

## CHURCH BULLETIN

We are a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland. We gather each Lord's Day to praise and worship the only true and living God.

24th December 2023



### SUNDAY SERVICES

Both services today will be taken by Mr Donald MacAulay (Carloway). Our services are livestreamed at <https://www.youtube.com/@shawbostfreechurchofscotland>

At the **12.00noon service** the Scripture reading will be taken from Luke Chapter 2 and the sermon will consider *The Birth of Jesus*.

At the **6.00pm service** the Scripture reading will be Matthew Chapter 2 and the sermon will consider *The Wise Men*.

The praise will be led by our precentor(s) and the Psalms for this Lord's Day are as follows:

	12.00 Noon Service		6.00pm Service	
1	Psalms 145(ii) 1-7	Psalter	Psalms 40:7-10	Psalter
2	Psalms 145(i) 8-14	Psalter	Psalms 1	Psalter
3	Psalms 27: 4-7	Psalter	Psalms 2:1-7	Psalter
4	Psalms 24: 7-10	Psalter	Psalms 2:8-12	Psalter

### SUNDAY SCHOOL

There will be no Sunday School today due to the school holidays.

### SERVICES NEXT LORD'S DAY

The services next Lord's Day will be taken by Rev Roddy John Campbell.

### WEEKLY PRAYERMEETING AND BIBLE STUDY

The weekly prayer meeting and Bible study on **Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> December at 7pm** will take place in the Church Hall. Everyone is most welcome and encouraged to attend,

### FREE CHURCH YOUTH CAMPS

Free Church Youth Camps are week-long activity camps for young people in P5-S6. There are a variety of exciting activities (often including things like go-karting and water sports) but the main event is the gospel-centred teaching. Campers will have the opportunity to learn more about Jesus and explore the Christian faith for themselves in a safe and relaxed environment. FCYC are a week of fun and friendship, and the chance to learn more about Jesus and His love for you. For full details and to register visit: <https://www.freechurchofscotland.org/youth-camps/> Registration for next summer's **Free Church Youth Camps** has opened. Eleven camps are planned for summer 2024 catering for those in P5-S6 – including a new addition of **Renfrew Seniors**. It would be appreciated if you could take time to look through the camps we have on offer and encourage families in your congregation to register their children for FCYC 2024. God has richly blessed the evangelistic efforts of the camps over the last 63 years and we pray this would continue.

### THE ISLANDS STUDY CONFERENCE

The Islands Study Conference relaunches on the weekend of **2nd - 4th February 2024**. The lectures will be held in the North Harris Free Church to which all are welcome to attend. No pre booking is required for lectures. There is a residential option available in the Harris Hotel for the duration of the Conference. The speakers are **Rev John Macleod (Allander Evangelical Church)** and **Rev David Court (Christ Church, Edinburgh)**. For further information or to book accommodation or meals please contact: [ischotelbookings@yahoo.com](mailto:ischotelbookings@yahoo.com)

### IMMANUEL

Immanuel is one of Christ's most precious names. It is a combination of two Hebrew words that together mean "God with us." The gospel of Matthew explains that Christ received this name in fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

For many people, the name Immanuel has a nice ring to it that suggests comfort and hope in times of trouble. Yet there is a lot more substance and significance to this name. The encouragement Christians can take from this name is no mere vague impression or passing emotion. The truth conveyed by this name has both a glorious beauty and a wide range of blessings attached to it.

#### The Beauty of Immanuel

The Bible uses the name Immanuel mostly in connection with the incarnation of Christ. The first time we hear this name is when Isaiah prophesied the virgin birth of Christ: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" ([Isa. 7:14](#)).

Isaiah spoke these words to Ahaz, king of Judah, who was being threatened by surrounding nations. When you read the context you find that, sadly, Ahaz had no interest in God being with him. Despite that, Isaiah told him a person named "God with us" would come. In the fullness of time, Christ would become incarnate in order to bring God's presence to us. He would be born of a virgin, thus escaping the corruption of David's line while remaining David's son.

Christ is an incarnate Savior. That's the beauty of Immanuel. He didn't come as an angel or some spirit manifesting itself from time to time. He took to Himself bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. No other religion can give such comfort and hope.

#### The Blessings of Immanuel

Because the Son of God took to Himself our nature, there are a myriad of blessings represented in His name Immanuel:

1. He is God-with-us to reconcile sinners to God. Man is born alienated from God, and God can have no fellowship with Him because of sin. But Immanuel came to save His people from their sins ([Matt. 1:21](#)). He gave His life as an offering for sin so that sinners can be brought back into fellowship with God ([1 John 1:3](#)). On the cross He could promise the repentant thief that he would be with Him in paradise ([Luke 23:43](#)), that is to say, in fellowship with God.
2. He is God-with-us to guide, empower, and expand His church. Having ascended into heaven, Christ is now no longer with believers physically here on earth. Yet as the Heidelberg Catechism expresses so beautifully, "with respect to His Godhead, majesty, grace and Spirit, He is at no time absent from us" (Q&A 47). At the close of the gospel of Matthew, Immanuel promised His church, "Behold, I am with you always" ([Matt. 28:20](#)).
3. He is God-with-us to comfort His people. Think of [Psalm 46](#), which so beautifully describes the encouraging presence of God in the midst of very chaotic circumstances. He is "a very present help in trouble" (v. 1). Christians need not fear, even when the earth shakes and kingdoms rage. God's presence with His people is constant: "The Lord of hosts is with us" (vv. 7, 11). Believer, God is near you, to help and protect you.
4. He is God-with-us to bring His people to glory. We read in [Revelation 21:3](#) of the new heavens and the new earth, where "God himself shall be with them." In glory, the presence of God with His people will be perfect and uninterrupted. [Revelation 22:4](#) tells us that they shall even see His face.

Do you believe this record God has given of Immanuel? Do you see how low Christ stooped to be God-with-sinners? Do you experience the blessings of God-with-us? These can only be ours through a new birth from above. His birth calls us to ask: Have I been born again? If so, He is your Immanuel.

By Dr. Gerald M. Bilkes, Professor of New Testament and Biblical Theology at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Taken from [Ligonier.org](#)