



## Beyond Easter!

Undoubtedly, spring time always brings with it a great amount of anticipation leading up to Easter. Even for those who are "Christmas and Easter" church-goers, or for those who simply sit at home and dream of Easter baskets, chocolate rabbits, and coloured eggs, anticipating Easter, on the one hand, is like waiting for the door to finally be unlocked, unhinged and opened onto a green spring field of sunshine and colour. On the other hand, Easter is stepping out onto that field and closing the door behind on the long, cold, dreary winter.



Yet, for many, the day comes and goes and then what? Easter is over again until next year. In some parts of the world, winter still hangs above, and the grey of death has not given way to the springtime. The chocolate is eaten, the celebrations are over, and everything seems to return to normal. All that anticipation ends in just one day—with grand festivities and powerful sermons, and perhaps with even a first playful egg-roll in the springtime grass—and then it's over. Or is it?

The celebration of Easter is insignificant if the celebrations do not point to the continuing reality of the Risen Lord. Indeed, in many church traditions, the season of Easter which lasts until Pentecost asks this very question. *How do we know the continuing presence of the risen Lord in our daily lives?* Indeed, how do we? Is it simply the annual remembrance of a historic event from long ago?

If we're honest, many of us do wonder what difference the resurrection has made in the practical realities of our lives. We still argue with our spouses and loved ones; we still have children who go their own way. We have difficulties at work or at school. We still see a world so broken by warfare, selfish greed, oppression and sin. Like the two men on the road to Emmaus recounting the events surrounding Jesus, perhaps we wonder aloud: "**But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel**" (Luke 24:21a). Things seem pretty much as they were before Easter Sunday, and the reality of our same old lives still yearns for healing, salvation and hope.

This is often the way we feel if we have only understood resurrection as an event long past that only speaks to a future yet to come. We feel this way if we do not connect Jesus's prayer for God's will to be done "**on earth as it is in heaven**" with the reality of the cry, "**He is risen, as he said.**" The glimpse into

the kingdom of God that we get in the life and ministry of Jesus is confirmed through the resurrection. New creation, new life, resurrected living is now a possibility for those who believe, trust and follow Jesus. The risen Jesus told his followers, "**As the Father has sent me, I also send you**" (John 20:21).

My friend, let me remind you that Jesus' resurrection is not a promise for escape from the world, or a life free from trouble. We know it isn't! But rather it commands those who are Christians, to you and to me, to those would remember his resurrection to be his 'faithful and courageous' agents in the world.

We have a wonderful message of hope and life which only God through Christ provides. He sends us out with the extraordinary news that the dead can be raised to new life, for death and evil do not have the last word! Heaven is a certainty and Easter reminds us that one day we will be with Him and with all those who in faith have trusted in His name. We are sent out beyond Easter Sunday into the future because everything has changed. As we live into and out of the resurrection, we demonstrate the continuing presence of the risen Lord in our lives and in this world.

Therefore, wherever we go in life, and wherever God leads us in the future, let us never forget that Easter gives us hope beyond today and a seasonal celebration. The reality of Easter is a promise of God delivered and guaranteed by God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ for every day of the year and beyond!

May your heart be filled with peace, joy and hope as you remember Jesus' love for you and the eternal life won for you through His resurrection. Never doubt it!

Happy Easter! God bless you now and always, In Him,

**Benjamin**

The angel said to the women, "***Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.'*** Now I have told you." (Matthew 28:5 – 7)

## The Church Magazine



**Thank you** to everyone who has signed up to receive this magazine by email and so are helping us to reduce our carbon footprint. If you haven't yet registered for the electronic version, and you would like to, then please contact me at [colleena-joslin@gmail.com](mailto:colleena-joslin@gmail.com). The newsletter is also available on the church website at <https://www.blairgowrieparishchurch.org.uk>. We continue to provide a print

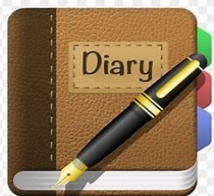
copy for those who wish it.

I would like to encourage contributions from more members of the church to add to the news and features aspects of future newsletters. If you have an event you would like to share with your church family (photographs welcomed), or an opinion or a book review or anything else then we'd be very pleased to hear from you. Ideas for developing the newsletter would be appreciated too, as would feedback on what you like, don't like and what you would like to see more of. Thank you.

**Colleen**

## Church Diary

### Dates:



- Mar. 1st** - World Day of Prayer Service, 7pm  
**Mar. 11th** - Stewardship Meeting with Katherine Southern, 2pm  
**Mar. 17th** - Messy Church, 9.30am  
**Mar. 20th** - Kirk Session Meeting, 7.30pm  
**Mar. 23rd** - Easter Praise, Wellmeadow, 3pm  
**Mar. 28th** - Maundy Thursday Service, 7pm  
**Mar. 29th** - Good Friday Service, 7pm  
**Mar. 31st** - Easter Morning Early Service, 9.30am  
- Easter Sunday Service, 11am  
**Apr. 3-5th** - Easter Holiday Club  
**Apr. 27th** - Guild Spring Tea, 2pm  
**Apr. 28th** - Messy Church 9.30am  
**May 5th** - Early Morning Service, 9.30am  
**May 24th** - Boys Brigade Parent's Evening/ Display, 6pm.  
**May 26th** - Messy Church, 9.30am  
**Jun. 2nd** - Communion Service, 11am  
- Children's Communion Service, 11am  
**Jun. 16th** - Messy Church, 9.30am  
**Jun. 23rd** - Sunday School Presentation, 11am

## Treasure Chest Appeal



The appeal for treasure to support our Audio-Visual fund continues and we have more items for this appeal that will be sold shortly.

**Grateful thanks** to everyone who has donated.

Do you have gold or silver broken chains, odd earrings or anything else that could top up our chest? If so, and if you are willing to donate, then please pop it in an envelope and put it in the plate on any Sunday, or pass it to your Elder, or contact David (david@thelowats.net) or Colleen (colleenajoslin@gmail.com) to arrange collection. Thank you.

**Colleen**

**25** Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;

**26** and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" **John 11: 25-26**



### CAN YOU GUESS WHO?

Which Elder's mother darned socks for HRH Prince Philip? **Answer on Page 7.**

**Church Webpage:** <https://www.blairgowrieparishchurch.org.uk>

From the church website you can access our:

- ⇒ weekly pastoral letter
- ⇒ monthly prayer diary
- ⇒ triannual newsletter
- ⇒ daily reflections
- ⇒ video recordings of morning worship
- ⇒ daily Bible verse
- ..... and much more including:
- ⇒ a link to our Facebook page.



find us on

**Facebook**

## J.A.M Club

A very busy, successful J(esus) A(nd) M(e) Club was held in Blairgowrie Parish Church Hall in October. It was enjoyed by a good number of children learning how to be team members and finding out about God's Team. Parents and carers also enjoyed the free time it gave them and joined in the final session for a short time.

So we plan to repeat the experience and invite all Primary School children to join us on **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup>, Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> and Friday 5<sup>th</sup> April** when we are planning to run another **JAM CLUB in Blairgowrie Parish Church Hall from 2pm to 4pm each of these afternoons**. The theme this time will be finding things that are lost and God welcoming those who are lost. We will be looking at the Parables of The Lost Coin, The Lost Sheep and The Lost (prodigal) Son.

There is no cost for the children come along and join in the games, a treasure hunt, songs, story time, activities in groups and to enjoy a snack. Children have fun, learn more of the Bible and that God loves them, while parents/ grandparents/ carers get an hour or two to themselves. Those who have helped really enjoy it and we welcome any offers to help by donation towards the snacks, by joining us with the children, by spreading the news about the JAM CLUB—and very importantly by prayer for this venture. For more information or registration please phone 01250874023 or email [esther.dingwall@gmail.com](mailto:esther.dingwall@gmail.com). Information about registering will also go out on the schools email system. **Esther Dingwall.**

### Stewardship

The Church of Scotland describes Christian stewardship as 'recognising that everything we have belongs to God and that we are called to care for all that God has given to us'.

It claims we are—and we must be—honoured to be given this role because intentional and meaningful stewardship in every aspect of our lives brings honour to God, helps us grow as followers of Jesus and furthers God's mission in the world.

To help us understand more about stewardship and our role in it, Katherine Southern, the Stewardship Consultant from the Stewardship and Finance Department of the Church of Scotland is visiting us on Monday 11th March at 2pm in the hall.

This is planned as an introductory meeting and members of Session, the Working Groups and all church members are encouraged to attend. Please come along to meet Katherine and to learn more of what we can do to be 'good stewards'.

Refreshments will be served.

### From 'Communique' (written at Easter during 'The Troubles')

There is no bilateral statement  
for the six o'clock news.

The communiqué displayed says simply  
*He is the King of the Jews.*

On reflection it is clear  
his agenda had been set from the start.  
He planned a suicide mission  
against the strongholds of the heart.

He did not negotiate with sin  
when matters reached their head.  
He would not de-commission his arms  
but spread them wide instead.

**Godfrey Rust (1953)**(CC nc-nd license)

## Our Unitary Constitution and Working Groups

Following the dedication service on the 1<sup>st</sup> October, the Unitary Constitution is now in operation. The Working Groups have all called meetings and have begun to develop their strategies and priorities. It is expected that future issues of the church magazine will contain reports of Working Group activities and these will overtake some regular items, such as the Property Update or Treasurer's report. This issue of the magazine begins that process.

The Working Groups are:

**Worship:** supporting and developing all forms of worship within and beyond the church family.

**Mission & Outreach:** developing and implementing (with others) a practical and achievable mission for the church family and in the community.

**Pastoral Care Group:** identifying and providing opportunities for pastoral care to members, adherents and the wider community.

**Communication:** promoting and supporting the congregation's internal and external communication links.

**Finance & Stewardship:** monitoring, controlling, and reporting of income and expenditure.

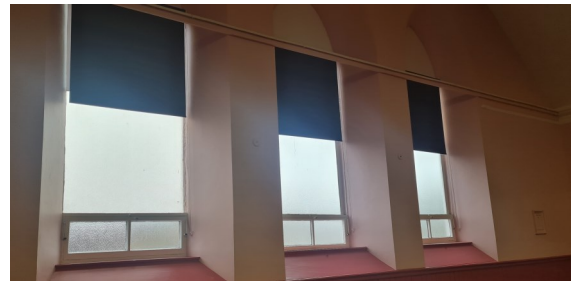
**Fabric:** care and maintenance the heritable and moveable properties of the congregation.

If you would like to get involved, you will be welcomed. Please let Clifford or the convenor of the Working Group of interest know. And please continue to pray for the work of these Working Groups as they grow and develop. Thank you.

**Colleen Joslin**

## Fabric Working Group: Report

A pre-application is being prepared to submit to the Council to obtain agreement that the windows in the hall can be replaced. We have to apply for planning as the hall is in a conservation area and we would like to put in double glazed windows. New blinds have been fitted in the hall and these would be transferred to the new windows. The Fabric Working Group is looking for curtains to be hung on the rails to reduce the echo in the hall, not to cover the windows!



The motion sensor light at the entrance to lower hall has found to be faulty and will be replaced soon.

The Fabric Group has a schedule of small jobs that need to be completed around the Church and hall and intend to meet each Saturday at 10.30 am for an hour and a half throughout March, to complete as many of these small tasks as possible. Jobs on the list so far include: rub down the railings and paint: fill in the gaps on the steps: renew the paint on the steps: replace worn out carpet on the stairs to the sanctuary:



repair the seats in the side chapel: clean the woodwork on the pulpit. If you can help there will be a job for you and you will be very welcome to join the working party. Please wear old clothes and working gloves and sign up for a job.

The seats in the side chapel have been showing signs of significant wear for some time and work has now started on replacing the seat upholstery. More material has been purchased to replace all the seats and this will be completed over time.

*(One of the repaired seats.)*

**Susan Whiteford: Fabric Convenor**

## Finance and Stewardship Working Group.

### Financial Overview:

2023 presented another challenging year financially. We undertook significant improvements to the church and halls, including installing new boilers and painting the halls, which totalled nearly £40,000. Fortunately, we were able to use investments from 121 George Street to cover these costs. However, these resources are finite, and unexpected situations could arise in the future.

Excluding these major projects, the church's day-to-day operations broke even. This means we are not currently building up funds for future projects. Our income comes from several sources: Standing Orders, Free Will Offerings (which we are transitioning away from in favour of Standing Orders), open plate donations, and general donations. Unfortunately, due to an ageing congregation with fewer younger members joining, we anticipate a potential decline in this income source. Our other main income stream is hall rentals, which, thanks to our dedicated hall letting convenor, generates £6,000 annually.

### Challenges and Opportunities:

Beyond the declining income from donations, our ageing building requires increasingly expensive maintenance, particularly with regards to energy costs. While we don't expect major repairs on the scale of the past few years, future needs are inevitable. Meeting these challenges won't be easy. We are grateful for the generous contributions of many, but additional support is crucial. While we understand everyone faces financial pressures, especially in the current climate, we encourage those who donate via Standing Orders to consider reviewing and potentially increasing their contributions if they feel they can. The convenience of Standing Orders simplifies regular giving.

### Positive Notes and Conclusion:

Despite the challenges, we are financially stable and we have a well-maintained building. I extend my sincere gratitude to all who have generously contributed and supported the church throughout the past year. As we move forward, let's continue our good work together.

**Bob Strachan, Treasurer and Working Group Convenor**

## The Worship Working Group

The Worship Working Group has overall responsible for all forms of worship within and beyond the church family, encouraging others to participate as the National and local church reduces its ministerial capacity. Its work should support the minister in the style, content, and planning of worship.

Last November the minister and eight other members of the Worship group met for the first time to discuss the responsibilities of the group and to establish a process to facilitate worship within the church and find various ways of engaging with the congregation to enhance meaningful worship.

A full Christmas programme of services was conducted during the Advent season in 2023, and these were well attended and appreciated by the congregation and the community. Looking ahead to the season of Easter, during Holy Week, we will hold the following services.

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| Maundy Thursday, 28 <sup>th</sup> March 7.00pm | – Communion Service.      |
| Good Friday, 29 <sup>th</sup> March 7.00pm     | – Reading and Reflections |
| Easter Sunday, 31 <sup>st</sup> March 11.00am  | – Sunday Worship Service  |

Everyone is of course very welcome!

**Benjamin (Convenor)**

## The Pastoral Care Working Group

When Blairgowrie Parish Church adopted the Unitary Constitution model of working last year, a Pastoral Care Working Group was formed. We already had a Pastoral Care Visiting Team whose members, under the direction of the Minister, regularly visit people who are ill or housebound or who can no longer attend church. We have decided to join the two groups together and we are looking forward to building on the work that is already being done.



If you know of someone whom you think would welcome a Church visitor, please speak to Benjamin or to Elinor who is the Group Convenor. If you feel this is an area of Church life where you could help, again speak to Benjamin or Elinor in the first instance.

Since June last year, we have been sending cards to our church family members who are ill or bereaved or who have something to celebrate such as a special anniversary. Over that time, more than thirty cards have been sent to let people know that they are in our thoughts and prayers, and we hope that these cards bring a little comfort especially in difficult times. We do rely on people letting us know of anyone who is in such circumstances so please do get in touch - we would rather hear several times than not at all.

*“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” Matthew 25: 35-40*

**Elinor Smith: Convenor**



### DID YOU GUESS? (From Page 3)

**Charlie Smith:** Charlie’s mother was renowned as a very skilled needleworker. Her niece, Valerie, worked at Balmoral and it was via Valerie that the request came for her to darn Prince Phillip’s socks, which she did very willingly, of course. Did she get paid, I wonder?

## Messy Church & Family Services



The first Messy Church of the year was on the theme of Joseph and his multi-coloured coat. There were dreamcatchers to make and edible Joseph’s!

In February the theme was Abraham and Sarah and involved making stars to represent the many children there would be in the world descended from them. Models of the pair and a star bracelet were made.

Sunday school is held in the hall at 11am on the weeks when there is no Early morning service or Messy Church.

Everyone is welcome at Messy Church or at Sunday School. Please come and join us.

**Susan Whiteford**

## Mission and Outreach Working Group

What an exciting time in our Church when new groups work together to move our Church forward and make His Light Shine within our Church and Community. This working team has overall responsibility for developing and implementing (with others) a practical and achievable Mission for the Church. We will coordinate, plan, carry out and evaluate Mission and Outreach in aspects identified as priorities.

The Mission and Outreach group has definite aims:

- a] Developing our Ministries through Mission.
- b] Planning Outreach to all members of the Parish and Community
- c] Strengthening our partnership with others.
- d] Welcoming new and existing members into our congregation.
- e] Supporting and developing Discipleship initiatives
- f] Encourage sharing the gospel among the congregation and local community
- g] Nurturing Young People of our Church Family and wider community.
- h] Supporting leaders to develop work with children, youth and families.
- i] Liaising with other members to provide refreshments for after Church and other events.

Our Group has met on three occasions and are in the process of producing an Action Plan which will reflect our aims. We hope to present this to Kirk Session in March.

We have met in Faith, developed Friendships and experienced God's Love, and this we want to share. We want our Church to be a Lighthouse in the community, pointing people towards our Lord and Saviour. How bright can our Light Shine?

**Gal 5:22-23:** When the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Now is the time to reflect where and how we are using our gifts. Can we use them more effectively? Are you interested in joining? Can you help us make a difference? (See the questionnaire on the last page!)

**Margaret Conroy (Convenor)**

## Mary's Meals

This global organisation which has caught the imagination of so many people since it started in Dalmally in Scotland. The simplicity of the idea of feeding a child if the child goes to school has made so many children grow both in stature and in mental development. Margaret Young is the leader of the Blairgowrie group which last year reached the one million pound fundraising point. Margaret receives donations all round the year, but she also organises two large events each year. One is the always successful New Year Ceilidh, and the other is the **Coffee Morning** which will be held in the **Town Hall** on **Saturday 15th June at 10am**. As well as delicious traybakes, there will be a Cake & Candy stall, Bric-a-Brac stall and plants for your garden. Do make a note of this grand event to support children all over the world to benefit nutritionally as well as educationally.

Margaret is always looking out for volunteers, and you can give her a ring on 01250 875086 if you feel you may be able to help.

**Moira Somerville**





## The Communications Working Group



The Communications Working Group has overall responsibility for promoting and supporting the congregation's internal and external communication links. Reporting to Session as required, it will work to establish an effective communications strategy for all aspects of Church life and witness.

As such, we exist to support other Working Groups, as well as to undertake the weekly communication with the congregation via the Pew Leaflet, and the PowerPoint Files projected during services. We were, until recently, directly involved in producing a weekly report on the work of the Church for the '*Blairie*', and we hope this will be re-established because it is another way to reach our wider community. There are also reports in '*The Hub*' magazine, as well as the editing and producing of our own Church Magazine three times annually. We have supported other Working Groups by producing Hymn Sheets for outdoor events, including Christmas Praise in the Wellmeadow.

Since our first meetings, we have been looking at GDPR regulations as required by the Church of Scotland. We have undertaken a data audit that identifies how we store and distribute information, and we have produced an updated Data Protection Policy, Employee and Congregation Privacy Statements and an action plan of 'good practice'. One example of this relates to donation recording where neither the donor nor the amount donated needs to be openly discussed or recorded. The Treasurer and a few of his team will need to know and it may be necessary to record how much the donation was, but not to name the donor unless he/she wishes it. Perhaps more importantly though, it is clear that we need to establish safe methods to store and share information.

Some time ago we were told that our Xerox photocopier was to be phased out. The Communications Group considered replacement possibilities and eventually opted for an Epson ET-16600 Series machine, which can print in colour up to A3 in size, double sided, and relatively cheaply. This recommendation was put to Kirk Session, it was approved and it has been purchased. It is an ink-jet printer, so is better for the environment than either a laser printer or a toner photocopier. It uses ink tanks, rather than cartridges, so is easier to maintain as the casual user will not need to know about ink replacement, toner cartridges, etc. Meanwhile, we plan to produce a 'User Guide' to make this new machine more accessible, and to establish costs for non-church use so that it has the potential to support community organisations. We were able to purchase this machine due to donations from members of the congregation. Many thanks! Meanwhile, the old Xerox machine is still available for black and white work until the contract ends.

Our next priority will be to address the question of the Audio/Visual system, to establish whether there is any way it can be done in stages or to look for grants, so the work can be done sooner than will be achieved by fundraising alone. There is, of course, the risk that phased purchase will cost us more in the longer term but Live Streaming is a critical priority because just now the Session Clerk is required to spend several hours each Sunday afternoon editing and uploading the files to YouTube from the two mobile phones used to record the service. This cannot continue, yet we see the video worship as a very important part of our outreach, and the upgrade is what any incoming minister will now expect.

If you would like to get involved with the preparation of weekly PowerPoint files, and their projection, or the preparation and printing of the Pew Leaflet, then let us know. We are a relatively small group, but we hope to be able to help the other Working Groups achieve their goals.

**David P. Howat (Convenor)**



For behold, the winter is past; the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth, the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. **Song of Solomon 2:11-12**



## The Guild: New Wine, New Wineskins

The Guild invites men and women to meet in the Church Hall on the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month to share Faith, Fellowship and Friendship. You can become a Guild Member or a Friend of the Guild. Would you like to join us or become a special friend? Since our last Church Magazine report, we have met regularly and speakers have been varied, but on reflection many have been from our own Church family this time around. Jimmy Taylor shared his experience of building a Church in Malaysia; Martha Easton entertained us with 'Name that Tune' which we all enjoyed together with our friends from Kinclaven and Ardler, Kettins and Meigle Guilds; and Benjamin gave us lots of encouragement in a meaningful Bible Study which was our traditional first meeting of the year. Other speakers so far this year were a representative from Mission Aviation Fellowship and Betty Cocker who ensured we were kept 'Fit for Purpose' through exercises and entertaining anecdotes.

Our Christmas lunch was held in the Red House in Coupar Angus and our Coffee Mornings in November and February were very successful, with Church Family and friends coming together to enjoy Fellowship and to raise funds. The money we raise through the Guild supports our Church, Guild Projects and other local initiatives.

Our Guild continues meeting until the end of May and we look forward to afternoons of 'Getting Creative', hearing a speaker from the Vine Trust and another from 'Blair in Bloom'. Our Spring Tea will be held on the 27<sup>th</sup> April at 2.00pm in the Church Hall and the Guild will finish for the summer with our A.G.M. and a Guild Outing.

Often we worry about what the future holds but as Christians we have the assurance of knowing who holds the future and this allows us to 'Look Forward in Faith', secure in the knowledge that God has gone before, His arms are around us and that He will guide us in His path.

Let us not forget:



**Margaret Conroy**

## Christmas Carols in The Wellmeadow

On the 16th December we braved the chill and the threatened rain to sing Christmas Carols in the Wellmeadow. Although this event was arranged by Blairgowrie Parish Church, we were delighted that representatives from other churches in the town joined us.

Song sheets were available so everyone who wanted could join in and it was good to see passers-by stop for a while to sing with us or just to listen. Others came especially to join us because the event had been advertised on local social media. We gave out sweets and details of the Christmas services—and the rain held off.



The singing was opened with prayer, lasted about 45 minutes and was followed by refreshments in the Church Hall. This occasion was very much a team effort reaching out into the community. Thanks are due to all who made this possible. Praise be to God for a lovely day and for His Presence with us.

**Marjorie Ferguson**

## 2nd Blairgowrie Boys Brigade

The Boys Brigade continues to meet on a Friday evening in the church hall from 6.15pm to 7.30pm. We have now lost our three company boys to other activities but have nine in the Junior

Section and four in the Anchors. Mrs Annand, our Officer in Charge is still unwell so has not rejoined us as yet but she is making a good recovery and we hope to see her back with us soon. Mrs Cathy Ferrier has continued to help during this time.

October through to the end of December was filled with activities including a visit from the community police officer who had the boys enthralled with his different equipment,



and the boys even got to sit in his car and put the lights and siren on.



We had an evening at the pantomime and the boys thoroughly enjoyed it, and the ice cream at the interval. This was partly funded by a generous donation of £100 from Mitchell's Newsagents. Mr and Mrs Cooke visited us for our Christmas

evening and had lots of great activities for the boys who loved it.

Since the New Year we have worked with the boys on what activities and games they want to do as they go forward, reflected on what we are thankful for, made some innovative junk models and learned about Robbie Burns and how to do Strip the Willow. Mrs Mary McKay usually provides the opening theme for us and her stories are always interesting and inspiring. Mrs Abigail Crawford-Ireland is a whizz with the handicrafts and always manages to come up with something new for the boys to try and Abigail's son Monty has been with us as part of his Duke of Edinburgh award. He is doing an excellent job as games co-ordinator. We hope to visit Airlie Primary School for some outdoor activities and also a visit to the fire station before we break up at the end of May. Over the coming months we will be working on learning some new songs and teaching the boys drill in anticipation of our yearly display. If there are any drill experts who would like to come along and give us some tips, we would be most grateful.

**Niki Watt: Acting OIC: Junior Section**

## Memories of the Kirk: Sunday School (Part 1)—by Charlie Smith

I was born in the 1950s into a family who regularly attended St Andrew's Church and who contributed significantly to the running of "the kirk." From an early age, therefore, I too was expected to participate in church life.

My earliest memory of St Andrew's was attending infant Sunday School in what is now called the Upper Hall. As a toddler we attended at the same time as the Morning Service was taking place in the church itself. Later, the 5–11-year-olds attended the initial part of the "adults' service for around twenty minutes then departed up the steps to our Sunday School session.

If memory serves me correctly, we sat in the first six (!) rows of the church and heard an introductory hymn, the weekly intimations, a prayer (which seemed never-ending), and a children's address. After a dedicated children's hymn, we departed upstairs. The first minister I recall, was Rev. Howieson who had come from Glasgow and had baptised me in the church some years before. As an infant I remember sitting on small collapsible chairs in the hall, before graduating to larger uncomfortable solid ones.

**(To be continued)**

## The Promise of the Rainbow: Esther Dingwall

Wind-driven rain, Blocks out the light of day. A grey depression round me,  
As I walk along the way.

Suddenly a clearing in the clouds, A rainbow arches overhead, The sun glints  
in the rain, The rainbow is above my head.



And there before me in it's glory Is the beauty of the Firth and Highland hills: A beauty that I knew, deep  
down, Was only hidden for a while.

Life has been storm-battered, Grey, depressing and uncertain. I had wondered in despair  
Will I know the love of God again.

The beauty of that rainbow, And the promise that it holds, Reminds me of the love of God  
And that promise made of old.

He will never leave His people, Nor withdraw His love. He will lead and guide me  
If I learn to look above.

## Craft Group

We are a friendly, welcoming group that meets on Wednesday mornings from 10.00 – 12.00 in the church hall, although anyone is free to pop in at any time. Everyone brings along their own project to work on – knitting, crochet, sewing, embroidery etc and there is always someone on hand to share their knowledge and experience with those who are less expert. While it is truly humbling to see the wide array of talents on display, there are some of us who just come for the chat and to share the joys and sorrows that come with life.

A number of our group members knit items for the Crossreach Visitor centre at Perth Prison – baby and toddler hats, mittens, jumpers and blankets are all well received. Adult hats, scarves and gloves are also appreciated. We received a letter of thanks saying, “With the cost of living continuing to rise, and the current low temperatures, beautiful gifts such as these make a child smile at this time of year and your donation helps towards us continuing to make a real difference to families.”

We were also asked to make winter hats for children whose families use the local Foodbank and many in the group provided these using their various skills.



At Christmas, we had a session making wreaths which enabled some of us to explore our creative side. No two wreaths were alike, and everyone had a wreath to take away to decorate their home.

If you have some free time on a Wednesday

morning, do join us for a coffee and a chat – you are assured of a very warm welcome.

For more information, contact Elinor Smith on 01250 870618.

**Elinor Smith**





## From the Pew to the Pulpit - A Journey to Readership (Part 2)

*In the November magazine we learned about how Keith reached the point of considering ministry and the Discernment process he undertook. Now Part 2 tells us the rest of his story.*

If the candidate is allowed to proceed, then the decision is taken to allocate the candidate to one of the four ministries in the Church of Scotland; Fulltime Parish Ministry, Ordained Local Ministry, the Diaconate or Readership. I was pleased to be allocated to the Readership – I felt I was being called to preach the Gospel and it was heartening that my mentors agreed with that.

My first placement was with Rev. Mary Haddow in Pitlochry and although I only had a short period with her due to her retiring through ill health, I really enjoyed working with Mary and the congregation and was sorry not to have had more time under her careful and thoughtful guidance.

The Rev. Penny Fraser stepped in to take over supervising my progress and again I felt blessed to be given the chance to work with such an experienced minister. The chance to take part in and lead worship in an iconic building as Dunkeld Cathedral was an opportunity not to be missed!

My final placement was with Rev. Mike Erskine in Alyth, another very experienced minister with a different style of preaching. Under Mike's supervision I covered all aspects of preparing and delivering prayers, readings, sermons and so covering all aspects of preaching. I was also pleased to be invited by Benjamin to take part in services here in Blairgowrie on some occasions.

There is one Preaching Assessment for the Readership and Mike and I agreed that I would undergo the assessment on 16<sup>th</sup> April in Alyth with two ministers from another Presbytery in attendance. As well as conducting the full service there, I had a conversation with Mike and the assessors after the service. It felt a bit like a job interview and there was a bit of nail biting going on but the outcome was positive!

There was plenty of support available from the Church of Scotland teams who manage the process, and the encouragement of friends was invaluable. But the biggest support came from Morag whose unstinting support— even when things didn't always go to plan— kept me going through the times when I questioned if I genuinely had a calling.

### Keith Redwood

'When all at once I saw a crowd, a host of golden daffodils,  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing  
in the breeze.'

From 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' by W. Wordsworth



## PLEASE HELP INFORM OUR CHURCH PRIORITIES

At a reflection session in November 2023, the following possible priorities emerged. At a time of great change in the church, locally and nationally, we need to be active in our mission and outreach and we are keen that **all** members take the opportunity to contribute to our future direction of travel. Please take a few minutes to complete and return this questionnaire (print or email to cooke1955@gmail.com).

Select up to five of the options that you think are important. If you think we need to look at something else, add this to the bottom of the table. **Where can we be a Brighter Light?**

<b>Highlighted Areas of Importance &amp; Key Suggestions/Questions from our November Reflection Morning.</b>	<b>Your Priorities? (1-5)</b>
Establishment of a Church Café in the centre of the town	
The need to reach out to teenagers. How?	
Do we know our parish? Profiling and surveying needs?	
Having a presence at all local fairs, markets & annual events eg. Switching on of Lights, Balmoral Day,	
The personal touch/witness works best so each of us must reach out and speak more about our beliefs (e.g. saying grace in public setting).	
Our communication needs to be stronger/improved.	
Is Sunday the best day for <b>all</b> communal worship? How do we take forward other forms of worship? (Evenings/ Early mornings/ Sunday School / Messy Church times.	
A multi-pronged approach is needed for any priority..	
Make more use of advertising of what we do, or what <i>we'd like to do – with help.</i>	
Be more ready to ask those in the wider community for help.	
Work more effectively with other local churches. E.g. support other local church initiatives, invite churches to our services and other events or initiatives.	
Be aware of the impact of all our actions e.g. Fairtrade, our carbon footprint.	
Develop use of Christian materials & resources e.g. Christianity Explored, Alpha Course.	
Be open to the needs of others and act accordingly in a loving way.	
Outreach materials for newer housing/new neighbours in the town.	
Christian engagement with hall and sanctuary users e.g. a welcoming presence for school services with info for parents/families about current church events & activities.	
Other?	
Additional Comments?	