

# UPPER BRAES

PARISH CHURCH

**CONNECT**  
**SUMMER 2025**





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## **Communion Sunday - 1st June 2025 at both Ministry Centres at 11am**

"Do this in remembrance of me"

As a member of the Church of Jesus Christ, we encourage you to accept our Lord's invitation to share in the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

# Upper Braes Contacts

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## Safeguarding Panel

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Local Mission Church Leadership Team: contact the Minister

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Hall bookings: lets@upperbraes.org.uk

Our website is also full of resources and information, including a church calendar, hall booking forms, news updates and much more.



## DEATHS

November 2024

Mary Balow

Cameron Sharpe

## Congregational Roll Update

January 2025

Janet Buchanan

Mae Bennie

Margaret Main

April 2025

Barbara Scobbie

March 2025

Betty Scott

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms...if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am."



# Pastoral Articles

## Message from the Manse

BY SCOTT BURTON

I'm writing this shortly after having two experiences of God speaking to me and guiding me. Each experience is to do with sermons I preached in succession, and for each, I approached the occasion of preaching the messages I had been drafted with great uncertainty: were these the themes and ideas God wished for me to preach? Were they too simple on the one hand, then too far-removed on the other, to be of any use and relevance?

These kinds of experience are not uncommon to any preacher, and the measure of uncertainty waxes and wanes across the seasons, both in and out of season. But as I said, I believe I had two experiences of God speaking and guiding. To the average person, and certainly to anyone

unaccustomed to God's gentle, yet faithful, ways – to such folks as those, they might easily dismiss those subtle nudges, written off as a figment of imagination or fancy.

But God was faithful, particularly through my day-to-day Bible reading pattern, and so that confirmation came, peace was received, and I stepped out in faith with those messages I believe were from Him – and His Word did not return void, to which all glory is His alone (Isaiah 55:11).

What of you, friends? Where is God confirming and encouraging, wooing and challenging our hearts and ways to confirm to His will? If you are not in the regular habit of reading the Bible in some pattern during the week, then I cannot exhort you enough to find some way of establishing this in your life! There are a great many tools and ideas available, both in print and online – please ask me, the Elders or

Fellowship Group leaders if you are needing some guidance on where to start. After all, 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Tim. 3:16) and this includes the Old Testament, as we are seeing in our current series on the Ten Commandments.

And what of us collectively as a church family – where is God speaking to us in this context? Maybe in our times of worship, through (and following) the Word preached? Maybe in our Kirk Session and Team meetings? Would we recognise His gentle whisper, His subtle invitation, beckoning so faithfully, so consistently, to walk in His ways and grace?

One way the Lord speaks to us and meets with us,



rather because of the call of His heart. He put the Law at the service of love and became a servant Himself – even though He is Lord.

It should be the same for each of Christ's followers today! We do not partake of any ministry because it is expected of us or because we feel legally bound to do our "bit"! I believe we need to follow the example of Jesus who said that He came to serve, and not to be served. In the writings of his Epistle, James says; *"faith without works is dead"* (James 2:26) and goes on to say in Chapter 2 vs 14 *"what good is it if a person claims to have faith but has no deeds – can such faith save him?"*

God has led us all to a place where we can grow together in faith; where we can grow together in Christ's service and where, as a worshipping community in the Upper Braes, we can serve those around us. There are many opportunities available to serve others. Many may be found in the weekly activities sheet or, you could ask an Elder, or the Minister

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where you may best help others. Remember, we are all called to serve through our faith in Jesus Christ. We have all been gifted by God, and no-one has been left out! The Apostle Paul tells us: (2 Corinthians Ch 9 vs 12 and 15) *"This service you perform is not only supplying the needs of God's people, but it is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God."*

When each member is doing something, however small, but with the love of Jesus, then we truly will be the servant Body of Christ in the Upper Braes.

May our Lord Jesus Christ bless you in His service.

Monica



## Youth Development Worker

BY CAROLINE WHITTIT



Hello everyone!

It has been an absolute joy working alongside you all, and I have thoroughly enjoyed my first few months. It has been such a privilege to build relationships with the young people, helpers, and leaders as I've visited the incredible youth groups including Boys Brigade, Girls Brigade, Bible Fun Club, Young Adults Group, Sunday School groups (Flaim in particular), Scripture Union (SU) at Wallacestone Primary School, and the SU group regularly at Braes High School. I am now also part of the chaplaincy team at the high school which is a real privilege.

I have been truly inspired



is through the sacrament, that visible sign of His promise, that communication of love and grace, that embodiment of His purposes and will, in a physical, tangible way. Sometimes we need to see and touch; sometimes the subtle nudge is hard to grasp, and in His infinite knowledge and goodness He meets our need. Are we listening? Are we attentive and eager, positioning ourselves so that we might hear Him today? I pray that we are and display ourselves as such as we gather around the Lord's table this June, and hear the Lord's Word to us afresh in Word and sacrament.

Love to one and all,  
Scott



## Pastoral Assistant's Message

BY MONICA  
MACDONALD

For folks who do not know who I am, my name is Monica MacDonald and I am delighted to be part of the ministry team of the Upper Braes Parish Church since the 15th December 2025. I trust that over time I will get to know you all personally.

Work towards the union of the Upper Braes churches took a great deal of time and I am sure most of us were wondering how it would work out. Well, for myself and my husband, and many others I have spoken to, it has proven to be a wonderful coming together of believers. Our services of worship have been truly encouraging, not only by the numbers attending, but also through the biblical teaching we have received from our Minister, Scott Burton and the Preaching Team, who have ably covered the pulpits at our two Ministry Centres – Brightons and Slamannan.



However, the work of the Kingdom is not only for those who have trained to preach or teach, it is the task of all believers. You see, we do not receive God's blessings just for ourselves – God expects us to share those gifts with others.

The practical ministries of any worshipping community should be following the example of Jesus whose ministry on earth was manifestly practical. His love and compassion for ordinary people caused Him to serve them at their point of need. And so, we read in the Scriptures of how He fed, helped, comforted, encouraged and healed those who were in need. You see – for Jesus it was not a legalistic ministry. He did not do these things because of the demands of the Jewish Law, but



by the incredible work happening at Upper Braes Parish Church. The dedication of those who serve in these groups - investing their time, energy, and love into nurturing young people - is hugely admirable. Your kindness, care, and commitment are seen and appreciated.

One of the highlights has been regularly visiting the SU group at Braes High School, which was founded by one of the pupils—how amazing is that! Since its launch last autumn, it has been going strong, with young people attending regularly to grow in their faith. Their enthusiasm and commitment are heartening. Please pray that more young people find their way to this group and that our efforts to encourage continued participation are fruitful. If you know any pupils at the school who might be interested, or any P7s coming up to the high school, please invite them along! Mike Glass, Louise Munro and I are there every Monday at lunchtime in the classroom 311, with snacks and drinks provided.

I help at the Bible Fun Club at Slamannan Ministry Centre weekly which has also been a wonderful experience. About 10 young people (P1-P7) attend each week, engaging in singing, praying out loud together, crafts, Bible stories, and lots of joyful dancing! They bring such fun and energy, making every session a delight. If any more children would like to join, they are more than welcome - it is on Wednesdays at 5:30pm at the Slamannan Ministry Centre. A huge shout-out to Linda and Fiona, who have faithfully served here for years, creating a space where young people feel valued and encouraged.

At Flaim (S1-S3) Sunday School, I am continually amazed week upon week at the depth of Bible knowledge the young people have – this is testament to the dedication of the Sunday School leaders and helpers and the teaching they have received throughout their time at UBPC. The Sunday School leaders, helpers and I are currently working behind the scenes to refine the curriculum, so it best serves the needs of our

young people, equipping them to live out their faith and embrace God's promises, both in the joys and challenges of life. Please pray for wisdom as we develop this curriculum, ensuring we teach what is most meaningful and impactful. If you would like to help at Sunday School or the creche then I encourage you to get in touch with Alie Drackford. It is a great opportunity to serve and support others and you also end up learning lots yourself!

Our mentoring program is also underway, with one young person already engaged and another soon to follow. By the time you read this, I hope to be able to say even more are involved! The program is designed to strengthen young people's faith, build confidence, and develop key skills, while allowing adults in the church to serve as guiding figures. Thank you to all those who have signed up as mentors so far - your willingness to support our young people is truly encouraging. I appreciate your patience as the program is being



established. If you would like to be a mentor or know a young person who would benefit from this program, please reach out to me. I'd love to help facilitate these connections.

Reflecting on the past few months, I feel incredibly grateful to God for surrounding me with such a supportive community. Your kindness and words of encouragement mean more than you know and serve as reminders of His goodness. Thank you!

If there is anything specific you'd like prayer for regarding the young people, please do let me know. A group of us pray weekly for all the young people in our church and the pupils of Braes High School. We need your prayer requests so that we can present the needs of our young people to God so we can help support you and your families.

As we look ahead to the next quarter, my prayer is that we continue to grow in Christ, stepping forward boldly in faith and speaking up for what we believe. I pray that as you read this, you know how deeply loved and treasured you are.

We hold the prayer for the young people

monthly in person on a Wednesday morning currently at Nadia's home and have an option to pray weekly in the WhatsApp chat too. If you would like to join us in prayer, then please do get in touch with me. My mobile is 07848 480801 and email address is [cwhittit@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:cwhittit@churchofscotland.org.uk)

## Youth Development Project Update

BY KEITH  
WANSBROUGH

Writing on behalf of the Youth Worker Committee, we are excited! Thanks to your very substantial prayer and ongoing financial support, and after a multi-year journey, we can finally hand on the torch! Caroline Whittit is now in post as our Youth Development Worker and doing an amazing job already (see her article in this issue). That means our job as the Youth Worker Committee is complete, and the youth development project is now in the faithful hands of Caroline with the support of the Up and Coming team and the youth development project management team

(Scott, Peter Costello, and Carolyn McEwan). Thank you for continuing to pray and give to support this work.

In the Upper Braes, and across Scotland today, young people are struggling. They are struggling with anxiety and mental health issues; they are struggling with meaning and identity and belonging. They need something, and many of them are searching for that something.

We believe that Jesus can make the difference. As a church we long to

- **Engage** with their spiritual search and help them meet Jesus.
- We long to **Grow** their confidence and help them get involved in the church and community.
- And we long to **Equip** them with the resilience they need to flourish through all the challenges they face.

We see the need, but to date our reach has been limited. In our church we are blessed with many children and young people. We take seriously our commitment to love and include them, and to

help them come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Yet there are so many outside our church, outside any church in the Braes, and outside the Brigades and other activities. Across the Upper Braes, only 5% of young people have any active connection with a church.

Way back in 2016, the Kirk Session started to grapple with this challenge. We soon realised we needed a youth development worker - someone who has full-time responsibility for our youth and the youth of the Upper Braes, and is able to reach out to them, be available to them, and catalyse the work we're already doing to help us reach the other 95%.

Since then, the Kirk Session, Youth Worker Committee, and many others of you have been faithfully working to understand the challenges and figure out how to move forward. And a little over a year ago we invited you all to contribute, both financially and in prayer.

On behalf of the whole church, and of the young people of this parish, I want to thank you all.

- Thank you to those who are so faithfully giving to support this work.
- Thank you to those of you who are praying - please keep praying, this is not easy and the enemy opposes it.
- Thank you to the Kirk Session for supporting this project.
- Thank you to all the members of the Youth Worker Committee, past and present, for your long hard work over the many phases of this project.
- Thank you to all those who shared their vision and inspiration and ideas.
- And thank you to Caroline for accepting God's challenge - we are with you! We as a church are praying for you and supporting you as you step into this new role.

In Christ,  
Keith Wansbrough -  
chair of the former Youth  
Worker Committee

## Youth Fellowship Update

BY SCOTT BURTON

Since the beginning of the prelim season last term, we've seen numbers fluctuate a lot for our Sunday Youth Fellowship, yet we continue to connect with our young people in Sunday worship or in other ways, and it has been encouraging to see them share in our shared life together with a range of practical tasks and prayerful support of one another. They are of course seeking to be diligent in their studies and use of their gifts, and we would ask you to uphold them in prayer for these final weeks of the academic year. We look forward to welcoming back those from university, and to welcoming those who move up from FLAIM this term. Looking ahead, we could still have quite a sizeable group next year, and we plan a bit of a revamp so that we adapt to the changes of age range. Please keep Caroline, myself and the group in prayer as we journey forward together and seek to grow a confident faith in one another.



# Upper Braes Team Updates

## Kirk Session Update

BY JUDITH NORTON

Thinking back to our first Sunday morning service on 3<sup>rd</sup>

November as the new united Upper Braes Parish Church (UBPC), I can't quite believe it's been nearly six months since the 15 'ruling Elders' of our new Kirk Session were commissioned!

This commissioning was meaningful for us – a blessing and affirmation of our calling, as we were sent out to serve in the spiritual and practical leadership of our church family.

As you can imagine, these last six months have been a busy time for us! Led by our minister, Scott, the Kirk Session has been navigating the additional practical and governance responsibilities that the Union has brought, as well as upholding our

responsibility of spiritual oversight - ensuring the worship, pastoral care, and teaching within our congregation remains faithful to Scripture.

We formally meet monthly as a Kirk Session. We do make our minutes available – both printed copies in the Brightons and Slamannan Ministry Centres (BMC and SMC) and online on the Governance page of our website ([Governance – Upper Braes Parish Church](#)). If you missed these, here's a flavour of a few of the key items/decisions that have been made by Kirk Session since our first meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> November.

**Post Union Governance** – approval of Office Bearers, Team Structure and Convenors, Local Worship Leaders, Safeguarding Convenor / Panel and our Employee contracts (see photos and organisational charts in both Ministry Centres). **Spiritual Care** – approval for the Minister, along

with a small 'reading group' to develop a 'Discipleship Pathway' on the back of the Re-missioning course Scott is undertaking. The intention is that the Pathway framework will be used in small groups to develop our congregation's discipleship training and help us mature in our faith. More will be shared on this in due course.

**Pastoral Care** - approval to move to a new Pastoral Care model, with more emphasis on everyone playing an active part, ending the provision of Elders' Districts and Pastoral Groupings. A follow-up communication to all Members and Adherents was made with the Winter 2024 Connect magazine, detailing the ways Pastoral Care is still very much available.

**Oversight of church finances** – including approval for annual budgets/spending limits for the Teams; approval to continue funding the Shieldhill mini-bus, subject to review depending on use;

approval to replace the organ in BMC with a new digital organ; recruitment of Gayle Millar to replace Ian Baillie as Pastoral Assistant for two years. As Trustees we need to ensure we have a clear view of ongoing costs and what is needed for capital projects as we make decisions to approve spend. Strategic finance principles are being developed to help us with our decision making.

***Managing property and safety*** – including approval of the sale of the Shieldhill church building to St Andrews Mar Thoma church and approval of roof repairs to BMC following storm damage.

***Policies and Procedures*** – approval of the necessary policies to support and safeguard our life together as a congregation (again paper copies of these are available in both Ministry centres and online on our Governance page of our website)

***Annual Governance*** – including attesting our Congregational, Safeguarding and Property records to meet

Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and Church of Scotland requirements.

***Team, Safeguarding and Presbytery Elder Reports***

– regular overview of key activities and approval of names to be added to the Safeguarding Register. General - including approval of let arrangements with ministry centres with organisations that align to the vision and values of UBPC.

If you have any questions about any of the points mentioned, please do come and see me in person, or drop me an email.

While a lot of our time is spent preparing for, and participating in these monthly Kirk Session meetings, each of the Elders have other roles within our church family; be it serving on one of the many Teams, supporting Scott, taking part in worship, providing pastoral and spiritual support, and so many other behind-the-scenes tasks that sustain the life of Upper Braes.

The role of Elder is a responsible one, requiring wisdom, commitment, diligence and prayerfulness, but with it comes the real blessing of serving our Lord, and our church family. I give thanks for Scott and the Elders, who so faithfully serve – it is a real privilege to be part of this great team!

As a Kirk Session we really value your prayers – for wisdom, discernment, encouragement and the sustaining of our leadership, as we seek to serve our Upper Braes family and move forward in strength and unity.

On a personal note, I'd also like to say thank you for all your prayerful support and encouragement I've received over the last two years, first as Session Clerk for the legacy Brightons Parish church then for UBPC. Again, it's been a real joy and privilege to serve and share with you all as we journey together in faith.

For the last four months I've had the opportunity



to spend some time with Stenhouse and Carron Parish Church, attending and taking part fortnightly in their services. They are moving into union with another three churches (Larbert East, Larbert West and Airth) on 1 May. It's been really special to journey with them, sharing both in their sadness as their church buildings are closing, but also their looking forward to becoming part of a new congregation as the Larbert Tryst Church; which they hope will be a source of inspiration, encouragement and renewal for their wider community. A very real example, to me, of God calling us to share in each other's journeys, as we bring our own experiences, which in turn grows our faith and love for each other.

God bless

Judith Norton  
Session Clerk

## Union Update

BY SCOTT BURTON

As the report from our Session Clerk makes clear, a great deal of work has been undertaken within the Kirk Session in particular to establish the Union, but much else has also been done by others.

We now have a Local Mission Church Leadership Team for the Slamannan Ministry Centre and related areas of ministry. The team is seeking to work closely with all teams and to see the various ministries within Slamannan as part of the wider Union. As such, the Team keeps a broad overview of things without being the primary point of contact for all things within the local mission church. We're still finding our way and any enquiries can be directed to myself or Linda McGarry.

There has been a great deal of work undertaken by those involved with the sale of our Shieldhill building and the advertising of our Muiravonside building. It has been encouraging to

pass stewardship of Shieldhill onto another church and we look forward to partnering with St Andrew's Mar Thoma in due course. With regards to Muiravonside, a few extra steps were required and these delayed the process by some months. However, we are (or will be soon) on the market and continue to be prayerful about this sale, which we do not have the final say on, since the Title Deeds are vested with the General Trustees. As such, they will decide the process and final outcome of any interested parties who offer for the building.

We have also welcomed Rev Monica MacDonald as our Pastoral Assistant since December 2024, and with Ian's retirement at the same time, we are now welcoming Gayle Miller, Candidate for Ministry, to be our additional Pastoral Assistant for two years from the beginning of June 2025. It is a delight to soon have full capacity in our Ministry Team, as we also welcomed Caroline Whittit as Youth Development Worker in

January 2025, and we really do look forward to what God will do amongst as with our full compliment of staff serving alongside the church family to further His purposes.

A lot of the things we knew to address have been attended to, and many more we had not expected have also arisen, and we are seeking to faithfully attend to these going forward. God is using this journey to mature and refine us, both in character and our readiness for the next stages of His purposes for us. If there are queries or ideas you have for our collective way forward, then please do speak with me.

## **Community Audit Update**

BY SCOTT BURTON

Over March to October this year, training will be given to help us engage, listen to and connect afresh with our local communities across the whole of the Upper Braes parish. The hope is that this will clarify where we as a new congregation can best get involved, so

as to embody the love and kingdom of God in our communities. Over these months, there will be 6 training sessions led by Cinnamon Network to help facilitate a "community audit". The first was held on Saturday 1st March, and it was a really helpful time to get the journey started. Funding has also been secured from the Church of Scotland Seeds for Growth Fund to cover the costs of the course, and we are grateful for Presbytery's support of our application. Whilst two sessions have run so far, we still need as many of the congregation to be involved as possible, so look out for the next date, and anyone is welcome to attend, even if you haven't made a previous session. There will also be work to do between training sessions, so please consider getting involved so that through this process and journey there is transformation for both us and for our communities, and we find ways of engaging our serving our parish well in Christ's name and for His glory.

## **Moderator of Presbytery**

BY SCOTT BURTON

In April this year, the Presbytery of Forth Valley and Clydesdale concurred with the Nominations Committee to accept me as Moderator of Presbytery for the year 2025-2026, beginning in September. The role will see me "chair" the 6 meetings of Presbytery (an unwieldy task with hybrid dynamics and 150-200 people to weave together!), as well as attend Business Committee meetings, and share in services of Induction, Ordination and Unions. Before agreeing to be nominated, I met with the Elders, Team Conveners and some others, so I am heartened by their support for taking on this role within the wider life of the Church. I do feel it is a call of God for such a time, and look forward to playing my part in helping shape our shared life across our area, even with the limitations of the role. I would value your prayers ahead of and across this year. Scott



# Community Outreach Team

BY MARALYN STIRLING  
AND ROY GRAHAM

The Community Outreach Committee operates to encourage and promote all activities relating to helping the needy in our community and spreading the Good News of the Gospel. This is done through our :-

Belong Fun Days,  
Easter, Light Party and  
Christmas

Belong social events,  
New Years Eve Ceilidh,  
Games night

Pre-fives Play Group,  
every Tuesday morning  
in the Heriot Hall

Thursday Coffee  
Morning, every  
Thursday morning  
during term time in the  
Rankine hall. We enjoy  
monthly visits from  
nursery children from  
WPS.

CAP (Christians Against  
Poverty), Debt and  
Money Coaching. We  
are seeking to expand

Money Coaching, could  
you undergo some  
simple online training  
and help our Money  
Coach carry out future  
courses. See Roy Graham  
(roymunro13@gmail.com)  
for more info.

ASN (Additional Support  
Needs) group meets  
monthly.

Community litter picks -  
see Maralyn Stirling if  
interested.

Banners and Foyer Notice  
board displays.

The three Church  
endorsed charities we  
support as a group are:

CAP: Our Church  
Partners with another 15  
churches in the Forth  
Valley area to provide a  
free Debt / Money service  
to those in need.

Food Banks: we support  
Falkirk Foodbank and  
Martha's Pantry in  
Slamannan.

Polmont Prison: Gifts and  
cards at Easter and  
Christmas.

## Team Members

At the time of writing,  
the Community  
Outreach team  
comprises of Roy  
Graham, Maralyn Stirling  
(Co-conveners), Margaret  
Scott, Rachel Gilmour,  
Cameron Dick and Jill  
Dickson, Willie  
Tomlinson (Visiting  
Elder).

## Changes

From May onwards the  
leadership of the team  
will change, with Roy  
and Maralyn stepping  
down from co-convenor  
role. Both will continue  
as members of the team.  
We warmly welcome  
Jamie McIntosh as the  
new convener.

## Prison Outreach – Easter

Thanks to everyone who  
donated towards our  
Easter appeal. We sent  
an Easter card together  
with a small chocolate  
Easter egg to all the  
inmates at HMP/YOI  
Polmont. There are over  
600 prisoners in the  
institution.

As in previous years, we  
seek to send a symbol of  
God's loving care to  
those who reside in  
Polmont HMP/YOI.



# Forth Valley CAP Debt Centre

Spring Newsletter

April 2025

## HELLO

This month we celebrate our 6th anniversary so I'm delighted to be telling you at the same time that another person has just gone debt free! We are still working with 22 other people. In March, we held our first FV CAP Community Breakfast and enjoyed getting to know or reconnecting with others who work in the community. We wanted to share about what we do whilst showing appreciation for the people we work alongside. We hope this will help strengthen relationships and lead to better all-round support for the people we see.



FV CAP Breakfast in Cornton Baptist Church

Email: [fionaprimrose@capuk.org](mailto:fionaprimrose@capuk.org)

Tel: 07395 281 788





## A word from Fiona

I want to thank our partner churches and individuals who support us financially. These are tough times for many and we are very grateful for your sacrificial giving for another year. Thank you! We're meeting for coffee, a blether and prayer in Falkirk Baptist Church on Saturday the 10th of May from 9.45 (finishing by 11.30). We'd love to see you there. Please let me know by the end of April if you plan to come along. Bookings are now open for the CAP United Conference in Linlithgow on the 19th of June. See me for more details.



## Bible Verse

**Matthew 11:28-30:** "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."



## Client Story

Over half of people who completed CAP's client survey reported at least one key support issue. Someone who needs 24 hour care has just gone debt free. They said "I was with (Debt Agency X) for years and never got anywhere. I got with you and it was the best thing I ever did. A big weight has been lifted off my shoulders. I can breathe again."

## Thinking of taking on a challenge in the next 12 months?

If you're running a marathon, taking on a long walk or cycle or something similar, would you consider using it to raise funds for FV CAP? Approx. £8000 of our annual funding comes from one off gifts or fundraisers and CAP can provide you with a fundraising pack and Justgiving page.

## Pastoral Care Team

BY SANDRA ANDERSON  
Care Home Residents, Hospital Patients and Housebound Members, who are no longer able to attend Church Services, are all visited regularly by our Pastoral Assistant, Rev. Monica MacDonald, our Pastoral Care Team and our Volunteer Visitors. If you know of anyone requiring a visit, please let the Team know.

We do depend on people keeping us up to date with our Members' Special Birthdays or Family Celebrations so that a card can be sent from the Church family to mark the occasion.

We do send cards for Family Bereavements and on the first year anniversary of the loss.

Our Annual Bereavement Service taken this year by Mr Ian Baillie will be held in Brightons Ministry Centre on Sunday, 11th May 25 at 3pm.

The voluntary collection taken at our Monthly Thursday morning

Church Services will this year be donated to the MacMillan Cancer Charity when the Services finish for this year.

A generous donation received recently allowed us to purchase some books, which deal with Caring, Bereavement and also Terminal Illness in families. These are available on the shelves outside the Rankine Hall to take away, read at your leisure and return when finished.

The Remembrance Book continues to be appreciated by members who can see it in the front vestibule, open at the particular month, on Sundays and Thursday Monthly Services. If you wish to place an entry, please speak to one of the Team.

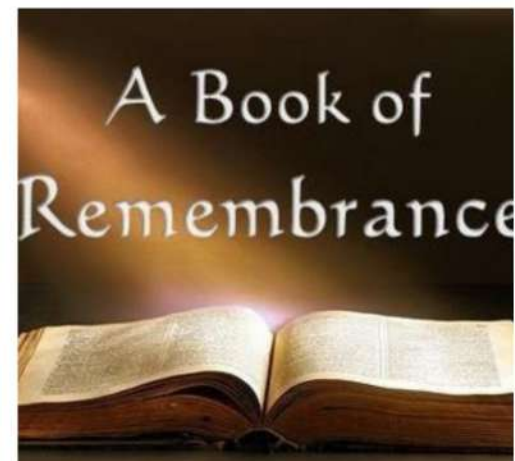
The Prayer Shawls knitted by our Members are so well appreciated by those who receive one, and we have the 'Thank You' notes to prove it! The pattern is available if anyone wishes it!

We are very grateful once again that the GB made beautiful Easter

Cards for us! This year it was suggested that, since the number of Care Homes with Members as residents has grown since we became UBPC, we should send one larger card per Care Home. The cards are always well received by residents, members and staff.

The Visitors Lunch held in February went really well, and was a good chance for the Visitors to meet each other. Great Fellowship and plenty "eats"! The Visitors are truly appreciated.

If you need information on any of these topics, please contact any of the Team. The Members are- John Anderson, Ian Baillie, Rev. Scott Burton, Jean Callahan, Robert Callahan, Sheila MacLennan or Sandra Anderson (Pastoral Care Convener). Blessings.





## Finance Team

BY PAT PATERSON

The Finance Team meets quarterly to discuss ongoing financial matters in our church. Much of our remit is to support our very busy Treasurer, Sharon Glass.

We are now a few months into our Union as Upper Braes Parish Church and as such are getting to know our Brothers and Sisters from the legacy congregations.

People have taken the opportunity to meet on Sundays, after the Service for tea/coffee. Any donations given at this time are being donated to Tearfund. This is done on an annual basis, January to December. We thank all those who generously give to this very worthwhile cause.

Each Easter we give an Easter Card and Easter Egg to those at HMYOI at Polmont. Our congregation always give very generously to this cause. This year the sum of £316.60 was donated. We thank all for this wonderful amount.

As always, we thank Judith and Ewen Norton for carrying out this compassionate work on behalf of our church. We have also had a retiring Collection for Myanmar Earthquake Appeal. Funds are still being donated so a final total is not yet available but to date well over £200 has been raised.

We continue to have members of our congregation wishing to take up Free Will Offering Envelopes or start Standing Orders as a way of contributing each week. We are also reminding people about Gift Aid which adds to their donations.

If anyone wishes to discuss either of these options please speak to Sharon or myself.

Forms for Standing Order and Gift Aid can be found in the BMC foyer.

If anyone does start a Standing Order can they please inform Sharon or myself and I will pass this information on to her.

Your ongoing support in

all financial matters in our church is greatly appreciated and as said above if you have any questions please speak to Sharon or myself.

## Up and Coming Team

BY PETER COSTELLO

It has been a real encouragement to see continued growth across our children's and youth ministries over the past few months. Sunday School has been thriving, with some room reshuffling helping to support our expanding team of leaders. Our Easter Club went very well, averaging 13 children across the two weeks. The atmosphere was full of energy and joy and fun.

My heartfelt thanks go to the volunteers who kindly gave up their Sundays during the Easter holidays, allowing our Junior Church leaders to take a well-earned break. Their willingness to step in has been a real blessing.

School-based work continues to bear fruit. SU groups at Wallacestone and Braes High are steady

and growing, and Caroline has been developing the content to better connect with young people. New possibilities are emerging at Slamannan and Shieldhill, and it is great to see the Bible Fun Club at Slamannan restart with fresh energy and potential.

FLAIM has also settled into its new space, with encouraging engagement from the young people involved.

As always, your prayers for our children, young people, and all those who serve them are deeply valued. Together, we continue the shared work of discipling the next generation to walk in the way of Jesus.



## Organ Update

BY SCOTT BURTON

With the ongoing issues around the organ in the Brightons Ministry Centre, and a significant quote for repair of the current instrument, the Kirk Session agreed in December 2024 to replace it with a digital Johannus Opus 280 Choir organ from Church Organ World. We anticipate that the installation will take place in June 2025 and thereafter there will be a commissioning of the instrument for God's glory and purposes.

Thank you to members past and present for their generous giving to the congregation which has enabled the reserves to be available for this large expense.



It is maybe also a timely reminder for conversations and actions to be taken in relation to leaving a legacy to the church (ideally not restricted to a particular cause), and further interest around exploring such options can be followed up with our Finance Team Convener or Treasurer, as well as information on the Church of Scotland website.







### *The Heavenly Staircase*

Prayers are the stairs that lead to God,  
and there's joy every step of the way  
when we make our pilgrimage to Him  
with love in our hearts each day.

### *Power of Prayer*

I am only a worker employed by the Lord,  
and great is my gladness and rich my reward  
if I can just spread the wonderful story  
that God is the answer to eternal glory ...  
bringing new hope and comfort and cheer,  
telling sad hearts there is nothing to fear,  
and what greater joy could there be than to share  
the love of God and the power of prayer.

### *You Are Never Alone*

There's truly nothing we need to know  
if we have faith wherever we go,  
God will be there to help us bear  
our disappointments, pain and care,  
for He is our shepherd, our Father, our guide,  
You're never alone with the Lord at your side.

*(verses taken from "A collection of Comfort" by  
Helen Steiner Rice)*

# Upper Braes News

## The Guild

BY ANNE SMITH

The daffodils are blooming and blowing in the wind and the snowdrops have come and gone. It was lovely to see the snowdrops appearing when the weather still felt like winter. They cheered us up and confirmed that spring was coming and I think that we can now say spring is here! The Guild strategy for the next two years is, 'Let us Build a House' and the topic for this session was 'Sure Foundations'.

For our Project we chose "Bibles for Bairns", and it has proved very popular and successful. Thanks to the generosity of our congregation, we were able to send £1087.35 to the Scottish Bible Society. This will enable them to offer every baby born in Scotland a free 'Share a Story Toddler Bible' on their first birthday. Every birthday after that, until age five, they will send a Bible related gift. On their fifth

birthday each child will receive an 'Early Reader Bible' to take them through their primary school years. This fitted in very well with our Sure Foundations topic.

The Guild is once again organising Easter Plants to decorate the church for the Easter Season. Anyone who contributed to these plants were able to collect a plant on Easter Sunday and the rest were distributed to the elderly and housebound members of our congregation.

Laurieston Guild is no longer functioning and four of the ladies join with us on a Monday afternoon. They were happy to come and we were happy to receive them. Next session we will be joined by ladies from Shieldhill Guild. It will be lovely to join the Upper Braes Guilds together in the fun and fellowship we have always enjoyed in Brightons.

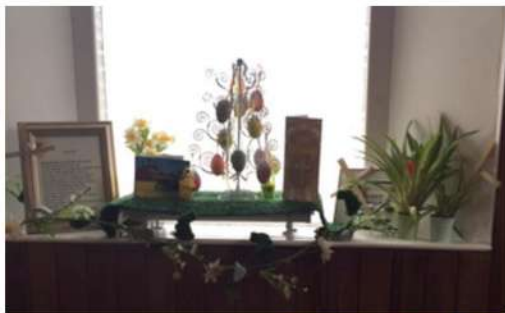
This is my final article as Convenor of The Guild and I look forward to sitting in the "body of the kirk" next session. Thank you for always supporting the Guild in so many ways. It does make the job of Convenor a lot easier. Thanks again.











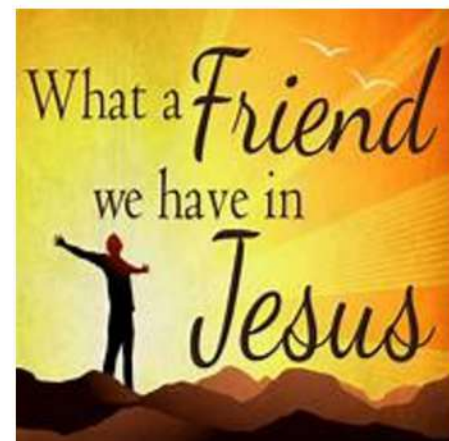
## Friends of Jesus Group

BY RACHEL MEEK

Since the New Year we have had an evening of prayer for Prospects Across Scotland, and five sessions looking at some of Jesus' 'I Am' statements. We've sung, played games, done some acting and made crafts as we've explored what Jesus meant when he called himself the Good Shepherd, the Gate, the True Vine and the Light of the World. At the beginning of April Gayle Miller helped us to think about Jesus entering Jerusalem and the events leading up to Easter. Our series concluded with a Visitors' evening, when we looked back at what we've learnt and thought about another 'I Am' saying, 'I am the Way'.

We are closing our session on Wednesday May 14th with a fund-raising evening in aid of Prospects Across Scotland, when the People's Puppets will bring us a Bible-themed evening of fun. Everyone is welcome!

As ever, we are grateful for our willing band of helpers and their readiness to help out with whatever needs doing, and to take over when someone can't be there. We've also been blessed again this year with a wonderful musician and sound technician in Ian Huntley. We are also indebted to James and Kaiden for helping out with the music at the visitors evening, and Ian Lawson with setting up the sound system when Ian Huntley is away. It is truly a blessing to have such a supportive church family as we endeavour to share Christ's love and care with our Friends. Thank you all for your support.





Pictures of our Easter meeting.



Pictures of our Prayer for  
Prospects Across Scotland evening





## Coffee Morning

BY MARGARET SCOTT

Sometimes it can be difficult to describe the Thursday Coffee Morning. To say we are a group of folks who enjoy each others company, a tea or coffee, some baking and a chat is true. There is so much more, the willing helpers who come along to help, especially when I take extended holidays! The giving of lifts to and fro, and the wonderful fellowship and support that is so freely given and greatly valued by us all.

The Nursery visits still bring great joy and entertainment to us on a monthly basis. We warmly welcome new visitors, the men are now starting outnumber the ladies!

Thank you all for your continued support.  
Margaret, Anne, May and Andy



## Art Group

BY LINDA GILLESPIE

Around six of us have been meeting on Monday afternoons in the small hall. Our former tutor is sorely missed and, as yet, we have no one to replace her. Could it be you? Our weekly subscriptions are donated to the church in appreciation for the use of the church facilities and also to other agreed charities. This year includes Lynsey Gow and her dad heading to Everest Base Camp to raise money for Strathcarron Hospice.

Consider giving us a look in after the summer.





## Wednesday Book Group

BY NADIA COWAN AND  
MARION GRAHAM

This group has been a fun way to encourage each other in new and deeper ways to grow in our faith.

There are between 8 - 12 women who meet once a month on a Wednesday morning to discuss a faith book we've been reading. We discuss some of the main ideas found in the chapters we've read that month, and have found that this helps us to grow in understanding while encouraging each other.

Some of the general questions to ask when reading are:

1. What captured your attention/ jumped out at you? Note down any words, quotes, concepts that 'spoke' to you.
2. What is God saying to you? Think and pray.
3. What does this mean for my life?
  - My personal life
  - How I am with my family/friends/church
  - Service/action

We also share concerns, prayers and encouragement through a WhatsApp group.

This year we've been reading a really thought-provoking book together - 'Twenty Questions Jesus Asked' by John Pritchard. What an excellent read this has been! We've been reading and discussing two chapters each month. Every chapter begins as an imagined story told by the person encountering Jesus. It's followed by a helpful explanation and discussion of what that question means for us today. There are some questions to ponder, and prayers at the end of each chapter.

We have all found this to be an exceptional book. It has challenged us, made us laugh and made us cry. I believe each of us would say it has greatly helped to enrich our walk with Jesus.

Some of the questions Jesus asked:  
"What are you looking for?" John 1:38  
"Who do you say I am?" Mark 8:29

"Are you asleep?" Mark 14:37

If you are interested in joining the group after summer (when we'll start a new book), please speak to Nadia Cowan or Marion Graham.



## Slamannan Baby Basket Ministry needs stock!

It has been customary over the years to make up a hamper for newborns in the villages of Slamannan and Limerigg (formerly the Slamannan Parish). This has been part of an outreach ministry to young parents. Now stocks of knitted baby clothes and other items like vests, baby sleepwear – everything really, is seriously low. Anyone who enjoys knitting is invited to help us to keep this ministry to young parents going. For further information, please contact Monica MacDonald. Her contact details are [monica.macdonald@churchhofscotland.org.uk](mailto:monica.macdonald@churchhofscotland.org.uk)

## **Report from Graham and Sandra Duncan April 2025**

BY RACHEL MEEK

Dear Friends,  
There have been increasing issues at St Augustine's College, where Graham serves on the Senate and Board of Directors, as the college and the two Roman Catholic seminaries in South Africa engage in discussions about a merger which will both serve the training of priests and provide academic training of the Catholic Faith Tradition which is remarkably like the Reformed Faith Tradition! In addition, he is deeply involved in the Ecumenical Theological Commission of the Church Unity Commission, which is working towards providing an ecumenical approach to theological education and the training of ministers. You will see from this that our ongoing mission is an ecumenical venture as denominations are becoming more open to the needs of one another.

Christmas was lovely as usual with our friends' Neil and Stephan's families. Then we had New Year with Jakub and Marve who were home from Ireland. Otherwise, we had a quiet restful time. January began with a burst – Graham off to the University of Stellenbosch and Theological Education by Extension College to have discussions with the institutions where we train our Uniting Presbyterian Church in SA ministers. The cost of education in SA has become very expensive and this was one of the factors discussed as we also engage with our ecumenical partners. The year began well at the Baptist College with numbers holding up despite the rising cost of higher education. We are about to undergo a site visit from the Council on Higher Education regarding the re-accreditation of our programme offerings. Then, in February, the Presbytery of Tshwane officially appointed Graham as minister of St Mark's congregation for a period of two years. This had brought about a period of stability,

although further changes will come about within the foreseeable future, with congregational decline particularly within our traditionally white congregations.

Sandra had two large projects: a book to be published by a well-known Old Testament Scholar to edit, and another book about a famous religious stalwart from the struggle against Apartheid. Both were quite large volumes +/- 400 pages each. So this kept her glued to her computer through the first quarter of this year. And then we had a delightful break in the Kruger National Park enjoying a huge variety of wildlife and beautiful sunsets.

From Graham and Sandra Duncan, Pretoria, SA

Work also continues with the Mamelodi congregation - these pictures show recent distributions which are in part enabled by the giving of Upper Braes through a regular retiring offering.





## Refreshment Team

BY MARALYN STIRLING

Our team of volunteers has grown! How exciting is that!

Teas/coffees are now being served in the Heriot Hall as the numbers coming to our "after-church cuppa" have increased too! We are so blessed.

It has been really uplifting to see members from our "legacy churches" offer their services - a great opportunity to get to know our Upper Braes Church Family and put names to faces!

Should you wish to be part of the Refreshment Team, please speak to Maralyn Stirling.

## Welcome Team

BY LINDA GILLESPIE

Our "official" Welcome Team is growing. New people are finding that this is a good way to meet more people. There is something else that is becoming more noticeable before the service starts - people are moving about the church, talking with each other. Some of them are wearing official Welcome Team lanyards but more and more are not. They are members of the church family reaching out to each other. This is a joy to see. More and more people are continuing their conversations after the service over a cuppa. This too is a joy to see. We are a real family gathering in our Father's house to thank Him and praise Him and trying our best to please Him.

A recent addition to the team has this to say, encouraging and humbling at the same time: "Moving from a small church to a bigger one really worried me. But the lovely welcome you all gave us, coming from Shieldhill was amazing."



I enjoy coming to the Upper Braes Church and being on the Welcoming Team - and the teas and coffee team. Thanking you all. Agnes x"

However, we are still a way from no longer needing an "official" Welcoming Team. We still have spaces on the calendar - maybe for you?



## Men's Book Group

BY JIM HOPE

The Men's Book Group continues to meet regularly every few weeks, with typically 8 or 9 members and a few other "interested followers". Having in the past 18 months completed two different books on biblical themes, we have now moved on to look at a classic title on contemporary issues.

John Stott's "Issues Facing Christians Today" was first published in 1984, but has been

revised and updated several times since then. We soon discovered that even though particular subjects rise and fall in levels of public awareness and Christian comment, there are important underlying principles which need to guide our responses both as individuals and as a church. John Stott's writing is a masterclass in clarity of thought and presentation, and even though the book runs to over 500 pages, it is not in any way a daunting read. So far we have only looked at the introductory chapters, but have already been challenged to sharpen our biblical literacy and our social awareness to shape our responses to today's world.

The first three chapters which we have studied look at the world as "Changing, Complex and Plural", and pose questions as to whether Christian witness is "Necessary, Distinctive and Influential". As we move on into further sections we will look at a selection of "Global, Social and Personal" issues. We may not be

able to look in detail at every one of the 13 (!) issues he identifies under these headings; we may not always reach the same conclusions, but we can be sure that we will be stretched and challenged in seeking our own distinctly Christian perspective on matters of continuing debate in the public square of today's media.

If you're up for that, why not join us, even perhaps for a one-off "try it and see"? You'll be welcome. You don't even have to have read the book – the conversation is the thing most of us value at least as much as the reading. Keep an eye on the notice sheet for details.

Jim Hope (Convenor),  
[hope.jim@gmail.com](mailto:hope.jim@gmail.com)





# Romain Wendla Sida Nana born 1<sup>st</sup> September 2005 in Burkina Faso

BY JIM CURRIE



2009

Members of Blackbraes and Shieldhill Church sponsored this young man through Compassion Christian Child Development. Mrs Carolyn Marshall managed the link over a number of years that enabled Romain to be released from poverty. Sponsorship provides food, health care, school fees and medical support making a difference to not only the child but his family.

In Burkina Faso half of the population lives below the poverty line. The children's welfare is threatened by malnutrition, child labour and sickness.



2014



2022

Romain's last letter reports that his family are doing well. Gives thanks for the support given to him. As the rainy season approaches he is going to sow maize, beans and peanuts. He thanks God for his welldoings towards

them. In a current project he is learning to sing, read bible verses and to respect each other. He asks us to pray for the rainy season so that God keeps them from strong winds and storms. And to pray for his country Burkina Faso.

Romain has now reached the age where he is called up for the armed forces and will no longer be supported by sponsorship. In a country which is under military rule there is an ongoing threat from jihadist rebels and Al-Qaeda, we must pray for peace and safety in Burkina Faso.

The sum of £340.00 is the balance in the fund which is to be given to the Upper Braes Church for forwarding to an appropriate children's charity.







BY MONICA MACDONALD

The Management Committee and Volunteers of Martha's Pantry remain grateful for the opportunity to support the communities of Limerigg and Slamannan. According to our service-users, they have benefitted in ways they had never thought. Not only is Martha's Pantry able to provide them with fresh produce and a variety of other food items each week - whether frozen or from our shelves, our cooking demonstrations (which include tasting!) has given service-users ideas for making healthy meals on a budget. Our resident (retired) Chef, David, provides a recipe every second week - often for a three-course meal, using ingredients that can be found in the Pantry.

Currently, we are deeply concerned that Falkirk Council want to close Slamannan Community Centre where the Pantry is housed. Closure was set for the end of March

2025. A small group from our Management Committee held discussions with Council representatives in February. As a result, the closure has been put on hold for six months (until 30th September) through our having submitted an Expression of Interest to take over the building.

At the time of writing this piece, the Falkirk Council have offered Martha's Pantry the use of a small shop in Slamannan which has been vacant for some years. The premises can be made available to us under a Community Benefit Lease where the Council foregoes the rent on the basis of the benefit accruing from our activities. There will be other costs of course, but the main cost will be in getting the shop up to a standard that it can be used! We are in the process of costing out such an exercise to establish its feasibility. Funding this project will take more than our current reserves.

As a Community Group, we believe that what our volunteers are doing in

this area of high deprivation (the 3rd highest in the Falkirk Council area) is the Lord's work - being the hands of Jesus, supporting those who find life hard and money too little to go round. The Moderator of the Church of Scotland, Rt Rev Shaw Patterson, in addressing Political Leaders recently said: *"Supporting the poorest people in society is a Gospel imperative and at the heart of what the church does"*.

Please pray for this work. Please pray for good outcomes for premises for Martha's Pantry. Please pray that grant funding will be made available to us not only for the fitting out of new premises, but also that we can continue to provide support for the families in Limerigg and Slamannan.





## Bible Translations

BY RACHEL MEEK

*'I feel like the world was dark before, but now it is light and I have hope and joy. I feel as if I have been born again.'*

How many of us feel like that about the Bible?

Those were the words of Nura, a lady living in the Middle East who had been following posts on a social media site which shared verses about Jesus from the Scriptures in her own language. She asked, 'Where can I find a Bible? Tonight Jesus came deep into my heart and I was full of the love and joy of Jesus. Your posts with verses about Jesus make me very happy. I really want to know more about him.'

This language, which will soon have its own printed New Testament after 14 years of dedicated work, is already available on an app, and the believer who posts the Scripture verses this lady read was able to tell her how to find God's Word. Reading it on a digital device will be safer for her than having a physical copy – another way in which modern technology can help to spread the Good

News of Jesus Christ in parts of the world closed to Christian workers.

We were hearing recently about the work of the Bible Society and how it helps to make God's Word available around the world in a language people can understand. In some countries, however possessing a Bible is illegal; for many it's simply not available in their native language. Organisations like the Bible Society and Wycliffe Bible Translators (to whom I am indebted for this story) are finding ever more innovative ways of reaching people with the Good News – let's continue to pray that the power of God's Word will bring lasting change in the lives of many who are currently in darkness, like Nura, wherever they live.



## Interview with Monica and George MacDonald

BY EDNA OLIVER

Last December on an icy afternoon, I delivered the Contact magazine to the MacDonalds. They gave me such a warm welcome and the house was so comfortable that I was tempted to accept the cup of tea they offered. But I had to get on, and Monica had to take a funeral, so I didn't stay. But it occurred to me that I knew little about them except that they were both ministers and both from South Africa, and it would be interesting to find out more.

Fast forward to April and I meet with them again to learn their stories for this interview. And I was not disappointed.

### The Background

George and Monica were both born and raised in Cape Town, both in Christian homes, although from different traditions. Monica's father was a Methodist minister. George's father was a carpenter, and his





family were of the Catholic/Anglican tradition. The couple were both aware of their calling from God, Monica quite early as a girl growing up, and George somewhat later.

George worked for 30 years as a Communications engineer in Cape Town, a job which he enjoyed. He was part of the group which installed digital telephones in South Africa, and he was there when the first digital telephone call was made to the South African Ambassador in France. It was a big occasion. Unfortunately, however the ambassador did not receive the call himself, as he was answering a call of nature at that moment!

While working, George was also getting involved in church work. For years he was a Christian street worker with the St Vincent de Paul society, mainly distributing bibles. He was veering more towards Protestantism and in his early 20s had become an elder in a Presbyterian church. It was at a bible study at a Presbyterian church that George and Monica met. Monica worked as a para legal at that time. While working full time George was also studying to become first a part time minister and then finally, he made the decision to leave his work to become a full-time minister. He was ordained in 1995 and served in a Presbyterian church just outside of Cape town.

In 1997 they made the decision to move to Durban. The children were by this time grown up and George became minister of a church in Durban. Monica while in Durban worked as an admissions administrator at a large private {Catholic} school. They lived in Durban for seven and a half years.

Before they moved to Durban apartheid in South Africa had ended but both had grown up with it and I felt I had to ask how it had affected them. My own understanding was that even churches were affected by it, but both said this was not their experience. Their own parents were in no way racist and the churches they knew were integrated long before apartheid ended. The school where Monica worked had been integrated before 1994.

### **From Durban to Scotland**

George and Monica had travelled broadly during their time in Durban, and they had travelled to the UK three times. George had taken an



interest in the Church of Scotland General Assembly which he watched online.

With many vacancies in the Church of Scotland in and around 2002/2003 the couple travelled to Scotland where George applied for a Certificate of Eligibility and had opportunity also to visit a number of vacant charges, one of which asked him to return to preach as sole nominee in the September of that year (2003). While a move to Scotland was huge, George and Monica both experienced a deep sense of call to serve the Kirk.

In January 2004, George was Inducted to the linked charge of Hamilton South and Quarter, South Lanarkshire. And, they said they were tremendously blessed by the Kirk Session & Board of the Linked Charge's decision to pay for a container so they could have some of their own furniture shipped over which helped them to feel more at home when they moved into the manse.

Of course there was a lot of adjusting to do, not least getting used to the climate. George had brought no long-sleeved shirts and no warm jacket, and it was winter!

George serviced this linked charge for five and a half years before accepting a call to Bonnybridge Parish Church, serving there for eleven and a half years and from where he retired at the age of 75.

Monica had trained as a Lay Preacher in South Africa but now in Scotland she had to start from scratch. She did Readership training, served as a Reader and Locum and later applied for the Ordained Local Ministry. She was ordained on the 4th October 2014 which was also the start of her ten-year ministry serving the Slamannan and Limerigg Parish. She retired from there at the end of October 2024.

Most of us will know that Monica started Martha's Pantry based in the community centre at Slammanan. There she has put into practice her

obvious organisational skills. Unfortunately, the community centre is due to close, but the hope is that somewhere else will be found so that Martha's Pantry can continue.

George also volunteers at Martha's Pantry. I get the impression that the couple are very much a team and both are very hardworking.

### **Charitable Works**

While at Hamilton South lw Quarter, George and Monica set up a Registered Scottish Charity (Friends of Place of Restoration Scotland) to support a Shelter for abused and abandoned children and those with HIV/AIDS called Place of Restoration – an organisation they had already been involved in during their time in Durban.

Annual Garden Parties were held on the lawns of the manse in Quarter and Monica was invited by schools and church groups to speak to them about the charity. Once they moved to Bonnybridge their events took on a

different format – a South African Day where traditional South African cuisine was served. This ticketed event, along with craft sales and donations helped to support the children at Place of Restoration. Over the last 21 years they have been able to raise between £10 000 and £12 000 each year for the charity. With the South African currency being devalued, funds raised here have totalled over 4.5million South African Rand.

### Retirement

Upon George's retiral, the couple moved to a house Airth. They love gardening too and have made a garden at their house in Airth where there wasn't one before. They both have hobbies, however. The son of a carpenter, George restores furniture to a beautiful finish. He is a keen photographer and I saw some of his work. Monica enjoys knitting and sewing and made clothes for herself and for the children as they were growing up.

They both love music and travelling. Some of

their travels have taken them to biblical sights in Israel, Egypt, Greece, and Turkey. At Ephesus they held a communion service and their whole coach party attended!

At an age when some of us might be thinking about slowing down, there is little sign of this with George and Monica. Monica, while no longer minister of the Slamannan church has become Pastoral Assistant for the whole Upper Braes Parish. George may be retired but he still accepts invitations to preach, and he supports Monica in all she does.

I feel blessed to have heard their story and am sure there is still a lot to come!

## Slamannan Seniors Lunch





# Sunday School

BY ALIE DRACKFORD  
SUNDAY SCHOOL COORDINATOR

The groups have settled well into their new halls and all seems to be working with only a few minor teething problems which have been easily resolved. Numbers have been swelling in all groups which had prompted the hall moves. Which is a lovely problem to have.

I nearly have enough people to start running a crèche rota so that will be an excellent addition to our facilities for the children. Expect to see that added soon.

Here is what has been going on in each group:

## Beginners (age 3 to P1)

BY MAGGY DICK

We have been learning about people's jobs and how they relate to Jesus' stories. Our wee ones are growing in numbers all the time as well as their faith. They have been impressing us with their answers to our questions and their understanding. They have taken the new hall in their stride and been very accepting of the change. We have been practising more of the action songs we sing in church to try to help us remember them when we sing them in church.





# Juniors (P2-P4)

BY ALISON CASSELLS  
AND EDNA OLIVER

In Juniors we are blessed with a small group of enthusiastic young people who are keen to participate and take part and every week we use a variety of means - games, bible stories, direct teaching, prayer and craft - to help the children learn.



This term we have been exploring a unit called 'Godly Character - Living Like Jesus' and we have been learning how to develop a godly character and what that means for our everyday lives. Over the course of 11 weeks we have learned about the Fruit of the Spirit looking at 'love', 'joy', 'peace', 'patience', 'kindness', 'goodness',

faithfulness', 'gentleness', and self-control, as well as 2 additional topics of 'trust' and 'thankfulness'. We used Galatians 5:22-23a as our memory verse and learned that the Fruits of the Spirit aren't different things like apples, bananas and pears, but that they are all part of the same fruit, like segments on a satsuma. They are the things God grows in us. We've learned that we're not perfect like Jesus is, but we can try to follow his perfect ways.



In February we enjoyed sharing a great Buddy Sunday with the FLAIMers and we all took home a WWJD (What Would Jesus Do) bracelet to remind us to always consider how Jesus would respond in any situation.



We have three P4s who will move up to Triple S on 'Moving Up' Sunday and we look forward to welcoming our new P2s from Beginners in August.





# Triple S

(P5-P7)

BY DIXCEE SPENCER



We continue to learn the books of the Old Testament by using hand motions and have only six to go! We've been highlighting where events in the New Testament were foretold in the Old Testament, e.g. birth of the Messiah, and also pointing out Jesus' ancestors.

As we head into the last section of the term, we are learning a Gaelic song with Isla and Samuel Duke using their musical talents to accompany us. We won't reveal what instrument they are playing. We'll keep that as a surprise, but we are having lots of fun!

## FLAIM

Forever Living Alive In Me  
(S1-S3)

BY GEORGE MANN,  
NADIA COWAN,  
DOUG AND RACHEL  
GILMOUR  
FRASER TAIT

Flaim has recently moved venue! We now meet in the small hall, as we were getting a bit cramped in the community hall. We have 14 young people in our group, with 8-10 regularly attending on Sunday mornings. What a great group of young people to spend time with on Sundays! We have also loved having Caz join as a leader - Caroline Whittit is our wonderful Youth Development Worker.

One highlight after church, was a fun pizza and pancake party together. Doug made huge piles of delicious pancakes and we all got stuck in, eating them



with some very interesting toppings....peanut butter, chocolate spread AND apple, anyone???? Some Jenga competitions followed and everyone was a winner....of course! Recently on Sundays, we have been looking at the main beliefs contained in the Apostles' Creed, and more in depth at the meaning of the crucifixion and the resurrection. It's not just learning about these important topics, but also about how this should affect our lives as Christians. We want our young folk to grow confidently in their faith. Each of the leaders has committed to praying for 3 or 4 of the group on a regular basis.

Caz has also set up a group of people to pray weekly for young people in our church, and also for staff and pupils at Braes High School.

Please pray for our young people too, and encourage them when you see them. And pray for us as leaders too, please!

Caz, Doug, Fraser, George, Nadia, Rachel



# Girls' Brigade

BY SANDRA BLAIR

1ST POLMONT GIRLS' BRIGADE CAPTAIN

## Explorers (P1-P3)

This year at Explorers we have had around 24 girls attending each week which has been great to see and have all been very enthusiastic in everything that we do.

The theme that we were following for the session was Celebrations.

Each week we start our evening with a Bible Story. We have looked at stories about Creation, Noah, David and Goliath, Joseph, Harvest, Remembrance, The Good Samaritan, Advent, Christmas Story, The Lost Sheep, Moses to name just a few. Most weeks after we have listened to our story and chatted about it we then follow this with some action songs.

During the year the girls have made several crafts which always seems to be a favourite item in our programme. We started

off by making Olympic torches as we were looking at Olympic Games for our Physical badgework, Olympic Rings, made scarecrows with wooden spoons for Harvest, decorated Joseph's coat, painted poppies for our poppy wreath for Remembrance, Christmas crafts, butterflies made from fruit and pancakes, St Patricks day masks, valentine windsocks, flowers and cards for Mothers day to name just a few.



At end of November we attended the local pantomime again "Sleeping Beauty" at Larbert Dobbie Hall. A great afternoon was had by Explorers and Juniors and there was lots of excitement and noise!! In December, as a company, we led the Christingle Service in the Church.

For our Physical activities we have been looking at Olympic Games and played many games relating to this topic. We also held a mini Highland Games, played games using chopsticks when it was Chinese New Year. One game the girls do



love to play is a Scavenger Hunt and we have had a few of these relating to various topics throughout the year.

We hope that the Primary 3 girls who will be moving up to the Junior Section after the Summer have enjoyed their time at Explorers and we look forward to still seeing them about on a Wednesday evening when in Juniors.

## Juniors (P4-P7)

BY CHRISTINA MASON

I am sure I said this last year but I can't believe how quickly this session has been! It gives us a chance to reflect on the good times we have shared at Juniors. We have welcomed a few new faces to our section and have loved helping the girls learn and grow in their Girls' Brigade journey. They are a wonderful group of girls who always try their best.





The girls were interested in continuing to read the Bible and learn some of the amazing stories about Jesus. We have used the Bible almost every night at Juniors and the girls have developed their confidence in finding books, chapters and verses. We have also learnt about Jesus through stories and action songs.

Our theme of Celebrations provided us with ideas for activities and crafts, including making compliment jars on Valentine's Day. The girls are kind and caring and have always shown an interest in helping others. They really enjoyed filling the Blythswood shoeboxes and making cards for the local care home residents. Thank you to all the girls who attended the 100th Anniversary Afternoon Tea to help serve cakes and support at the craft stall.

In our Physical Badgework we tried out some new games including curling and hockey. We also tried to



make sure we had a game of Splat! whenever there was time.

We hope all the girls have enjoyed their time at Juniors this year and we'll see them again in August. Good luck to our Primary 7s who will be starting High School and Brigaders.



## Brigaders (S1-S6)

BY MAGGY DICK

This year we have been celebrating the centenary of 1st Polmont so for our Educational badgework we have been looking at Celebrations. We have looked at Christmas, Weddings and Easter looking into the different traditions round the world for each of these occasions.

For our Spiritual work we looked into 'Have You Ever Wondered' looking at different questions on what we question.

For Physical we have enjoyed Curling, Card Games, Archery, Tetris, Javelin Throwing and enjoyed competing in teams against each other.



For our Service  
badgework we have  
again made Christmas  
and Easter cards for the  
local nursing homes,  
making different crafts,  
baking for the Thursday  
morning coffee morning  
and serving tea and  
coffee at the afternoon  
tea for our Centenary.





# 100 Year Anniversary Afternoon Tea

At the end of our session we celebrated the company being 100 years old with an Afternoon tea in the Church Hall. It was great to see so many people join us at this event and the Brigaders and P7s serving the tea and coffee, etc., to everyone. Everyone enjoyed looking at all the old memorabilia we had relating to the company from uniforms/camps/competitions/display nights, etc. We even found a packet of Polo Mints in amongst the box of items from a National event we took part in in 1987!!!!



## Thank you

My thanks go to all the officers and helpers who come along every Wednesday evening and put so much of their time and talents into preparing to make each evening so enjoyable and fun for the girls who attend and especially since the start of the year when I was unable to attend. It was very much appreciated.

## New Session 2025/2026

Our new session will re-commence in August 2025 and further details will be found nearer the time by either e-mail/Facebook/Falkirk Herald/Church Newsheet, etc.



# Boys' Brigade

## Anchor Boys (P1-P3)

BY SHEILA WILLIAMSON

We have just completed another fun filled year culminating in our Annual Display night.

Our prize winners were

Best Groups :

Eagles & Ospreys

Liam Mcluckie,

Isaac Duncanson,

Elon Ikegwuonu

Tristan Jellicoe,

Hugo Lang,

Arran Bishop.

Special award :

Joshua Robertson

1st Polmont Anchor Boys

Sports Prize :

Seth Bremner

Andrew Mcculloch Cup

Best New Recruit :

Sam MacIntosh

1st Polmont Anchor Boys

Spiritual Cup :

Otis Eckles

Best 3rd Year Boy Ian

Baillie Shield:

Cameron McNeill





Congratulations to them all. We look forward to welcoming our returning boys in August and also welcoming new boys starting their BB Journey. We wish our Primary 3 boys every success as they move on up to Junior section.





## Juniors (P4-P6)

BY MICHAEL FYALL

The Juniors have enjoyed a good session since the Christmas break. In January we had a joint trip with the Company Section to watch Falkirk play Livingston. Sadly, we didn't witness a Falkirk win, but the boys enjoyed it nonetheless.

Later that weekend our boys were successful in the Battalion 5-a-side competition.



We've had various themes for our Friday nights including; Chocolate, the human body and Chinese New Year.

In May, we're looking forward to a tour of Hampden and the Scottish Football Museum. Our annual display is on Friday 23rd May.

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## Company (P7-S6)

BY COLIN HEGGIE

It has been another busy year for the Company Section boys with everyone playing their part in the many different activities and competitions we have participated in. We have had more great fundraising activities which both the Company and Junior Sections have been involved in. We collected almost £900 at

Tesco in Redding in November and our Christmas card delivery service around the community also raised £250. At the end of March, our senior boys organised a 20 hour sports marathon where

we used exercise bikes to cycle over 900 Kilometres and continuously played a variety of sports and games from the Friday night through to Saturday afternoon. The boys decided that all money raised would be split between Company funds and Crohn's and Colitis UK, and the current total raised is

just over £1600. A fantastic effort by everyone!

The boys have competed in several battalion competitions including badminton, volleyball, ten pin bowling and 5-a-side football and basketball competitions. Our Pulpit Fall spiritual competition team came second, narrowly losing out to 2<sup>nd</sup> Larbert after leading up until the last round.





The boys also competed in a number of national competitions this year. Our FIFA teams both did well before narrowly losing to a team from Dundee, who ended up as national champions. Our two Masterteam quiz teams narrowly missed out on a place in the second round, finishing 3rd and 4th out of 8 teams in their heat. Our senior 5-a-side football team made it to the last 12 teams in Scotland but just failed to make the Scottish final. It has been great to see the boys all compete in these competitions in such a friendly way and build relationships with boys from other companies throughout the country.

We have also had a different Christmas night out this year and everyone our trip to 10 pin bowling and mini golf in Edinburgh. We also had a couple of sporting trips this session with a joint trip in November with 2<sup>nd</sup> Polmont to the Scotland v Fiji rugby international at Murrayfield and we also went to the Falkirk v Livingston football game in January.

The boys have also put in a lot of hard work this year with two boys gaining their President's Badge. Very well done to John Gilmour and Callum Clydesdale who are starting out on their King's Badge work.

A huge congratulations to Stuart Barclay, Lucas Haig and Alastair Gough who have now completed their King's Badge and will be attending the King's Badge parade at Scone Palace in June.

We are all delighted that two of our young officers, Owen Gough and Lauren Hunter, have been selected to represent the BB as stewards at a Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in May. It is a great honour as only 12 people nationally have been invited and good luck to them both!





# Food for Thought

## **Slamannan Childrens Gala Day 1910**

BY ALEX BUCHANAN

A Gala Day promoted by the Slamannan Co-operative Society (Ltd) took place on Saturday last and was attended with the fullest possible success. Former functions of this kind have been successful in a way, but the one on Saturday created quite a record in every way. The Weather was delightfully fine, and all the arrangements were perfectly made. Large numbers of visitors as well as former residents poured into the village from early forenoon. Throughout the whole district there was a profuse display of bunting. Beautiful, decorated arches bearing appropriate inscriptions and mottos spanned the public highway at Burnrow, Station Row, Station, George Street, New Street Main Street, High street, Blinkbonny and Mosscastle Road. While

at every convenient point flags in great profusion were displayed. The scene which the decorations presented was quite a picturesque and effective one, competition being very evidently keen amongst the inhabitants to have the most gaily decked premises. Neither labour nor expense was spared in the decorations which was ample proof that such an occasion in the locality was appreciated.

A special train brought the children from Westfield, Blackston and Avonbridge. While the Longriggend Contingent came with the ordinary train arriving at three o'clock. By this train also travelled the three bands which were to accompany the procession.

From the station proper the procession may be said to have begun, headed by 51<sup>st</sup> Glasgow Company Boys' Brigade Brass Band playing selections of Scottish Airs the procession of

almost 2000 strong wended its way from the station by way of George Street, Main Street, High Street, Blinkbonny and Mosscastle Road. Interspersed among the processionists were the 39th Glasgow Company Boys' Brigade Pipe Band who played "Scotland Forever" also the 113th Glasgow Company Boys' Brigade Pipe Band playing "The Bugle Horn". The employees and members of the committee assisted by friends took charge of the children. Every point of vantage along the route was occupied by interested spectators who returned the children's vociferous cheering. Combined with the decorations of the village, the carrying of the various banners by the children, and the massed bands playing, the whole presented an animated scene never before witnessed in the village. The rear of the procession was brought up by the horses and vans of the butchery and bakery departments,

most elaborately bedecked with jingling bells, flowers, ribbons and flags.

After their arrival at the field at Castlehill, which was kindly granted by Mr Robert Shanks, the children were given a most liberal supply of buns, cakes and lemonade. After this had been partaken of, games, skipping rope, competitions, races, etc., were arranged for the children who had taken part in the procession, while the adults engaged in dancing. At intervals the different bands gave pleasing selections. From first to last not a single hitch marred the proceedings, thanks to the admirable arrangements made by the convenors – Messrs Robert Stirling, Blinkbonny; Thomas McCracken, Burnrow; Alexander Duncan, Longrigg; and John Gardner, Crossroads – ably and energetically assisted by the President of the Society, Mr John Wood; Mr William Easton, Vice-President; Mr William Hutchison, Treasurer; and Mr Andrew Murray, Secretary.

## **Gee what a cute cow**

BY DREW ROBERTSON

One day when I worked in shipping, my boss got me into his office. We knew that something must be happening because his phone had kept ringing and judging by the number of calls, it must be quite urgent. There was one drawback though. My boss had a sense of humour that was legendary and sometimes you didn't know when he was being serious or just playing out an elaborate joke on his unsuspecting staff.

This was one of those occasions.

After pleasantries were exchanged, he paused for a moment, then his face adopted a very serious expression. Finally, in hushed tones he announced,

"Andrew, I want you to go right away to Edinburgh to find a lady!"

I was expecting something to do, but nothing like this. I thought about it for a second and my mind

came up with three options as to what I should reply.

Option 1 - Simply answer with great enthusiasm, "Yes Sir!" Then rush out the office. Hotfoot it to Edinburgh at maximum speed before he changes his mind. Perhaps it was all a secret conspiracy to marry me off!

Option 2 - Reply something along the lines of, "There's thousands of them. It's a big city! Which one would you like me to find?"

Option 3 - Nod as if I knew what he was talking about. Say nothing. Look very interested and perhaps he would elaborate on what he had in mind.

I chose Option 3 and this turned out to be the correct one. Seeing that I wasn't in the least bit fazed and knowing I enjoyed doing unusual tasks, he smiled and let me in on the secret.

"You are actually going to look for a very special lady."



Apparently, one of the cruise ships had been berthed at Leith for a couple of days and on this morning, buses had taken most of the passengers on a tour of the city which included all the famous landmarks. A final stop was always made at the castle for the folks to look around and take in the fabulous view, before heading back to the ship. It would then sail soon after to head for Lerwick in the Shetland Islands. The great thing about it was that the passengers would be able to actually see their cruise ship from this high vantage point. Because of this, lots of photos were always taken, showing both the city and the ship in the background.

Only this time, one passenger had not returned!

My boss told me an older lady had gone missing. Something had gone wrong on the bus and they had miscounted the amount of returning passengers. Somehow, they thought everyone was accounted for. This

was back in the days when security was much less sophisticated and people didn't have to go through stringent checks. A quick headcount would probably have been done on the bus and the ship would just assume everything was OK when the tour company returned its passengers and reported nothing amiss.

As a result, the ship was just about to sail when they finally discovered the lady was missing. It was not possible to wait much longer because of the tide. When she was eventually found, she would have to stay overnight in Edinburgh. She would then be put on a flight to Lerwick which would be on the next day during the afternoon as the morning departure was fully booked. This was actually OK because the cruise ship wouldn't be sailing from Lerwick until later the next evening.

The cruise company had given my boss some background information about her and even more

embarrassing was the fact that she was one of their best clients. She regularly booked one of their most expensive suites, as she enjoyed this particular cruise which took her all around Britain. When she was in Scotland, she loved visiting its historical buildings, and had a particular soft spot for churches. This was music to my ears as I would have this one thing in common with her and could show her some fine ones.

I was to make sure this lady made it safely to her hotel and until her flight for Lerwick departed tomorrow afternoon, I was to act as a sort of ambassador for the cruise company. If she wanted to go on a sightseeing tour, I was to take her. If she preferred to visit a historical building or church, I was to accompany her. I had been given in effect, carte blanche by the cruise company to make her stay in Edinburgh nothing less than fantastic, in a bid to try and restore her faith in the company.

My first and most important job was to locate her. This wasn't as difficult as it might sound. We knew her last known location was at the castle. From past experience, we found that people tended not to stray too far if they were in an unfamiliar city. She would most likely still be there.

Sure enough, I was just approaching the city when I got a call on the very large piece of equipment that passed as a mobile phone back then. She had apparently approached a tour guide in the castle. Then she had pointed over in the direction of Leith where the large ship was slowly swinging round in the harbour basin and announced,

"Say, I think that's my cruise boat over there and it looks like it's going away!"

When I arrived, she was sitting in a small room in the castle offices, poring over some postcards which were on a table with her back turned towards me. A really nice snack had been provided

for her from the castle restaurant. I was actually quite nervous about meeting her. In fact, I feared the very worst, expecting her to be either absolutely furious or totally distraught.

I was relieved to find I couldn't be further wrong.

When I opened the door, she turned round and smiled such a sweet smile. Then she held up a large postcard which featured a very fierce and extremely shaggy looking Highland cow. Instead of a tirade, there was simply a sense of wonder in her voice and the very first words she said to me were:

"Gee, what a cute cow!"

I nodded vigorously and with a smile informed her,

"I can take you to meet a cow just like that one!"

This made her double up with laughter. She also looked absolutely delighted.

Then she said softly, " I'm Aida. Thanks for coming

to rescue me. I'm so sorry about this." I knew I had made a friend.

After outlining how we were going to reunite her with the ship, tomorrow evening at Lerwick, she asked if I happened to know in what street the oldest building in Edinburgh was located and what type of building it was? I had a flash of inspiration. Knowing she had a soft spot for churches and old buildings I said,

"Aida. What would you say, if I told you I can take you to see the oldest building in Edinburgh...that it is only one moment away from where we are right now...and...it happens to be a church!

She was absolutely thrilled.

"That would be nothing short of miraculous! Please do so!

St Margaret's Chapel, situated within the castle and built in the 12th century also happens to be the oldest building in Edinburgh. It



was empty at this time of the afternoon not long before closing time. It is a very small chapel and there is such a feeling of peace and gentle splendour within its beautiful interior.

Aida sat on one of the small seats and asked, "Are you a religious man Andrew?"  
I replied "Yes."  
"Would you like to join me in prayer?"  
"I'd be delighted to."

I sat in the next seat, soaking up this beautiful tranquillity in the heart of the busy city. Aida prayed first. I have never heard such a beautiful prayer. She started off by thanking God for being given the opportunity to visit this beautiful country and for the welcome she had been given by its generous and caring people. She went on to tell God about what a privilege it was to be before Him in this beautiful church and in her thoughts were the thousands of people who had visited or worshipped there over the years. She gave thanks for the comfort these folks had been

given in this quiet sanctuary, just like she was experiencing now.

She also asked God to send His love and blessings to everyone else who will visit this little chapel in the future and may they know that God is always with them and they can turn to Him for help, even when they have left the comfort of this sanctuary. She told Him about her love for the little piece of Scripture from First Peter, Chapter 5, verse 7 where it says, "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."

She thanked God for all His care and added it was only through His grace that she had the privilege of sitting here before Him. Last of all, she asked Him to come close to anyone who is lonely or suffering and surround them with His loving presence.

The thing that struck me about this lovely prayer was that Aida spoke to God like a close friend and confident. I could actually feel Him with her. I love to pray, but up

until then, when I was younger, my prayers had always been very formal. It was if I was speaking to an unseen boss, rather than a friend I could confide in and take great comfort from. I now realised what I had been missing and how easy it is to open up to God. I used to pray as if God was very far away. I realised I had been communicating with Him as if I was calling up a long distance radio station that was thousands of miles away.

I was so glad I had met this lady. On that afternoon, without knowing it, she had taught me how to pray.

It was now my turn to pray and for the first time ever, I talked to God like a long lost friend. My prayer was not a patch on Aida's but she sat, listened intently and looked on with the air of a person who felt so privileged to be there while this was happening. I felt such deep satisfaction because I knew from now on, I would develop a much closer relationship with God

and today I had taken that first step.

We sat a few moments more, enjoying the peace and stillness that God's presence brings, then it was time to take Aida to her hotel.

The next morning, I picked Aida up bright and early at nine o'clock. Her flight to Lerwick wasn't due to depart until late in the afternoon, so I had great plans for a magnificent tour of the city. When I told her about all the wonderful places we were going to see, she said:

"That's splendid, but I can always see them next time I'm back. There's one place though I'd really love to visit". She then produced the postcard with the very shaggy Highland cow.

"You said yesterday you could take me to meet this cutie. Is it far to go?"

I did a quick calculation and replied,

"No. Not too bad. The cow is at a friend's farm about thirty miles away

on the road to Perth.

She looked really excited and replied " You've just made my day. I'm from Arizona and we drive two hundred miles just to visit our friends! That's what I love about Scotland. Everything's so close!"

During the drive which was very pleasant, Aida told me that she had been brought up on a huge ranch in Arizona. In her teens, she had spent many wonderful days riding around the ranch's vast area with her father and his crew. She loved the animals and seeing this cow on the postcard had absolutely enchanted her and brought back some really good childhood memories. We made good time and when Aida first caught a glimpse of the cow in the large field beside my friend's farmhouse, she was absolutely thrilled. She managed to coax this wonderful creature right over to us. I was able to take a few photographs which I promised I'd forward on to the ship.

We had an excellent early lunch with my friend and his wife in the farmhouse, but the highlight of the trip came when we stopped at a souvenir shop on the way back. I showed Aida some Highland cow soft toys, which let out a resounding "Moo!" when squeezed. She bought half a dozen for nieces and nephews, but I think one was really for her!



After that, the time had come to drive her to the airport. It was almost time to say goodbye and I told her that the cruise company was so sorry she had been left behind for a couple of days. What she replied touched my heart. Here was a lady that had travelled all over the world. She must have seen so many of its grandest and most beautiful places. Yet, she told me that by taking her to see the Highland cow, I had taken her



back in time and it brought back memories of an absolutely wonderful time in her life when so many of her loved ones, including her dear father, were still alive. She said she would always be grateful to me for that.

After we said goodbye, I had one last job to do. Aida had given me a dozen large postcards for friends and relatives which had a picture of an exceedingly large, very shaggy Highland cow and asked me to post them for her.

Each card had exactly the same thing written on the part where you could write your message. It simply said:

"Gee, what a cute cow!"

## More tales from my garden

BY RENA MOORE

Some years ago, I was involved with eco churches. The eco church's underlying effort was encouraging congregations to look at ways of supporting creation.

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They did this by working in a way that preserved the environment around them and looking further afield. Some congregations looked farther afield by helping various projects abroad: Christian Aid, Toilet Twinning, and so on.

These sorts of activities are valid responses to the fifth Mission point that states, "To strive to safeguard the integrity and sustain and renew the life of the earth."

The RSPB has recently published the results of their Big Garden Bird Count. This took place on the final weekend of January. This gives scientists a snapshot of changes on the same weekend over many years. Some 599,000 people took part this January. The birds who made the top ten are all present in my garden apart from the feral pigeon at number 10. This is the pigeon that you will often see in towns and cities.

The Big Garden Birdwatch that I am part of runs all year and gives scientist a snapshot of

things that are happening in different areas. For the past few years we have had bugs, bees, butterflies to count as well as birds during the summer months. My garden is not too tidy, I don't use pesticides and I am looking at how I can reduce a nettle patch that is getting a bit close to the raspberry patch.

The birds that visit my garden has changed over the years. A high wind felled a sycamore tree that I had.



This was one of the starlings collecting place before heading out over The River Forth to wherever they met their friends to form a huge group to form the amazing aerial display unique to starlings.

From time to time, I have visitors. One spring we had Bullfinches. We have a tree that was in the garden when we moved into that house and it



produces some sort of berry.



The first time that we had bullfinches they were on that tree, eating the blossom buds. The fawn bird is the female and the brightly coloured one is the male. Frequently the male is the brightly coloured bird.



Chaffinches are regularly around although recently I have only been aware of two pairs. The one in the picture is a male, the female being brown.

The finch that has declined the most is the greenfinch. I have two occasionally. These were common finches until a few years ago. Many of our seed eating

garden birds succumbed to a respiratory disease that resulted in death. Disease spreads among birds who flock together. People who feed the birds can help too by keeping bird tables and feeders clean. I complain often about modern bird feeders as some are tricky to dismantle and some are almost impossible to reassemble.

When I am in my garden, I often feel Jesus's presence and companionship.

God's cleverness at designing things has sent plants into my garden, common orchids, wild pansies, and a teasel. The birds play there part too as I have one or two too many elder trees.

It doesn't matter whether your garden is big or small or a window box. All green spaces will attract some sort of wildlife and your window box can attract butterflies and bees.





# Events and Services

## Brightons Ministry Centre

Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> May 11.30am

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June 11.00am

Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June 11.30am

Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> July 9.30am - 11.30am

Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> July 11.30am

Thursday Service

Communion Service

Thursday Service

Men's Prayer Breakfast

Thursday Service

All services above are available on our YouTube channel and Facebook page

## Slamannan Ministry Centre

Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June 11.00am

Communion Service

## Muiravonside Building

Third Wednesday of the month 10.00-11.00am      Muiravonside Prayer Time

For further information on Services and Events please use the Upper Braes Website [upperbraes.org.uk/calendar](http://upperbraes.org.uk/calendar) which is updated regularly.

