



In this Newsletter:

A new look · God on our streets look · Mission Planning

Is there anyone you know who might be interested in (a part of) this fortnightly newsletter? You could maybe copy and send (just the section) to them. You could maybe copy and send (just the section) to them. Anyone interested in being added to the mailing list can email us.

To the church...

'The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God' John 1:9-12

<i>Light of the world</i>	<i>King of all days</i>
<i>You stepped down into darkness</i>	<i>So highly exalted</i>
<i>Opened my eyes, Let me see</i>	<i>Glorious in heaven above</i>
<i>Beauty that made this heart adore you</i>	<i>Humbly you came to the earth</i>
<i>Hope of a life spent with you</i>	<i>you created</i>
	<i>All for love's sake became poor</i>

Tim Hughes' response to this realisation is:

*Here I am to worship
Here I am to bow down
Here I am to say that you're my God
You're altogether lovely
Altogether worthy
Altogether wonderful to me.* Copyright © 2001 Thankyou Music (PRS)

What is ours?

A new look, a new pace, a new team

Here to Serve might have a new look, but will still have familiar content; easy to scroll through, with links for you to explore further and a spread of missional content to support you and the church.

It will come out at a new pace, on the first Wednesday of the month, with a special weblinks edition for January.

The newsletter is run by a new team that will bring a wealth of experience and interest with a heart to see Here to Serve connecting churches and Christians to serve each other and our world in Christian community.

We are looking forward to this new season and if you have any comments or ideas, we would love to hear from you.

Deborah, Muriel, Paul and Russell

Two stories of God on our streets

from our local Street Pastors.

One's self denial stops another's self-harm

A man, sitting in his home overlooking the street, with a history of self-harming was deciding whether to take harming himself to the next level. It was a dark winter evening, it was cold and it was pouring with rain outside. Everyone was hiding in their homes. But as four people in Blue Street Pastors coats passed by his window he heard a near audible Voice say; 'Stop! You are my beloved son.' Confused but impacted, he got in touch with the Street Pastors later in the week and shared how much that moment had affected his life.

The report from the Street Pastors patrol that night read: 'encounters: none.' 'Meaningful conversations: none.' They further commented that they were cold and soaked to the bone and did not reach anyone. But the hidden result is that God changed a life that evening, because of their faithfulness.

The 2 a.m. text message

It was 2 a.m., a female Street Pastor's phone screen flickered to life. A text had arrived and a big smile emerged on her face. You see, between 2 and 3 in the morning is often the hardest time. She smiled because she knew she was not alone; her prayer partner is 80 years old and goes to bed as normal but sets her alarm close to 2am, makes a cup of tea, prays for an hour and gets back to bed. At the start of that hour she just sends a simple message to her friend on the street letting her know she is not at all alone but being prayed for when time is hardest.

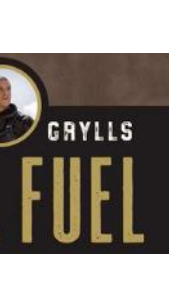
Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. Luke 9:23-24

Street Pastors simply wants to change lives by being present with people. Anyone with prayer for our area can join them. This might be late at night, it might be in the rain. But there are many more ways to help. They are looking for Prayer Pastors and prayer partners, Street Pastors on day patrols and even cyclists, not just walkers. You can link arms with Street Pastors easily from your home, via WhatsApp, help with fundraising or sharing their stories in your church.

If you want to listen, care and help; they have many ways to serve. People are encouraged to try it out for just two years, link arms with other Christians and learn about God on the street.

The response from the Council, the NHS, the police and the general public has been overwhelming, as they recognise the church, partnering with them, in action, on the street.

If you are interested, get in touch with Mark Hadfield, email inverness@streetpastors.org.uk or phone 07761 293 108. If you're more interested in praying for Street Pastors then get in touch with Marilyn Archer, email prayer.inverness@streetpastors.org.uk.



I can let my light shine

Christmas reminds us that Christ's all-changing Light walks towards and alongside those in hurt, pain and darkness. Alongside those within and beyond the church. Alongside us. And He invites me on the journey of inviting others to see the fullness of His Light through my brokenness, my weaknesses and imperfections. Too often I hide that light, rather than let my little light shine. This season, I should aim for more real conversations over a cup of tea or some mulled wine. Because, if that Light sparked a deep life change in me, it can easily spark a life change in others.

Green Matters

'The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it' Ps 24:1

Following COP26, we can make an effort to live more sustainable and start at home. Small changes over Christmas can make a big difference, especially when the potential for needless waste is high.

For example, if every UK household swapped a string of incandescent lights for its LED equivalent, we could save more than £11 million and 29,000 tonnes of CO2, just over 12 days of Christmas.

Or what about wrapping gifts with recycled paper or fabric?

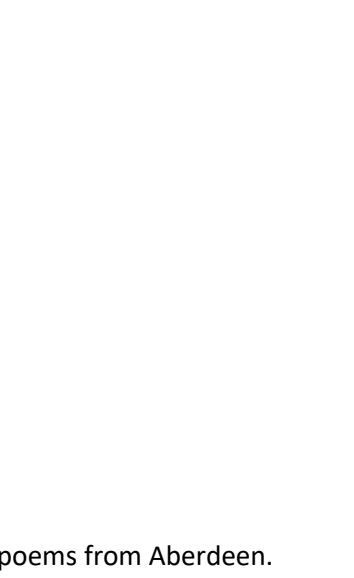
Did you know that wrapping paper with glitter and Christmas cards with glitter are not recyclable?

Find 18 eco Christmas ideas here from countryliving.com.

Bear Grylls Soul Fuel

'There has never been a human quite like Jesus. He towers above us all in goodness and courage, in impact and influence. The greatest artists, leaders, and thinkers, all put together, are dwarfed by Him. Yet Jesus did not come to impress us. He said He had come to save us, in total humility, as God come down among us. If He is who He says He is, and the gospel is real, then this is very good news. He simply wants us to learn to reach out and trust Him to help and calm us, to forgive and restore us. If we are to live fully and empowered, then this has to be the first step.'

These powerful words come from Adventurer and TV presenter Bear Grylls who wrote a unique 365-day devotional with daily readings. Bear reveals the inspiration that helps him to stand strong and face each day with purpose and power. It might just be a great Christmas present for someone.



One review reads:

'Soul Fuel is a fantastic book for daily, weekly or "now and then" inspiration and reflections on life and meaning. Bear Grylls has written it from the heart, personally, humbly, and without any filters. It's a book with 11 parts (Hope, Purpose, Determination, Relationships, Vision, Wisdom, Faithfulness, Courage, Forgiveness, Freedom, and Risk), which can be read independently and mixed. Every devotional is quick and easy to read with it's <1 page bite size (about 0.5-2 minutes read/devotion). A perfect book to read morning, evening or on the run.'

2022 dates for the diary

Pray for the area together

As part of the week of Prayer for Denominational Unity (January 18-25) there will be an event where believers from all denominations near Inverness can gather together to worship God and pray for the area. This will be at Culduethel Christian Centre on January 16th 2022 at 6pm.

Streetpastors Communion service

January 23 at 6pm at Culduethel Christian Centre. Anyone would be very welcome to support them.

Rewilding the church

on Zoom, Tue Jan 18, 7.30pm
An online conversation with Paul Haringman will talk to Steve Aisthorpe, Mission Development Worker for the North in the Church of Scotland about his book 'Rewilding the Church'.

Alpha course

Alpha and Old High St Stephens are planning to host an Alpha course starting on Monday February 7th, 2022. Pray that it reaches out to people in the congregations and community. Anyone interested, please 'Save the Date'. It is a 10/11 week course and please contact the Crown church office for details.

A shop keeper's journey

'On Thursday I had prayed the Acorn prayer: *Lord, who do you want me to connect with beyond the church today?* I decided to walk into a shop and had a 45 minute conversation with someone who was going through deep heartache and self induced trouble. And yet, he was smiling. On that dark road he noticed life is no longer about the Harley Davidson and the five bedrooms, no longer about coming out on top. It had become about learning to appreciate the small, the real things. Here was someone on a journey with God. And they started to recognize it. We are now in touch and he has already asked me to help move a sofa. I cannot wait to get a chance to explore further what God might be up to in his life.'

Want to try and enliven your own faith through Acorn? Contact Paul. Groups online on Mondays at 7.30 pm and on site at Inverness Tesco retail park café, A96, Thursdays at 10am.

The Christmas Gospel

Each year at Christmas a story was told of a baby with nothing, of kings bringing gold, of shepherds and angels and stars in the sky and people were puzzled and longed to know why.

They learned of the God who before time began had made the whole world and a friend he called 'man'

Now man thought he'd manage quite well on his own but soon without God he felt very alone.

And God, who is love, longed for man to be free of all that he'd chosen to do and to be so a baby was born one long ago night to give man a way to return to the light.

As man was quite helpless to change his own story God's son became human and shed all his glory. And shepherds who heard and saw angels above knew the wonder, the blessing, the power of God's love.

He grew from a boy into a man Talked with his friends as they worked out God's plan He taught them and showed them the things they should know and as they told others the kingdom could grow.

The kingdom of God where love is the key Love God and love others and all men are free But some men were angry and said he should die so they made a cruel cross and lifted him high.

And there on that cross in his suffering and pain God's son bridged the gap to restore once again the way that things were when the world first began with love, trust and friendship between God and man.

But death couldn't hold him so that's not the end He rose on the third day and spoke to his friends He returned to his Father, to glory above but gave man his Spirit – the gift of his love.

So the story goes on and we each have a part in sharing and telling the love of God's heart

a poem by *Anne Smith*, elder and self-publisher of faith poems from Aberdeen. Anyone interested in receiving any of her writings can get in touch with her smithanne@tiscali.co.uk.

Mission Planning

By Rev Mike Robertson, Mission Planning Committee convener

The General Assembly has taken decisive action to re-shape the Church of Scotland to be fit for mission, now and into the future. It's a challenge of creativity. We'll have less human and financial resources than in the past, and many of the familiar ways of working, already aren't, and so we need to envision something new. Not every-thing will change, but there will be change for every-one. Thankfully, we are children of the Creator, whose Mission we are invited to partner in. He knows the right shape of things to come, and so our primary task is to pray, discern, and have the courage to bring it to life. There are more opportunities than challenges though, which makes this an exciting time to be church. We hope some of those opportunities will be ecumenical ones and involve closer partnership with the wider local church too.

The Mission Planning Committee is taking the lead on this work, but it remains a task that involves the whole of Presbytery, including everyone in every congregation. A lot of 'gathering' work is underway with information on finance, property, ministry and requirements, to build a factual picture of the whole Presbytery, which resulted in the requirements and tools of the Mission Planning Act, will form the basis of a draft plan which we hope to develop in the early part of 2022. As part of this, we have already met with every Minister and Interim Moderator in the Presbytery, which resulted in many encouraging conversations. We're also inviting ideas and vision from individuals or Kirk Sessions. Here are some ways you can be part of the Mission Planning process;

PRAY – There could never be too much prayer for the journey we are now on. So whether it be individually, in groups, or as congregations, would you please pray for:

- ◆ Fresh vision, wisdom and energy for the members of the Mission Planning Committee
- ◆ A tangible sense of Holy Spirit leading and guiding towards God's Mission Plan for our Presbytery
- ◆ The courage and strength for each one of us to be able to let go of what needs to be laid down, and take hold of what needs to be taken up for us to be an effective and fruitful part of the body of Christ in this place. Whether that be buildings, ways of thinking, patterns of church or whatever.
- ◆ God's Kingdom to come in power, through the challenges of transition and into a new era of being church where He has placed us.

COMMUNICATE – Presbytery has instructed all Kirk Sessions to keep a focus on Mission Planning, and encouraged sharing information about the process and inviting ideas. We'd encourage all church leaders and members to keep the conversation – everything! As we do, we'll encourage each other, ideas will no doubt emerge, and confidence will grow that God is in this. By the time we come to presenting a final plan to Presbytery for approval, we hope there will already be a strong sense of shared ownership and enthusiasm about the way ahead.

If you'd like to get in touch with us at any time, please contact: Rev Mike Robertson (Convener) – mike@robertson@churchofscotland.org.uk or David Thompson (Clerk) – thompson277@btinternet.com

Verse of the week memory verse 42 2 Corinthians 4:5

Being Christ's disciple; serve others

For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.'

You can learn to memorize these verses by repeating them frequently, or even hand-writing them on a piece of paper. You can also do this together with a Christian friend, and test each other. Building a regular rhythm at a set time and place that suits you might be key. More info: www.navigators.org/resource/topical-memory-system/.

Gospel goodness

We would love to post more news about your church & parish in this newsletter, please let us know what is happening.

QUIET MOMENTS IN THE OLD HIGH IN ADVENT

The Old High will be open between 12 noon and 1 pm each Thursday running up to Christmas, starting on Thursday 2 December. There will be a simple act of worship lasting about 15 minutes, followed by a chance for quiet, personal reflection. Contact Andrew Stevenson 242767 or stevenson.ata@btinternet.com

Out of the Box musical production for the whole family: Steve the Shepherd tour.

Sun Dec 6, *Milton of Leys primary school*, Inverness, 3.30pm
Mon Dec 7, *Inshes church*, Inverness, 6.30pm
Tue Dec 7, *Urquhart & Glenmoriston church*, Drumadrochit, 7pm
Wed Dec 8, *St Ninians church*, Nairn, 6.30pm

Great fun, lots of laughs and real things to ponder around the Christmas story.

More on <https://outofthebox.me.uk/>.

Also; Countdown to Christmas advent calendar videos [here on youtube](http://hereonyoutube.com)

NewStart Highland has supplied us with £15 Mobile E-voucher top ups on EE, Vodafone and O2. If you know of anyone struggling in your areas or a programme that might need support, do get in touch via Paul (below) you would like access to any of these.

Benefits/council services. The single free helpline number – 0300 303 1362 – will connect callers to Council specialist teams (Mon to Fri from 8am to 6pm).

Next edition: January links special

The next edition of Here to Serve will come out in early January. Like last year it will be a 'one stop shop' special links edition pointing to dozens of helpful places on the internet. It will therefore not come out in a Word-paper version. Want to try and enliven your own faith through Acorn? Contact Paul.

Last Here to Serve: IPCS thank you edition

We understand the last version of Here to Serve, nr 47, might not have reached everyone. It was the last IPCS edition, containing their thank yous and an article on Street Pastors. If you did not see this edition but would still like to receive it, please do contact paulharingman.mission@gmail.com.

We thank many for their advice and input into this newsletter.

The Here to Serve editorial team consists of Mission Development Worker Paul Haringman with support from Deborah Macrae (Old High St Stephens), Muriel Babb (the Barn) and Russell Lees (Daviot and Dunlichity).