

# Leaflet

**Greenbank Parish Church**  
Braidburn Terrace, EH10 6ES  
No 568 Dec 2006/Jan 2007



## Pulpit Diary

- Dec 3 First Sunday in Advent**  
*Start of Christmas Offering for Christian Aid*  
9.30am First Sunday Service, led by World Mission Committee  
10.30am Rev Dr John Stevenson  
Sacrament of Baptism
- Dec 10 Second Sunday in Advent**  
10.30am Rev Dr John Stevenson  
Gift Service
- Dec 17 Third Sunday in Advent**  
10.30am Rev Dr John Stevenson  
7.00pm Carol Party in Main Hall
- Dec 24 Fourth Sunday in Advent**  
9.30am Rev Dr John Stevenson  
Sacrament of the Lord's Supper  
10.30am Rev Dr John Stevenson  
Service of Lessons and Carols  
11.30pm Christmas Eve Watchnight Service  
Carol Singing in the Church from 11.10pm
- Dec 25 Christmas Day**  
10.30am Short Family Service
- Dec 31**  
10.30am Rev Dr John Stevenson
- Jan 7**  
10.30am Rev Dr John Stevenson
- Jan 14**  
10.30am Rev Donald Pirie
- Jan 21 Sacrament of the Lord's Supper**  
9.00am, 10.30am & 3.00pm  
Rev Dr John Stevenson  
3.00pm Service in Braid Room
- Jan 28**  
10.30am Rev Dr John Stevenson
- Feb 4**  
9.30am First Sunday Service  
Led by Help the Homeless Group  
10.30am Rev Dr John Stevenson

## Minister's Log

Let me first say a word of thanks to all who helped with the Harvest Thanksgiving Service and to members of the congregation who wrote to thank the church for the gifts that were delivered to them.

Time seems to fly faster than ever at this time of year. Soon it will be Christmas and then New Year and then, perhaps by the Springtime, the start of a new ministry in Greenbank. You will see that I have tried to keep to the traditional pattern of services over Advent and Christmas.

Some people talk about "spending Christmas" – they say "where will you be spending Christmas?" ("spend" being the operative word for many); others talk about "keeping Christmas" (a reminder perhaps that the Christmas message is always relevant); and still others, perhaps the more liturgical, think of "observing Christmas." I would like to think that we "celebrate" Christmas and that it is, above all, a time for rejoicing and thanksgiving together. It is an occasion in which the whole family of the Church can participate. Young people will take part in the Gift Service and in the short Candle-lighting ceremonies with which we begin each Sunday in Advent.

I hope that all ages will come and again enjoy our famous Carol Party, at 7pm on 17th December. I hope to have another brain-teasing Quiz for the young members of the audience, whatever their ages. This year the questions will be on Fairy Tales, so now is your chance to swot up on the lesser known ones.

Remember that you do not need cards for our Communion Service at 9.30am on Christmas Eve.

I expect that the congregation will once

again respond generously to our annual *Christmas Offering for Christian Aid*. It is one practical way in which we can express our appreciation of the love which God revealed in Jesus. Here is another way: we have received a letter from the International Office of the University of Edinburgh asking if anyone is willing to



offer overseas students hospitality, either during term time or during the Christmas/New year vacation, by inviting them to join them for a family meal. No overnight accommodation is required. Anyone interested should contact me.

Thinking of the impact it would make if we were to put the Christmas message into practice all the year round and the difference we can all make with just a little effort, I leave you with this story of a Snowflake: "Tell me what does a snowflake weigh?" said the red robin to the pigeon. "Next to nothing," was the reply, "why do you ask?"

"Well," said the red robin, "I was sitting on the branch of a fir tree one day, when it began to snow. Not like a wild snowstorm, the snowflakes came down just softly and silently and weightlessly. Since I had nothing better to do, I counted the snowflakes which came to rest on the twigs and needles of my branch. I got to exactly 3,741,952 of them. And then when the three million, seven hundred and forty-one thousand, nine hundred and fifty-third flake fell, a mere nothing as you say, the branch broke." And so saying the robin flew away, leaving the pigeon to wonder just what one single mere nothing snowflake could do.

**John Stevenson**

Please deliver material for the February *Leaflet* to the Editors' pigeon hole by 10.30am on Sunday 14th January, or to 17 Jordan Lane or by email to [alison@eca.ac.uk](mailto:alison@eca.ac.uk) or [j.murison@ed.ac.uk](mailto:j.murison@ed.ac.uk) by 6pm on Tuesday 16th January.

## Christmas – a time of surprises

I well remember the excitement I experienced as a child on many a Christmas Eve – my parents lost count of the number of times I got up and then was ordered back to bed. It was the longest night of the year! But in the morning there were surprises to encounter as presents were unwrapped, and shouts of delight welcomed some while another pair of socks was greeted in a more subdued way.

The intervening years have put the exchange of gifts into perspective. There is a greater gift to accept in the form of the Christ-child. In ministerial life it would be easy to become blasé about the Christmas season but instead I have found that my sense of wonder and surprise has grown. The more experience of life I gain, and the more I see of what is happening in the world, the more surprised I am at the Christ-child gift. Here, born into poverty and wrapped in strips of cloth, is the living expression of the redeeming love of God for humankind. *God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day.*

Christmas surprises come to us in many different forms and shapes. My prayer for you individually and as a Church is that God will surprise you afresh this Christmas with the extent of his love for you.

**Rev Dr Jared Hay, Interim Moderator**

## Scoutpost

The Scout Association will be receiving Christmas cards (18p per card), for delivery within the Edinburgh area, at Greenbank Parish Church during the following times:

**Thursday 30th Nov** 6.30pm–8pm

**Sunday 3rd Dec** 10am–12 Noon

**Tuesday 5th Dec** 6.30pm–8pm

Please note that cards will *not* be accepted during the periods of Sunday worship.

**Editors**

## Charity Christmas Card and Gift Sale, 4th November

Thank you to all who supported this event on 4th November. 19 charities took tables with a wide variety of cards, craftwork and other gifts for sale and our Guild ran a splendid Home Baking stall in the Session Room. I know that the refreshments organised by Liz Smith and her team of helpers were much appreciated and I am most grateful to Jim Davidson for his help in setting up beforehand and clearing up afterwards.

Next year's event is scheduled for 3rd November from 10am–3pm!

**Kathleen Patrick**

## Sunday Volunteers required at Royal Edinburgh Hospital

Sunday Volunteers Are Urgently Required By The Department of Spiritual Care at The Royal Edinburgh Hospital.

Volunteers come along (on average every 6 weeks) on a Sunday morning, 9.50am until about 11.15am, to help the Chaplain set up before Worship, to befriend patients and visitors, and to serve tea and coffee after the Service.

Full training will be provided.

*For further details or to register interest, please contact:*

Department of Spiritual Care  
Royal Edinburgh Hospital  
Morningside Terrace,  
Edinburgh EH 10 5HF  
Tel/Fax: 0131 537 6516

E-mail:

marion.paxton@lpct.scot.nhs.uk

## Help the Homeless



### Fresh Start Collection

There has been a good response to the appeals for donations to Fresh Start. Many thanks to those who have been donating generously to help provide Starter Packs for those who have been homeless, and are about to move into their own accommodation. The packs are made up by volunteers in the premises of Edinburgh Furniture Initiative in Newhaven Road. These starter packs are a very valuable help to people who are on a limited budget. They also show we care about them.

Items can be donated on **Sunday 7th January 2007**. Donations of **Pots and Pans** are particularly needed. If you have any questions about donations to Fresh Start, please do see me in the hall on that date, or contact me and I will be happy to help.

**Alison Ambler**

### Caring Christmas Trees

When you buy just one Caring Christmas Tree you support Bethany Christian Trust's Winter Care Shelter. This provides shelter and food for the homeless at a time when they need it most

For the cost of a tree, Bethany can provide a homeless person with a hot meal, bed for the night and breakfast.

Tree sizes: 4ft to 8ft @ £5 per ft. Scottish-grown Nordman Firs, freshly cut and netted for safe transit.

**Order forms** are available on the table in the vestibule.

Or order online at

<http://www.caringchristmastrees.com>

Or Telephone 0845 111 8733

**Pauline Walker**

**For information about church organisations, please contact the Church Office (Mon–Fri, 9.30am–12.30pm):**

**Mrs May Brown**

e-mail: [greenbankchurch@btconnect.com](mailto:greenbankchurch@btconnect.com)

**The pastoral team can be contacted through the Church Office:**

**Rev Dr John Stevenson, Locum Minister**

**Mrs Anne Oxbrow, Pastoral Assistant**

To make contact with any of the organisations described in this Leaflet, please contact the Church Office.

## QII Christmas Family Ceilidh

**Saturday 16th December 2006**

**Cluny Centre (Upper Hall)**

**7pm–10.30pm**

**live music by the Southsiders**

**prices £10 adult/£5 child/£25 family**

**fundraiser – please support us!**

## World Mission

### *Micro-finance: financial services for the poor*

The recent award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Muhammad Yunus for his role with the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh in providing financial services to the poor has drawn attention to the importance of "micro-financing". In Indonesia alone there are said to be more than 600,000 institutions providing such finance. In the Philippines, for example, Oikocredit enables Aurea Fernando to employ fifteen people to make Wrango jeans from pre-cut sections.

Grameen makes loans to individuals but through small groups; loans are for business, not consumption; and collection of repayments is frequent, usually weekly. The loans are tiny and claims that micro-finance can eradicate poverty are probably far-fetched. But it is clear that the provision of funds through micro-finance is a very useful way in which small businesses in the Third World can be assisted.

Not everyone welcomes this availability of credit. Drug lords in Afghanistan dislike it because it gives a choice to farmers who otherwise could finance their crops only by growing poppies.

If micro-financing is to be expanded the costs will have to be reduced. For example it is too manpower intensive for borrowers to be frequently visited by their bankers. More competition should reduce costs as should new technology such as transferring funds via mobile phones.

(Drawn from *The Economist*, 21st October 2006.)

### *One World Stall*

The next One World stall is on **Sunday 19th December**. Chocolate bars are useful for Christmas stockings; buy them then.

## The Guild

If you are reading this before 28th November, there could still be the opportunity to come to our *Fundraising Event* in aid of Scottish Love in Action on **Tuesday 28th November at 7.30pm** in Greenbank Church. To entertain us, we have Kenny Milne with his Criterion New Orleans Jazz Band at what promises to be a very enjoyable and successful event. Tickets are £8.00, including refreshments, and will be on sale at the door.

There is only one meeting in December, on **Tuesday 12th at 7.30pm**, when the *Handbell Ringers of Great Britain* will sound out the spirit of Christmas for us at our Christmas Party, hosted by Isabel Hunter. On this occasion, we are very pleased that women@greenbank are joining us. Everyone may accept this invitation to attend our festive celebrations.

We herald in the New Year 2007 on **Tuesday 9th January at 10.30am** with our *Gift Envelope Coffee Morning*. Time to make a worthwhile resolution to attend these friendly informal occasions and all the other meetings too!

On **Tuesday 16th January at 7.30pm** our next meeting, led by Janet Walker and entitled *Opening the doors of Scotland's churches*, should be of particular interest for us all. Simon Green from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, will be giving us an illustrated talk on some of the finest churches of note in Scotland, churches well worth a visit.

We thank our loyal members for their continued support, as well as assuring a very warm welcome to any new members, and anyone, male or female, who wishes to attend any particular meeting.

## Work Party

The Work Party Christmas Meeting will be held at 2.30pm in the Main Hall on Thursday, 7th December when Mr Joe Cooney will speak about the work of E.M.M.S. International.

The first meeting of the Work Party in the New Year will take place on Thursday, 11th January at 2.30pm in the Hermitage Room.

**Doris Laing**

## Roger Bland



**Enid Mowat**



## Friendship Club

The new session of the Friendship Club began with three very interesting meetings. On 4th October our speaker was John Htet-Khin, well known to Greenbank members. His subject was *Burma Revisited*.

This was his first visit to his home country for many years, and he gave a most interesting account of this important and emotional journey – coming to terms with aspects of life which had changed in his absence, pleasure in being with members of his family and friends who had lived through these years. What seemed significant was his welcome, and through times of change those important to him remained unchanged in themselves.

On 16th October we welcomed Mrs Doreen Graham – Publicity Officer for the SSPCA. She gave a most interesting and enthusiastic talk about the work in which her organisation is involved. Few of us realised the extent of the tasks undertaken by the Association and their dauntless courage in preserving the comfort and care of so many species. She was an excellent ambassador for the work undertaken.

On 30th October the Club was delighted to welcome John Stevenson talking on *A Kirriemuir Experience*. His charge there followed a number of years spent in Cardonald in Glasgow.

His enthusiasm, interest and kindness brought deserved success, so that as his congregation grew his workload increased accordingly. This was a story of interest, commitment and success. We in Greenbank are well aware of these qualities.

J.M. Barrie was not forgotten and among the illustrations were pictures of his home and burial place, accompanied by anecdotes of his life. This was a most special and interesting afternoon.

**Eileen Crawford**

## Country Dance Club

### *Annual Party*

We are having our Annual Party at 7.30pm on **Saturday 13th January** in the Main Hall, with Alan Ross providing the music. We will be going over the programme, i.e. a quiet practice, on the last meeting of this term and on the first meeting of next, viz. **6th December** and **10th January**. If you enjoy Country Dancing, do join us, both for the practice and/or the party; we do call a quick resumé just before each dance.

There will be a programme of the dances on the notice board, after Christmas.

**David Paterson**

## QII Snippets... QII Snippets... QII

This term QII have played skittles, sampled worship at Charlotte Chapel, organized Hallowe'en parties (see photos below), supported Wateraid with the Riding Lights Theatre Company and explored the issue of HIV and AIDS.

This last topic brought us to the HIV respite unit, Milestone House, local to us all but the only one of its kind nationally. In other regions, patients would have to be admitted to hospital for respite care. Marion Chatterley, Milestone chaplain, and Colin McMahon, support worker, welcomed us with tea, chat and information! We were struck by their beautiful building with natural wood, craftwork and easy access to nature.

Meeting Jackie, Vera and Liz, unit users, made perhaps the biggest impression. They spoke with honesty and a fair bit of humour! Liz told of her painful difficulty in explaining her condition to her young grandson. HIV had damaged Vera's relationship with her son and grandson. Liz described the much-needed stability and security which Milestone House gives her, so she can then go home restrengthened. The ladies have explored their own faith and Vera was recently baptised.

Milestone (under Waverley Care) offers an impressive range of flexible services to its users. It needs £280,000 annually just to keep their sensitive and difficult work going and the two fund-raisers struggle to achieve this. In the list of charity giving, HIV/AIDS charities rank at the bottom. QIIers are selling Milestone's tartan ribbons around the church and in their schools; do stop them and buy one!

**QII Hallowe'en Parties:** The recent Halloween parties held by QII attracted nearly 90 youngsters of all ages (not all in the same hall!). The profit of £150 was shared between Milestone House and QII funds. *Some photos from the parties are shown here.*

**QII Ceilidh:** Finally, PLEASE come and celebrate Christmas with your family at the **QII Ceilidh on 16th December** – details are on page 2 of this *Leaflet*. We look forward to seeing you there!

Rachel, Roddy, Phil



## Bookstall

There will be a **Christmas Bookstall** in the Main Hall after the 10.30am service on **3rd December**. In addition to titles that may be suitable as Christmas gifts for adults and children, we will have copies of the *Book of the Month*, reviewed below, and *Pray Now 2007* – a prayer guide with suggestions for each day of the year. If you would like us to obtain any books on religious topics for you, please contact us.

The next Bookstall will be on **14 January**.

John and Joan Ritchie

## Book of the Month

*In the Footsteps of Saint Paul* by Edward Stourton

Hodder & Stoughton Religious Books; ISBN: 034086186X; Price £8.99 (pp 253)

Edward Stourton is probably best known as one of the presenters of the BBC Today programme and I ran across this book quite by chance. But it turns out to be rewarding to read, although familiarity with the letters of Paul in the New Testament is helpful. It is based on real travels to the places which form the essential background to any story of Paul's life and if one has visited some of them personally so much the better.

Stourton is no mere tourist. He has written and researched with the advantage of many local contacts, archaeologists, churchmen and journalists among them. His basic biblical and historical knowledge forms a strong background to his writing and this is the sort of book which will need to be read more than once and which will then add to one's basic knowledge of the Bible.

There is a comprehensive Bibliography which could easily lead to wider reading and the many Bible Verses cited in the text are listed in a valuable Index.

I can thoroughly recommend this book to anyone who would like to follow Paul in a readable text which one does not want to put down.

Bill McKinlay

# Congregational Register

Omitted from the on-line version of the *Leaflet*

## Church Flowers

*Provided by*

*Delivered by*

### Dec

3rd	Rutherford Family	Pauline Grant
10th	Paddy Bowman	Isobel Graham
17th	Katy Maguire	–
24th	<i>No flowers</i>	–
31st	<i>No flowers</i>	–

### Jan

7th	Ishbel Clark	Alison Lonie
14th	Maisie Sinclair	Valerie Macniven
21st	Mackay Family	
28th	Anne Morham/ Isobel Brown	Barbara Middleton

### Feb

4th	Anne Innes	Enid Mowat
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## Coffee Rota

<b>Dec</b>	3	D65 – Roger Bland
	10	Wednesday Morning Badminton Group
	17	D16 – Frank Hutson
	24	Teacher's Group
	31	Help the Homeless

### Jan

	7	Flower Group
	14	D41A & D41B – Doreen Cockburn & Gill Sweetman
	21	<i>Communion – no coffee</i>
	28	D33 – Maurice Berrill

### Feb

	4	D4 – Alison Berrill
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## Duty Teams

**3 Dec (First Sunday)** Walter Crosby, Brian Barron, Donald King, Donald McLeod, Roderick Morrison, Kathryn Sangster, Mairi Stevenson and Jim Young.

**10 Dec** Tom Walker, Bill Frazer, Fiona Grant, Stewart Hunter, Frank Hutson, Valerie Macniven, Paul Maxwell, Alison Murison and Leslie Stokoe.

**17 Dec** Alan Armit, Edith Armit, Patrick Cadell, Iain Davidson, David Ferguson, Elizabeth Mackay, Michael Pearson, Neil Ross and Malcolm Watters.

**24 Dec (+ 9.30 Communion)** John George, Kenneth Aitken, Tony Foster, Alistair Hunter, Hazel Macaulay, Kathleen Patrick, Jill Powlett-Brown and Dorothy Whitehead.

**31 Dec** Roger Bland, Richard Dunbar, Clifford Hastings, Chris Horne, Doris Laing, Enid Mowat, Robert Nimmo, Joyce Horberry and Keith Winton.

### 2007

**7 Jan** Ian Thom, Alison Berrill, Keith Clark, Ray Dely, Catherine Hardie, Anne Oxbrow, Isobel Thom, Kay Ellis, Michael Turnbull and Greig Scott.

**14 Jan** Stuart Sanders, Moira Davidson, Stuart Macmillan, John Murison, Fiona Greig, Alasdair Swan, Sandy Cameron and Sally Stephen.

**21 Jan (Communion)** John Rutherford, David Allan, Richard Denison, Kenneth Htet-Khin, Caroline Kehoe, Anne Kinnear, John Mowat, Jean Roynon-Jones and Colin Winchester.

**28 Jan** Walter Crosby, Brian Barron, Donald King, Donald McLeod, Roderick Morrison, Mairi Stevenson, Jim Young and Kathryn Sangster.

**4 Feb (First Sunday)** Alan Armit, Edith Armit, Patrick Cadell, Iain Davidson, David Ferguson, Michael Pearson, Neil Ross, Malcolm Watters and Elizabeth Mackay.



## Crèche Rota

*Supervisor*

*Helper*

### Dec

3rd	Ishbel Clark	Christine Wallace
10th	Rosemary McCulloch	Flora Pollock
17th	Lorna Peers	Christine Wallace
24th	(9.30am) Liz Foster Hazel McLachlan	Christine Morrow
31st	Eileen McKinnon	Julia Dunbar

### Jan

7th	Helen Barnes	Rachel Watt
14th	Janet Walker	Christine Wallace
21st	Shona Murray	Flora Pollock
28th	Pamela Neilson	Catrina Corbett

### Feb

4th	Wendy Darroch	Rachel Watt
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## Greenbank Christmas Card

The Greenbank Christmas card this year features a new painting of the Church (commissioned by the Kirk Session Communications Committee) by a local artist, Mr Athol Pirie of Pentland Gardens (Tel 447 3500).

*Editors*

## Paul's Purple Passages: Christmas

**Christmas is coming.** As if we need any reminder! When this edition of the Greenbank Leaflet appears there will still be four full weeks to Christmas Day, but since late October, if not earlier, shops have had displays geared to the annual spending spree, television commercials have featured the “must have” toys and gifts, decorations have been put up in the streets of towns and cities the length and breadth of the land and restaurants have been promoting Christmas Dinners for the month of December. In schools little children are rehearsing for concerts and plays. In our homes we are writing the cards in time for the Scout Post and wrapping the parcels for faraway places. And in churches the countdown to Christmas will begin on 3rd December with the start of Advent.

**Christmas is coming.** Despite the best efforts of local government officials and others to rename Christmas as ‘Winterval’ and to describe Christmas light displays as “winter” or “celebrity” lights, the majority of people in the United Kingdom continue to mark Christmas to a greater or lesser extent. Of course those who belong to other religions (Jews, Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus) will celebrate their own festivals, but they do not remain unaffected by what is going on around them. Even people who claim to have no religious affiliation will take notice of Christmas. They may do so because of happy memories of family and childhood or as a time of reflection and togetherness. And there are probably a small minority who observe the pre-Christian Yule, a Druid celebration, which marked both the shortest day of the year and the re-birth of the sun. (Which is why there are still some Christians who will have nothing to do with Christmas, claiming that it nothing more than a revival of pagan superstitions, traditions and rituals.)

**Christmas is coming.** But what is Christmas? Is it primarily commercially driven, a massive sales pitch to persuade us to part with our money or to use our credit cards, an attempt to make us guilty because we are not spending more on gifts for our families and friends? Is it simply about these same families and friends, a time when families come together as at no other time (unless perhaps for weddings and funerals) and we remember the friends we rarely see but who are still on our Christmas card lists? Is it no more than a welcome break in the darkest days when we may indulge in overspending and overeating, in wrapping up presents and putting up lights and engaging in a variety of jollifications? Or is it a religious festival, when we celebrate the birth of Jesus?

**Christmas is coming.** Between now and Christmas Eve no doubt someone somewhere will be making a plea to reject the spelling Xmas and to put Christ back into Christmas. “Jesus is the reason for the season.” But this then raises the question, Which Christ? Although at Christmas we inevitably focus on the baby born at Bethlehem, weak, helpless, vulnerable, we would not be celebrating the birth if we did not know the rest of the story, if we did not know about the man of Galilee and the victim of Calvary and the victor over death and the grave.



**Christmas is coming,** but it is the prelude and sequel which provide the context for the birth of Jesus and give it meaning and significance. This is why it can be helpful to go beyond the stories in the Gospels about the birth of Jesus. Many are happy to accept that “Jesus was born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of Herod”, as Matthew tells us. Their “Bethlehem religion” honours Jesus as an historical character whose teaching is unsurpassed and whose life was our perfect example. They are unwilling to leave Bethlehem behind to learn what this Jesus has done for each one of us and to explore the cosmic meaning of his birth.

**St Paul wrote his Letter to the Colossians** long before Matthew and Luke had put their Gospels together. The familiar stories about the birth of Jesus were circulated and became popular almost a generation after Paul and other early Christian preachers, teachers and thinkers had given serious thought to the meaning and consequences of that birth. By concentrating too much on the Child in the manger we have been in danger of telling less than the whole truth about Christmas and have failed to recognise in him the creative and healing and reconciling touch of God.

**St Paul wrote this:**

*We look at this Son and see the God who cannot be seen.  
We look at this Son and see God's original purpose in everything created.  
For everything, absolutely everything, above and below, visible and invisible, rank after rank after rank of angels – everything got started in him and finds its purpose in him.  
He was there before any of it came into existence and holds it altogether right up to this moment.  
And when it comes to the church, he organises and holds it together, like a head does a body.  
He was supreme in the beginning and – leading the resurrection parade – he is supreme in the end.  
From beginning to end he's there, towering far above everything, everyone.  
So spacious is he, so roomy, that everything of God finds its proper place in him without crowding.  
Not only that, but all the broken and dislocated pieces of the universe – peoples and things, animals and atoms – get properly fixed and fit together in vibrant harmonies, all because of his death...*

(Eugene H Petersen, *The Message*, Colossians 1, 15-20)

**These stupendous, breath-taking things** were being said about Christ within a generation of his death. Staggering as they are, they must be said by us, too, if we are to take seriously the full significance of Christ's birth, life, death and rising. Paul's words may be difficult to understand, but they claim that Jesus is the Creator, the Sustainer and the Final Goal of the world, a truly cosmic Christ. Similarly he is the source and origin of the New Creation, the Church. And when God's good world is threatened with disintegration it is Christ who is God's effective agent of a truly cosmic harmony, the peace and goodwill of the angels' Christmas song.