

**Ballantrae Parish Church
and
St Colmon Parish Church
Newsletter**

December and January 2020/21

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Ballantrae Parish Church

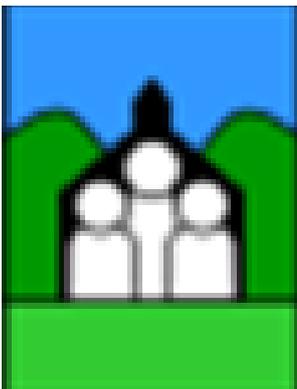
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From Your Minister

Dear All,

I do hope that this edition of the magazine finds you well. It seems that the threat of Covid 19 has come closer to home in recent weeks and leaves many with worries. There are challenges too for all of us as we face ongoing restrictions particularly in the run up to Christmas. As churches we have been very limited this year as we have implemented measures to curb the spread of the virus.

In the run up to Christmas this year it is particularly important that we keep in mind its true significance. The birth of the babe at Bethlehem was indeed good news for all. Jesus was born into this world to be our saviour. The fact that God came in him to dwell with us is known as the mystery of the incarnation. That God took on human flesh in Jesus is good news because it means that God understands the challenges that we face in this world. He knows what it is like as we face disappointments and restrictions. One of the names for Jesus is Immanuel which means, God with us. May we remember and be blessed by the truth that whatever happens God is there with us, bringing his loving presence.

2020 has been a very challenging year, but I think that we should look forward with hope and expectation for 2021. It seems at last that the hope of a viable vaccine is in sight and if we all work together, we can help to keep others safe. It may take a few months of 2021 to see many changes, but we need to pray and be hopeful. I look forward to services returning to a more "normal" format when we can communally sing God's praise in safety. I also look forward to resuming services at Glennap and Barrhill, and restarting other activities such as coffee mornings. God is with us and has been throughout this year, may we look for him being at work and trust in his purposes in 2021.

I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a wonderful Christmas and happy new year.

Every blessing,

Rev'd Theo Corney

Points for Prayer

“Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full on His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.”

The words of a chorus to remind us that however dark our present journey may seem, there is light and hope as soon as we come into the presence of the One who said “I am the light of the world.”

Pray for all those who are finding the present restrictions difficult and lonely.

Pray for our congregations that we may be bound together in spirit and mind even when separated physically.

Pray that God will open his word to us as we read our Bibles and seek to know his will for us. And that he will lead us into a closer and deeper relationship with himself.

Pray for the church worldwide as Christians in so many places face unprecedented levels of persecution and violence and exclusion. These are our brothers and sisters.

Pat Guthrie



CHURCH SERVICES

Ballantrae Parish Church

We meet every Sunday at 11:30am in Ballantrae Church.

Prior to lockdown a service was held in **Glenapp Church** at 3pm on the first Sunday of each month, and will resume when restrictions allow.

St Colmon (Arnsheen Barrhill and Colmonell) Parish Church

We meet every Sunday at 10am in Colmonell Church. We are currently unable to hold our monthly services in the Kirk Hall due to its size in relation to the two metre distancing restriction.

Our monthly service in **Barrhill Memorial Hall** is currently unable to go ahead due to the closure of the hall, but will resume when the hall reopens.

Each week's sermon is currently available to read or watch as a video on the Ballantrae Church Facebook page.

Ballantrae and St Colmon Sunday Schools

Ballantrae Sunshine Club and St Colmon Sunday Club are not able to meet at present, but are looking forward to restarting when it is safe to do so.



Christmas Services

A Watchnight Service will be held in **St Colmon Church** on 24th December at **11:30pm**, followed by a Christmas Day Service in **Ballantrae Church** at **10am**.

Please check on our website for any further details regarding these events nearer Christmas

The Story of Mince Pies

As with most of our Christmas traditions, the story of mince pies lies deep in our past, from well before the reformation. Originally they were made to look like a manger with a cover on top – just like a little cradle. And sometimes people would place a baby Jesus, made from pastry, on it. The whole idea being to remind people of birth of the Christ Child.

These little mangers were filled with meat and game and spices, the latter to recall the bitter elements of the nativity story. When eating their Mince (or Christmas) pie, believers were asked to think again of how God came down to earth to save mankind. This practice eventually evolved into making a wish before taking the first bite – alas developing into a superstition! Nevertheless, when next you have a mince pie, think of its origins and thank God for such a wonderful Saviour as Jesus.

Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall
Oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Swift are winging angels singing, nowells ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the babe is Lord of all. Christ the babe is Lord of all!

Provided by Rev. Jim Guthrie



Blythswood Care Shoebox Appeal 2020

Every year the Shoebox Appeal seems to generate a ‘new’ normal. This year the new normal was so very, very different!

The outstanding facilities at Fullarton allowed the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic to be contained and applied in such a manner as to allow the Appeal to go ahead in a great measure of controlled safety. Blythswood Care is enormously grateful for the flexibility afforded.

Quite simply, a secure cordon was established and maintained around and within the boundaries of Fullarton Hall and the Schoolroom. All volunteers who wished to help had to pre-book hourly slots. On arrival at the entrance to the cordoned area, each volunteer had to register, submit to a heat sensor test, and then – and only then proceed into the cordoned area.

As in previous years, many folk arrived at the cordon desk with gifts for the shoeboxes but, this year, there were special routines for gifts too. A “quarantine” box was situated just outside the cordon into which all donations of shoeboxes and additional gifts were placed. These gifts were then stored safely for 72 hours before being brought into use within the Fullarton Hall or Schoolroom area.

The other significant change in routine was the greater use of ‘our’ industrial unit in Harbourside. By the end of the Appeal the unit had housed **607** filled cartons, each with an average of **10 and a half** filled shoeboxes!

This year was different in many ways – slightly fewer helpers (perhaps because unaccompanied youngsters were not allowed), no Scripture Union groups, less blethering due to the need for face coverings, and greater work output (no tea/coffee cups at each work place!)

Again, we were fortunate to be able to call on the ready and obliging help of St Andrew’s and the Gospel Hall for the loan of tables.

Importantly, we were able to continue with our tradition of inviting a minister from one of the churches supporting the Ayrshire Shoebox effort to visit us and bless the gifts and their recipients. This year the 'new' minister in the linked charge of St John's Largs and Fairlie Parishes, Rev Dr Graham McWilliams, most willingly accepted and spent more than an hour going round the volunteers and making real contact with verve and wit. He has been involved with Blythswood Care for several years so well understood what we were about.

Immediately after the blessing of the boxes, those who were working in the Hall and Schoolroom were able to pause work, collect a shoebox, and gather on the pavement outside the old main entrance to Fullarton. We made a line of honour as the funeral cortege for Cathy McQueenie passed immediately after her funeral service. We mourned the loss of a much-loved founder member of the Shoeboxers.

Despite the expected lessening of numbers of completed shoeboxes this year, a surprising total of **6,359** shoeboxes were collected, inspected, completed with Christian literature, packed into cartons and stored in our warehouse in Irvine ready for final transportation (last year the number of boxes was just over 6,000!). A sum of almost **£7,800** was also donated to the charity to cover transportation and other costs.

The last of "our" filled cartons left Irvine on 27th November *en route* to Moldova.

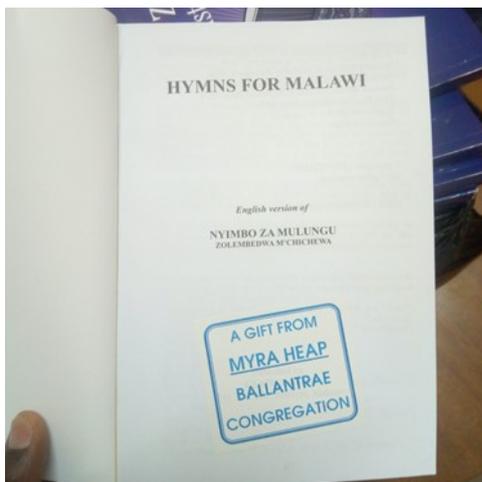
Our God is indeed a God of surprises – again and again!

Ballantrae Church Malawi Update

As the year rolls on and often we feel we can do so little for others it is worth reflecting on how much our little can mean to our sister church in Lwambasa.

During this year we have continued to support the church congregation with a monthly contribution to the ministerial stipend. In Malawi unless the church meets its obligations to the local synod they are unlikely to retain their minister who can be moved to another parish. By providing support to the church congregation it supports the continuity of ministry to the locality and in itself that continuity allows ongoing developments.

Prior to moving south Myra Heap made a generous donation to the Malawi fund and this allowed the purchase of hymn books in the two main languages spoken in the locality thus making shared worship and study easier and furthering the word of God.



The church in Lwambasa earlier in the year started a programme to build vestries in Lwambasa & Chisala. From the photographs received these vestries are not what we think of as a vestry but meeting halls for the congregations. As part of that work the Rev Blessings Kamanga asked if we could help with the funding of the roofing sheets to complete the buildings, which we are pleased to say we were able to support.

There are several photos attached showing the various stages of the building works to give a flavour of the work the congregation were undertaking showing just how much effort they were willing to put in to support their church & congregation.

Brick Making



Foundation Works



Formal handover of Funding to session Clerk to allow purchase of Roofing sheets



Completed Building



So what of the future for this group?

So far this year we have managed to continue supporting the congregation at Lwambasa despite having no opportunities for fundraising. Our big two events – the spring tea and the two spoon supper were cancelled due to the coronavirus situation. Sadly again given the current situation the Christmas card delivery will also have to be cancelled – sorry folks.

We are however now in the position where we only have enough money in the reserves to continue to support Lwambasa for another 4 to 5 months and without further funds our support for this congregation will cease. If you feel it appropriate and wish to continue supporting our brothers and sisters in Malawi then any donations to the funds would be gratefully accepted and can be handed to Colin our treasurer or to any member of the Malawi committee.

As you know Hal and Jackie have moved away from the area and although they will continue to support the Malawi group as much as possible additional help would be appreciated. If you feel you would like to offer support to the Malawi group by joining our steering committee then please get in touch either with Claire – clairestrain@live.co.uk or with Hal at hal.maxwell@btinternet.com.

OpenDoors

“Over 260 million Christians are persecuted. They follow Jesus, no matter the cost. With your help, we're bringing them hope and resources.”

Do you remember the handmade petition last year for which some of you made panels as part of OpenDoors “See Change” campaign? The handmade petition, a fabric banner made up of over 16,000 individual pieces, called on the UK Government Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative (PSVI) team to recognise that Christian women are doubly vulnerable to sexual violence, not just for their gender, but also for their faith.

Exactly one year on from the presentation of the handmade petition in Westminster Abbey, the PSVI team has launched a ‘Declaration of Humanity’. Lord Ahmad, the Prime Minister’s Special Representative on PSVI said this, “I affirm our unwavering commitment of promoting freedom of religion or belief for all and for preventing sexual violence. It is a tragic truth that women and girls from religious minorities often suffer. Simply why? Because of their gender, or indeed their faith. This must end. [...] With your support, and our collective efforts, I believe we can make a difference.”

And indeed, with your support, we are already seeing a difference. There is much more to be done, but this is an encouraging milestone.

With every blessing,

Izzy at OpenDoors

Learn more at advocacy@opendoorsuk.org

Colmonell Circle

The Circle was unable to complete our season of meetings but thanks to those who enabled a donation of £160 to be made to St Colmon Church.



Thanks to everyone at St Colmon's for your donations of **£75**.



The Stamp Appeal of 2020

As Christmas cards start to arrive please remember to save the stamps. Stamps must have a **one-centimetre border of envelope** left around them and not be torn or damaged.

Bring them to Church or phone Claire Pirrie on 841644.

Stamps are shared between the Church of Scotland's World Mission Project and Crossreach and sold to raise essential funds for their work.



- 100% free
- Raise money by shopping with your favourite retailers
- Over 2,700 retailers to choose from including Amazon
- Over 500,000 supporters already use [easyfundraising.org.uk](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk)

Unlike other websites, we do not take your payment information
Go to [easyfundraising.org.uk](https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk) then enter:

support a good cause > St Colmon Church > support this cause > create an account



Crossreach thanks St Colmon for the donation of £90

Impact Report 2019–20

Your continued prayerful and practical support has helped sustain us through these difficult months and it is our sincere hope that you have maintained your health and wellbeing during these times, as a valued member of our CrossReach family.

As you will be aware, our frontline work is always our priority and as part of our response to the impact of COVID-19, we revised our 2020 communications plan to reduce publications and mailing costs. One of the results is the launch of our interactive Impact Report which shares the personal stories of life-changing work supported by you and delivered on behalf of The Church of Scotland through CrossReach. Our ambition to reduce plastic and paper informed and shaped the first fully online CrossReach Impact Report 2019–20.

By going to www.crossreach.org.uk/impactreport_2019-20 you will see joy-filled pictures of creativity and fun, read of life goals achieved and view the short video messages from those we serve and from those who serve others on the frontline of social care.

Together, members of the CrossReach Family have celebrated the 150th anniversary of regulated social care provision by the Church of Scotland, sewn wash bags for care workers to use during the pandemic, engaged with Guild talks about social isolation and loneliness and much, much more!

Please take time to connect with this online resource. It is our prayer that you will find it a source of encouragement that will inspire prayers of thanksgiving for the work done in Christ's name.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Hay

Head of Service, Business Development



Life and Work: The Magazine of the Church of Scotland

Over 140 years, it has established itself as the voice of the Church of Scotland. During this challenging period, Life and Work is committed to helping keep our Christian community connected.

Though firmly rooted in the affairs of the Kirk, it also aims to cover a broad range of subjects of interest to church-goers across the spectrum, from international affairs and British political and social issues to science, ethics, and the arts.

Each monthly issue includes a forum for views on current social and moral issues; a monthly meditation and regular articles on the spiritual side of life; reviews of the latest books, videos, and Christian resources; and regular features on the Church worldwide.

The *Life and Work* magazine can be delivered direct to your door or any digital device. Visit the *Life and Work* website or find us on Facebook or Twitter.

Apart from usual methods of payment there is a special offer throughout 2021.

Payable by direct debit only a 12 Month Subscription is
ONLY £30 (includes 2 FREE ISSUES).

Shoebox Appeal 2020



Many thanks to those who gave 12 shoeboxes, 8 donation envelopes and bags of extra items for the shoebox appeal.

To everyone at St Colmon Church,

I have now handed over the role of session clerk for St Colmon Church to Lynne McIlwraith and I wish her well with this responsibility.

On Sunday 25th October I was surprised and overwhelmed by a presentation made on behalf of our Church family. Pat Guthrie's very kind words and your beautiful gifts, flowers and gift tokens made me feel very special and so grateful to be part of such a warm, generous and loving Christian family.

Fifteen years ago Roger and I returned to live in the family home and the first Sunday I walked up the church steps I was warmly greeted by Jimmy, Duncan, Alfie and others who made me feel so welcome that I immediately felt at home. Two years later I felt privileged to be asked to become a ruling elder of the Church and when Jimmy McLachlan decided to retire in 2009 the kirk session invited me to take on the role of session clerk. Other responsibilities followed and over the years it has been a pleasure to work with everyone and see the Church flourish and grow in so many ways.

Please accept my sincere thanks for your support and help in so many ways over the years. There are so many to thank but I would particularly like to mention Harriet Ellis, without whose unfailing support and hard work our Church would not function as well as it does.

We are all going through hard times in many ways at present, and a kind friend recently sent me these words of comfort:

What to do in dark valleys:

Refuse to be discouraged:

"I will fear no evil"

"God will strengthen you with his own great power so that you will not give up when troubles come, but you will be patient." Colossians 1 v.11

Remember that God is with me:

"For You are with me"

"When you go through deep waters and great trouble, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up – the flames will not consume you."

Isaiah 43 v. 2

Rely on God's protection and guidance:

"Your rod and staff comfort me."

"The good man does not escape all troubles; he has them too. But the Lord helps him in each and every one." Psalm 34 v. 19

Let us take comfort from looking back to the past and remembering people and places important to us and look forward and plan, knowing that we are always in God's presence. God guides and cares for us on our journey, showing us the way forward whatever that might be.

With thanks and wishing you all every blessing.

Claire

For Reading and Meditation: Isaiah Ch. 60 v. 1-3 + 19 –20

The days are drawing in, we need the lights on earlier each day
so that we are not in darkness,
In our spiritual lives we all struggle with dark times when we feel alone,
It is at these times that there is one we can turn to,
our beloved Saviour Jesus
He often experienced dark times in his life so he understands how we feel
and what we are going through,
Our Lord brings eternal light into our lives, He is there
when we stumble in the darkness
BELIEVE IN HIM

Prayer

Lord, you are the light of the world,
You called us out of darkness to share your light,
You dispel the darkness that often surrounds us,
The enemy wants us to walk in his darkness,
But you give us light and hope in our lives,
May we continue to walk in your light
in these darkest of days when there is so much uncertainty
When the whole world is in turmoil,
Not knowing when we will be able to meet
our families and loved ones
If we will ever again be free to move around.
Lord, let your everlasting light shine into our lives
Now and forever --
BELIEVE IN HIM
Amen

The Lord bless and keep you all in His light
Patricia Thackray

It's a busy few months in the manse with Eryn and Nathaniel celebrating their 11th birthdays. Then Simeon has his special first birthday in November with Reuben following in the New Year. Happy birthday to you all from Ballantrae and St Colmon congregations!



Drone footage taken during an inspection of the Ballantrae Church Steeple

Photo provided by Colin McNally



Birthdays

It has been an exciting few months in our home as we have had lots of Birthdays! We are particularly looking forward to Simeon's first Birthday in a few days. To prepare for this special day we have bought him a few presents and have ordered some dinosaur balloons for him to play with. We will also celebrate by making him a special birthday cake.



Have you enjoyed a special occasions in the last few months?

How does it feel when you are looking forward to something?

What do you do to count down the time to the big event?

Do you manage to balance your excitement with patience?

Advent

I am sure that you are beginning to look forward to celebrating Christmas. You may have even bought an advent calendar to help you count down the days until the 25th of December.



In church you may have seen an Advent Wreath which is used to count down the four Sundays before Christmas day. Advent wreaths are circular, representing God's infinite love, and are usually made of evergreen leaves, which "represent the hope of eternal life brought by Jesus Christ". Within the Advent wreath are candles that represent the four weeks of the Advent season as well as "the light of God coming into the world through the birth of Jesus Christ." The colour of candles used and what each candle represents can vary across different countries and denominations. However the heart behind Advent is much the same. Derived from the Latin word "adventus", the word advent means "arrival" or "coming". As Christians we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ.



A Story of Advent

Nicola had an Advent calendar every year. She looked forward to going to town with her mum at the end of November so that she could choose her calendar. She enjoyed opening each of the 24 doors and counting down the days until Christmas Day, and of course she loved eating the little chocolates hidden behind the doors. However this year was a little different. Nicola still bought a calendar but it was to be the first year that she was to understand why it was called an Advent calendar.

It was a cold wet Saturday afternoon at the end of November and Nicola and her mum had been into town. Nicola had chosen an Advent calendar, as she



always did, but as they were driving out of the car park Nicola turned to her mum and said, "What's Advent?"

Nicola's Mum explained that the word 'Advent' means 'arrival' and that it's a time when Christians look forward to celebrating Jesus' birth or his arrival. Nicola thought for a moment before saying, "And it starts on the first of December, and lasts for 24 days, like my calendar?"

"Well, not always," Mum said. "Advent begins on the Sunday nearest to 30th November which is sometimes on the 1st but not always, but you're right – it does last until Christmas Eve."

When they arrived home Nicola's mum told her that she would like to celebrate Advent in another way this year, as well as opening the doors on the Advent calendar. She said that she would like to make an Advent wreath and she explained that this is a circle of branches taken from an evergreen tree, with four candles standing around the outside of the circle and one in the centre. That afternoon Mum explained more as she and Nicola made their wreath.

Nicola found out that the wreath is in the shape of a circle, because just as a circle has no beginning and no end so God has no beginning or end either. It is made with green leaves because the colour green is a reminder of new life. They fixed four red candles into the wreath, with a white candle in the middle. The following Sunday was the first Sunday in Advent and Mum helped Nicola to light the first of the candles in their wreath. It was one of the red candles and she told Nicola that it is called the 'Prophecy Candle'. Nicola had no idea what the word 'prophecy' meant so Mum explained that it is a message from God telling His people about something that would happen in the future. The person who gives the message is called a prophet, and the 'Prophecy Candle' reminds us of the prophets who lived long ago. They told the people, who lived long before Jesus came to earth, that a special baby was going to be born.

At that time God's people were having problems and the prophet's message gave them hope for a better future. The 'Prophecy Candle' represents hope.

Nicola's mum liked to make her own Christmas cards and she liked to write and send them early. That week their dining room became a craft workshop as Mum, with Nicola's help, set to work making and writing cards. By Saturday they had finished and they were able to post them all. The next day, on the second Sunday in Advent, Nicola was able to light two candles; the 'Prophecy Candle' and a second red candle known as the 'Bethlehem Candle'. Of course Nicola knew what had happened in Bethlehem, and it was she who reminded her mum that Jesus had been born in a stable in Bethlehem about 2000 years ago. Mum told her that God sent his son Jesus to earth because he loves us, and for that reason the 'Bethlehem Candle' represents love.



The following week was very exciting as Mum took the Christmas decorations out of the attic, and they set to work making the house look beautiful. On Sunday the third red candle was lit along with the first two. Nicola's mum told her that this candle is called the 'Shepherds Candle' and it represents



joy. It reminds us of the joy of the shepherds when they were given the good news that Jesus had been born.

That week Nicola dressed as an angel and performed in her school nativity play. So on Sunday when Mum told her that the fourth candle was called the 'Angels Candle' she knew exactly where the angels appeared in the Christmas story.

Nicola remembered that the angels appeared to the shepherds in the fields outside Bethlehem. She wasn't surprised that this last red candle represented peace, since one of her lines in the play was, 'Don't be afraid! I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people.'

Nicola's mum tried to be as organised as possible and she had bought quite a few presents already. Even so, the week before Christmas was always busy and Mum spent a lot of time buying last minute gifts and food. Nicola was even more excited when presents started appearing under the Christmas tree, all beautifully wrapped.

Nicola opened the last of the doors in her Advent calendar on the morning of Christmas Eve, and that evening they lit the last candle in their Advent wreath, along with the four other candles. This was the white candle, the 'Christ Candle', which stood in the centre of the wreath.

Mum explained that the final candle is white to remind us that Jesus is pure and holy. Nicola had thought that the wreath looked beautiful when they had first made it but it looked even more beautiful with all five candles lit. She hoped that making an Advent wreath would become as much of a family tradition as the Advent calendar.

Things to Think About

Advent is a time of hope and a time of peace. Life isn't always easy, but try to appreciate what you have while looking forward to the future.

Advent is also a time of joy. We can usually find plenty of reasons to be joyful at Christmas, but don't forget the meaning behind the Christmas story, the real reason why we celebrate.

Advent is a time of love. Remember to show your family and friends how much you care for them. Remember that there are many people who don't feel loved, and that Advent and Christmas can be a very lonely time for them.

Craft Ideas

You may like to make your own Advent Wreath with an adult at home. Here are some ideas to help.



We are hopeful that we will be able to start Sunday Club again in the New Year. In the meantime we hope that you and your family have a lovely Christmas. We will be thinking of you.

Best wishes
Rachel

Christmas Jokes

Q.(1) How do you know Santa has to be a man?

Ans. No woman is going to wear the same outfit year after year.

Q.(2) Why is Christmas just like a day at the office?

Ans. You do all the work and the big guy with the suit gets all the credit.

Q.(3) What do monkeys sing at Christmas?

Ans. Jungle Bells, Jungle bells..!

Q.(4) What do you give a train driver for Christmas?

Ans. Platform shoes!

Q.(5) What did the big candle say to the little candle?

Ans. I'm going out tonight!

Q.(6) What is the best thing to put into a Christmas cake?

Ans. Your teeth!

Q.(7) What did Adam say on the day before Christmas?

Ans. It's Christmas, Eve!

Q.(8) What do you have in December that you don't have in any other month ?

Ans. The letter "D" !

Q.(9) Why did Robin Hood steal from the rich?

Ans. Because the poor didn't have any money!

Q.(10) What do snowmen wear on their heads?

Ans. Ice caps!

Q.(11) How can a snowman lose weight?

Ans. He waits until it gets warmer!

Q.(12) What do snowmen eat for breakfast?

Ans. Snowflakes.

Q.(13) What goes red white red white red white?

Ans. Father Christmas rolling down a hill!

Q.(14) What do you call a man who claps at Christmas ?

Ans. Santapplause!

Q.(15) What is Father Christmas' wife called ?

Ans. Mary Christmas!

Q.(16) What do you call Santa Claus when he doesn't move?

Ans. Santa Pause!

Q.(17) How many presents can Santa fit into an empty sack?

Ans. Only one - after then it is not empty any more.

Q.(18) What king is the children's favorite at Christmas time?

Ans. A stocking!

Q.(19) What kind of bird can write?

Ans. A pen-guin!

Q.(20) Why does Santa have 3 gardens?

Ans. So he can ho-ho-ho!

