



**Link** *The*  
*Magazine of*  
**Morningside United Church**



**December 2023**

## A message from Rev Sarah...

As we turn our attention again to Advent and Christmas, we remember these verses from the Gospels.

*In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered.*  
[Luke 2.1-3]

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.* [John 1.1-5]

Evocative words read at carol services as we remember once again the story of Bethlehem and of how God became one of us.

As Christian people we believe that the coming of Jesus changed the world. Whether it happened as the Gospels tell us - noting that Luke and Matthew do not agree on the details - or in some other way and the early Church had its own reasons for recounting the story of Jesus' birth as we have it, such is a central tenet of our faith.

The verses from Luke remind us that Jesus was born in earthly time and place. We might look up the dates when Augustus was Roman Emperor and for evidence of an imperial census. The verses from John conversely point to the metaphysical nature of Jesus' being. 'There was not a time when he was not' is a way of articulating this understanding. Holding these two understandings together reminds us that there is much connected to our faith that we might as this but not quite that. We celebrate that we cannot know all the details and that this is a good thing as there is always more to learn about God and how we are called to be Christ's disciples however long or short we have each been on our own respective journeys of faith and life. We witness to how the ongoing reign of Christ is about the now, the almost, and the not yet.

There is much talk at this time of year about the 'real' meaning of Christmas. Many people tire quickly of the commercialisation of the season. Others find the time of year difficult perhaps because of bereavement or other loss, or because Christmas is not as they would choose or hope for some other reason. We recognise the now, with all its complexities. We look toward the almost and the not yet in hopeful expectation of the possibility of a better future both in this world and whatever might constitute the next.

Wishing everyone connected with Morningside United Church a hope-filled and peaceful Advent, Christmas and 2024.

With love and prayers  
Sarah

The Revd Sarah Moore  
Transitional Minister

**Musings from Mary Taylor**, Pastoral Assistant, MUC

### **Stalingrad Madonna**

One of the recent Cross of Nails pilgrimage visitors was Jan Tolkmitt, the grandson of Kurt Reuber, who created the famous Stalingrad Madonna drawing. It was such a treat to meet the descendant of the creator of an artwork that has come to be so symbolic both in Coventry and across CCN partners.

Richard Parker, Coventry Cathedral Guide and translator, writes

Jan's grandfather, a priest, doctor and artist, was called up into the German army and ended up in Stalingrad at Christmas 1942. With no provisions, certainly nothing that could evoke Christmas, Reuber felt it his duty to help not only his army colleagues but the local population as well, whose situation was just as bad. He used his drawing skills to build the confidence of the people so that he could treat them.

The result was the Stalingrad Madonna: a beautiful image of a mother sheltering her newborn child in her cloak against the cold. He called it Christmas 1942 in the cauldron, Fortress Stalingrad.



It also bears three words central to St John's Gospel - Light, Life and Love.

He had only the back of a Russian map to draw on: on one side, red battle lines for the Russian army in Ukraine, on the other, a sublime image of calm, love and security. His colleagues were apparently speechless at the sight of such a powerful image.

Reuber was taken as a POW further into Russia. He died of typhus in captivity in 1944. His drawing, however, made it on the last flight out of Stalingrad and back to Germany, and was returned to his parents. It remained in the family for decades where Kurt's children and later Jan, Kurt's grandson, grew up with it. The original hung in his aunt's house, and a replica in his parent's. It had a profound impression on him and the whole family: this image of love and security in the midst of sacrifice, and the magic words Light-Life-Love. But it was also a source of pain and grief for Jan's mother, Ute, who like many children had lost her father in the war: the picture was like a missing link which filled the gap for her family. All this changed in 1982 when a journalist got wind of the drawing and its story, visited the family and persuaded them that the drawing could be of wider public interest as an image of reconciliation. In 1983 it was placed on permanent loan in the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, in the centre of what was then West Berlin.



This church became important in reconciliation between Germany and Britain: in 1988 it joined the Community of the Cross of Nails, and in 1990 a facsimile of the Stalingrad Madonna was presented to Coventry as a symbol of reconciliation by the German President by the German President Richard von Weizsacker, together with the Peace Bell which is rung in Coventry Cathedral at the beginning of each Sunday morning service. The drawing now stands in the Millennium Chapel on the north end of the Cathedral. And to complete the reconciliation circle, another facsimile was presented in 1995 to Volograd (which had become Coventry's first twin city in 1944).

The international Community of the Cross of Nails continues to grow and flourish with around 250 members. It is committed to its three aims:

Healing the Wounds of History

Learning to live with Difference and Celebrate Diversity

Building a Culture of Justice and Peace

May I take this opportunity to send best wishes to all readers of this December Link for an Advent and Christmas full of joy and peace.

Mary Taylor  
(Pastoral Assistant)

## Two runners meet in Rochdale

While visiting Morningside United Church a month or so ago, Mary Taylor was telling me about plans for marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Eric Liddell's famous 400 metre win at the 1924 Paris Olympics. It reminded me of the story my dad, a Methodist minister, used to tell – probably as part of what we used to call a 'children's address'.

As a young boy growing up in Rochdale, dad fancied himself as a bit of a runner. One day, he ran home from school. I don't know what distance that was, or whether he actually timed himself, but he was proud of the speed at which he'd run. He burst through the door and sprinted into the front room, still puffing, and keen to proclaim his achievement. It was a few moments before he realised that he had an audience who wasn't just his mother. There was a visitor also sitting in the room.

The man seated in the corner (with a pipe – or is that just my mis-memory?) was in fact Eric Liddell, who was famous even to this young boy as winner of an Olympic medal. A rather better runner than dad.

Eric was in Rochdale, speaking about his mission work in China, maybe raising funds. Perhaps that's all dad knew at that time – or perhaps there was some artistic licence in his storytelling, because there is a further connection with Eric Liddell that suggests to me dad may not in fact have been the guileless youngster of his story when he met the famous athlete in his front room. We have a picture in our home that came from dad. It's a water colour, painted with a limited colour palette. Branches of bamboo leaning into

frame, and little birds – rather like sparrows – some on the ground, a small clutch of them chasing in the air. On the back of the frame, dad pasted an A5 sheet on which he'd typed up this information:

'This water-colour was painted by a young Chinese artist from North China who was wounded during the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in the 1930s, and was taken to the mission hospital at Tientsin. His name and seal, together with the legend – "Together they were very happy" – are on the painting.

'It was brought to England in 1939 by Eric H. Liddell (athlete and holder of a gold medal for the 400 metres at the 1924 Paris Olympic Games), who died in a Japanese internment camp at Weiksien in 1945.

'The picture was acquired from Eric Liddell by my uncle, Noel. A. Nicholls M.Sc., who died on March 18<sup>th</sup> 1970, aged 74 years.'



I realise that if it was in 1939 that Eric visited Rochdale, then dad would not in fact have been an exuberant primary school child but a self-aware 16-year-old. Or maybe the missionary had made a return visit – perhaps to Carrs Lane Congregational Church in Birmingham, where 'Uncle Noel' was a member. Whatever the precise details, through this picture the connection remains – and it's still a good story.

Laurence Wareing

## Timetable for Ministers during December

3 December	Rev Mary Taylor
10 December	Rev Nick Brindley
17 December	Layperson Peter Ranscombe
24 December	Rev Mary Taylor
25 December	Rev Sarah Moore
31 December	Rev Sarah Moore

## Eric Liddell 100

There is still time to share recipes for the Eric Liddell 100 recipe book. Whether it be a family favourite, or one you've recently found that was a big hit, please speak to Yvonne Burnett or Mary Taylor if you would like to contribute a recipe.

## Reading and Flower Rota for December

### Readers:

3 December	Hamish McKenzie
10 December	Keith Wilson
17 December	David Donald
24 December	Maggie McKenzie
31 December	Lesley Donald

### Flower Rota:

Over the festive period we will have our Christmas Tree

If you would like to help with the Flower Rota in January, or even volunteer to read in one of our services, please get in contact, everyone is most welcome.

*Maggie McKenzie*  
261 4908



## Christmas Tree

We expect this year's Christmas tree to be delivered at the end of November and would be delighted if anyone would like to come along to help to decorate it probably. We're currently planning the morning Friday 1 December, but will keep you updated closer to the time.

## Advent collection

Our Advent collection this year is for Fresh Start - an Edinburgh-based charity helping people who have been homeless get established in their new homes. What We Do - Fresh Start ([freshstartweb.org.uk](http://freshstartweb.org.uk))

The tag line is 'Cookers for Christmas' – but it's money that is wanted. Cash in the bucket in the church, cheque in the bucket or by post or by electronic payment to the church account are all welcome. If you have a Gift Aid declaration to MUC, gift aid will be claimed and added on – please use cheque or electronic means, or for cash an envelope with your name on it.

Morningside United Church

Sort Code: 80-02-85

Account No: 00551871

If you use bank payment, please put a reference Lent. (your name will appear anyway). Any cheques should be payable to MUC – with the account name only on the front of the cheque. If posting and you want to make it clear the cheque is for this rather than a general donation for MUC funds please put a note separately or on the back of the cheque.

## Church Life at MUC – An Update

**Coffee Mornings** – Dates to go in your diary for this month are Thursday 7 December and Thursday 21 December from 10.30am to 12 noon in the Small Hall. All are welcome to join us to enjoy some chat, some tea or coffee and maybe even some wonderful home baking.

**Brass Tracks** – Advanced notice that Brass Tracks band will be returning this year for a morning service during Advent on Sunday 10 December. We welcomed them last year and they were a great success. More information about the event will be following shortly.



**Bruntsfield Christmas Lights** - On Wednesday 6 December the Bruntsfield Christmas lights are being switched on at 5.30pm at the Eric Liddell Centre. Voice House Community Choir, will be singing outside on the steps (Chamberlain Road) from 5:10pm.

Scots Music Group will also be singing inside the centre building where you can enjoy the following:

Arts & Craft Stalls

Mulled Wine & Mince Pies

Community Produce Stall

Raffle

Kids Activities

Inside Morningside United Church there will be our own Choir, along with music and also an art exhibition by Edinburgh based artist Frances Martin - many of you will remember her artwork here last year.

## Frances Martin Art Exhibition



Wednesday 6 Dec 5-8 pm  
Thursday 7 Dec 4-7pm  
Friday 8 Dec 2-5 pm

Morningside United Church  
15 Chamberlain Road  
Edinburgh EH10 4DH

[www.francesmartinart.com](http://www.francesmartinart.com)  
#francesmartinart @francesmartinart  
Email: frances.martin@btinternet.com

### Artist Biography

Frances Martin Art provides unique artwork inspired by the beauty of nature around us. What makes her artwork special is the attention to detail that she puts into every piece. As an independent artist, based in Edinburgh, she began painting in retirement and since then it has become her passion. She strives to create pieces that are both captivating and meaningful. Her artwork makes a great addition to any home or office space and is sure to bring out the beauty of the space.

## **An Advent Carol Service**

On Thursday 30 November, Edinburgh Napier Students will be holding a concert here at MUC, with carols sung by the Napier Student Chamber choir and winter readings. It will start at 7pm and everyone is welcome.

## **Christmas at Morningside United Church**

Thurs 30 Nov	7pm	Napier University Carol Concert
Wed 6 Dec	5:30pm	Bruntsfield Christmas Night – music and art exhibition
Sun 10 Dec	11am	Christmas Music Service with Brass Tracks
Sat 23 Dec	7:30pm	Octavoce Christmas Concert
Sun 24 Dec	11am	Christmas Eve Service
	6:30pm	Christmas Eve Service
Mon 25 Dec	10:30am	Christmas Day Service

## **December Prayer**

No matter who you are, say a prayer this season.

No matter what your faith, say a prayer this season.

No matter how you celebrate, say a prayer this season.

There are so many ways to celebrate faiths.

There are so many faiths to celebrate life.

No matter who,

No matter what,

No matter how....

You pray.

Let's say a prayer this season,

Together, for peace.

Mattie J T Stepanck

The Link Magazine is available on our website to view, and in Church. If you would prefer to have it emailed to you, please email [churchoffice.muc@gmail.com](mailto:churchoffice.muc@gmail.com).

To get in contact, please email: [churchoffice.muc@gmail.com](mailto:churchoffice.muc@gmail.com)

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