

New Elders' Groups

With the ordination of one and the induction of two new Elders in September, and the retirement of Tom McCron from the Serving Eldership at the end of December, a new set of Elders' Groups will be in operation from the start of January. Many of you will remain with your present elder, but some of you will find that a new face is dropping by every now and again. If you have any concerns about these changes, please contact the minister or your existing Elder.



Christmas Events and Services

The **Celebration of Christmas**, a mixture of carols, poems and choir pieces, will take place on **Wednesday, December 8th**, which will take the same form as in previous years. Many people have enjoyed the evening in the past, so bring some friends along! There will be a £2 entry charge.

Remember that the **Christian Bookshop** has Christmas cards and presents. It is open on Thursdays and Fridays, 10 – 12.30 and on Saturdays 10 – 12 noon. *Bathgate Churches Together will also be carol singing on Saturday 17th at St. David's Square, George Street.*

On **Christmas Eve, Saturday, December 24th**, there will be a **Service of Readings and Carols** at **5 p.m.** Please note the earlier time this year.

At **7.30 p.m.** the minister will lead a similar service at Avonbridge.

On **Christmas Day**, there will be a service at the usual Sunday time of **11 a.m.**

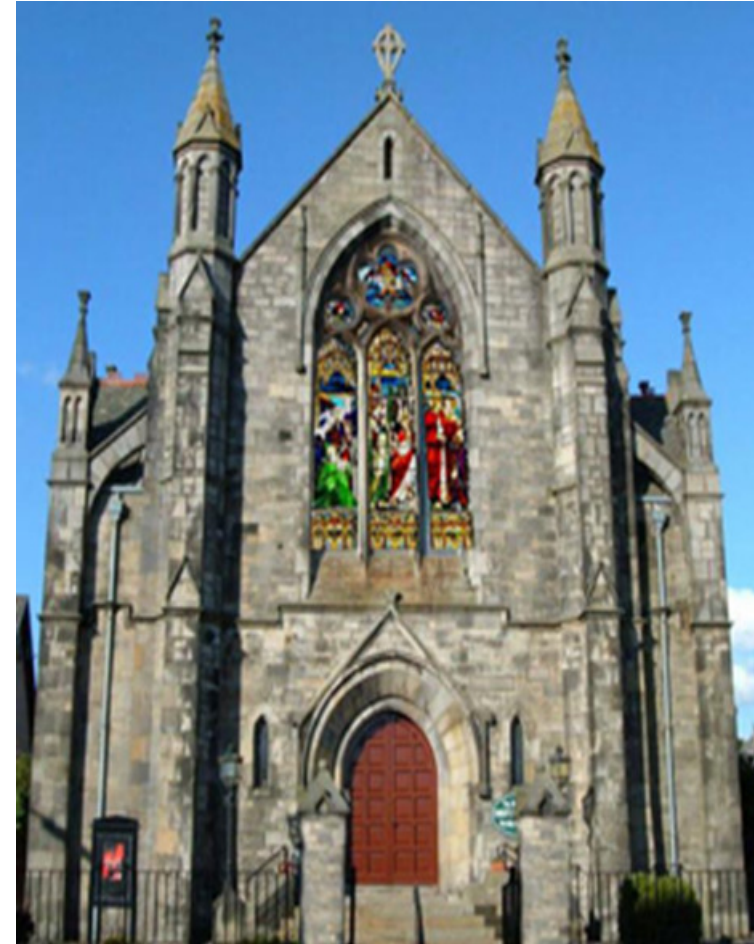
On **New Year's Day** worship at 11 a.m. will include the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

[Items for the next Newsletter need to be with the minister by January 4th, 2012](#)

Bathgate EU United Reformed Church

(Charity registered in Scotland - SC 014304)

Newsletter Advent 2011



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Letter from the Minister

“...the voice of one crying in the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight”
(Mark 1 v 3, and Isaiah 40 v 3)

Dear friends,

Advent is a time of preparation, and doubtless you are all busy thinking about which presents to buy, what food to prepare, which concerts or other events to go to. You may have noticed that ‘Christmas’ has already been with us for some time, at least in our shops and in our streets. I have already heard several Christmas carols and other ‘seasonal songs’ being played over tannoy systems. Am I alone in thinking that it is far too early for that? What will be left for us to celebrate on December 25th and the days which follow, if we have already done all there is to do?

The voice cries in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord; or the voice cries, prepare in the wilderness the way of the Lord. Whichever punctuation you wish to use, the fact is that we are asked to prepare the way of the Lord. That needs to be our number one priority at Advent. Many of us feel that we live in a spiritual wilderness. Many of us feel that we are like voices crying in a wilderness. For example, how many of us have friends or family members for whom the Christmas story means little or nothing? How many people do we know who have little idea of who this Lord is? Do we just shrug our shoulders and glumly accept that our world is this way, or do we need to respond in some way? Surely, somehow, through prayer and word and action, all based on the Biblical witness, we need to confront the wilderness around us and announce the coming of Christ. Otherwise, why celebrate Christmas at all?

Mirella joins me in wishing you all God’s blessing throughout this Advent and Christmas Season, and on into the New Year.

Your friend,

John S. Bremner
Minister.

Holiday in Italy: May 12 – 19, 2012

Some of you will remember that, as part of our “Bi-Centenary Celebrations” in 2007, we hosted a group from our sister church in Italy. The Waldensian Church has a history stretching back over 800 years, and next May a group from the United Reformed Church will be spending a week in the Alpine Valleys on the Italian-French border, west of Turin, getting to know something more of the Waldensian history and their present day activities. The dates for the visit are 12 to 19 May. The cost of the stay will be around £400, which includes half-board and travel on organised trips from the base in Torre Pellice. The cost of getting to Italy is additional, but flights to Milan can be quite cheap if booked in advance. For an additional £300, a further six days may be spent exploring Turin and meeting members of the English language and Italian language churches in that historic city.

The visit to Torre Pellice will be led by the minister. If you are interested in coming along, please contact him as soon as possible. Deposits of £50 per person must be paid by 31st January, 2012!



“Radical Welcome”

Those who stayed on after church for the Harvest Lunch will remember discussing a passage from Luke’s Gospel on the theme of ‘welcome’. The United Reformed Church is encouraging us to consider just how welcoming a congregation we are. We may think of ourselves as ‘friendly’ and ‘welcoming’, but we need to stand back and look at ourselves every now and again.

For example: physically, how welcoming is our building to someone in a wheelchair? And culturally, how easy would it be for someone who had no knowledge of church life to understand what we do in a church service?

If we are to be a truly welcoming church, then we must welcome people as Jesus welcomed them. We must welcome not just those who are ‘like us’; nor just those whom we feel will be ‘good for us’. Jesus welcomed those who were ‘different’, those whom mainstream society reckoned as ‘odd balls’ or even as ‘unwelcome’: the ‘ostracised’. Can we do that? Can we be ‘radically welcoming’ in a way which allows for the unexpected, and makes the church more like Jesus?