hospitality, inclusivity and tolerance and these shape our work and witness in our corner of Edinburgh.

Overall, we aim to be a community that is faithful as followers of Jesus Christ that lives out as best we can his invitation that we love God with heart, mind, soul, and strength; and that we love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

A Prayer for Christmas

Holy Jesus,
by being born one of us,
and lying humbly in a manger,
you show how much God loves the world.
Let the light of your love always shine in our hearts,
until we reach our home in heaven,
and see you on your throne of glory.
Amen.

Excerpts from St. Giles' News, October 2025

printed with permission from Michael and Brigitte Harris

“Checking in with some old friends”

“Since retiring from St. Giles at the end of 2024 much of our time has been spent in organizing the move south to Kent, back to where we had lived before coming to Edinburgh in 1996. The whole process had been longer than expected, but as of this week in mid -September we are finally reunited with all our belongings, and have been unpacking many, many boxes.

Jumping forward to the present, Brigitte and I have just returned from a marvellous railway holiday in Switzerland which is how we used the hugely generous gift from St. Giles congregation.

with the staff at a number of local care homes within our parish. The local population aside from people connected to the universities is not notably ethnically diverse.

We are an open and welcoming fellowship, open to questions with a willingness to learn from the riches of the scriptures, the Christian tradition, our community and our collective and personal experience. We aim to be welcoming to the LGBTQ+ community and same sex marriage ceremonies can take place in our church building. Our minister is registered to be able to solemnise all marriages in our building and at other appropriate venues.

Our work

Our church life centres around our worship service on Sunday mornings. Worship follows a traditional pattern, and we currently base our services on the material published by the Spill the Beans resource written and published ecumenically within Scotland. Worship is led by the Transitional Minister, an employed pastoral assistant (a retired URC minister) and visiting ministers and lay preachers/readers from both the Kirk and the URC. MUC has a significant musical tradition with an employed part time Director of Music and a choir who assist in the leadership of worship on an ad-hoc basis. We also sponsor an organ scholar.

Over the last few of years much of our mission and ministry with our wider community has arisen from our connection to the Eric Liddell Community and story. The missionary, sportsman and 1924 Olympian Eric Liddell was a member of Morningside Congregational Church and his legacy continues to shape our work. The centenary of his gold medal winning performance at the 1924 Paris Olympic Games was marked by a variety of events, including the Radio 4 Sunday Worship programme, many of which were held in partnership with the Eric Liddell Community. The most enduring legacy of this anniversary is the development of the Peace Garden and our acceptance as a partner by the Community of the Cross of Nails reconciliation project based at Coventry Cathedral.

More regularly we maintain close links with some of our local care homes, particularly Chamberlain House, and hold fortnightly coffee mornings attended by residents and the U3A yoga class who meet in our building. We aim to provide a high quality of pastoral care with a team led by an elder and our pastoral assistant.

The Merchiston campus of Edinburgh Napier University is a few minutes walk from our church building. Our transitional minister is a honorary chaplain at ENU. The chaplaincy service at ENU is made up entirely of honorary chaplains of a variety of Christian traditions and from other faith communities. It sits within the Wellbeing Team at the university. We have connections with the music department at the university and host series of student recitals and lunchtime concerts during the academic year.

Together with friends from other churches in the city we host the large and popular annual book sale to raise funds for Christian Aid. We also hold smaller collections for other charities throughout the year particularly during Advent and Lent.

Other events take place on an ad-hoc basis such as the Spirit Justice exhibition by a retired URC minister and artist during the 2024 festival season. We have enjoyed as a fellowship in recent times hosting Christian theatre companies touring their shows both during the festival season and at other times too. Overall, we aim to take a flexible approach to mission and ministry and meeting the needs of our local community.

Our resources

We are a well-resourced church community in respect of financial and property resources. Our church buildings are mostly accessible to those with disabilities, extensive, and in good order. The biggest practical issue is the lack of parking available close to our church. This cannot be fixed.

The church buildings are well used by a variety of local groups and organisations which contributes significantly towards our running costs. Saying this we do aim to be flexible and have and will allow partners whose purposes are sympathetic to our own to use our buildings for

free on occasion. The Edinburgh Spiders who make camouflage nets for Ukraine from recycled materials are one such group. Other lets include after school clubs, Alcoholics Anonymous, a local music teacher and others.

Financially we are in a comfortable position in terms of financial reserves, though income is overly dependent on external rental income rather than voluntary giving. We also have a manse that is currently inhabited by refugees from Ukraine whom we sponsor. We also own a flat close to the church that is tenanted as part of a formal refugee settlement scheme organised by the City of Edinburgh Council.

We employ a part time administrator and have handyman and cleaning services to help us manage all this!

We have adopted the safeguarding policies agreed by the Church of Scotland.

For whom do we do this?

We take seriously our calling as Christians within the Reformed Tradition and while it sounds like a cliché, our witness, work and worship aims to give glory to God and to love our neighbour. We are followers of Jesus Christ and strive to make our community a better place. We want to change the world, starting with our corner between Bruntsfield and Morningside. We are a community that thinks globally and acts locally.

This works out in our work with elderly people as we are part of an aging demographic. There is much potential in our community for work with families and with students and others connected to Edinburgh's universities. We host IT training courses for older people in partnership with Southside Care.

The reducing size of our congregation is a primary concern for us, particularly since our membership consists largely of people aged 60 and older. There are no people aged under 18 who are regularly part of our congregation, however we maintain activity bags for any children who attend. The long-term sustainability of the congregation is questionable. While our current Kirk Session is capable and works well as a team, it is difficult to see who might pick up key roles in the future.