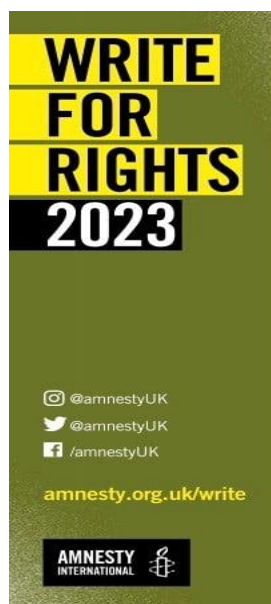




**ST.
MICHAEL'S**
Parish Church

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER

Welcome to your St Michael's Parish Church newsletter for December 2023. If you were one of the 3,000 visitors who experienced the wonder and joy of the recent Festival of Christmas Trees, you'll know Christmas must be nearly here! With a full range of services coming up at St Michael's and at our sister congregations of St Ninian's Craigmailen, Avonbridge and Torphichen, there are plenty of opportunities for us all to open ourselves again to the astonishing fact that 'Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour, yet for love's sake became so poor'. Read on for all you need to know about Christmas here and hereabouts!!



Write for Rights

Come to the Kirk Hall this Sunday (10th December) at 5:30pm to support prisoners of conscience by writing simple messages on greetings cards. Cards will be supplied along with all the information you'll need. Amnesty International state that cards benefit the prisoners by telling them they are not forgotten – and by reminding their captors that the eyes of the world are watching. There will be a short introductory service and an opportunity to donate towards postage stamps, and tea or coffee will be available.

You can still take part even if you can't come along on Sunday: check out the AI website [here](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write) for more info.

Outdoor Church Linlithgow



**Come along for a gentle
Advent Walk**

10th December 2:00pm

**Meet at
Linlithgow Cross**

(No meeting in January)



Please wear suitable clothing!



**ST.
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Outdoors Once More

Earlier on Sunday, Outdoor Church gathers at The Cross at 2pm for the last meeting of the year. The plan is to enjoy a gentle walk seasoned with a few seasonal readings, plus hot chocolate. Bring your (well-behaved) dog to worship!

Outdoor Church will resume on Sunday 11 February.



Trees Just Keep Growing

This year's Festival of Christmas Trees looks to have broken all previous records with 78 trees, over 3,000 visitors and uncountable gallons of hot chocolate! Congratulations to Margaret Johnston and her extremely hard-working team (including this rather elegant military man).

All clear proceeds will go to support Quiet Waters, the counselling charity based in Falkirk.



Come and join us! All are welcome.

Blue Christmas Service

**Wednesday 20 December 2023
At 7.00 pm**

**St Michael's Parish Church
Linlithgow**

This short meditative and reflective service is for anyone for whom Christmas is difficult. If wished, people can write a message to hang on the Christmas tree. Refreshments will be served and there will be an opportunity for conversation and fellowship with the ministers and with each other.



Cross House Caretakers

Next time you're in Cross House, make sure to say hello to Enida Elezi and Llani Bledar. Enida and Llani are providing specified caretaking services in exchange for the opportunity to stay in the Cross House flat. Welcome, Enida and Llani!

Hope Explored



Is there someone you know who is interested in the big questions of life? Do you have a friend or family member who is interested in spirituality?

In January, St Michael's is running a Hope Explored course. This is an opportunity to explore the importance of hope in our lives, and to discover how God might fit into it.

The course runs over three weeks, and includes a meal, watching a video, and some discussion. No question is off limits, everyone of all faiths and none are welcome.

For more information, or to book a place, email [here](#) by 7th January.



Hope Explored is an informal and relaxed three-week course. It's for anyone who wants to find hope, peace and purpose in life. It's run by ordinary Christian people local to you and is completely free. You don't need to know anything about the Bible, and you won't be asked to pray or sing. You can ask any question you like, or you can just sit and listen.

Whoever you are, whatever you're thinking, **Hope Explored** is a place for you to discover the hope of a future that is better than you could ever imagine.

HE

Starting 24th January 2024
Kirk Hall, Cross House,
Linlithgow

To register, or for more
information, email
hopelinlithgow@gmail.com
by 7th January

Pray Every Day

Sunday: Give thanks for the progress of work on the spire and for the work of the fundraising team in supporting this. Pray for its timely completion.

Monday: Pray we will successfully fill the posts of Pioneer and Outreach Worker and Early Years Worker, and give thanks for all Lorraine Orr and Fiona McCracken achieved in their time with us.

Tuesday: Pray for our Pastoral Visitors as they visit the shut in, the lonely and the vulnerable in our congregation.

Wednesday: Pray for peace with justice in the seemingly insoluble conflict between Israel and Gaza. Pray that the bereaved would be comforted, the sick and wounded healed and that all those displaced would receive food, water and shelter.

Thursday: Pray that all of us in St Michael's and in the wider community may be challenged during this advent season to think in new ways of the coming of our Lord Jesus.

Friday: Pray for the liaison team overseeing the upcoming merger of the four churches, and for wisdom when difficult issues have to be addressed.

Saturday: Pray for our ministry team and their families at this particularly busy time. May they know God's blessing and peace as they share the wonderful message of God incarnate with many at this time.



Where is God in Israel/Palestine

Here is a thought-provoking answer to that question from Rev Dr Munther Isaac, dean of Bethlehem Bible College and pastor of Christmas Lutheran Evangelical Church in Bethlehem.

To explain the photo, depicting this year's Manger at his church, he says "Christmas in Palestine this year. The Holy Child under the rubble. Immanuel God is with us in our pain and suffering. God in solidarity with the oppressed. The child of Bethlehem is our hope, for the children of Gaza and all victims of wars.

In Gaza today, God is under the rubble. He is in the operating room. If Christ were to be born today, he would be born under the rubble. We see his image in every child killed and pulled from under the rubble, in every child in incubators."

Knit While You Natter



The Kirk Knitting Club meet in Cross House on the first Monday of each month at 10:30. In between lots of friendly chat and cups of tea or coffee, they produce some impressive knitting including the red poppies pulpit fall that graced the church for Remembrance Sunday. Newcomers are always welcome, whether it's the knitting or the nattering that attracts you!



Christmas Fun Further Afield



Out of the Box Theatre Group are performing their Christmas musical 'Mary and Joseph... and a Donkey Called Hank' at Fairmilehead Parish Church in Edinburgh (just off the bypass) on **Saturday 16 December at 2pm**. Actors and puppets will tell the story in this zippy 1-hour production, which might just be the alternative you are looking for to yet more shopping or Hollywood Christmas schmalz.

To reserve your tickets (£7 for adults and £3 for children), contact the Fairmilehead church office [here](#) or by phone on 0131 445 2374.

Christmas Services

A poster for Avonbridge Parish Church with a black background and white text. At the bottom, there is an illustration of three lit candles (two purple, one white) and a nativity scene with figures in a manger, surrounded by greenery and berries. The title is in a white cursive font, and the service list is in a white sans-serif font.

*Advent & Christmas at
Avonbridge Parish Church*

Sunday 3rd Dec - Morning Worship, 10:00am
Sunday 10th Dec - Gift Service & Agape Breakfast, 10:30am
Monday 11th Dec - Schools Christmas Service, 9:30am
Sunday 17th Dec - Morning Worship, 10:00am
Thursday 21st Dec - Longest Night Service, 7:00pm
Sunday 24th Dec - Christmas Eve Carols & Lessons, 10:00am
Sunday 24th Dec - Watchnight Service, 11:30pm
Sunday 31st Dec - Morning Worship, 10:00am

Our friends at Avonbridge have a busy schedule over the next few weeks, including a Longest Night Service at 7pm on 21 December. All are welcome for this short time of quiet reflection on the longest night of the year, for those who want to take the opportunity to remember loved ones who are no longer with us.

A poster for Torphichen Kirk with a dark blue background. It features a large, bright white starburst in the upper right corner. The title is in a white sans-serif font. The service list is in a white sans-serif font. At the bottom, the phrase 'All are welcome' is written in a white cursive font. The background also shows silhouettes of buildings and palm trees.

Advent at Torphichen Kirk

Sunday 3rd 11:15am – Morning worship
Sunday 10th 11:15am – Informal Advent service: all join in with hot chocolate, carols and decorating the Christmas tree
Saturday 16th 7.30pm – Christmas Carol Evening (*Community Centre*)
Sunday 17th 11:15am – Morning worship
Sunday 24th 11:15am – Nine Lessons & Carols
Sunday 24th 11:30pm – Watchnight Service (*Avonbridge Church*)
Sunday 31st 10am – Joint morning worship (*Avonbridge Church*)

All are welcome

Torphichen Kirk also has a full line-up of Christmas services coming up. Alongside these, the Christmas Carol Evening at 7:30pm on Saturday 16 is a relaxed event, held in the Torphichen Community Education Centre across the road from the church. If you play an instrument to Grade 3 standard or higher and would like to help the scratch orchestra of around 30 musicians make a joyful noise, please contact Innes Duncan [here](#), and turn up 30 minutes early at 7pm for a quick warm-up!

Why not take the opportunity to visit one of these fellowships, or St Ninian's Craigmailen, during the festive season?

And here's the timetable for Christmas at St Michael's, including the St Michael's at Springfield carol service this Sunday which brings their 2023 season of worship to a close.



St Michael's Christmas Services

Sunday, 10th December, Second Sunday in Advent
9.45am Carol Service at Springfield Primary School

Sunday, 17th December, Third Sunday in Advent
10.00am Family Service with Sunday Club Nativity
7.00pm Festival of Lessons and Carols

Wednesday, 20th December
7.00pm Blue Christmas Service

Sunday, 24th December
7.00pm Christingle Service
11.00pm Community Carol Singing
11.30pm Christmas Eve Watch Night Service

Monday, 25th December, Christmas Day
11.00am Morning Service followed by Holy Communion

Sunday, 31st December
10.00am Morning Service

Sunday, 7th January 2024
10.00am Epiphany




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What Do You Think?

The St Michael's Parish Church newsletter goes to over 500 email addresses. We try to offer snapshot news of recent and upcoming items relevant to church folk. We're delighted that so many of you (typically around 70%) open the newsletter, and that several go on to follow up by clicking through or responding to requests for help.

But we'd love to hear what you really feel about the newsletter. Are there items you think we feature too much, or not enough? Are there stories we are missing altogether? Do you have an idea for something we could feature?

Whatever you feel about the newsletter, please click [here](#) to tell us. We look forward to seeing what you have to say!



Watch out for the first newsletter of 2024 around 8th February. For now, we wish you and yours a happy, peaceful and blessed Christmas!

JOIN US FOR WORSHIP



**ST.
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Our worship services are every Sunday at 10am. As Covid-19 remains highly transmissible, if you feel unwell please consider taking a lateral flow test before attending for worship. We look forward to worshipping with you, safely and joyfully, Sunday by Sunday.

Services at Springfield School are **at 09:45 (10 December last one for the year, resumes Sunday 7 January)** and you are invited to enter the school hall by the main door.

Contemporary evening service will resume at the end of January (6.30pm in the Kirk Hall) and will run every Sunday for an experimental period. Watch out for further information on the website and Facebook nearer the time

If you are not able to attend in person, our main church services are live-streamed

Website: <https://www.stmichaelsparish.org.uk>

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/stmichaelsparishlinlithgow/>

They are available shortly after the end of the service for 1 week on the Kirk website under 'Faith'/'Worship Replay' or <http://www.stmichaelsparish.org.uk/replay>

and later on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/c/StMichaelsLinlithgow>

NB: Please note that services that are uploaded to YouTube and elsewhere on the web also remain available for 1 week after each service.

CDs of the Sunday service are also available to those without internet. Please check in with neighbours and friends to see if they would like a copy and contact the office: info@stmichaels-parish.org.uk

We take our members' privacy seriously, and the information provided will be retained by us for as long as it is required for the purpose for which it was collected or unless you tell us otherwise. A copy of our full Privacy Notice can be found on our website <http://www.stmichaelsparish.org.uk>

This information is for church use only and is not shared with any third parties.



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**St Michael's Parish Church of Scotland, Linlithgow is a
Scottish Charity Reg No SC016185**