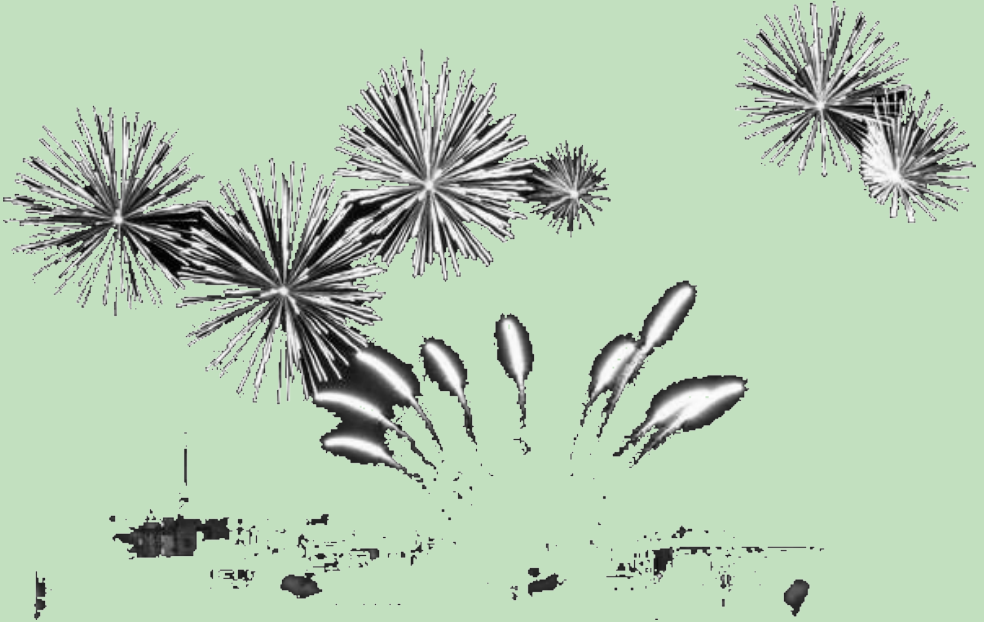


The magazine of Portobello Baptist Church

MESSENGER

• January 2012



Scottish Registered Charity: SC015322



Welcome
2012

NEWS • TEACHING • ENCOURAGEMENT • LETTERS

A PASTOR'S THOUGHT

"Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert. The wild beasts will honour me, the jackals and the ostriches, for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people."

Isa 43:19-20

We are well into the new year now, but since this is the first magazine of the year, it is worth reflecting on what people hope for. The traditions of different countries give us a hint:


- *In Japan the new year is the most important holiday, and is a symbol of renewal. In December, various Bonenkai or "forget-the-year parties" are held to bid farewell to the problems and concerns of the past year and prepare for a new beginning. Misunderstandings and grudges are forgiven and houses are scrubbed. At midnight on Dec. 31, Buddhist temples strike their gongs 108 times, in a effort to expel 108 types of human weakness. New Year's day itself is a day of joy and no work is to be done.*
- *The Spanish ritual on New Year's eve is to eat twelve grapes at midnight. The tradition is meant to secure twelve happy months in the coming year.*
- *The Dutch burn bonfires of Christmas trees on the street and launch fireworks. The fires are meant to purge the old and welcome the new.*
- *In Italy they throw food out the window and other old things as part of the "out with the old in with the new" theme. It is sometimes difficult to walk the streets for all the junk lying around your feet!*
- *In our own country, one of the traditions is "first-footing." Shortly after midnight on New Year's eve, neighbours pay visits to each other and impart New Year's wishes. Traditionally, first foots used to bring along a gift of coal for the fire, or shortbread. It is considered especially lucky if a tall, dark, and handsome man is the first to enter your house after the new year is rung in.*

The aspirations of all these traditions is: Hope that the future will be good, a desire that the pain of the past would not follow us into the future, the value of friendship and loving relationships to take us into the future.

It goes without saying that none of these customs have any real effect. The great hope of a new future can only be found in God. However there is one difference: God promises a fresh start every day of our lives. He leads us ever onwards and He does a "new thing" for us each morning we wake, each minute of every day. His promise for us this year is that He will transform our wilderness into overflowing blessing.

Let us trust Him to do what He says this year. In our church, in our individual lives, and in our community and in our world.

Your Pastor,



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

		Tues	10.30 a.m.	Weekly Hour of Prayer (all are welcome to stay for all or part of this time)
		Wed	7.30 p.m.	Midweek Prayer & Bible Study
February	7th	Tues	8.00 p.m.	Management Meeting
	29th	Wed	7.30 p.m.	Annual General Meeting

CHURCH FLOWER CALENDAR

The Church Flower calendar for 2012 is available on the Notice Board at the Church entrance foyer and there are still a number of vacant dates, if any of these dates have a special family significance then please add your name into the relevant space.

(Ewan Sinclair)



B.M.S. LINK MISSIONARY UPDATE (rec'd 16 Dec 2011)

BIG NEWS FROM ANGOLA

Hi folks,

It's becoming like Christmas in Luanda. Some decorations are going up in the streets and we are singing some carols at church too. We had a lovely time at the Embassy Carol Service with Nine Lessons and Carols. The choir had been practising since October and we joined in with some of the singing towards the end. The Bible readings told the whole story of God's plan in sending Jesus and it was a blessed time. Drinks and mince pies were served after and it was a big surprise to have a chat with Chris Eubank, who is training Angolan boxers. Despite

the traditions, it still feels strange to have Christmas in temperatures of thirty degrees plus. I do hope all of you are surviving the gales, floods and snow I hear have been affecting Britain.

PEPE closed for the summer holidays in mid-November and we had an end of year party with the teachers in Luanda. Great fun was had by all as we reviewed our PEPEs; thanked God for all that has happened throughout the year, sang songs, played games and, of course, ate lots of food. Some children and parents from PEPE joined us and loved the balloons and party hats. PEPE classes may have closed but work continues. We are running a training course for new teachers in Luanda, two weeks in December, two weeks in January. We have nine candidates at the moment. Please pray for Manuel as he will be doing most of the training and for Ernesto as he teaches some classes and helps in running the course. Continue to remember Maria Teresa and her children in your prayers, as they face the Christmas Season without their Dad. I hope to visit them when I am down in Lobito in December. Remember Januario also as he has been in Luanda for another physiotherapy session on his back.

The seminary students are off on their practical assignments and getting a taste of what it is like to Pastor a church. I have heard from Lando in Cabinda and Afonso in Benguela. Both have been well received by the churches and have been working hard. I hope to see my students before Christmas. I will continue teaching the same students next year, finishing the course on Islam in the first months of the New Year.

The Bible study group was asked to take the service to celebrate Bible Sunday on 4th December. We showed a short film, Sunday school performed a poem and we had prayer and a sermon on the blessing and importance of Bible study. This was to launch the weekly Bible study the church asked for. We had our first study last Friday and about thirty people attended. We all learned something and several people participated in answering and asking questions. It will be good to get to know people better in this smaller group setting. Please continue to pray for this group.

And now for more big news in this update. I am getting married! I've known Sitongua for several years and over time our friendship has developed. He headed up Child Evangelism Fellowship in Angola and our common work with children is one of the things that brought us together. Believing that we are fulfilling God's plan for our lives, we are going to get married in April. At present Sitongua is studying in Zambia, where I will join him after our marriage. Once studies are finished we will continue to serve God and will be praying and looking into possibilities with BMS and others. This means that for now I shall be leaving BMS, but I plan to come and visit my link groups probably in November/December, with my husband! We would value your prayers in all the work, wedding and moving



arrangements. Pray too for my colleague Fiona as we work through these changes. I am so grateful for all of you who have been so faithful in praying for me and the work over these last eight years, and hope you will continue to keep me and PEPE in your prayers.

(Pictured left: Lynne and Sitongua)

Love

Lynne

MITTENS AND MATCHING HATS

Helen Bunce hadn't been to church all year. Her joints were stiff with arthritis and her bones so brittle they could snap, but what was harder to bear was the thought of being separated from her ailing husband, Karl, for even an hour or two. Yet on the third Sunday of Advent last year, she went. It was time to dedicate the mitten tree at Emmanuel Congregational Church in Watertown, and time to reveal a decades – old secret. Since 1949, one woman had knitted dozens of pairs of mittens and matching hats that hung on the pine tree at the front of the church each Christmas, so many of them the tree's branches were laden as if with a heavy snow. But the woman insisted on remaining anonymous. Except to her family and a circle of friends, she was known only as “the mitten lady.” And so when the mitten lady's identity was revealed that morning,

Helen Bunce, 86 years old, sat quietly in her wheelchair, her daughter holding her hand. The members of the congregation began to applaud, then rose to their feet and gave her an ovation that lasted a full five minutes, able at last to thank the mitten lady in person for her many good works. It was the last time she went to church. Helen Bunce died on Saturday. Karl cried when his family told him she was gone. He wouldn't eat or drink, and he had nothing to say. The family kept a vigil, and on Monday, 86 and sick for many years, he died. "That's why he died when he did," said their daughter, Helen McDonald. "He had to be with her."



They had been together since 1928. It was summertime, and a girlfriend invited Helen Finney to come to a youth group meeting at Emmanuel. The girls were standing on the steps of the church when a young man came walking down Hamilton Street, wearing a white turtleneck, whistling "My Blue

Heaven." "I'm going to marry that man," Helen told her friend. Three months later she did. They were married in the church where their three children would be married, where 11 grandchildren would be baptized, where in 1978 they repeated their wedding vows to celebrate their wedding anniversary. It was the same church where Helen would hear a Sunday morning children's talk that gave her a mission in life.

The custom of the mitten tree began in 1949. Church members would collect mittens and hats, decorate a tree with them, then give them to poor children. Helen's best friend knew she knitted, and so she asked her if she would contribute. The first year, Helen made 25 sets of mittens and hats. The Reverend Graham Hodges, who came to Emmanuel in 1956, talked to the children about the mitten tree one morning. He told them how children in Europe lined up to receive mittens from relief workers in the years following World War II. As the workers came to the end of a line one day, a little boy held out his cold hands to them. But by then they had run out of mittens. "The moral was, the need is unending," said Hodges. "We needed another pair for that little boy."

Helen Bunce took the talk to heart. She could not forget about that little boy and his cold hands, and so each year she tried to knit more. In each of the past 20 years she easily exceeded 100 sets of mittens and hats. Every one of them bore a handwritten tag attached with a gold safety pin: "God Loves You and So Do I." When she had reached her goal for the year, she knitted two more sets, one for a little girl and one for a little boy, the children at the end of the line. Those she hung on the mitten tree herself, or gave to one of the grandchildren to hang, a reminder of why she knitted, and whom she knitted for. The knitting never left her side. She knitted as she dozed off. She knitted as she rode in the car. Her daughter Helen laughs when she remembers her mother sitting in the back seat of the car, so scared by a snowstorm she prayed out loud: "Lord, you have to get us home safe. I have to get these mittens done."

When Karl became ill with Parkinson's disease and went to a nursing home in Alexandria Bay, his wife sat with him every day, from 8:00 in the morning until 8:00 at night. She would take a Thermos of coffee, a sandwich and her knitting. Her own health began to fail and they moved together to the Samaritan Keep Home in Watertown. When the pain in her back became too much for her, she taught herself to knit lying down. Helen followed one rule in her knitting: never finish one project without starting the next. As soon as one Christmas passed, she began working toward the next year. She completed perhaps a dozen sets this month and last.

Every time she finished a hat or a mitten, she cast the stitches for her next project on her needles, so her knitting would always be ready to pick up. "She felt as long as she was knitting those mittens, the Lord wouldn't take her," her daughter said.

Helen had told her family she wanted to be buried with her knitting needles. Her daughter remembered that on Saturday. She went back to her mother's room, planning to retrieve the needles that would be holding a final, unfinished project. She found a pink and white hat that had been completed, and then she saw the needles. Her mother had bound them neatly with a rubber band and stuck them in the skein of yarn, empty. Helen McDonald is certain of the reason: her mother had known her work was done.

(Andy Scarcliffe)

GREAT QUOTES with Kirk



“Nothing speaks so loudly as the silent eloquence of a holy and consistent life. It is a practical and perpetual sermon!”

~ William Schenk.

“Do you know someone who, by their very life, speaks volumes without saying a word? I do. Joni Eareckson Tada, living 40 years in a wheelchair, exuding selfless grace and generous compassion for others in need, is one of my heroes of the faith. She is a very dynamic and inspiring speaker, but her life shouts the loudest. Has anyone said that about you? I want to live like the Heavens, who without having to say a word, send their message of the glory of God to the ends of the Earth. “



~ Kirk Cameron

SCOTTISH BAPTIST PRAYER LINK

January	01th	Crown Terrace & Culduthel
	08th	Culloden & Cupar
	15th	Dalbeattie & Dalkeith
	22nd	Dedridge & Dennistoun
	29th	Denny & Dingwall