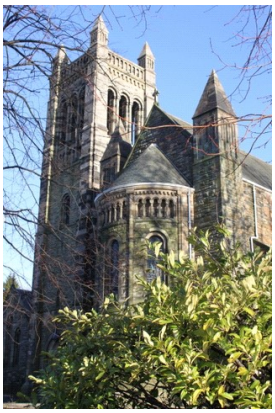
St Margaret's

Scottish Episcopal Church

Magazine



50p

December 2017 - January 2018

Christmas Edition

The light shines in the darkness , but the darkness has not overcome it.
(John 1.5)

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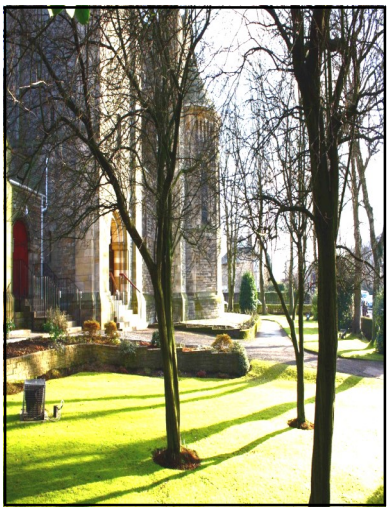

A warm welcome to St Margaret's

Should you wish to speak to the Rector, he is regularly available at the Church on Wednesdays between 6 and 7pm (if the church does not appear to be open, please ring the bell at the left side of the small door to the left of the main West door). Otherwise he can be contacted on 0141 632 3292.

St Margaret's on the internet: www.episcopalnewlands.org.uk
email: stmargaretsnewlands@btinternet.com
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Magazine submissions to stmargaretsnewlands@btinternet.com,
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or in the drawer marked "Magazine Editor" at the back of the church

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Christmas at St Margaret's

Sunday 17 December

10.30am Sung Eucharist, with Church family lunch after morning service

Sunday 24 December - Christmas Eve

9am Said Eucharist

10.30am Sung Eucharist with Nativity Special, featuring Sunday School and other stars!

8pm Christmas Family Carol Service

11pm Midnight Eucharist

Monday 25 December - Christmas Day

9am Christmas Day Said Eucharist

10.30am Christmas Day Family Service

Collections at the Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services will be taken in aid of the International Red Cross for relief to the Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar for Bangladesh.

Notes for January 2017

- Sunday services as normal
- Tuesday communions resume 9 January
- Rector's Hour resumes 10 January 6pm

Scott writes ……

It is easy for Christians to dismiss Christmas. At least those parts of Christmas toward which we self-righteously turn up our noses. We so easily offer our theological critique of all that is wrong with Christmas. We excoriate the excess. We sniff at the sentimentality. We even coyly cringe at the carols. And as for that monstrous Christmas Album. I tell you, if I hear Slade singing 'Merry Christmas Everybody' one more time, I'll…. well, you fill in the blanks. It is so easy to go down the CCC route - Christian Christmas Cynicism. And, of course, as with all heresies, there is always an element of truth to be found here. In a world of gross wealth disparity, it is tempting to see the Christmas season (which begins, as you know, at the end of October) as simply an opportunity to fleece even more supermarket sheep. We all recognise that behind the shmaltzy glitter lies a potential credit catastrophe. And all that Christmas jumper cosiness can't disguise the familial stress that so often rears its head at this family time of year.

BUT

I can imagine that, while you read this and more than likely agree with most of what I've said, nonetheless you feel uneasy. If so, that's good. Not because what I've said isn't true. Sadly, it is all too evident. But it isn't, and can never be, the whole story. Christmas can't be confined. The fundamental point of the Christmas Story is the fact that it is precisely a story of excess. The Incarnation, the breaking in of God to be with us is, at the same time, a breaking out of all that would limit our wonder at what it means to be human. Christmas is a time when, in the face of all the pettiness, all the pain, all the limitations of life, wonder is not extinguished.

Despite all our best efforts we never quite manage to ruin Christmas. That, in itself, is part of the miracle of Christmas. We know all about the commercialism, we know all about the clutter and the chaos, and yet there it is every year, regular as an Advent Calendar. We never succeed in ruining it, and by that I mean taming it. And that is because Christmas is all about grace, and grace can't be tamed. It is a reminder to us that our valiant attempts at making our world small and disenchanted can never finally succeed. So, I guess what I'm really saying is that we have to be careful to hold our genuine concerns over the inequalities of our world, without

descending into that cynicism which tempts us to throw our hands up and jack the whole thing in.

Because throwing up his hands and jacking it all in is precisely what God chose *not* to do. And because of that Love came down at Christmas.

I pray that you will all have a blessed and grace-filled, wonder-filled Christmas.

Scott

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Countdown to Christmas ……

Words and Music for Advent

This will take place on Sunday 3 December at 6.30pm. Do come and support the choir as they lead us in our Advent preparations.

Advent Reflections

Step aside awhile out of the busyness of the Christmas Season. 7pm in the church on Tuesdays 5,12 and 19 December.

Care for Creation evening service

The next Care for Creation evening service will take place on Sunday 10 December at 6.30pm. The theme of these services is to link our understanding of Creation with The Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission, and December's service will offer an opportunity to reflect on our responsibility to challenge unjust structures of society.

Christmas Family Lunch

Following last year's highly successful lunch, this year's event will take place on Sunday 17 December immediately after the morning service. As well as food there will be some party games and carol singing. To give the catering team an idea of numbers, please sign up on the sheet at the back of the church. Last year's event will be a hard act to follow, but we are sure that Kalpana has surprises in store!

Around St Margaret's December 2017

Regional Council Joint Service

The church was well filled for the service on Sunday 29 October. It was great to hear lusty singing from a full congregation, and we were delighted to welcome the choirs from St Aidan's and St Ninian's as they joined St Margaret's choir. The flowers were especially striking. The theme of the service was All Saints Day; Scott presided at the Eucharist, Paul read the gospel, Lesley-Ann led the prayers and Nicholas in his sermon reminded us that we are all called to be saints, living and working to be ever closer to God in holiness and love.

The aromas coming from the kitchen towards the end of the service, presaged a wonderful spread provided by Jan, Collette, Ajit, Kalpana, Jenny and Fiona, and so it proved; many compliments were given by diners. A hearty thanks to the caterers and to members of the congregation who contributed food.

Second Sunday concerts

November's concert saw the welcome return of Edwin Paling (violin) who, along with Rosalin Lazaroff (violin), Miranda Pythian-Adams (cello) and Michael Bawtree (organ) entertained us with works by JS Bach and Josef Rheinberger. Rheinberger's Suite for Violin, Violincello and Organ was particularly memorable with Miranda's cello playing quite extraordinary.

The concert on 10 December will be a festive concert for all to enjoy, featuring Folk-fiddler Alastair Savage and friends bringing a set of their best loves numbers to St Margaret's.

Alzheimer's coffee morning and raffle

The Alzheimer annual coffee morning took place on Saturday 4 November. Numbers were down on previous years but as usual there was there was a good variety of goods on display, as well as home baking.

Time to Remember service

Eileen Smith again masterminded the service on Saturday 11 November, this time on the theme of the sea, a topic which has nothing to do with loss and grief, yet which can be used as an analogy to describe the journey through loss and bereavement. A thoroughly appropriate selection of

hymns and readings of Bible passages and poetry made for a moving and memorable service. Most of the 50 or so who attended stayed on to share in tea and fellowship afterwards. We were delighted that Hugh Macdonald was able to play the organ, having made a good recovery from his recent heart attack.

Remembrance Sunday

The service on Sunday 12 November included an act of remembrance. Douglas Pearson again laid the wreath at the altar, carrying it with duly solemn military bearing and reverence. The Sunday School children were also in action making their own field of poppies, labelled Flanders Field, and at the end of the service, in their own poignant act of remembrance, they placed their display beside the wreath at the altar.

Study Group

The Pilgrim Study Group continues. The session on 15 November was ably led by Lee and considered the phrase "Crucified, Risen and Ascended". The last session in the series takes place on Wednesday 13 December on the topic "One holy, catholic and apostolic church".

Pub Philosophy

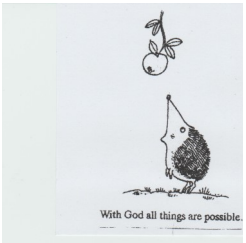
22 November 1963 was not only the day of President Kennedy's assassination but also the day on which the authors CS Lewis (Narnia etc) and Aldous Huxley (Brave New World) died; all three died within 70 minutes of each other. Accordingly the philosophers gathered on 22 November to reflect on some of their writings. Discussion was wide ranging and animated, and included thoughts on conspiracy theories, standing up for absolute rights, reactions to the problem of pain, whether living under a tyranny is better than being subject to "moral busybodies" and to what extent people behave rationally. See Andy Clist or Richard Norris if you want to know more about what goes on. The gatherings will resume in the New Year.

Leaf clearing day…..on a cold and frosty morning……

The annual leaf cleaning day took place on Saturday morning 25 November. Around a dozen keen and enthusiastic volunteers set to with rakes, shovels and tree loppers to clear the autumn leaves which were

hiding in awkward places in the garden and behind the church, to trim the profusely growing bushes and tidy up the grounds in general. Many bin loads of leaves were emptied into the skip and the church grounds look much the better for it. Thanks to all who helped and to Fiona and Jenny who produced the usual, scrumptious bacon and sausage rolls half time!

Kathleen Wallace



Lorna's mother Kathleen died on 28 October, having been in care for over a year since suffering a stroke last August. Lorna has understandably been preoccupied with caring for her mother and now hopes to be back in circulation at St Margaret's. This is one of Kathleen's favourite drawings, which was reproduced on the front cover of the order of service at her funeral; the text on it reflects her philosophy in life, 'With God all things are possible'.

Caring Christmas Trees

It's not too late to order your trees from Caring Christmas Trees; act quickly by ordering from their website www.bethanychristiantrust.com/support-work/caring-christmas-trees.

Flowers

The flower team are very appreciative of the generous donations made throughout the year by members of the Congregation. We are sorry that for various reasons we were sometimes unable to allocate you the specific weekend requested.

Having looked at the diary overall it is noticeable that the first months of the year are the quietest so if there are some of you who are happy to provide flowers but not at a set weekend we would encourage you to consider the earlier part of 2018. The new flower list will be on the back table fairly shortly to facilitate this. *Moira Atkinson on behalf of the Flower team.*

SECMA (Scottish Episcopal Church Missionary Association)

The new issue (number 100) is now available on the literature table at the back of the church. It has a number of articles illustrating the wide variety of

work done abroad in the name of the church, in particular helping refugees in Lebanon, Nigeria, Congo, South Sudan, Burkina Faso and Uganda. The magazine's editorial points out the need to match faith with practical action, as written in the letter of James. Please do help yourself to a copy of the magazine.

Magazine rota

Just a note to thank all those who have helped preparing this for posting and/ or for uplifting at the back of the church. I hope you are all willing to continue - it only takes one hour on a Thursday morning. Please let me know if you have a problem before I make out the rota - I plan on doing this early January. *Prue Clark (632 4734).*

Coffee rota….please help

Fiona Campbell writes: I am frantically trying to compile the rota for 2018, but we are down to an alarmingly small number of willing volunteers to take turns on the coffee rota. Obviously the more people we have available, the less often you need to do it…….and the dishwasher makes washing up so much easier! Please contact me if you are able to join the rota (586 6895 or 07905 177793 or fionacampbell595@gmail.com).

2018 Counting and stewarding rotas

Ajit is working on these and they will be available shortly at the back of the church. Please remember to check to see whether you are "on deck", especially in January!

Harvest Thanksgiving

Glasgow City Mission have written to thank us for our donation of food. This will help those experiencing homelessness and poverty to make ends meet. Joe, one of the Mission's Project Workers, says. "People are grateful to receive the food you've donated. It gives people a sense of hope and they can experience God's provision." When someone receives an emergency food parcel from us, we're able to talk with them and link them in with our other services which include lunch clubs, advice sessions and classes in cookery and computing. We want to help people improve their situations and move forwards with their lives. Thank you and please extend our thanks to everyone at St Margaret's.

AGM report - 26 November

The Vestry's Report for the year together with summary accounts, reports from the Lay Representative, the South Regional Council, the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Co-ordinator, the Property Convener and the Sunday School Co-ordinator had been circulated in advance. Salient points from the accounts are shown on pages 16 and 17. In answer to a question it was confirmed that the church pays the Living Wage and that salary increases recommended by the SEC take the current rate of inflation into account. The various reports were approved.

Fiona Campbell, Richard McIndoe and Adrian Osmond were standing down from the Vestry after completing two consecutive three year terms, and Heather Macdonald had retired through ill health. They were thanked for their contributions to the Vestry. Colin Fraser, Maida Gibson and David Kennedy were elected for a three year term. Kalpana Panickar, Jim Gibson and Jan Whiteside were appointed as People's Warden, Lay Representative and Alternate Lay Representative respectively.

Approval was given to amend the constitution to make the Alternate Lay Representative an ex officio member of the Vestry, in line with a decision of the 2017 General Synod.

In his Rector's remarks, as well as thanking the many people who help around the church, Scott said how much it means to him that people turn up on Sundays. Regarding the 2020 project he said that it was not our intention just to give money away; we were seeking to enable the church family to foster relations with the community. Our journey so far had been more challenging than expected, but we were now seeking to employ a 2020 Project Manager (see article on page 18), to help us work out how best to make dynamic connections with the community, recognising that our society is disconnected and isolated on many levels and that the church is irrelevant for many. We believe that the church has a role to play in connecting communities . God is not absent, but He is in the midst of the challenges we face; Jesus was at his most divine when suffering the pain of the Cross.

Speakers from the floor were supportive of the plan to employ a Project Manager and the meeting closed with a vote of thanks to Scott for steering us, pastoring us and encouraging us through the year.

St Margaret's Episcopal Church

Report of the Vestry *for the year ended 31 August 2017*

Charitable Objectives

The church's Mission is to be an inclusive, affirming, non-judging community, where all are welcome to explore faith and doubt, to come to a deeper understanding of God's call in their own lives and to engage in the wider mission of the church.

Principal Activities

The charity's principal activities are:

- Worship
- Young people and whole congregation engagement
- Community and charity involvement

Achievements and Performance

- Worship is central to the church. Regular services occurred in line with the church calendar. Morning and evening prayer services were also held each weekday, other than Tuesday when a Eucharist was held. Evensong was held periodically. Occasional special services were also arranged, including the regular "Time to Remember" service held in November. Short reflective services have been held once a month on a weekday evening, led by members of the congregation. The Rector hosted a pastor from the Three Self Church in China for a month.
- The Sunday School ran during the Sunday morning service and played a central part in Christmas Nativity and Harvest family services. Ways of engaging young people of the congregation were regularly explored. A Pastoral Care Team assisted the clergy in home visits. Study groups and reading groups were arranged regularly, aligned with the church calendar. Ten issues of the church magazine were circulated.
- The church seeks to engage with the local community through opening up its buildings for communal use, and by providing community accessible activities. The community children's choir continued until November 2016. A number of charities were supported through dedicated collections during the year, with

collections arranged for MS, The Beatson Institute, Wheelchair Rugby, and the Scottish Refugee Council. The church participated in World Aids Day, and in Glasgow Doors Open Days Festival. A Knit and Natter open group has become established within the church and practical support has been extended outwards through the 2020 vision. The website was upgraded.

The 2020 Vision, first endorsed through the 2015 AGM approval of the church's reserves policy, has seen some practical implementation with four projects supported during the year. Community projects supported have been musicALL, The Well, and Home Start South, through approval of grants totalling £8,097. The Knit and natter group is also financially supported. The vestry has approved guidelines for decision making on where support is directed. It regularly reflects on how the vision is being implemented.

The rich musical heritage of the church has remained strong although new recruitment to the choir is required. Under the Director of Music the choir has continued to contribute greatly to Sunday morning worship, including joint services out-with St Margaret's and has been prominent in evensongs and special services. The vestry has supported the recruitment of trebles and has approved the engagement of two choral scholars for 2017-18. The high quality second Sunday open concerts have also continued to bring appreciative audiences into the church space. The church is also used for externally organised occasional concerts.

The commitment to fair trade and environment awareness has continued with the church designated an eco-congregation. A Fair Trade stall is opened each Sunday after the morning service, recycling is strongly promoted and there is a policy of purchasing only eco-friendly cleaning materials.

Careful attention has been given to the maintenance and enhancement of the fabric of the church and ancillary properties. A significant project was the replacement of the severely degraded courtyard screen/entrance. Consideration has been given to addressing the unsatisfactory nature of the raised heating pipes between the nave and the aisles. Many maintenance and fabric issues have been relatively small scale with cost

implications minimised through the generous giving of time and skills by members of the congregation.
Responsibilities for the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) feature at all vestry meetings. An annual return was made to the Diocesan monitoring officer. The church's PVG co-ordinator attended one vestry meeting. The PVG co-ordinator will submit a separate report to the AGM.

There were no changes in staff appointments during the year.

The vestry heard feedback from the June 2017 SEC General Synod and has since formally considered the Guidelines to Marriage issued by the College of Bishops following Synod decision to amend Canon 31.

Statement on Risk
Major risks the charity is exposed to, and strategies for mitigating them are summarised as:

- Governance and management: Regular vestry meetings. Mixed skill set. Effective communication systems. Record keeping. Succession planning. Limits on terms of elected trustees.
- Operational: Delegation of responsibilities. Training. Investment in technology.
- Financial: Finances reviewed and actions approved at each vestry meeting. Rigorous attention to fabric of properties.
- Compliance (law and regulation): Sound knowledge base. Trustee/ vestry member code of conduct. Compliance with Provincial guidelines in critical areas.

Plans for Future Periods
The key objective for the coming year is to continue to provide a welcoming non-judgemental environment within which to continue the mission of the church.

There will be further implementation of the 20/20 vision arising from the 2015 AGM decision on the reserves policy. This will involve the deployment of some funds for supporting inclusive projects in and around St Margaret's in line with agreed criteria and protocol. Possible employment of someone to scope this further is being considered.

Gerald Wells, Secretary

December Diary of events

Sun 3rd	Advent 1
Tue 5th	Holy Communion 10am; Advent Reflection 7pm
Wed 6th	**No Rector's Hour**
Thu 7th	Vestry 7.30pm
Sun 10th	Advent 2
	Second Sunday concert in the church 3.30pm
	Folk-fiddler Alastair Savage and friends
	Care for Creation - evening service 6.30pm
Tue 12th	Holy Communion 10am; Advent Reflection 7pm
Wed 13th	Rector's Hour
	Pilgrim Study Group 7.30pm in the church
Thu 14th	Knit and Natter 10.00am to 12.00pm
Sun 17th	Advent 3 - Service followed by lunch
Tues 19th	Holy Communion 10am; Advent Reflection 7pm
Wed 20th	Rector's Hour 6pm
Sun 24th	Advent 4 - Christmas Eve and Christmas Nativity

Christmas services as on page 3

Sun 31st	Christmas 1

Readings for December and January

Advent 1	
3 December	Isaiah 64: 1-9, 1 Corinthians 1:3-9, Mark 13: 24-37
Advent 2	
10 December	Isaiah 40: 1-11, 2 Peter 3: 8-15a, Mark 1: 1-8
Advent 3	
17 December	Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11, 1 Thess 5: 16-24, John 1: 6-8, 19-28
Advent 4	
24 December	2 Samuel 7: 1-11, 16, Romans 16: 25-27, Luke 1: 26-28
Christmas 1	
31 December	Isaiah 61: 10 to 62: 3, Galatians 4: 4-7, Luke 2: 22-40
Epiphany 1	
7 January	Jeremiah 31: 7-14, Ephesians 1: 3-14, John 1: 1-18
Epiphany 2	
14 January	Isaiah 60: 1-6, Ephesians 3: 1-12, Matthew 2: 1-12
Epiphany 3	
21 January	Genesis 1: 1-5, Acts 19: 1-7, Mark 1: 4-11
Epiphany 4	
28 January	1 Samuel 3: 1-20, 1 Corinthians 6: 12-20, John 1: 43-51

2020 Project – Situation vacant

St Margaret's wishes to employ someone on a one year contract to scope and develop our project. The appointment would be initially for a year period and would be on part time basis (0.5) at full time equivalent salary of £24,500.

The main duties will be to:

- Conduct a mapping exercise to identify opportunities for working with other organisations in line with the 20:20 vision.
- Draft a 1 year action plan and a 3 year strategy for Vestry consideration.
- Provide regular updates and progress reviews to the Vestry.
- Ensure regular reports are received from recipients of the funding.
- Ensure that funding recipients are abiding by the conditions of the funding and have good governance.
- Monitor budgets.
- Assess 20:20 applications against agreed criteria and liaise with applicants throughout the process and provide reports to the Vestry for approval.

Further information and application forms are available from Richard Norris. Anyone who is interested in applying or knows someone who might be interested in applying, is asked to get in touch with Richard. The deadline for applications is 11 December 2017 and it is intended that candidates will be interviewed by an interview panel during week beginning 18 December, with a recommendation then going to the Vestry.

Fair Trade – Everyone's business

Next time you do your supermarket shop, ask yourself "Is my purchase simply adding to this supermarket's profits or could it benefit a wider, more deserving community whose produce struggles to compete with the corporate conglomerates which dominate most of our food supplies?" A lengthy question for a trawl through the aisles but one with a simple solution: the Fairtrade Foundation exists solely for the betterment of just such communities all round the world and you can buy its products easily every Sunday at St Margaret's.

There is now a great variety of high quality Fair Trade produce and the range is extending all the time. It is sometimes a little more expensive than similar products on supermarket shelves but that little bit extra goes to help make the world a fairer, more equal place. And my goodness, don't we need a lot of that now!

Christmas is coming as well as New Year. Both good times to resolve to improve the ethics of some of our shopping by visiting the St Margaret's stall, as well as stocking up on some useful Christmas goodies, especially at the bumper stall on December 3rd. Of course, we can't sell you everything you could possible need but if you do have to shop elsewhere, look out for the official Fairtrade logo (below) – and don't be fooled by products described as "fairly traded" if they don't have the logo. *Chris Lennox*

FAIRTRADE ®

Foiled again!

A bundle of foil has recently been taken to the scrap yard, generating a modest amount of income for the church. Don't throw away your Christmas tin foil - recycle it! There is a bin outside the back door into which you can put it.

Travels with my Aunts: A Travel Blog by Danielle Corrigan
Part 1 - Sunday 18 June to Saturday 24 June
(Abridged from the original - Ed)

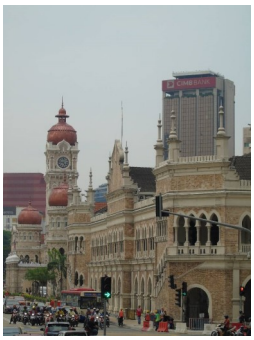
Sunday/Monday "You're going to Malaysia? On your own? Why?!" "Why not?" Most people who have asked have been concerned about the potential risks to a solo female traveller, However, I am a firm believer in grabbing opportunities; who knows where they might lead? No good ever came from inward thinking. I have the chance to experience a new culture first hand, and I am venturing into this with open-mindedness and a desire to learn. I might even try to leave some Scottish influences behind where I can! I have packed my essentials - a sketchbook, a journal, a few novels, my camera and my music. I doze off on the plane as we fly over Russia and wake up over Pakistan. The views as the sun comes up are beautiful.

Tuesday After almost 24 hours of travel I land in Kuala Lumpur to a temperature of 37 degrees. Met at the airport by my first host, a lovely Malaysian woman, who insists I call her "Auntie". She is very welcoming and I will be staying with her for the first few days of my trip, at her home in a suburb of Kuala Lumpur. It is comfortable and has everything I need. Auntie takes me for breakfast to a local shop where I am presented with a bowl of pork broth and noodles, a ceramic spoon and a set of chopsticks. I am the focus of a lot of attention over my breakfast, in fact, people are staring. "Ah," says Auntie, "it is your eyes." It is unlikely that anyone in this neighbourhood has ever seen eyes like mine before; they are predominantly blue, but have patches of hazel and a green ring around the iris. Combined with my pale skin, freckles and dark hair, I am likely to remain something of an attraction here for the foreseeable future.

I meet the children at Auntie's kindergarten. I will be helping there for a few days. I am greeted by a chorus of, "Good morning, Teacher. It is nice to meet you!" The children are learning Malay, English and Mandarin, all before the age of five, and can communicate well in all three. Education in Malaysia is the key to providing a better life. The children are beautiful, bright and eager to learn. Teachers are highly respected. I am teaching alongside Auntie's two sisters, whom I am to address as "Second Aunt" and "Third Aunt" in accordance with their place in the family.

My freckles are still a source of great confusion. Some of the children have attempted to rub them off, or trying to catch one with their fingers from my arm or face as they pass me. One 3 year old attempts dot-to-dot with a black marker on my right ankle. Soon he's drawing freckles on his classmates with the same pen, and everyone is now sporting a polka dot look.

Wednesday Typhoon-style weather. The children have learnt the meaning and appropriateness of the Scottish words "dreich" and "drookit" this morning. Teacher Danielle felt this was necessary descriptive language for the day.



The overground railway is a technological marvel, lit up like a Christmas tree with numerous LED lights. Once in the city centre, it is clear to see where modern Malaysia is developing. Independence Square is home to the flagpole where independence was declared in 1957. Across from this stands the Sultan Abdul Samad building, which once housed the offices of the British colonial administration, and is a striking example of the Indo-Saracen style of the period. The clock in the central tower still chimes daily, just as it has since the jubilee parade of Queen Victoria in 1897 (picture on left).

Arguably the most impressive building in central Kuala Lumpur is the Petronas Twin Towers, standing at 451.9 metres from the ground to the tip of each spire and linked together on the forty-first floor by a glass 'skywalk'. The buildings are certainly a powerful symbol of the country's economic growth and development. The shopping centre under the towers houses every designer brand you can think of, and probably some you can't! Every shop has armed security on its doors. A security guard in a jewellers takes great delight in telling me that the bracelet I am looking at retails at £186,500.

I have been invited for dinner to meet some of Auntie's extended family, along with the matriarch of the family, Auntie's mother. She is in her eighties and speaks no English. She is a formidable woman, but has a sense of fun and is also taken by my eyes, hair and skin. Within seconds, she is peering into my eyes as if she is searching for my soul. The rest of the extended family follow suit. Dinner is 'Steamboats', which is basically a giant wok filled with chicken or fish broth, a bit like a hotpot. Ingredients are replenished at an impressive speed; tonight's dinner takes a staggering four hours!

I move in with Third Aunt tonight, where I will stay until I travel south to Malacca next week. She has a lovely little mongrel dog. He reminds me of a tiny Labradoodle. At bedtime I soon realise that he is fairly keen on the bed I will be sleeping in too. He is not impressed at the idea of moving. We compromise and he budges over a bit. He snores.

Thursday Early start at the kindergarten this morning for 6:30am. We watch a beautiful, peaceful dawn on the porch with roti bread and a bowl of dahl, not a bad start to the day. Third Aunt tells me that the translation of her job title directly into English is "teacher mother". This is so accurate; the children here are a community, and the teachers have as much input in raising them as their parents do. Teaching is a strict discipline here. Scolding can be heard when someone is pushing their luck a bit too far, and yet credit and praise are given when they are due.

Second Aunt arrives to teach the morning's Mandarin lesson. She is unmarried when her culture would possibly rather she was, and dedicates herself to providing care and education to the kids. She has a fabulous sense of humour too, and on an afternoon she accompanies me on the hop on, hop off tour bus to the bird sanctuary in central Kuala Lumpur, the largest free-flying aviary in the world. Pretty much every type of bird that isn't likely to rip you to shreds is free inside the grounds. Most are not at all wary of humans, which allows for some fantastic photo opportunities.

I then travel part of the way home to Third Aunt's by the city's Monorail. The train is packed and no-one disembarks as the doors open. No-one gives way either, and suddenly everyone is pushing onto the already crowded train. Second Aunt is a pro, stepping on with confidence and nudging people out of the way with her rainbow umbrella. It is incredibly hot but we are only going three stops. Disembarking provides a fresh challenge. Second Aunt, shopping bag and umbrella in hand, is soon on the platform. I manage to barge and squeeze my way out unscathed, whereupon Second Aunt asks what on earth took me so long. I make it to Third Aunt's house, and the streets are alive with noise, bustle and music since everyone can now break their fast. A huge array of street food is on offer, primarily sweet pastry-based items.

Friday Breakfast is Nasi Lemak, a Malay breakfast dish of coconut rice, dried anchovies and nuts, all wrapped in a banana leaf. It is my last day of teaching at the kindergarten before I go off on my travels. Sunrises and sunsets are beautiful here, and this morning's fiery red effort is no exception. I am allowed to take on the mantle of cooking the lunch, before I deliver my last English lesson.

Today is end of term for the kids too, they now have a week off for Hari Raya, the end of Ramadan. Most Malay people go back to their hometowns to celebrate and visit extended family. It is a huge occasion, filled with light, colour, music and food. An inordinate amount of cooking is done, and homes, streets and buildings are decorated with fairy lights and lanterns, while most women and girls are decorated with henna. This includes me as a member of my host family. The lady who paints the henna creates a beautiful design on my left arm, a hibiscus flower, for luck and prosperity in the coming year and also Malaysia's national flower. I am delighted with it.

I take a temple trek alone to the Batu Caves, a warren of tunnels and vaults with every imaginable deity represented. The idea is to stop at each shrine and pay respects. It is very humbling to be shuffling along as part of this great crowd in the caves and at the same time, everyone is helping one another. The climb to the main temple is 270 steps, with a further 60 or so inside the temple itself, and I wait respectfully at each station whilst prayers and chants are performed, incense burnt and candles lit along the way. During the ascent, you can't help but feel that you're a little bit closer to Heaven with each step. Once out of the cave network, there is a chance to see some of the wildlife outside, mainly birds and monkeys, all eager to

find out if any passing climbers have food. The animals are certainly photogenic and I manage to catch some wonderful shots, such as this long tailed macaque - my very own 'National Geographic moment !

Saturday I am being taken out for the day by one of Auntie's ex-colleagues, "Auntie C". She is originally from Borneo, and brings her sister and daughter along for the ride and to help with navigation and English translation! I get my first taste of Kuala Lumpur car journeys and am thankful that I am in the back. No-one seems to follow any rules of the road. Cars squeeze through the tiniest gaps , take no heed of road markings and simply run red lights if there is space. Bikes are a hazard too; I cringe as I watch an entire family of mother, father and three children all perched precariously on a moped make a U-turn at alarming speed. It is quite an experience!

We drive along, communicating in a mixture of broken English and broken Malay, but we reach understanding about most things with the help of gestures and a slowed speed of conversation. Auntie C's daughter is desperate to know about Scottish life and asks me about how cold it is and what the food is like, but also, for example did I know the Queen personally and had I ever met the boyband "One Direction". She is delighted that I know the songs and that she can join in too. Before I know it, we are all singing and laughing together. All the ladies are fascinated by my henna tattoo for Hari Raya, which has now gone a deep, coppery red shade on my pale skin.

We head into Kuala Lumpur city centre so that I can climb the Menara Tower. You can climb the 2,058 steps to the top, but most visitors like me use the bullet lift, which arrives at the top in just over thirty seconds. The views from the top are spectacular. I take plenty of photographs before waiting in the line for my turn to go out on the skywalk, a glass box suspended out over the tower's edge from which you can look down at the ground hundreds of metres below. Well worth doing! I find a table in the café and have tea high in the clouds, then head back down to ground level.

We drive through the Brickfields and Petaling Street areas of the city, a beautiful fusion of Malay, Indian and Chinese. The whole place is alive with bustle, colour, noise and music. Street vendors are selling everything from sweet treats, to saris and flower garlands. After curried samosa for lunch, we move to another shopping centre, where I am still blown away by the sheer scale of these things. I could easily fit my entire flat into one of the jewellers. We head back home, where Third Aunt's dog is sitting patiently by the bedside table as I arrive. Thankfully, he has stopped getting overexcited with my left leg every night. He has moved to my right leg instead, just to keep the balance right.

To be continued…..

Intercessions

O Lord Source of all of our strength and courage We come before You with our cares and concerns; hear us, O Lord. May Your church throughout the world work for justice and for peace. Give courage to Your ministers to preach Your gospel even in the face of apathy, complacency and derision. We pray for all those who continue to put their faith in You even in desperate and difficult circumstances.

Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for people around the world who are facing the worst of times, for the Rohingya people and the unspeakable abuses they have suffered and continue to suffer - for refugees seeking shelter and safety - for those trying to survive in the midst of war zones - for those who have lost everything because of the recent hurricanes. Have mercy on them all, Lord, and allow help to reach them.

Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the peace and comforts we enjoy and take for granted in this country, Lord, we thank you. Yet, there is poverty and suffering and strife here too. We pray for those struggling to make ends meet and ask for Your guiding hand to rest on them. Give wisdom to those who govern over us that they may consider first and foremost the needs of the nation before making far-reaching decisions and reforms.

Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

We commend the work of this diocese into Your hands, O Lord, and ask for Your blessing on Bishop Gregor as he leads, guides and nurtures those around him. On this special feast day, we remember the life of St Margaret and pray that our purpose and mission in this church reflects her faithfulness, compassion and determination, all to Your glory, O Lord.

Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

May those who are sick and suffering find their respite in You, O Lord - we commend them into Your care. We continue to ask for Your blessing on those who are ill. We pray for those we love and who mean so much to us - in a few moments of silence, we lift their names to You, O Lord.

Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

So much of our lives happens outside of these walls when, sometimes, we can lose sight of You, O Lord. Stay close to us in our daily lives so that we may be encouraged and strengthened to face any and all things. Give us courage to live our faith even when this is challenging and, when dilemmas arise, to always chose the right way.

Lord in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

As the new week begins with its joys and challenges and stresses, give us the courage Lord, to face our fears and to remain true to ourselves in Your name.

O Lord, accept these prayers for the sake of Your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, Amen

(Kalpana Panickar, 19 November, Feast of St Margaret)

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There are questions at issue between Christians to which I do not think we have been told the answer. There are some to which I may never know the answer: if I asked them, even in a better world, I might (for all I know) be answered as a far greater questioner was answered: "What is that to thee? Follow Thou me."

(CS Lewis, Mere Christianity)

Sukhita Child Update

During the year we have engaged in a number of fund raising events and would like to take this opportunity to share details, as you might like to see what we get up to away from St Margaret's.

We have successfully been running stalls at Bellahouston, Ingliston, Carlisle and Ayr, selling model cars, collectables and memorabilia, which has either been donated or sourced by Lee (one of the trustees) with all profits going directly to Sukhita. Average takings for one of these events would be around £300 and to date we have taken part in 13.

We also managed to arrange to have a stall at the Ignition Festival at the SECC in August selling model cars and motor racing items (again donated or sourced) and with contacts in this area a lot of signed merchandise was collected and over the three day festival we raised over £6,000.

Once again in September we joined the charities at Newlands Fayre, had another good experience selling toys, jewellery and bric-a-brac raising over £400.

Our Race Night in early October was also a great success. As well as good fun another £2,300 in takings went into the bank. Due to demand we hope repeat this event early next year.

Many thanks to everyone who kindly support our activities both home and abroad. If you have any questions please speak directly to myself or John.

Love and best wishes

Linda Fisher

The Last Word

A teacher's first job was in a draughty classroom opening on to the school hall. One day he was writing on the blackboard when he heard a child come in and sit down, leaving the door wide open. 'And who was born in a barn?', said the teacher. Quick as a flash came the reply, 'Jesus, sir.'

St Margaret of Scotland, Newlands

Service details

Sundays

9.00am Said Eucharist
10.30am Sung Eucharist,
Crèche, Sunday School & Youth Group

Tuesdays

10.00 am Holy Communion

Morning and Evening Prayer
Mon, Wed, Thu and Fri 9.00am and 5.30pm

For other services not listed please see Diary inside

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