



**Newsletter December 2025**  
**St Columba's Presbyterian Church**  
**Mutare**

**The Magi and their worship**

**Matthew 2:1-12**

The story of the Magi is very familiar to us. The Magi were professional star-gazing, sign-seeking, wise men from the east - probably Persia - many hundreds of miles from Israel. They saw a new star in the sky and followed it because they knew it heralded the birth of a new King – the King of the Jews.

The Magi were not Jews, yet they set out from the comfort of their homeland and followed the signs to find and worship a king. When the star stopped above the place where Jesus was, they knew they had reached their destination. They were overjoyed to find Jesus, and their immediate reaction was one of worship.

**Calendar highlights**

Fri 5 Dec	10 am	<b>Leisel and Braden's Wedding at St Columbas</b>
Sun 7 Dec		<b>Shona Service combined with the Mutare congregations at St Columbas</b>
Sat 13 Dec	10 am	<b>Session Meeting</b>
Sun 14 Dec	10.30 am	<b>Christmas Experience after English Service. Hosted by Kidz Church</b>
Thu 25 Dec	9 am	<b>Christmas Service</b>
All Sundays	9 am 11 am	<b>English Service Shona Service</b>

They bowed down and presented the child with costly gifts, signifying the mission of Jesus as a royal priest who was destined to die not just for the Jews but for all mankind.

When we truly encounter Jesus, our reaction will be like the wise men – great joy, humility and worship. ‘Worship’ comes from the same word-root as ‘worth’. We humble ourselves before Jesus to give him what he is worth. The wise men brought costly treasures. What can we bring in order to worship God? What is most costly to us? We may not have material riches like the Magi but we have something even more precious. The apostle Paul says that nothing less than our whole bodies can be offered to God as ‘living sacrifices’. (Romans 12:1)

So as we enter the Christmas period and the New Year, let us seek to worship God with the best of our selves - our time, our talents, our money, our love - and our very lives.

## **A** Word From The Pastors

Dear friends,

December is the month we celebrate the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We do this through joy-filled activities and joy-filled actions because the birth of Jesus is such good news that it “will cause great joy for all the people” (Luke 2:10).

Now, beware of joy-stealers this Christmas season – the type of joy-stealers who come to “kill, steal and destroy” your joy and steal the benefits of your salvation (John 10:10).

Here are some ways to protect your God-given joy this Christmas.



## **1. Know the source of your joy.**

It is not people, or possessions, or positions. It is God. Stop burdening people with the responsibility to make you joyful. Joy can only be manufactured from the inside by God, but it can be shared with all.

## **2. Manage expectations.**

The positive side of expectations is that you can outdo yourself as you fulfil some of the expectations. The negative side is that you can't fulfil all expectations, including some of your own expectations. So submit all expectations to God this Christmas season.

## **3. Plan ahead.**

God planned ahead, from the very beginning of creation, that He would send us the Saviour that we now celebrate at Christmas time. Planning will cut your stress levels significantly.

## **4. Self-care.**

Even the shepherds that received the good news of great joy would take turns to sleep and look after the sheep. Rest is Godly and it is instructed by God for the sake of worship and the sake of refuelling and that is self-care.

## **5. Be loving.**

Do not impose an oppressive and enslaving Christianity full of rules and laws upon others this Christmas. Instead, focus on being loving and encourage freedom and joy in Christ.

## **6. Be wise.**

Use humour, use music, and use outdoors to make your gathering times happy. Share costs, share tasks, and share your time with others. As God for practical wisdom this Christmas season.

May God bless us all with the much-needed gift of joy this Christmas. We wish you a blessed and meaningful Christmas!



(A poem of appreciation by Breslin Mushonga, a female student in Called to Care)

In corners where silence speaks in loudest cries.  
Where dreams are buried and hope slowly dies.  
There rises a hand, gentle and fair,  
A light in the darkness – Called to Care.

For the girl who walks with her head held low,  
Where path was blocked before she could grow.  
For the boy lost in life's heavy load.  
Called to Care walks with them down the road.

It hears the stories the world ignores.  
It opens hearts and unlocks doors.  
It finds the child who slipped through the cracks of life.  
And helps them rise, no looking back.

With every lesson, hug and meal,  
It teaches the broken how to heal.  
Not just in books but in self-belief too.  
It offers courage, hope and relief.

Especially the girl, so often unseen,  
Pushed aside, yet born to be a Queen.  
Called to Care says "You matter too,  
There is a place in the world made for you."

So let's stand with hearts aware,  
Lift others up, show that we care.  
For when we help one soul to rise,  
We all grow stronger, wise and wiser.



# **M**anaging Stress During the December Festivities: Handling Difficult Relatives

The December holidays are often described as a season of joy, family, and togetherness — yet for many people, this period also brings a fair share of stress. Between financial demands, packed schedules, and family dynamics, it's not uncommon to feel emotionally stretched. Managing stress and maintaining inner calm becomes essential to truly enjoy the season.

## **1. Acknowledge That Stress Is Normal**

It's okay to feel overwhelmed. The holidays tend to come with social expectations and emotional triggers. Simply acknowledging that stress is part of the experience can help you manage it better and respond more calmly when tensions arise.

## **2. Plan Ahead and Prioritize**

Last-minute rushes and overcommitment are major stress contributors. Make a plan early — budget realistically, decide which events matter most, and avoid saying “yes” to everything. Give yourself permission to slow down and protect your peace of mind.

## **3. Manage Expectations**

Not every gathering or interaction will be perfect, and that's completely fine. Let go of the pressure to create a flawless holiday experience. Focus instead on meaningful moments — connection, laughter, and rest — rather than perfection.



## 4. Handling Difficult Relatives

Family relationships can be complicated, and certain personalities may trigger frustration or old emotional wounds. Here are a few practical strategies:

***Set boundaries:*** It's okay to excuse yourself from conversations that become tense or draining.

***Stay calm:*** Take deep breaths before responding and choose to disengage rather than argue.

***Shift focus:*** Try to see beyond the behaviour and recognize that others may also be struggling in their own ways.

***Limit exposure:*** If someone repeatedly crosses your boundaries, it's okay to keep interactions polite but brief.

## 5. Take Care of Your Body and Mind

Eat balanced meals, stay hydrated, get enough sleep, and make time for physical activity. These habits reduce anxiety and improve mood. Remember — self-care is not indulgence; it's a way of maintaining emotional stability.

## 6. Find Quiet Moments

Amid the noise and celebration, take moments of stillness for reflection or gratitude. Simple mindfulness practices like deep breathing, journaling, or short walks can help clear your thoughts and bring emotional balance.

## 7. Stay Connected

If you're feeling lonely or emotionally drained, reach out to supportive friends, a counsellor, or your church community. Sharing your feelings helps lighten the emotional load.

### **In summary:**

December doesn't have to be a season of exhaustion or emotional strain. With realistic expectations, healthy boundaries, and intentional self-care, you can enjoy the festivities with peace and balance —

focusing on connection rather than perfection.



# The 1st Mutare Company of the Boys' and Girls' brigade



The 1st Mutare Company of the Boys' and Girls' brigade held their annual end of year awards with the cookout, where we saw 3 Boys' and 3 Girls' win attendance prizes, also 5 Boys' got their camping badge for having attended 2 or more camps.

Then for the cookout we had 10 participants divided into 4 teams 2 teams had 3 members and 2 had 2 members a great time was had by all, our judges were Liffy Gorton & Mercy Kamunda prizes were presented by reverend Paul Neshangwe.

Different types of menus were done and I noticed that some were adding their dessert of fruit salad to the main meal, I am pleased to say no one got burnt or cut during the cookout have a great Christmas and pse those who are travelling stay safe and arrive alive.







## LADIES RETREAT 2025

What a wonderful blessed time we had.

Special Thank you to our pastors,  
Jean Brandt, coordinator,  
all the ladies who helped  
and all who donated in cash  
or kind to make this  
retreat so special.







Dear men Ministry

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks for all the support, guidance, and camaraderie you've shown throughout this year. Each gathering, event and conversation has been truly rewarding and made a difference to someone.

Although there were many memorable moments I'm sure for most was the Men's Retreat at Smallbridge Dam was the standout. The time we shared there, filled with reflection, encouragement laughter and genuine connections was a powerful reminder of the strength of our fellowship.

Thank you for the way you constantly created a space in your busy lives where men can grow, open up and strengthen both their faith relationships, and genuine care have impacted more people than you know.

As we look forward to 2026, we should all be excited for what's in-store. Remember it's all about teamwork I can't achieve anything without your participation. Let's look forward for new opportunities, deeper fellowship and greater impact.



I also invite any ideas or suggestions you may have on how we can continue to engage more men not just from our church or circle but men out in our community and other churches. Your input is valuable and together we can reach even more brothers who need connection, support, and encouragement. Particularly thank you to Pastor Paul for encouraging me and roughing up my feathers when I slack in my duties as the leader.

So with this I thank each one of you, may I wish you and your family a very Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

I truly believe the best is still yet to come, I'm grateful to be on this journey with you all.

With sincere appreciation.

God bless you and your family.

Colin Brandt.



*It's Christmas Time*

In just a few weeks we will be entering the "most wonderful time of the year."

We will be hosting a 2-hour FUN CHRISTMAS EXPERIENCE this is a hands-on event for your whole family after church. It's for families of the children who attend Kidz Church.

**DATE:** 14 December  
**TIME:** 10:30 to 12:30 (after church)  
**COST:** \$5usd per family – payable upfront.

This event is made up of two separate activities:  
*Your hands will be messy,  
but your hearts will be merry!*

Please register and pay after church with Wendy or Mandy or Liffy or phone Jenny for more info on 0772 77 66 55.



# SHONA SERVICE

Shona service at St. Columbas started on 2 November 2025 at 11am.

We have asked some congregants about this new service which is being held in Shona.

Some of the answers they gave are:

We understand better when the preaching is done in Shona.

- Intercessory prayer for self and others are best expressed in my mother tongue
- There is a lot of fun when singing from the hymn book, playing the rattle and the drum
- It is easier to showcase your talent when expressing oneself in the mother tongue especially in singing and dancing

Other congregants also expressed joy at the possibility of being allowed to preach in church, having their children halfway through the service before they can go to the kids church, and getting to meet other congregants after church when people leave church in a line and greet each other while standing in a ring.

## Church Service Proceedings

- Singing of welcome hymns
- Welcome
- Praise and Worship
- Intercessory prayers
- Testimonies
- Offering and Tithes
- Announcements



## Kids leave for Kids Church

- Scripture reading
- Hymn to invite the preacher
- Sermon
- Response
- Closing Hymn
- Benediction
- Procession out
- Tea
- Departure

\*Kids Church is conducted by Mrs Julia Boka and her team

\*Communion is every first Sunday of the month

\*There shall be a Bible Study in due course

\*Attendance

On the first Sunday of the Shona Service, a total of 50 congregants convened from Chigodora and L'Amour

\*There were 24 congregants in the Second Service

We hope the Lord will bring more people to the Services.

## Acknowledgements

Pastors Paul and Lydia Neshangwe,  
Colin Brandt,  
Kuda Musanhu,  
Mercy Kurewa,  
Liffy Gorton,  
Breslin Mushonga,  
Fiona Botes,  
Abigail Makunika,  
Iris Shiripinda,  
Rob van Steensel,  
Wietske Mushonga

all contributed to the production of this newsletter.



Help Mary  
and Joseph  
get to the stable.





## Nhopi, butternut porridge

Recipe by Abigail Makunika

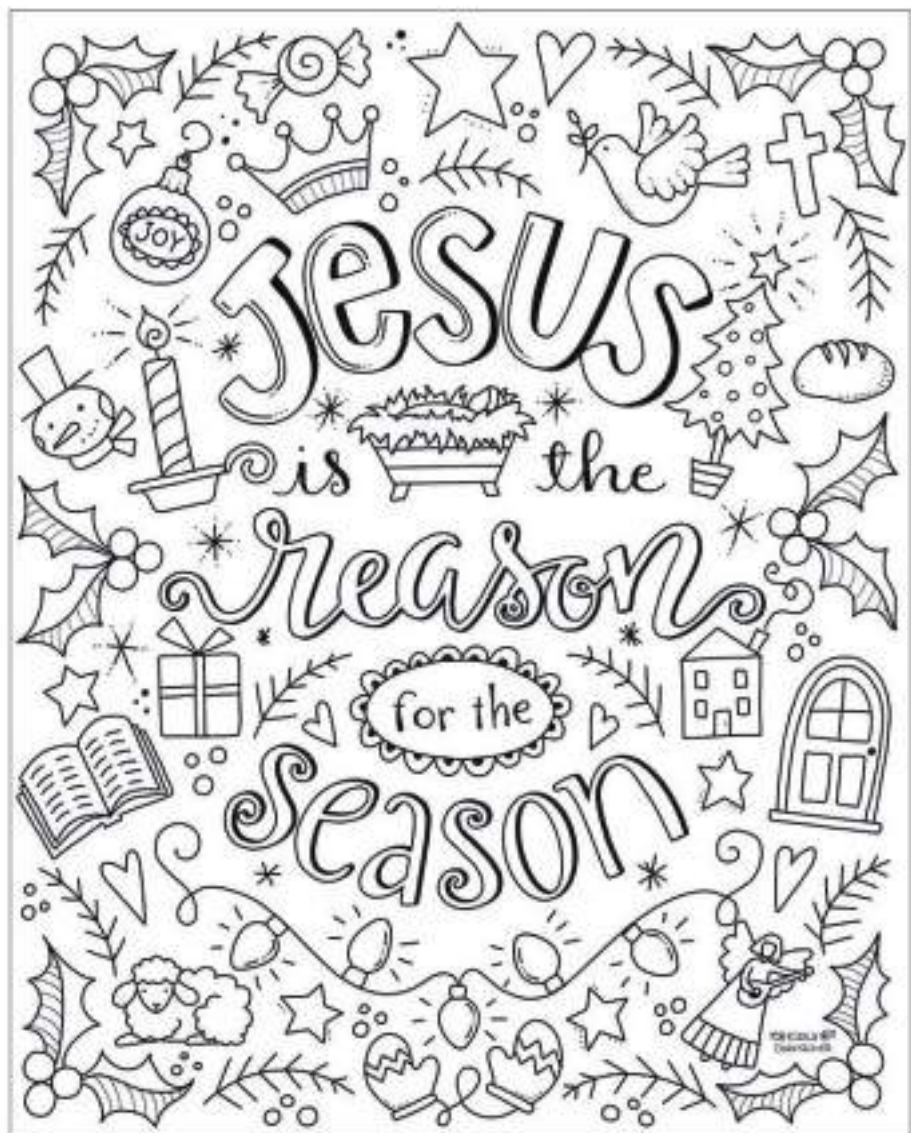


Perfect and so nutritious for breakfast, lunch or with dinner.

Cook the chunks of one butternut until soft, mashing them, and then mixing in two spoons of peanut butter and two spoons of sugar to taste.

Enjoy!







# List of Ministeries

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## MINISTERS:

REVs PAUL AND LYDIA NESHANGWE

Email: [paneshangwe@gmail.com](mailto:paneshangwe@gmail.com), [lydianeshangwe@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lydianeshangwe@yahoo.co.uk)

Tel: 0717 654008, 0782 964362

## CHURCH OFFICE:

Mon – Fri 8am – 12:30pm

Tel: 02020 60628, 0717 459312

Email: [mupresby@gmail.com](mailto:mupresby@gmail.com)

## SESSION CLERK:

MARIE SACCONI

## CHURCH SECRETARY:

NORAH MACHIRI

## CARETAKER:

GODFREY MAGODHLO

Tel: 0772844273

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## SERVICES:

Sunday: English Service 9 am, Shona Service 11 am

Communion Service and 'Handful of Rice' - 1st Sunday of the month

Kids Church - 9am - Jenny Paterson, 11am - Julia Boka

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## BIBLE STUDIES:

### *Ladies Bible Study*

Mon 10-11am, Jenny Paterson, Cntct Wietske Mushonga or Jenny

### *Bible Study*

Tue 4pm at Park cottages, Liffy Gorton

### *Alpha Course*

Tue 6pm, Simon & Katie Bowen

### *Homegroup*

Wed 6.30pm, Mark and Jenny Paterson

### *Homegroup men&women*

Wed 6-7pm, Albert Masvongo and Colin Brandt

### *Ladies Bible Study*

Every 2nd Thu, 10-12am, Marie Sacconi

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## CHURCH MINISTRIES:

- **CALLED 2 CARE (Skills Training Outreach)** Every Wed and Thu cntct Rev Lydia
- **GILLS (Growing In Love Ladies)** Last Sat of the Month 9am cntct Jean Brandt
- **FELLOWSHIP OF WOMEN** Every 2nd Sun after Church cntct Esther Mususa
- **MEN'S MINISTRY** Every Sat, 7am - Colin Brandt
- **BOYS' & GIRLS' BRIGADES** Every Sat at the church, 2pm - Fiona Botes
- **YOUTH MINISTRY** Every Sat, at the church, 2pm - Munya Kamunda
- **MUSIC MINISTRY** Every Fri 4.30pm cntct Josphat Mususa
- **KIDS CHURCH** Every Sun 9am - Jenny Paterson  
11am - Julia Boka
- **YOUNG ADULTS** Monthly, cntct Kuda Musanu & Simba Mangore
- **DECO TEAM** Contact Hlupe Kandiero

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CHURCH BANKING DETAILS: STANBIC BANK RTGS 914 000 2833 696

FCA 914 000 4484 346

ZB BANK RTGS 4532 104335 200

FCA 4532 104335 405

19



*Greetings, friends.*

*The Newsletter Team is appealing to all who would like to advertise their businesses, practices and trades in the monthly church newsletter.*

*You can take a full page, half page or a quarter page for a small fee. We want to know about and support your “hustle.”*

*Contact Wietske or any member of the Newsletter Team.*

