

Dear friends,

I write this two months into my year as part of the staff team in Strathclyde, and time is flying.

It is proving a real joy to minister with you, particularly in Kilsyth and Milton, but also as part of the wider circuit team.

I said at the welcome service that it felt very odd to be welcomed to the place where my ministry started – I trained as a Local Preacher in the old Glasgow circuit, and candidated from there a few years later – and in which I've been preaching for the last three years, but it's definitely proving to be a good sort of odd.

Thank you for your welcome.

Being 'the minister' again rather than just a visiting preacher on the plan means that I'm back into all the planning for the festivals of the church year. This edition of the plan takes us from Advent, through Christmas, to the brink of Lent. I always find it strange that we rush from Jesus' birth to his death and resurrection at such speed, but such is the way our calendar works. At this time of year when the darkness can feel endless as the nights get longer and the weather cold and gloomy, how good it is that we get to celebrate the light of the world being born among us. And in a world where the metaphorical darkness seems all around us, where the news is full of pain and suffering, thank God that we get to tell a story of hope, of God who loved the world so much that Jesus came to be one of us, to know what it is to be human, to live and die that we might know God for ourselves.

So, this Advent and Christmas, may you see the light shining in the darkness, may you cling to the hope that things can be different, and may you rejoice in being part of the kingdom Jesus came to bring about. As we worship together, may we be part of the light that shines in the darkness of our world, that others too may find hope.

Helen J