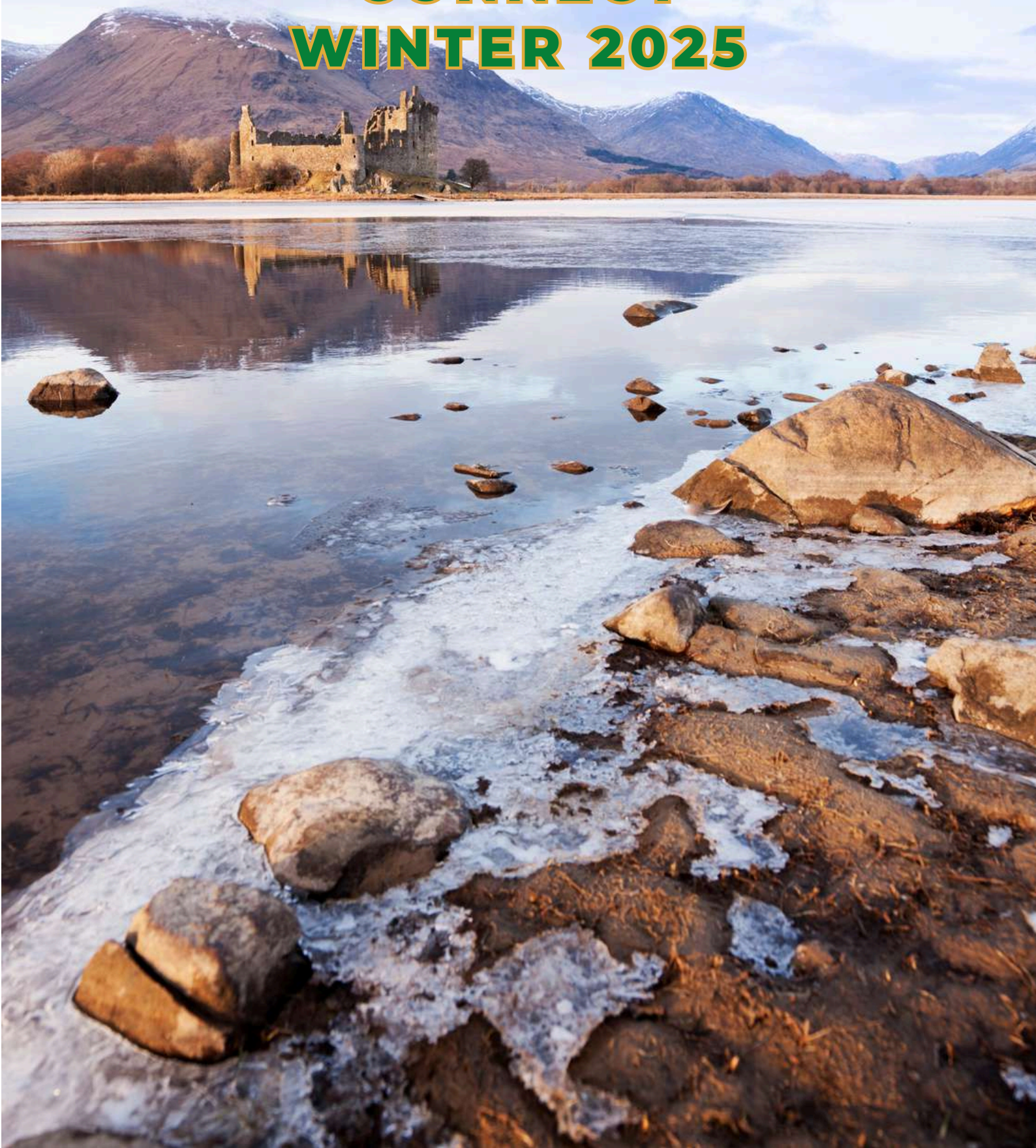


# UPPER BRAES

PARISH CHURCH

**CONNECT**  
**WINTER 2025**





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## **Communion Sunday - 7<sup>th</sup> December 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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General Enquires: info@upperbraes.org.uk

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

March 2025

Alice Henderson

April 2025

Christine Nicol

## Congregational Roll Update

May 2025

John Pearce

Marion Arthur

June 2025

Margaret Patrick

Ray Page

July 2025

Evelyn Henderson

Amelia Robertson

August 2025

Archie Orr

Mary (Moira)

Hamilton

October 2025

Tom Grieve

Myra Maden

"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."

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# Pastoral Articles

## Message from the Manse

BY SCOTT BURTON

Over the present term, it has been encouraging to see a number of new faces around and to celebrate a baptism service! As we see these folks take steps of faith and steps into fellowship with us, it can remind us that God is moving in our nation, even moving in our locality and congregation – as many might be aware, there is recent research and discussion in the media that “the tide is turning” and now many more people in our nation are open to exploring faith than there have been in recent decades. If you are one of these “new” folks, whether this term or the recent past, whether new to faith or a long-time sibling in the faith – then welcome!

Maybe as we see more new folks around, we will also be reminded of the welcome God showed the world in the Advent stories of meeting with

old people, young people, the outcast and the insider, the passionate and the disaffected – each one God pursued and welcomed into His family and purposes.

I wonder if you need to know God’s heart toward you again this Advent? Do you need to know He is for you and with you? Do you need to know you are seen by God and welcomed by God? As we journey through the Advent themes of hope, peace, joy and love I pray that we will reconnect with God’s heart and His invitation to one and all.



But we also have the opportunity to know these truths and invitations as we gather around the Lord’s table on Thursday 27th November for the half hour service at 11.30am, and then our whole-

church Communion services at Slamannan Ministry Centre and Brightons Ministry Centre on Sunday 7th December at 11am.

Will you join us? Will you come to the One who was given that we might be forgiven and welcomed into the family of God? After all, the angel said to Joseph, ‘...give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ (Matthew 1:21) And when Mary received the news, she understood God to be the One who is ‘mindful’ of our situations (Luke 1:47).

Friends, we have much to celebrate this Advent as we see God at work: drawing people to Himself, leading people to share in His purposes amongst us, but most especially in the Lord Jesus, who was given that we might know hope, peace, joy and love afresh and forever. I hope you’ll join us.

Love to one and all,  
Scott

# Pastoral Assistant's Message

BY MONICA  
MACDONALD

The writer Rupert Bristow said he believed that the prayers of the faithful across ages and cultures have formed a continuous thread across the world, and that these prayers have not only been expressions of faith but have also been the bedrock of personal relationships with God through Jesus Christ.

It is certainly true that our connection with God is given meaning and substance through our prayers ~ whether they are written, silent or loudly spoken, private or corporate, it matters not.

There is no particular method to pray to God. He just wants us to communicate with Him! From its opening pages all the way to the end, the Bible is a story of God's intervention in the lives of His people and how He has pursued mankind with an

unchanging and unquenchable love. And it is significant, that while Jesus taught his followers many things, he also took time to teach them to pray.

Jesus said: **"Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received...."**(Mark 11 vs 24) From this statement we see that Jesus is not hoping his followers will pray.... he is expecting them to pray! In fact, prayer needs to be part of our worship and, if we are to communicate with God through Jesus Christ at all, we need to cultivate a strong relationship with God through in-depth prayer.

The principle of prayer has its basis in necessity and willingness – We have to pray, even though God knows our need before we ask. So you might say, well, why pray..? The answer is two-fold:

- a) God wants us to recognise our need
- b) He wants us to set aside our pride, stand before Him, seek his forgiveness and lay our cares at His throne of grace.

God also wants us to build an intimate relationship with Him. We can have a good understanding of the Scriptures, but that is not enough to know God. In fact, Jesus said: **"If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you"** (John 15 vs 17).

We must not only be seeking answers to our prayers, we must also be seeking the God who gives the answers... and our prayers must be in harmony with God's gracious will and for His glory. Jesus himself gives us an example of this when he prayed **"Father, let this cup of suffering pass from me... but not my will, Father, but yours be done."** (Luke 22 vs 42) And it was, in accordance with God's will.

The Scriptures teach us pretty much everything we need to know about God's character and nature....

- He is our provider
  - He is our sustainer
  - He is our protector
  - He is our Shepherd
  - He is our Father .....
- and we can trust him!

A Sincere seeking of God's Will means that we trust God to use any means or resources that He sees fit to answer our prayers sometimes words will be hardly necessary; sometimes our hearts will be so full that our tears will tell the whole story; sometimes our anguish will be so great only a cry to God for help is needed.

When we know God –  
when we have a faith relationship with Him –  
When we have asked within His will and purpose –  
When we have expressed our need in humility....  
Then we can wait with great expectation for the answers to our prayers.  
And they will come. That is God's promise for his people.



## Pastoral Assistant's Message

BY GAYLE MILLER

My goodness, who would believe that this year would go so quickly.

Today is the 1st November 2025. One year to the day since Upper Braes Parish Church came into being. And what a year it has been.

For those who have not met me yet, I'm Gayle Miller and I was blessed to join the wider Pastoral Care Team on 1st June this year as a second Pastoral Assistant, working alongside our Lead Pastoral Assistant Rev Monica MacDonald.

I was introduced to Upper Braes as a candidate for full time word and sacrament Ministry, in October 2024, and served my training placement with Scott as my mentor until May this year.

I have 1 ½ years left of my academic training and I was delighted to be offered a part time

Pastoral Assistant post until June 2027, at which point I hope to go into the final probationary stage of my Ministry training with the Church of Scotland.

Prior to commencing Ministry training, I worked as a Nurse for 35 years, but God had other plans, as he often does.

My favourite Scripture reading is:

Jeremiah 29:11

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future".*

Over the years, I have learned to listen to these words particularly when I am uncertain, frustrated, or anxious about something.

God has indeed a plan for every one of us and he has a plan for Upper Braes Parish Church.

Usually, part of a plan involves some aspect of change. That can cause uncertainty, frustration, and anxiety if we let it.



We have just had the first Upper Braes Parish Church Conference, and it was fabulous. We all went into it not sure what to expect. But we handed it over to God and what resulted was a weekend where the Church family gathered joyfully and shared in encouraging fellowship, honest discussions, hopeful plans for the future.

We felt that the weekend strengthened our family bonds and left us feeling uplifted, enabled and dare I say, excited about what God's plans will be for Upper Braes.

So, going into Advent and into the New Year ahead, let us take Jeremiah's wise words to heart, and trust in God's plan for us all.

I very much look forward to meeting more of you as the weeks and months go by. We have a big job ahead providing all aspects of Pastoral Care to our large Parish, but please know that we are here to support you in any way God enables us.



The Pastoral Care Team consists of our Minister Rev Scott, two Pastoral Assistants Rev Monica and myself, Pastoral Care Team Convenor Elspeth McCallum and our wonderful group of Pastoral Visitors.

If you know of someone who would benefit from our Team's Ministry, please contact us.

And if you would be interested in becoming a Pastoral Visitor, Elspeth would love to hear from you.

Wishing you all God's grace, mercy, and love.



# Upper Braes Team Updates

## Communications Team

BY JAMES FALCONER

‘Communication – the transmission of information.’

In a large and active congregation as we have at Upper Braes there are many types and strands of information we need to communicate.

Whether that be information on church events, information on common interest groups and organisations, our policies, the people involved in leadership roles etc., etc. The list could go on.....

The Communications Team is involved in and responsible for 17 strands of communication – some daily, some weekly, some seasonally, some annually. What communications areas do you find useful to interact with?

The Team is currently looking for additional members to help manage tasks across our

communications landscape. Not many of them require specific skills just some time and commitment to progress the activities that keep our wide-ranging congregation informed.

Could you help with:

- collation and printing of the weekly Newssheet?
- collation and production of our biannual Connect Magazine?
- bundling of magazine and cards for distribution?
- social media posting?
- uploading information to the website?

At least 3 members of the Team are stepping back from their roles for a variety of reasons and, if we can't resource our existing activities some of them will have to reduce or stop. As we face change as individuals, as a church and as a congregation we will certainly need to start new things and we will also have to stop

doing some things we do just now and we will certainly need more hands involved in the day-to-day running of things.

If you are interested or prompted to find out more, please speak to one of the Team or directly to myself.

## Discipleship Team

BY HEATHER MCMANUS

The Discipleship Team meets twice a year “to assist the congregation in developing their Christian life through praying, learning, and expressing faith in action.”

We love hearing about the work of The Guild, Friends of Jesus, and Friendship Plus and continue to keep the teams, volunteers and their work in prayer. Keep an eye out for more updates on these groups in Connect or in the church news sheets. The team also oversees and supports prayer, Alpha, Huddle, Safar,



Fellowship, and Book Groups. We've been greatly encouraged by how these groups and activities have helped our church family grow in faith over the years, but we continue to ask how we can best help every member—whatever their age or stage—mature in faith.

This year saw the launch of a new Huddle group. Huddle is a discipleship group that meets every two weeks to explore Jesus's model of discipleship and how we can follow His example to grow in faith and disciple others. It's a big commitment, and we're so grateful to those who have chosen to invest their time in this way. We look forward to seeing how God moves and works through this group in the months ahead.

The team also champions The Bible Society and our missionary partners, the Duncan family, with Rachel Meek keeping us updated on their work and news. Copies of The Bible Society Magazine can be found in the front entrance. We've also

recently decided to support Thrive Scotland, a group that helps equip people to live out their faith in the workplace, in place of Christian Solidarity Worldwide. We'll share more about this change in the next edition of Connect.

If you'd like some support with your daily devotional time, Daily Bible Reading notes can be ordered from Heather O'Neil. These offer a simple and encouraging way to stay connected with Scripture. Many in our church family also use Lectio 365 or the YouVersion Bible App to guide their reflections and prayer throughout the week. For those who find that visual storytelling brings faith to life, the Bible Project App is another wonderful resource. Please speak to Heather McManus if you would like any more information about any of these digital tools and resources.

Prayer continues to be central to our church life. Alongside prayer before Sunday services and in small group meetings, a group meets regularly to pray for young people

and schools. Thursday evening prayer also continues, with the group currently trialling a new in-person format every two weeks. Please consider joining in—either in person on alternate Thursdays or online—to pray for our local community and the wider world.

Our first 24/7 Prayer Weekend took place at the beginning of September, with many sharing how deeply they were blessed through the experience. Plans are already underway for the next one at the start of Lent, so keep an eye out for more details in the coming months.

Some members of the Discipleship Team, along with others from the congregation, have also been exploring how best to equip and encourage us all to share faith naturally and confidently in everyday life. They're planning to develop a new resource that will include biblical teaching, practical principles, and conversation starters to help us engage meaningfully with those around us. The first version will be trialled

later this year before being shared more widely.

We'd like to take this opportunity to pass on our heartfelt thanks to all the leaders and volunteers within these groups—and to everyone serving in any kind of discipleship role. We'd also like to thank Tom Nimmo, who has stepped down from his role as Fellowship Team Convener, Ian Lawson and Donald Meek, who have also stepped back from their roles on the Discipleship Team, and Kay Keith, who previously attended meetings to share updates from the Gender-Based Violence team. We are extremely thankful for the time, and commitment they have all given over the years.

Minutes from our team meetings are available on our website or in the vestibules of the Upper Braes and Slamannan Ministry Centres. If you have any questions about our discipleship groups, would like to get involved or are interested in studying

God's word and journeying in faith with others through a Fellowship or Book Group, please get in touch with Heather McManus to find out more. We'd love to help you find your place to grow and serve.

## **Finance Team**

BY PAT PATERSON

The Finance Team meet regularly to discuss ongoing financial matters in our church. Much of our main remit is to support our Treasurer.

At this time it is my duty to inform you that our Treasurer, Sharon Glass, is stepping down from this role from January 2026. Sharon has been a stalwart in this role, seeing us through the transition period when we entered Union of the Braes Churches. We are therefore in the position of looking for someone to take on this role. If you feel you have the prerequisite skills to take on this role and God is calling you to become more involved in our church life then please speak to Scott or Judith.

Throughout the year we donate to a number of charities/causes both at home and abroad. This year our December Communion Retiring collection (December 7th) will be for the Scottish Bible Society.

Our Christmas Retiring Collections, as always are donated to Strathcarron Hospice.

As was intimated earlier on this year we face ever increasing costs in many areas of church life. Many have responded to the call to look at our personal givings each week or month. We continue to support our community with Outreach, whether it be through Martha's Pantry or Prison Outreach. We are very heartened by the response at this time and would ask that you keep in mind our need in this area of our church work going forward.

As always, if anyone would like to ask about church financial matters or discuss Standing Orders or Gift Aid please do not hesitate to speak to myself or another member of the Finance Team.

## **CrossReach Prayer Diary entry for Polmont Prison Visitor Centre**

BY MARALYN STIRLING

HMPYOI Polmont has a population of male Young Offenders aged 16-21 and women of all ages. The Visitor Centre offers a warm welcome, refreshments, support and advice to families. We also support children visiting their parents in custody, with activities and opportunities for positive action. Please pray:

- For the families who faithfully visit and support their loved ones in prison despite the financial, social and emotional challenges faced: may they receive the support they need.
- For the children who have a loved one in custody at HMP Polmont: may the time they spend together be positive and nurturing and reduce the negative impact of separation caused by imprisonment.
- For the staff at HMP Polmont: may God give them patience, understanding and

wisdom as they perform their demanding role.

- For the women and young men in HMPYOI Polmont: may their time there be helpful and purposeful. May they receive the support needed to move on to better life situations on release.
- For the Visitor's Centre staff team: may they continue to build trusting relationships with the visitors, families and children and may God provide wisdom, resilience and creativity as they provide practical and emotional support.
- For positive working relationships and mutual respect between the Visitor Centre and Management of HMPYOI Polmont.
- For the Storybook Families initiative: may the stories recorded by loved ones in custody bring their children a sense of comfort and connection.

## **CrossReach Prayer Diary entry for St Margaret's House Polmont**

BY MARALYN STIRLING

St Margaret's House is a 36 bed specialist care home for people living with dementia. Please pray:

- Thanks for all people who have supported the service and who have demonstrated God's love in action to residents, volunteers and staff.
- For sensitivity in supporting those who are coming to the end of their lives and for their families during these difficult times.
- For God's presence to be felt by all who enter the home and may the residents feel God's peace throughout their days and nights.
- That God will continue to bless the care given by all the volunteers and staff who work for CrossReach.
- May residents old and new feel a sense of community, belonging and wellbeing.

Thank you for supporting the work of CrossReach through your purchase of Christmas Cards and Calendars.



# Upper Braes News

## The Guild

BY MARGARET SIM

The Guild began their meetings after the summer break on 15th September. On the 13th September six of our members attended the Annual Gathering of the Guild in Perth North Church. We enjoyed a day of worship celebration and fellowship. We were told that we are entering our second year of our strategy "Let us Build a House" where we build up from "Sure Foundations" to the "Living Stones", put simply, God is the architect and planner, Jesus is the cornerstone and foundation, and we are the building material all bound together by the Holy Spirit.

As we do not have a convenor this year, all of the committee and members are taking it in turns to lead a meeting. Our first meeting lead by Margaret Scott was a Welcome back meeting



where Margaret and May Kennedy took part in a short drama which explained that anyone can lead a meeting, and explained that the brochure 'Living Stones' (which is available from the Church of Scotland Guild) has ideas of Bible readings and Prayers which can be used to lead a meeting.

At our meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> September our speakers Christina and Cathey, who had come down from Alness, north of Inverness, gave us a great insight into one of our Projects 'Build My Church Bulgaria'.

On 13<sup>th</sup> October we went Carpet Bowling at Laurieston Bowling Club which was a most enjoyable afternoon finishing, of course, with tea and biscuits.

On 27<sup>th</sup> October Frances McCabe, one of our members, showed us how to make some Christmas baubles.

We still look forward to a talk about the Titanic and Monica MacDonald is talking about 'Living Stones'.



Our Christmas Lunch is Monday 8th December at the Claremont.

We have a full programme planned for our next session from January to March. If any one would like to join us for any of the sessions you will be made most welcome.

## Coffee Morning

BY MARGARET SCOTT

The Thursday Coffee Morning is a group of folks who enjoy each others company and a chat, with a cup of tea or coffee and some baking. There are a lot of willing helpers who come and help with the setting up and tidying afterwards. There are plenty of people who can give others a lift to and fro if that is required.

The Nursery visits still bring great joy and entertainment to us on a monthly basis.

We warmly welcome new visitors, so please come along from 10am to 11.30am on Thursdays to enjoy friendship and fellowship and of course a cuppa.

Margaret, Anne, May and Andy





# Friends of Jesus Group

BY RACHEL MEEK

Our theme this session is 'What is God like?' and we are using the songs we sing to highlight truths about the character of God – that our God is so big, strong and mighty; that he's creator of the world and us, using 'If I were a butterfly'; that God is our friend and that God is love. Our friends continue to participate enthusiastically and show a real concern for one another. They are gaining confidence as we split into smaller groups for prayer.

At the end of October, a number of our friends and helpers attended the Annual Celebration for Prospects groups around Scotland, which was held in Dunfermline this year. A great time was had by all!

Ivy Blair has now retired from Prospects Across Scotland and a new co-ordinator, Gill Lyth, started in September. It was a joy to meet Gill when she visited the group at the end of September, and in

October one of the trustees visited to receive a gift of over £200 which our group had collected for the work of Prospects Across Scotland over the previous year.

We have fewer helpers this session, as a couple of them have stepped back due to their circumstances. We are particularly grateful for the many years of faithful service which Jean Callahan gave, and very much miss her presence! So, if you feel drawn to work with our friends who have learning challenges, we would love to hear from you! It would be good if

we could recruit a male helper, as we have more gentlemen than ladies in our group at present! You would be welcome to arrange a visit to find out more about what we do at our fortnightly meeting on a Thursday evening (6.45-8.00pm).





# Friendship Plus

BY JESSIE WALLACE

The first meeting of the session was held on 24th September, when we welcomed 12 new members from both the community and church.



The Catalina choir from West Lothian, entertained us with a variety of songs and hymns, which was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.



We meet on the third Wednesday of the month and everyone is welcome.



## Wednesday Book Group

BY NADIA COWAN

'What's so amazing about grace?' This is the question we have been looking at this year. We are reading the classic Philip Yancey book of that name. It has already shocked us, made us cry and made us ask lots of questions of our own faith.

Thankfully it has also encouraged us greatly! God loves us SO much, outrageously, in spite of all our failures and idiosyncrasies. He is compassionate, gracious and forgiving. Which means we, as Christians, should treat others like that too. Not so easy!

Sometimes we find it hard to accept just how much God loves us. So we have been encouraging each other in our faith, and how we can respond with acts of kindness and grace.

There are around 10-12 of us, we meet in the small hall on the second Wednesday of the month at 10 am. We read a few chapters of the book

before each meeting, then we discuss it and pray about it.

If you are interested in joining us, please speak to Nadia Cowan or Marion Graham.



BY LESLEY MANN

The pantry continues to support around 68 households each month in the villages of Slamannan and Limerigg. Volunteers prepare and stock the pantry on a Monday for its opening hours on a Wednesday. Each week the pantry provides fresh fruit and vegetables, fresh meat and dairy products, as well as tinned and dry foods on the shelves.

Although Slamannan Community Centre closed at the end of September, the pantry has been able to continue to use a small room for a further few weeks. The pantry is currently going through the process of taking over the lease of an empty shop next to the cross in Slamannan under the Community Benefit scheme operated by Falkirk Council. The refurbishment of the shop premises is the responsibility of the pantry and this has been costed out. We value your prayers and support as the refurbishment progresses and the pantry moves into its new location.

The pantry has a wonderful group of around 16 volunteers who help once or twice a month. During the recent writing of our business plan, we calculated that between shopping for food, applying for grants, administration, as well as the volunteers stocking and staffing the pantry when open,



the pantry needs around 40 volunteer hours a week. Everyone enjoys their volunteering and we endeavour to mix up the rota for volunteers all to meet each other. New volunteers are always welcome and needed.

The management committee and volunteers are very grateful for the recent generous donations from Brightons and Slamannan Ministry Centres, Wallacestone Primary School P6 classes, and also to all those who donated prizes and supported the fundraising Prize Bingo held in Slamannan Bowling Club.

Please pray for this important work and that the pantry can continue to support those in need, especially at this time of year when households have to start spending much more of their income on heating their homes.



## Bible Society and Translations

BY RACHEL MEEK

Why are the Bible Society and other agencies, such as Wycliffe, involved in Bible translation projects around the world? Most people know a trade language alongside their own mother-tongue, and Scripture is already available in most major languages, so what's the problem? Well, perhaps you have some knowledge of another language – say French or Spanish – but how would you get on in a church service which was in that language, or you only had a French or Spanish Bible? For many in our world, the problem is even deeper than that – they can't read in any language! The latest Bible Society magazine describes the challenges this poses in a country like Malawi, where most people are nominally Christian. 'Their faith is often tested by hardship and a lack of deep, personal engagement with Scripture. The Bible is revered, but remains inaccessible due to cost, illiteracy or a lack of

access to it in a heart-language.' Making God's word accessible to everyone ensures that the transformative power of God's word is also available, providing light and hope. Sometimes this involves using phone apps or audio versions on SD cards.

Alex is a young man living in Malawi, who has experienced the difference God's word makes. He was trapped in a cycle of heavy drinking, drugs and fleeting relationships, which finally led to complete mental breakdown. In hospital he received counselling and began to experience a deep spiritual hunger. After discharge, the Bible Society of Malawi gave him a Bible in his language, and he says, 'it has brought new meaning to my life.' God's word began to heal what medicine alone could not, as he held on to Jesus' words in Matthew 11:28: '*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*'





Commenting on the impact on people in Tanzania now that they have the New Testament in their own Jita language, one of the translation team said: 'Even when people are resistant to the gospel message, if you hand them a copy of scripture in their language, they immediately value it because it preserves their language. They then start reading it, and they come to faith in Jesus.'\*

I wonder how much we value having access to the scriptures – and do we read it regularly and allow it to transform us?

\*Source: Wycliffe 2024-5 Report on the Impact of Bible Translation.

## Brightons Pre Fives



We continue to have a thriving Pre Fives Group that meet on a Tuesday morning during school term times. The group provide a wonderful environment for parents/carers and their children to socialise and enjoy lots of fun. Many who come along are not members of our congregation, however, they are very much part of our church family. It's great to see the children flourish and grow, and to see the adults making new friends.

We meet on Tuesday morning from 9:30-11am in the Brighton Ministry Centre halls, with one hall equipped with lots of toys and activities, and one hall for snack/tea/coffee and we always close our sessions with song time getting everyone involved in singing and actions.

As with many of our other groups we do need

some additional volunteers to help us make the group a safe and welcoming place. No specific skills are required and volunteers cover a number of areas:

- setting up (usually done on a Monday evening) and tidying up
- preparing snack/refreshments
- chatting with parent/carers
- leading the singing

There is no need to commit to every week - volunteers are generally on the rota once every 2-3 weeks. There is no requirement for PVG or Safeguarding training.

If you have time to be involved in helping at Pre Fives and are interested in finding out more do speak to Jim Dick, Rachel Gilmour or James Falconer.

# Youth Church

BY ALIE DRACKFORD  
YOUTH CHURCH COORDINATOR

Youth Church is the new name for Sunday School. It involves everyone from Creche right up to the teenagers in FLAIM, so as such we no longer see it as an extension of School. But that does not mean we are not learning! Everyone involved will be sure to tell you that we are all learning a lot from each other. Our young people are all amazing and are discipling us leaders and helpers as much as we are them.

Along with renaming the groups we challenged our young people to create a logo for our new name. Our winner is Lewis Rankine and please see the new logo here:

We look forward to showcasing our talents with you in the Nativity on Sunday 14th December in the service. Please come and enjoy.

We are always looking for more helpers for our groups so if you like what you read about the groups and hear God calling you to help, please get in touch with me and we can see where you might be a good fit.



## Creche

Creche has restarted and is going well. We share the Rankine hall with the Beginners separated by a screen which means once we are old enough (3 years old) we have a really easy transition as we can see what is going on in there. We still need a few more on the rota so if you are looking for baby cuddles or like playing with the toddlers get in touch with Alie.

## Beginners (age 3 to P1)

BY MAGGY DICK

Our numbers are growing and we now have between 8 and 12 children most weeks. We enjoy learning the songs with actions that we sing in church as well as a bible story every week. We then always have a craft – we particularly like glueing and sticking especially if we get to use the



scissors for ourselves as well. We then have games and then finish with a prayer.

We have worked through how God provides for us in all we eat and drink and all the various bible

stories connected with those. Now we are looking at all the animals in the world and how they are God's creatures too, how they help us and how we can care for them. Then as we move closer to Christmas we will look at the nativity from the angels' point of view this year.

We have already been busy recording our parts for the nativity so even us little ones can be heard in that this year.



and Alison has been trying to introduce singing.

For the first 3 weeks we had a short series on the Sermon on the Mount and since then we have been looking at Christian lifestyle, namely Hope, Courage, Responsibility, Obedience and Grace.



Each week there is a bible story to go with the subject e.g. Daniel in the lions' den for Courage and the Prodigal son for Grace.



We are continuing with this series up until Christmas.



## Juniors (P2-P4)

BY ALISON CASSELLS  
AND EDNA OLIVER

Since August we have been blessed with a great group of juniors keen to listen, always ready to talk, make a craft or play a game. Our lovely assistant Isla is always able to think of a game at the last minute





## Triple S (P5-P7)

BY DIXCEE SPENCER

We picked up from where we left off at the end of last term which is finishing off the hand motions for the final 6 books of the Old Testament. We will continue to remember those books and hand motions as we go on.

We had a brilliant time with Beginners on Buddy Sunday where we did finger painting of the Garden of Eden.

We have started to go through the book 'Diary of a Disciple: Peter and Paul'. It is a version of the Book of Acts for kids. We'll progress through that during the year.

## FLAIM

Forever Living Alive In Me  
(S1-S3)

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

Flaim, our group for S1-S5, have had a great summer and autumn! Over the holidays we went to one day of the Magnitude youth festival

festival and would like to do more next year.

On Sunday mornings we have been studying Jesus' parables and applying their lessons to our own lives. We've been growing in faith and confidence, eating good snacks and learning to pray for each other.

We took part in the 48 hours of prayer. We met at the Gilmour's house for chips and BBQ sausages and s'mores to prepare ourselves! Then we headed to the prayer room and enjoyed an hour talking to God, listening for his voice, and exploring the prayer stations. We had lots of good feedback, and some Flaimers asked to do even more next time.



Continuing our food theme, we had a fun bake-off competition. We had 2 hours to make cupcakes and a

gingerbread "construction". One group retold the parable of the house on the sand, by building a gingerbread house that collapsed live during judging!



We also helped serve teas after church. Can you spot a recurring theme in our activities? We are following in the footsteps of Jesus, who often ate with his disciples.



Please pray for our Flaimers, as they grow in faith. Pray that they would know God for themselves and find their purpose and meaning in him.



PHOTOS FROM ALL AGE YOUTH CHURCH RUN BY TRIPLE S





PHOTOS FROM ALL AGE YOUTH CHURCH RUN BY TRIPLE S





# Girls' Brigade

BY SANDRA BLAIR

1ST POLMONT GIRLS' BRIGADE CAPTAIN

## Explorers (P1-P3)

This year at Explorers we have around 14 girls attending each week. Our theme is Travel around the World.

We started off making passports and suitcases and decorated wooden aeroplanes. The first destination we travelled to was France. We learned some French phrases and made an Eiffel Tower.

when we made Minnie Mouse Biscuits and learned facts about America.



We have also travelled to Spain where we again learned some Spanish words and made maracas.

The last country before writing this article we travelled to was America

For our Spiritual badgework we are travelling through the Bible where we have learned about Creation, Noah, Abraham, and Jonah and look forward to learning more over the coming weeks.

The girls also took part in collecting food for Martha's Pantry as part of their Service badgework.

# Juniors

(P4-P7)

BY CHRISTINA MASON

Another session is here and it has been lovely welcoming so many girls back to Juniors. We have had lots of Explorers moving up and we've also had some new Juniors join our group. We hope you've enjoyed your time so far!

We took suggestions from the girls about their Badgework this year and some great ideas were put forward including learning about Birds as part of our Educational Badgework. In previous sessions, the girls have shown an interest in wildlife and protecting the environment so we felt this subject could extend their knowledge. We were all really excited to observe geese flying in formation on one of our Wednesday evenings after learning about the winter migration!



Within our service Badgework, we are going to be learning about people who help us. This will include people in the community, in the church and within our daily lives. We have already worked together as a company to collect donations for Martha's Pantry and discussed how food banks are such a huge support for many people. We are always so grateful for our children and parents' generosity when collecting donations.

We have many girls in Juniors who take part in after-school activities which include gymnastics and dance. We are going to focus our Physical Badgework around this theme and share our skills with each other. We'll also learn some fun dance routines to keep fit!

One of the best parts of being a leader at Girls Brigade is seeing the girls' enthusiasm for learning about being Christian and what the

Bible says. The Juniors are becoming more confident in naming books from the bible and are able to find chapters and verses independently. We are going to explore The Old Testament this session and have already had some interesting discussions about the Creation of the world.

Kirstine and Charlotte are continuing to support at Juniors and do so much to help the girls each week. Thank you! And to Sandra, thank you for being our captain and for being such a positive and caring leader. We're all looking forward to another fun year!





# Brigaders (S1-S6)

BY MAGGY DICK

We started the session welcoming the new young ladies from Juniors than joined us. It is lovely having a bigger group and seeing them all interacting together.

This year we are looking at the countries in the United Kingdom. We started with England looking at the history, the cities, The Church Of England etc.

We had an evening baking for Thursday coffee morning and another evening making plain scones and also vegan scones.



The girls also helped with the collection for Martha's Pantry which were included with items brought along at Harvest Service in Church.

We are now starting to look at our own country Scotland and looking forward to learning more about it and also look forward to learning some Gaelic.



# Boys' Brigade

## Anchor Boys (P1-P3)

BY SHEILA WILLIAMSON

Anchor Boys returned in August, we are so pleased to welcome all our new boys & returning boys.

We have enjoyed lots of craft and games. We also had our annual chippy night, here are a selection of photos of our boys at craft & enjoying hot chips.

It's not too late, if you know of any boys in primaries 1 - 3 if they would like to come along and join us on a Tuesday evening.





# Juniors

(P4-P6)

BY MICHAEL FYALL

Boys Brigade Juniors have enjoyed an exciting start to our 25-6 session. Along with Company Section, we started our session with Tennis and then Lawn Bowls. Thank you to Laurieston Tennis Club and Laurieston bowling club for hosting us.



In October we've taken part in the Juniors 'Flip out' sleepover in Glasgow, which the boys thoroughly enjoyed.

We've also enjoyed nights themed around: Pizza, a fancy dress party, time travel and competing for the 'Heggie Trophy'.

We're looking forward to a gymnastics evening in November.

P4-6 meet on Fridays from 1815-1945. New boys are always welcome.

## Company (P7-S6)

BY COLIN HEGGIE

It was a busy end to last session with our annual display night in May where ex company



officers Ian and Sheena Huntley were our inspecting officers. I was delighted that they were able to present Alastair Gough, Stuart Barclay and Lucas Haig with their King's Badges with John Gilmour and Callum Clydesdale receiving their President's badge. Well done to all the boys. Stuart and Lucas then attended the Mid Scottish Queen's Badge parade in Scone to be

presented with their certificates.

Two of our young officers, Owen Gough and Lauren Hunter, were selected to represent the Boys Brigade nationally at the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in May. This was a brilliant experience for them both to work at the event and also meet senior members of the royal family.



Owen Gough and Kai Taylor also attended their final week of the KGV youth leader training at Carronvale in Larbert in July and they have both now completed the training which gives them an accredited leadership qualification, Callum Higgins completed the first week of his training and I am delighted to see these young leaders progress their BB journey with us. Owen is also now part of the Boys Brigade Scotland Committee as the Mid Scottish Under 26 representative, and this gives him the opportunity to be a part of the decision making process nationally regarding how the brigade develops.

This session has also started very well, although with lower numbers in the company section, all boys are very committed and attendance levels on Friday nights and at other events has been excellent.

We started off with trips to Laurieston Tennis Club and Laurieston



Stuart Barclay and  
Lucas Haig – King's Badge



Alastair Gough –  
King's Badge

Bowling Club in August and September to give the boys taster sessions in these activities and they all really enjoyed these experiences. We also attended the battalion church service

and our own dedication and remembrance services during the session.

At our dedication service in September, I was honoured to present the Boys Brigade President's Commendation to Callum Clydesdale. This was due to his actions last year when, as a paper boy, he noticed an elderly neighbour had not picked up his paper from the previous day



Callum Clydesdale –  
President's  
Commendation

and Callum ran round to the back of the house to find the man lying on the floor. Callum quickly alerted emergency services to the situation

and sought help from a neighbour. Callum has also received a BBC Young Hero award for his actions and we are all extremely proud of him. This is the first time a boy from our company has received the President's Commendation since 1937!

Friday nights have continued with a mixture of games, discussions, and sports as well as the constant theme of bible talks and drill. We are preparing for the battalion drill competition in March, and we have started a regular bible study discussion group which has been very well received. We are planning a visit to Falkirk School of gymnastics later this month and have a Christmas night out planned to a virtual reality simulator booked!

The competitions now come thick and fast as the session progresses. Our two FIFA teams have competed in the national competition with the 'A' team winning against Dunblane and now heading to Penicuik in



Lauren Hunter and Owen Gough  
at Buckingham Palace

the next round whilst our 'B' team losing out to a team from Dundee. We also competed in the national Masterteam quiz in Livingston with our 'A' team winning their round and progressing to the second round whilst our 'B' team finished 4th. There are also the battalion football, badminton and volleyball competitions coming up!

We are also planning to have a car boot sale with tables at Polmont Sports Centre on the 23rd of November and we will again be running the Christmas Card Delivery



Service for the Church with stamps on sale at £1 for 2 stamps. Stamps will be available from Sunday 16th of November and all cards will be delivered over the weekend of 13th to 14th of December.

We have also booked an end of session activity weekend for the boys from 5th to 7th of June at Whithaugh Park, Newcastleton in the Scottish Borders and our fundraising will go towards reducing the cost of this weekend.

Thank you all for your continued support for the company.

# Reflections

## St Ninian

BY RENA MOORE

I have for many years been interested in our saints. They were at the forefront of bringing The Good News of Jesus to our shores. It is not that long ago some modern Pilgrims who were following the footsteps of St Mungo stopped at our church for breakfast - perhaps - or a rest before heading towards Glasgow.

My starting point for my journey with the saints is going to begin with St Ninian.

St Ninian's name is remembered throughout Southern and Central Scotland in street names and school names.

Who was St Ninian? It is thought that St Ninian lived in the 5thC, just after The Romans had left Britain. The Picts, who were formidable warriors, on land and water, had stretched from Scotland, as far as Wales and

Cornwall. This terror lasted for most of the first half of the 5th century. The local people rose against them, and The Picts retreated to their traditional lands in what we now call Scotland.

The Picts became much less warlike and became farmers. What had happened to them? Well, they had become Christians through the teaching of Ninian and Columba.

There was a lot of traffic between Ireland and the southwest of Scotland. The two lands are separated by a narrow channel. It is known that small groups of monks from the far east, the area of the land where Christianity had its beginnings had made their way to Ireland. These groups of monks paved the way for St Patrick and St Ninian, who lived round about the same time. Ninian came to the Scottish shores from Ireland.

The Venerable Bede mentions St Ninian in his writing and connects him with his Candida Casa, or White Building. No trace has been found of this white building and it is not known where it was. When land was excavated for the building of a new church, a white stone was dug up. Could this be a morsel of Ninian's Candida Casa; who knows?

Ninian arrived in what we call today, Galloway. Galloway in those days was a kingdom and was ruled by kings. Ninian befriended the king of the day and so, through his friendship, Ninian was able to meet with the people. And so brought Christianity to Galloway.

The establishment of the Christian Faith is often accredited to St Patrick and St Ninian. Both men were accredited with performing miracles, none greater than the miracle of the great calming of the Picts.



It is only in recent years that more has become known about St Ninian. Perhaps if we had known more about him, he would have been a candidate to be our national saint.

For many years all that was known about Ninian was in ancient manuscripts.

The Venerable Bede recorded a short passage about St Ninian and his church, The Candida Casa, was a stone church, the like that had not been seen before. Bede says that Ninian travelled to Rome. As well as Bede's writing, there is Latin Poem, "The Miracle Nynie Episcopi", (The Miracles of Nynia, the Bishop), written by a monk in 8th century in the monastery in

Whithorn. There is prose about St Ninian written by Alfred of Rievaulx in Yorkshire, in 1167. Alfred visited Whithorn and took great interest in all that was going on there.

Whithorn is on the Pilgrim's trail and many pilgrims visited during the Middle Ages. Today, Whithorn is on the

modern-day Pilgrim's trail.

There is a small, early church, at the point where the parking area is. There is also a memorial to The Solway Harvester Fishing Boat that sank in The Solway. You can walk to St Ninian's Cave from here but it is quite a long and rocky walk and not for the fainthearted. There is another path that goes through trees.



The floor of the cave is quite smooth, it probably did not look like this when Ninian was there. This cave was used by other monks who were searching for space in which to pray.

Galloway is a pleasant area to visit and the museum in Whithorn is worth a visit. It is beside

the remains of the 12th Century Priory. It has the Latimus Stone that dates from the time of St Ninian and articles from excavations from all over Galloway. Galloway is often a little quieter than some of the other areas of Scotland. There are bustling market towns, and you will be sure of a warm welcome.

*The Saints of Scotland; Alan MacQuarrie  
Saints of Scotland; Edwin Sprott Towill  
Wild Men and Holy Places; Daphne Brook  
St Patrick's Confession*

# Jawcraig Pit 1913

BY ALEX BUCHANAN

Great consternation was caused in the village on Monday night last, when news was brought that the moss had broken into Jawcraig pit belonging to Jawcraig Coal Company. And when with this news came also the intelligence that several men had been entombed the greatest excitement prevailed, for the moment everything else was forsaken.

Meetings suspended, Games of all sorts abandoned, and a wild rush made for the colliery. Every sort of vehicle being brought into use for speed. Amongst the first to arrive were Dr Young one of the principals of the firm, Mr Paterson the Manager and Mr Stewart the Under Manager. Under their combined supervision communication was shortly afterwards established with all the men working in the pit. Volunteers and helpers came forward in abundance as by this

time hundreds of workers had arrived on the scene.

Realising the precarious position of the men in the workings, Mr Paterson gave directions for them to journey by a circuitous route to the mine, which is situated a little to the north of the pit. By this means all were after a little delay got out in safety. The wisdom of taking this course was soon seen as shortly after the issuing of the order the moss swept hutches and everything before it from the soft coal seam down the shaft to the mill coal seam. With a noise as of thunder, hundreds of tons of moss pouring down the pit and making the massive pithead frame shake as though it was made of matchwood.

The suspense at this time was very great as the last of the entombed men, although on their way to safety, had not arrived on the surface. Men stood around in groups their faces betraying their inward feelings, whilst women

who had arrived on the scene sobbed bitterly. The arrival of the last of the men happily ended their trying experience, it was fortunate that the disaster happened at the hour it did as had it occurred during the daytime when many more men are employed in the pit, the consequences would in all probability have been very serious.

Another fortunate incident and one which materially helped to mitigate the consequences, was the fact that while proceeding to work, Mr Alex Aitken noticed from the surface that something was amiss, being thoroughly conversant with the workings he, after making the startling discovery that the moss was in the soft coal seam, descended the other 17 fathoms to the mill coal and gave warning to the 15 men employed there, who were quite unaware of their great danger, Mr Aitkens brave action was warmly extolled by all his fellow workmen.

Since Tuesday the company have had a large number of workmen engaged in filling up the gap made by the evacuation of the moss, till this had been made solid no attempt will be made to open out the pit workings. The hundred odd workmen employed at Jawcraig are finding work in the surrounding collieries

## The Eternal Flame

BY DREW ROBERTSON

*Hi Everybody,  
I usually either write a true story or one with fictional characters and have been for some time thinking about writing one which has a bit of both! Soon after I started writing "The Eternal Flame," I knew that this one would be very suitable for this type of story. The summer memory of my bus journey is absolutely true, together with all the places I passed and things that I saw. Then, come Christmas time, Harry Elliot, a fictional character, takes the same bus journey and although the events all*

*around him are fictitious, as ever, the events described could certainly happen when God's love is involved.*

*Have a really nice Christmas when it comes.*

*Blessings from Drew  
-----*

Ask almost any person to think back to their summer holidays when they were a child and immediately their face will light up. Not only that, but an amazing transformation takes place. There is a sparkle in their eyes which then takes on a misty look as they gaze back in time and a gentle warmth seems to envelop them as a memory is evoked.

Sometimes it can be something very simple, such as a snatch of music from the song that seemed to be at the number one spot for the whole of that summer. Perhaps it is the taste of a vanilla ice cream cone melting in the mouth. If the memory is more recent, it could even be a holiday romance which was all too short. In some cases, the memory conjured up can be

something a little more unusual and I would probably fit into this category.

In my case, it's a bus.

Back in the mid 1970s I used to go with my mum and dad to Largs each year for our summer holiday in late June. After arriving in Glasgow, we used to catch a bus from Anderston Bus Station in the city centre. The buses that run back and forward to Largs nowadays are excellent and almost brand new. However, it was a different story back then!

In 1974, the buses that traversed this 32 mile route dated back to the early sixties and in many cases, long before that. They looked very quaint, but the better ones were at least fourteen years old (the same age as myself!) When we arrived at the stance for Largs, anticipation was already building up to see which bus would be taking us. Would it make it to Largs? (Which often wasn't the case!)

Sure enough, we heard the old familiar rumbling



sound as one of the oldest examples trundled into the stance and came to a halt complete with a judder, a few splutters, then the engine totally stopped. If it had been a person, it would have collapsed in a heap. Instead, being a bus, it uttered what sounded like a long sigh, and the door finally opened.

So many journeys must have been made during its lifetime and it maybe looked like it should have been retired long ago, but I loved this old bus more than anything in the world because it was taking me on my holidays. The departure was always rather spectacular. The bus had to back out the stance and the conductress used to go outside and guide it out and was issued with a very loud whistle (that I later found out went by the brand name of the "Acme Thunderer.") She used to blow this with gusto once the bus was clear. It could be heard for miles!

When the bus got as far as Johnstone, it could be quite a tense moment because there was a bus



depot that could offer a replacement if required and it would mean having to change buses just after we had all got comfortable during the journey. We used to sit upstairs on the front seat and just above us up near the ceiling there was a small advert stuck on above the window which had the bus company logo on it together with the short but rather desperate plea, "Wanted – Mechanics." Some person with true wit who obviously had travelled regularly on the old bus had added ("Dead or Alive!") in felt tip pen.

I remember too that if you made it past Johnstone, the next highlight was a big billboard which was out in the middle of nowhere away past Howwood which had the admirable safety message "A little care gets you there." The only thing is that

somebody had blotted out the "e" and it now read, "A little car gets you there" which is actually very true.

Other things tend to stay in my memory forever, such as the trees scraping the roof of the bus with a screech as you neared Lochwinnoch. Last of all, just before descending the Haylie Brae which was very steep, the bus would grind to a complete halt as the driver tested the brakes. Then it would descend into Largs and we had made it again!

We had a wonderful holiday and got back home safely - thanks to that old bus again. Time passed by quickly that year and as Christmas rapidly approached, I had temporarily forgotten about the old bus and Anderston Bus Station. Someone else though was very much aware about it and even now was standing at the very spot in the stance where we had stood.

Like myself, he knew all about the old bus and was peering out to see

which one would trundle in. It was Monday the 23rd of December, 1974 and a cold wind was now blowing through the bus stance, rattling the small adverts that were attached to the walls. The odd drop of sleet would drift in for an amazingly far distance and Harry Elliot watched one fluttering by, temporarily distracted, as the very same old bus that we had travelled in during the summer juddered to a halt and after sounding its long sad sigh, opened its doors. Harry gratefully got on. Just a few years ago, he had graduated as an accountant and had managed to secure a position with quite a prestigious firm in the city centre. He had also been interested in the Stock Market since his University days and dabbled with stocks and shares, becoming quite an expert in them.

Although ten years older than me, we had one thing in common. Harry also loved this old bus more than anything else in the world, but for a different reason. It was taking him to see his

girlfriend. If you were to ask Harry to think about a memory from his summer holidays, not only in childhood but more recently, the sparkle described earlier would be in his eyes and his face would light up even on such a gloomy December day. His memory wouldn't be of a vanilla ice cream. It would be of a holiday romance, but this one wasn't all too short.

Seven months before, just a little while before my parents and I were travelling in the old bus, Harry had taken it to Largs and went on to spend a week's holiday at Millport on the Isle of Cumbrae. He had been looking forward to this trip for ages because during that week, the Cathedral of the Isles was running a three day conference called "The Eternal Flame."

As a child at Sunday school, he had been captivated by the image of the burning bush and later, as a teenager, when he saw the Church of Scotland logo which contains the burning bush, he quickly looked

up the Latin words written under the logo - *Nec tamen consumebatur* - (Yet, it was not consumed.) He found that the wording referred to Exodus Chapter 3, verses 1-4 when Moses came upon the burning bush and the angel appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of the bush.



Harry had always been fascinated by the image of an eternal flame which would never be extinguished and it symbolised to him what faith in God was all about. There was a permanence and complete reassurance in the symbolism of an eternal flame and he wanted to find out more.



At the conference he happened to be seated beside a young lady called Sarah Jane who actually lived in Millport with her parents and they got talking about eternal flames. Her fascination was that she had seen a photo of the eternal flame that burns on President Kennedy's grave in Arlington National Cemetery and had been totally moved by this. She told Harry during one of the coffee breaks that if she was asked to describe her faith in God, she would draw an eternal flame, as this would describe her faith in a way that words just could not express and never would.

As the conference progressed, Harry and Sarah Jane began to spend more and more time together. They cycled round the island which is just one of these "Must do things" for a visitor, (as well as a resident!) On the last night before Harry had to return home, they had dinner together. They stayed on at the restaurant for coffee, then ordered another one, making it last as

long as they possibly could. Finally, Harry suggested, "How about if I come down to Largs next Saturday and I'll meet you in Nardini's?" Sarah Jane thought it was a wonderful idea.

That was how Harry got to know the old red bus so well. He hadn't got round to learning how to drive and didn't like travelling on trains, especially if they were crowded. For the next four Saturdays, Harry travelled down to Largs for the day and met Sarah Jane. They would then spend the whole day in Largs, and Sarah Jane would go back over to the island at night.

On the fifth Saturday, Sarah Jane looked absolutely over the moon and told Harry, "My parents have said it would be OK for you to stay with us next weekend if you want to!" She added, "They would really like to meet you!" Her face was radiant, "Oh don't you see? We'll be able to spend the whole weekend together!"

"Do they have a spare room?" Harry asked.

Sarah Jane's parents actually owned one of the largest villas which was in an elevated position behind the promenade, on the outskirts of Millport, overlooking the small bay. She simply smiled her lovely Sarah Jane smile, took his hand and quietly told him. "We have seven." The next weekend was a great success and as the months passed by, this became a regular feature. Harry got to see Largs and Millport in winter. He also got on very well with Sarah Jane's father who had an interest in the Stock Market and they often had long conversations about this.

As the months passed, Harry and Sarah Jane seriously began to think about a future together, but there was only one thing that came between them. Harry had just assumed all along that if they did get married, Sarah Jane would come and live with him in Glasgow. But she didn't want to ever leave the island. Her parents owned quite a few properties there

and ran a small company which let the houses out to holidaymakers and people living on a more long term basis on the island. She was employed by her father as a "sort of estate agent," inspecting the properties which she loved doing and taking care of all the paperwork.

As much as Harry loved the island and longed to live there, he knew there wouldn't be much chance of him getting a job there in his own field.

Sarah Jane was absolutely determined and they would sometimes quarrel about this. Many a relationship would have ended because of that. They soon found though that they just couldn't let each other go and come Tuesday or Wednesday, one or the other would phone, much to the joy and relief of the other.

Although Harry didn't know about this, he had an unlikely ally. Usually, fathers of an only daughter guard them against potential suitors with the suspicion, determination and dedication of one of the

best bodyguards in the country! Early on though, when Harry had been spending the weekend with them, Sarah Jane's father had got to talking about shares again and Harry offered him some advice which he took. The advice actually ended up in him making a fair amount of money. But it wasn't just the money. He realised that his only daughter had not only met a really nice guy, but a very clever one as well!

After that, Sarah Jane's father became the unlikeliest ally in the world and rooted for Harry. He also became the unlikeliest matchmaker. If he knew they had been quarrelling, he would call Harry up and invite him down to "discuss shares." But the meeting was always arranged for a time when he knew his daughter would be around and in the house.

As the long bus journey progressed, Harry was thinking about all these things that had happened. They made it past Johnstone Bus Depot. He gazed up at

the "Wanted – Mechanics" (Dead or Alive!) and smiled a little. As the bus passed the "Little car(e) gets you there" billboard, he knew they would have Christmas to look forward to and resolved to somehow find a solution that would make both of them happy.

Soon there was a loud screeching of trees scraping across the roof and Harry knew that Lochwinnoch was now very near. Not too far to go now and after passing through Kirbirnie, soon the bus drew to an abrupt halt as the brakes were tested. Before it descended the steep hill, he was greeted with the beautiful sight of the lights of Largs and could even see some over in Cumbrae as well. The bus arrived safely at the bus station, let out its long sigh and Sarah Jane was waiting for him.

The next day - Christmas Eve – was wonderful, with last minute shopping over at Largs before the ferry stopped for the holiday. In the evening, Millport looked



beautiful with the coloured fairy lights switched on. After a beautiful and very moving Watchnight Service which Sarah Jane's parents also attended, it was now Christmas Day!

When they all arrived home, as well as receiving and giving their normal presents, Sarah Jane's father had another present for them and although he didn't say anything, he secretly hoped it would become a wedding present. He told them that he had some good news. He had been toying for a long time about expanding into renting out houses farther afield in places such as Greenock and Largs. It was now possible to do this.

He went on to say that due to the company expanding, he would need a company accountant and told Harry that if he wanted the job it was his. He then asked Harry and Sarah Jane to think about it over the holidays but knew they would soon figure out

that their problems had just been solved. Later that day, as Harry and Sarah Jane walked along the elegant little street, hand in hand, Harry knew he would never return to the city again except for an occasional visit. He had come home. An eternal flame had been lit for both of them. Soon after, the Christmas present did indeed become a wedding present.

### **Epilogue**

Fifty one years later, the eternal flame still burns. Harry and Sarah Jane now have a grownup son and daughter and three grandchildren. The business is now run by their son. Although Sarah Jane's parents have both sadly passed on, she will never forget how much her father did for her with regards to bringing Harry and her together and still cannot express in words how grateful she is to him. There is never a day goes by that they both don't think about the conference at the Cathedral of the Isles that brought them together. Harry eventually learned how

to drive and when he occasionally goes over to Glasgow, he always drives the same route via Lochwinnoch and Johnstone and just like myself, has never forgotten about the old bus that fifty one years ago brought him to a new destiny.



## **From the Editor**

BY MARGARET SIM

This is my last edition of Connect. I have enjoyed producing the magazine for the Upper Braes Churches. I would like to thank all those who have given me such great articles and of course the photos that accompany them, there wouldn't be a magazine without you.

The help from the Comms Team when proof reading is required has been essential. And good luck to the person taking over the position, I hope they enjoy it as much as I have.

# Events and Services

## Brightons Ministry Centre

Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> November 11.30am

Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November 6.30pm

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December 11.00am

Thursday Service (Comm.)

Evening Service

Communion Service

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

Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2026 2.00pm

St Margaret's Care Home

## Events Brightons Ministry Centre

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December 1-5pm

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2-3pm & 7.15-8.30pm

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December 3-4pm

Youth Church Party

Oliver with a

Christmas Twist

Caledonia Choir Sing-a-long

## Slamannan Ministry Centre

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December 11.00am

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December 6pm

Communion Service

Bereavement Service

## Events Slamannan Ministry Centre

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 12.30pm

Seniors Lunch Club

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.



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CHARITY SC001385**