



Experiencing the Christ of Christmas

Christian preacher of a bygone era, *F.W. Boreham*, tells a charming story, told to him by his mother while they sat around the fireplace one evening. As a young woman of seventeen, she had set up an appointment to meet her cousin in Canterbury, near the Cathedral. She went as planned but her cousin was not there. Somewhat

“dejected and disgusted” about this broken appointment, she was not in the happiest disposition.

A man with a very intellectual countenance but a gentle presence who had seen her walk up and down offered to show her around while she waited and explain some of the Cathedral’s features and its history. He had a wealth of information with incredible insights. As they parted, he gave her his card and without looking at it, she slipped it into her purse. In the end, it turned out that her cousin had become ill and hence, never showed.

On her way home in the train, she finally took out the card. It simply said, *“Charles Dickens.”* She gasped at the thought that she had been face to face with one of the greatest story tellers of all time and regretted her lost opportunity of knowing through whose eyes she was seeing the great Cathedral...one who was so in tune with the stones and personages that intersected where they had met. But preoccupation had pre-empted that inspiration.

Sadly, history has a habit of repeating itself and regrets of that nature have a long reach. The story of Christmas is a classic example of this. Just think, on that quiet night so long ago, lying in the manger was the answer to all of life’s successes, struggles, disappointments, and regrets. The hopes and fears of all the years had met in Him that night in a makeshift crib in the little town of Bethlehem. A carpenter, a humble maid, a band of shepherds, and ordinary people responded in awe at the blessing of his arrival. And yet, as always, there were those who were busy about their business and had no time to pause and ask, **“Who is He in yonder stall?”** What a loss! They missed a divine appointment.

Then there were those in power that felt threatened by Him and wished to silence Him permanently.

Christian writer *Malcolm Muggeridge* said it well: ***“All new news is old news happening to new people.”***



Just as the Garden of Eden is lived out every day in somebody's life, the Christmas message is lived out every day in all of our lives. Today in our schools and even businesses and the corridors of political power, the message of Jesus is blatantly silenced or mocked. This is not new.

Today, we have the unique privilege of being able to look back and read the whole story. There was a Cross that loomed in a fearful symmetry with the manger. Emmanuel, God was with us. Born to be lifted up, **"to raise the sons of earth, born to give them second birth."** Bethlehem foretold the magnitude of the need and the supremacy of God's answer.

Our world is broken. Many a family will have a vacant chair this Christmas because a life has been snatched from their circle. Humankind is wounded, and hollow speeches bereft of wisdom are the landmarks along the way. We look into the future a little bit like the virgin Mary, knowing we have the Saviour but not knowing what swords will pierce through our hearts. Hopes and fears intersect as we journey. Therefore, let us draw strength this Christmas. We are pilgrims, journeying through life. The story of Bethlehem is the most beautiful and the greatest story ever told, the story of God's visitation.

Missing Dickens and being fearful are legitimate regrets or fears in a world of unknowns. But finding the Saviour and having Him explain all and take you to your destination is what Christmas is all about: hope within and hope for the future. He is the One and only Prince of Peace. Do you know Him?

As we approach the season of Advent, let me wish you a blessed Christmas and a joyous New Year to you and yours.

Benjamin: (Minister)

Church Diary Dates:



- Nov. 4th - Guild Coffee Morning**
- Nov. 5th - Communion Service, 11am**
- Nov. 11th - The Suffering Church: Barnabas Aid, 3pm**
- Nov. 12th - Service of Remembrance, 10.45 am**
- Nov. 25th - First Reflections Session, 10 am — 12.30pm**
- Dec. 3rd - 1st Sunday in Advent; Christmas Gift Table, 11am**
- Dec. 21st - Lessons and Carols Service, 7.30pm**
- Dec. 24th - Christingle Family Service, 6.30pm**
- Dec. 25th - Christmas Day Service, 10.30am**

Suffering Church Week

Barnabas Aid, the organisation that works to provide hope and aid for suffering Christians, has designated the week of 5th—12th November as 'Suffering Church Week'.

On Saturday 11th November at 3pm, in Blairgowrie Parish Church Hall, a speaker representing Barnabas Aid will provide an overview of the current global situation for Christians who are persecuted for their faith.

There will be a book table, and Christmas cards and books will be available for purchase.

Refreshments will be provided.

This event is organised by the local prayer group and a warm invitation is extended to all.

J(esus) A(nd) M(e) CLUB

On 11, 12 and 13th October the JAM Club met in the Church Hall from 2pm to 4pm. This Holiday Club was aimed at children in primary school. Sixteen children between four years and twelve years were registered and amongst the team of helpers were two teenagers on two days. It was so good to have young people having fun together with the adult helpers and learning more about the Bible and how God wants us to be on His Team.

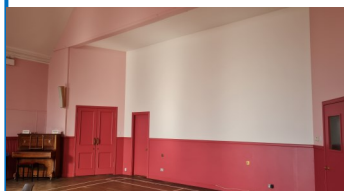
We sang, played games, heard and were involved in stories, did some craft and art work and, of course, had a snack. The actions for the songs kept us very fit! The stories were about Joseph; Jesus choosing His disciples and Paul, Barnabas and John Mark travelling to tell about Jesus. The children even learned Memory Verse (Psalm 118 verse 24). Do you remember the days we had to learn one a week?

On the Friday a number of parents and grandparents joined in the last half hour with the children. And on Sunday 15th October some of the families were at a Family Service in Church, the congregation joined with the children in some of their songs with actions and the Memory Verse they had learned. The adults were fantastic at joining in. Thank you. Also there was a chance to admire some of the art work done by the three teams--- Jammy Dodgers, Marmalades and Raspberries. We have to thank Andy Lang for helping at the Service with his guitar playing.

Those involved would like to thank everyone who supported this venture whether working with the children, praying, giving up their meetings in the Church Hall over the three days or giving a small donation to help with costs.

Esther Dingwall

Hall Lets



It is so good to be able to report the main hall is now decorated and looking very smart. The ceiling is so pretty and

the floor has been repaired, so tripping risks are reduced.

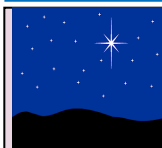


The halls continue to be well-used with just occasional weekday/evening availability of the large hall. The hall is only occasionally used through the day at the weekend though, apart from Sunday mornings, and it is never used during the evenings at weekends. The Session and Meeting Rooms have availability too, so the aim now is to increase use of the halls during the weekends and to increase the use of the Meeting and Session Rooms throughout the week and at weekends.

Hall and Meeting Room rental provides an important part of our regular church income and using this asset well can support other church activities, like mission or maintenance. It also allows us to have contact with our wider community so we continue to work towards encouraging more users into our buildings.

Please share information about the halls with any contacts you have who may be interested and, for further information, please contact me by email at colleenajoslin@gmail.com or by phone on 01250 873701.

Colleen Joslin



Behold, the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! *John 1.v 29*

Mary's Meals

Mary's Meals, the global organisation which makes sure that children are given a daily meal as long as they attend school, has a dedicated group in Blairgowrie. It is led by Margaret Young.

The next major fundraiser for Mary's Meals will be the always well supported Ceilidh to be held on the 12th January 2024. The tickets cost £15.

Tickets are available from Margaret, and she is always happy to meet new volunteers too. Her phone number is 01250 875086.





Treasure Chest Appeal for the Audio-Visual Fund

Our Treasure Chest Appeal continues and since May we have been given more items for this fundraiser. Our thanks to everyone. These gifts will really make a difference to our AV fund when we close the appeal next spring.

Do you have gold or silver broken chains, odd earrings or anything else that could further 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@thehowats.net) or **Colleen** (colleenajoslin@gmail.com) to arrange collection. Thank you.

Colleen

The Shepherds

It was done plainly enough.

The night sky was a perfect billboard,

The sound effects spectacular.

Only a few were awake

And in the right place

At the right time when heaven,

Unable to contain its amazement any longer,

Spilled out momentarily into earth

And explained itself.

The message was clear as day

But His timing was, as always, surprising,

And the show ran

For one performance only.

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



On Tuesday 17th October, at Alyth Parish Church (where he did most of his training), our friend and church member Keith Redwood was 'Set Apart' as a Reader. It was an uplifting service led by the Moderator Rev. Donna Hayes.

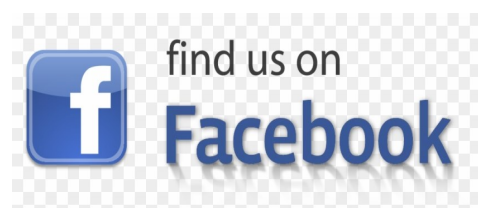
Pictured is John Ferguson, Presbytery Clerk, the Moderator, Keith Redwood and Carleen Robertson who preached the sermon.

Keith will be in our prayers as he continues his ministry, and you can read more of Keith's journey to Readership later in this newsletter.

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
- ⇒audio and video recordings of morning worship
- ⇒daily Bible verse
- and much more including:
- ⇒a link to our Facebook page
- ⇒worship resources
- ⇒links to other Christian materials.





Used Stamps

I am still collecting used stamps.

The Foreign Mission selects a small project to support by selling used stamps. The current one is called "Firmly Planted", and it is helping to finance a community based agroforestry initiative with the ambition of making a sustainable impact across Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It aims to address challenges of food insecurity, deforestation, climate change and youth unemployment.

Tree nurseries create employment opportunities, fruit trees improve nutrition and wider tree planting helps mitigate the impact of the climate crisis, in turn improving agricultural productivity. The proceeds of this stamp appeal will go towards establishing the tree nurseries. The Guild is also involved in supporting this programme.

So far, half way through the project, £7,400 has been raised. Please leave your used stamps in my pigeonhole in the Lower Hall. Thank you.

Moira Somerville

CHRISTMAS GIFT BAGS FOR CHILDREN



Once again the Church will be collecting gifts suitable for children aged from birth to 17 years. Any donation of a toy, game, book or piece of clothing would be very welcome. Equally useful would be donations of money. This will be used to buy individual gifts or gift cards.

All of the gifts will be given to the children's Social Work Department in Rattray to distribute to the children they have contact with. They were most grateful last year that we managed to provide so many gifts as a large number of families were struggling. I fear that, for many, circumstances will not have improved this year.

The CHRISTMAS GIFT TABLE will take available during the service on Sunday 3rd December when your gifts will be gratefully received.

If you would like to donate a gift or money but cannot attend you can contact Sheila Watkins on 01250 873505 or Joy Kearns on 01250 874902 and we will come to you.



Songs of Praise



In the afternoon of 6th August a Songs of Praise took place in the Wellmeadow. Although this event was arranged by Blairgowrie Parish Church, it was with great pleasure for us that representatives from other churches in the town came along to share the Gospel message.

The hymns chosen were some of the old favourites composed by different 19th century writers.

A brief background was given to the composition of each one. There was a scripture reading and a beautiful solo was sung by Connie Irvine. It made a huge difference to have an excellent sound system kindly supplied for the day by the Community Development Officer.

The service and singing lasted about 45 minutes and was followed by refreshments in the Church Hall. Many joined us for that where much chat was enjoyed.

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



The Guild: New Wine, New Wineskins

This session 2023-2024 will see us conclude our 3 year strategy '**Look Forward in Faith**'. It has been a very apt strategy as we have looked forward to what God has for the Guild in the years ahead.

As we let our light shine in 2021-22 with the theme of 'Lights and Bushels', we showed the many talents that are given to Guild Members that enable us to serve God effectively in our communities.

As we look back over the 2022-23 session where the theme was 'Wee Seeds and Big Trees', we think of the seeds planted by the Guild, nourished over the years and brought into their full abundance by God and we are encouraged at the ways in which God has blessed the Guild.

Looking forward to the 2023-24 theme of 'New Wine, New Wineskins', our Guild began the session with a Dedication Service on Sunday 17th September which was led by the Rev. Brian Dingwall. At our first meeting, Caroline White shared stories of God's goodness in Pakistan.

Our syllabus looks forward to afternoons shared with our church members, Jimmy Taylor and Martha Easton and also visits from external groups and individuals, including Mission Aviation Fellowship and a representative from UNIDA, - and all before Christmas.

Our annual Autumn Coffee Morning will be held on Saturday 4th November at 10.00 am. Please join us in this activity to raise funds for the current Guild projects, for the church and for local causes.

Our final meeting, before Christmas will be our Christmas Lunch.

At our Guild Meetings we share our faith, friendship and fellowship. We meet twice monthly on (1st and 3rd) Monday afternoons at 2.00pm in the Church Hall where everyone is welcome, whether you are a member or just a friend. Come and join us. You will be made so welcome and as we continue to **Look Forward in Faith**, we can remember...

Margaret Conroy.



From Presbytery

We are still within the first year of the newly formed Presbytery of Perth. This consists of not just our previous Dunkeld and Meigle Presbytery, but also Perth, Angus, Dundee and Stirling Presbyteries. As with most changes, particularly such a large one as this, management of change can bring 'teething' problems. The difference for us is that we now attend meetings alongside at least 200 fellow Presbyters, compared to our former 40 or so attendees.

Clearly a major concern is having a strong communication system in place and this is of high priority. We now have a Communications Officer as well as a full time Presbytery Clerk, assisted by an Administrator (also full time). Every Friday a comprehensive 'Roundup' is sent to all members of Presbytery and all Session Clerks. As well as details of planned training courses, the Roundup gives information on various events being held across Presbytery including concerts and talks.

Linkages, Unions and closures, which were set out and agreed in the Presbytery Mission Plan, are now starting to take place, although Blairgowrie Parish Church is unaffected at the moment.

Alisdair Drummond: Presbytery Elder

Doors Open 2023



Over the weekend of the 15th, 16th and 17th of September the Church took part in the Civic Trust's Open Doors weekend. The sanctuary looked beautiful with its



banners and artifacts on display as we opened it to the public.

On Friday 15th the local schools were invited in, and 120 children came to look around the Church and took part in a sheep trail and treasure hunt. The children loved looking round the building and finding the answers and the lost sheep. With Martha Easton playing the organ, the children were given the opportunity to try the keys and pedals. They also enjoyed the juice and biscuits that followed!



Over the weekend visitors were served teas and coffees and a lovely afternoon tea on Saturday that was prepared by the Guild. In the Church there was entertainment by "Not Them Again" Andy Lang and Jim Webster, and with Janet Coyle and Fiona Bain on the organ.

Church in Sevlievo



One enjoyable outcome of a holiday is the opportunity to join worship at other churches. This summer I was invited to the Methodist Church in Sevlievo, central Bulgaria - where my sister worships - for a special service that included a seminar on Paul's use of the Old Testament in his epistles. The seminar was presented by Foka Van De Beek, a missionary with the Dutch Reformed Church who (although obviously a Dutch speaker) presented in English—which was then translated into Bulgarian by Rev. Margarita Todorova for the congregation.

The language shifts led to a somewhat strange experience, especially when trying to follow references to the bible, but it was very enjoyable and informative and I felt blessed to be there. I particularly appreciated the kindness of Margarita who, knowing I was from Scotland and struggling with the heat, positioned me in front of a large fan! I also appreciated the wonderful welcome from the congregation and the invitation to share lunch with them in the garden following the service.

Pictured with me outside the church are Foka Van De Beek (back), Rev. Ventsislav Andreev, Lovech Church Minister and Prison Pastor, and Rev. Margarita Todorova, Minister of Sevlievo Church.

Colleen Joslin

The Boys Brigade started its new session on the 1st September with most boys returning and we welcomed a few new faces too. Currently we have 3 Company, 9 Junior and 4 Anchor boys.

The boys have looked at two main themes so far this session, “Will your anchor hold” which is the BB’s hymn and the Lords Prayer. They have been involved in various activities and learned the meaning around the Anchor logo on their badges. Opening worship has included themes such as: ‘It is ok to talk about your worries,’ ‘You need the right tool/gift for the job’ and ‘Everyone has an important part to play in life’. We have had a visit from Mrs Adam from DeafLink and she showed the boys how to sign their own names. We are planning trips out to the fire station and Airlie Primary in the future and also a visit from the Community Policeman.

This session has been a challenge as we said goodbye to both Mr Steven Mitchell and Mr Paul Kinney at the end of the summer. Both men have played an integral role within the Company and we sorely miss them. Also Mrs Annand, our Officer in Charge, has been unwell so has not joined us this session but we hope to welcome her back in the New Year and she is always in our thoughts and prayers. This left us with 2 officers, Mrs Abigail Crawford-Ireland and Mrs Nicola Watts, and an amazing helper Mrs Mary McKay. Abigail’s son Monty is doing his Duke of Edinburgh award so as part of that he is helping out with the activities and games and is doing a great job. We have been very lucky to have Mrs Catherine Ferrier visit us to help out and represent us at the Battalion meetings. Mrs Ferrier used to be an officer at Blairgowrie Boys Brigade before she moved away but now travels in all the way from Bridge of Earn to give us moral support and keep us going. We have also been lucky enough to have visits from Mrs Dorthea Cooke and Mr Bruce Dow who both enthralled the boys with stories and games.

Niki Watt: Acting OIC: Junior Section

Photo by Hello I'm Nik on Unsplash



Knitting for Perth Prison Visitors Support and Advice Centre

Many of you will know already that Crossreach runs a centre at Perth Prison to support the families of

prisoners, some of whom may have travelled some distance to get there. Many families of prisoners are quite disadvantaged and they really appreciate the knitted goods that are sent from our Church.

We have a group of people who knit for this – baby blankets, baby clothes, toddler clothes and adult hats and scarves. All are valued by families for whom a hand-knitted item is greatly treasured. Thank you to all our regular knitters for their continued support.

Thank you, too, to Moira & Jim Somerville who have delivered goods to Perth Prison for many years. If you find you have some spare time, then please think about doing some knitting for this worthy cause. And do get in touch if you would like more information

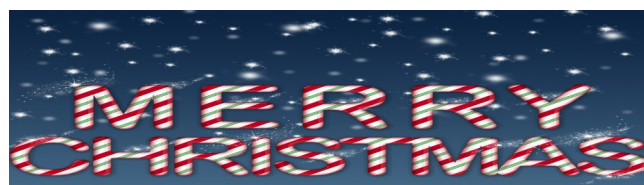
Elinor Smith 01250 870618.

1st Reflections Session

A short session of reflection and evaluation will take place on Saturday 25th November in the Church Hall, 10am—12.30pm.

All Elders, Working Group members and other interested parties are invited to come together to review our progress on the Church Mission Statement (2019) as we look forward to our future under the unitary constitution. This initial meeting will begin to inform the development of our Mission Statement for the next 5 years, and it is this Mission Statement that will drive the agenda for the Working Groups—so it is very important.

Please come along. We need lots of voices to ensure the updated statement continues to reflect the opinions of the whole congregation.



Underway! Our Unitary Constitution...

I am delighted to report that following our Dedication Service on 1st October, the Unitary Constitution Working Groups are now calling their first meetings to get to grips with their remits and Standing Orders - and of course, to begin planning their priorities in conjunction with the Kirk Session. These 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 communication links, internally and externally.

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

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

It is heartening to see that that some people are still coming forward to serve on one of these groups. If you would like to get involved, do let me know. And please be aware that each group has the authority to seek help from anyone suitable, especially for any specific, time-limited task. If asked, please say 'Yes'!

Do please continue to pray for the work of these Working Groups as they grow and develop.

This is an appropriate point to sincerely thank, on behalf of the congregation and office bearers, those who recently served on the Congregational Board as it now goes into abeyance. The work of the Congregational Board, over many years, has been invaluable and a key part of the work of the church.

Finally, David Howat maintains the Door Duty rotas and updates them several times a year. If you already volunteer for this, thank you! If you would like to join one of the door teams to welcome folks through the doors on a Sunday morning, do let David know. The more who volunteer, the less often each has to do it!

Clifford, Session Clerk.

Property Update: Fabric Report

It is good to report that the hall was repainted at the beginning of the holidays and all the cracks and staining from the historical roof problems are now covered. The floor was repaired at the same time so the hall is now bright, clean, tidy and much safer - although there are still some floor issues to be addressed. There is still outstanding plastering work in the entrance and in the Session Room but this should be completed soon, and then we will be in a position to decorate and develop the Session Room so that it will be fit for more frequent use.

A problem occurred recently when the fan on one of our new boilers failed. Fortunately the new system provides for the second boiler to pick up when the first fails so we were never without heating—and the fan has now been replaced. The heating system seems to be working well just now.

One other recent issue has been the failure of our clock chimes again, resulting in many of the townfolks getting in touch by Facebook and other means. It is really interesting to learn how important our clock chimes are to people in Blairgowrie. It took some time to get the clock fixed, but it is once more sounding across the town centre!

The Audio-Visual fund is gradually growing and we hope to be able to make decisions on the way forward for this important update to our church fabric very soon.

Susan Whiteford: Fabric Convenor.

Treasurer's Report by Dr A. Shaw

This will be my last report for the magazine on financial matters. As you may know, Bob Strachan has taken over as Treasurer. I am sure you will want to join me in thanking him for so doing. Bob was our Treasurer some years ago. He has accounting skills so I am sure we will be in safe hands.

I did not find the day-to-day Treasurer tasks difficult – just a little time consuming, but the end of year work drawing up the Church of Scotland and OSCR approved form of accounts was beyond my skill set. That issue is recognised by our local Presbytery. The Presbytery Treasurer, Rhona Nicol, a most helpful lady, has met with several of us to explain the workings of a new software package that she is sure will be widely adopted within Presbytery and will result in less challenging end of year account preparation. Bob and our hard-working Gift Aid Convener, Susan Edwards, are busy becoming familiar with the software. I continue to assist at a level more suited to my limited skills, so rest assured that a new team is there to ensure that good governance and due diligence is applied to the monies you all so generously give.

Our latest simple cash flow accounts for the first nine months of this year show a continuing need to draw from reserves. There is still plenty reserve in our Growth Fund but as I have said many times, we cannot continue to draw on reserves indefinitely.

We contribute generously to the Church of Scotland centrally. These funds provide for not just our Minister's stipend and expenses including national insurance and pension arrangements but also finance the Church of Scotland's wider responsibilities including support for churches much less fortunate than us. Under the new Giving to Grow rules, replacing as they did the mysterious Ministry and Mission system, we will not be asked to release funds from those donations labelled "Restricted". We have already had approximately £7,000 in donations so labelled this year. Last year the figure was just over £6,000. We retain these funds to use largely for considerable AV developments and a new photocopier.

I am sure we will see actual installations soon, but as these funds are in what I loosely describe as our "current account" we will have to draw on reserves to pay at least some of the costs. To those who have given so freely I say, be patient – your generosity will bear fruit.

A challenge we faced last year was finding a form of words – not figures – to describe our financial position. If we are too depressing, we will only realise our worst fears. However, we must be truthful not just in the annual report but in the Parish Profile we must prepare before we appoint a new Minister next summer.

I rarely dip into deep religious matters, but I was very moved by an interview given by an Israeli woman on Newsnight a few days ago. She had lost her only son in the terrible Hamas raid. She spoke not of bitterness but of shared loss with those on the Arab side. She pleaded for forgiveness, compassion, and a love of our neighbours. She did not want retribution in the form of death and suffering to those on the other side. Her moving address reminded me of Benjamin's sermon just two Sundays ago when he asked us to consider who were our neighbours and how should they be respected and helped. The story of the good Samaritan was the New Testament reading prior to the sermon. We do need Christian values to promote a better world.

In conclusion, I say thanks to all of you for your wonderful support. We have a kind, considerate and generous membership. We deserve to flourish.

Alasdair

Assistant to the Treasurer



Craft Group



We started up once more at the beginning of September with four new members, after a break in July and August.

Before the summer break we had a lovely trip to Karelia near Aberfeldy, which is a large craft centre. We had a lovely lunch there and were able to buy different wools, threads, buttons, etc. We also had a demonstration of a VERY expensive sewing machine which did all sorts of stitches. Most of us said we preferred to stitch by

hand!

Some of the group made sheep for a “sheep hunt” during Doors Open when there were school children in visiting the church.

Before Christmas we plan to celebrate St Andrews Day and in December we will again be making wreaths for Christmas.

We meet every Wednesday 10-12 in the meeting room at church. Please come and join us if you are free, even if you don't craft just come for coffee and a chat. You'll be very welcome.

Dorothea Cooke



The Church Newsletter

In our previous newsletter we asked whether anyone would be prepared to help us reduce our costs and carbon footprint by taking future newsletters by email. The response was fantastic with over 50 households agreeing. **Thank you.**

The newsletter is produced 3 times each year and the in-house printing is time-consuming, expensive and it does not show due consideration for our need to conserve resources, to be sustainable and to play our part in protecting our God-given world, so alternative distribution methods needed to be found. Nevertheless, we must meet the needs of **all** of our members, so we will continue to provide the printed newsletter to anyone who would like it that way and there is no need to take any action if this is your preference. If, however, you would like the email version but haven't yet registered then please contact me to be added for the next newsletter at colleenajoslin@gmail.com. The newsletter is also available on the church website at <https://www.blairgowrieparishchurch.org.uk>.

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



Messy Church & Family Services

To tie in with the Doors Open weekend there was a Messy Church where the children took part in the lost sheep trail and learnt about how we should always welcome people in to church, whoever they are.

The early morning services have restarted on the first Sunday of each month at 9.30 am in the hall. These services are an informal mix of hymns, activities and a bible message and everyone is welcome. Please come and join us.

Susan Whiteford

End of the Road for Freewill Offering (FWO) Envelopes.

From at least as far back as 1958 our church has been issuing FWO envelopes to members and non-members to support the running and upkeep of our beautiful church. When I took over in 2001 as FWO Convenor our church ordered 400 sets of envelopes each year. This number has dwindled over the years and since 2021 only 100 sets of envelopes have been required, and of these 100 sets only about a third are regularly used.

Our Scottish suppliers have advised us that with effect from January 2024 they will no longer supply these types of envelopes due to the lack of demand for them. With these facts in mind our church Congregational Board took the decision that December 2023 would see the end of our usage of this method of giving.

Blairgowrie Parish Church would like to thank all members and non-members who have faithfully used this system over many years and would ask them to consider using the Standing Order system, giving directly to the Church Bank Account, or indeed using the open plate on a Sunday.

If you have any questions regarding methods of giving please contact me on 01250 873219 or contact me at the church.

Susan Edwards, Freewill Offering Convenor.



The Social Club

After our summer break the Social Club started again at the beginning of September in the very smart, newly painted hall. We are enjoying meeting up again and have been very pleased to welcome a few new members.

For anyone interested in joining us, our badminton sessions are on Tuesday afternoons (from 1.30 pm) and Wednesday evenings (from 7.00 pm) and carpet bowls on Friday mornings (from 10.00 am).

Our last session before Christmas will be our bowling session on Friday 15th December and we will start again on Tuesday 9th January with our afternoon badminton session.

Anne Byres

Archie & Anne McLauchlan: Diamond Wedding Anniversary on 4th June 2023



Archie & Anne first met in Dumfries at precisely 11.30pm on Hogmanay 1960 after a dance they had both attended. They had never met before this or even during the dance, but the occasion turned out to be a memorable one! Archie had given a lift to the girl who was going to the dance with Anne's brother, and everyone was then invited to Anne's house for stovies before the New Year Celebrations began. Anne therefore needed a lift home—and she ended up in the front bench seat of Archie's Vauxhall Victor to direct him to where she lived!

That was when Archie realised that Anne was just that wee bit different as she kept pointing left while telling him to turn right and vice versa! He was then to discover she was born in Wormit while he was born in Auchencairn, Kirkcudbrightshire. THEN, he discovered she was one of EIGHT of a Family

while he was only ONE of ONE!

As things would have it, Archie was looking for a partner for the Bankers' Dance in Dumfries and Anne just happened to be looking for a partner for the Dumfries & Galloway Royal Infirmary Hospital Dance a week later. The following morning a telephone conversation between the two fixed the two dates and "THAT WAS IT"!

Six months later they were engaged and two years after that they were married on 4th June 1963 in St Nicholas Church, Prestwick. The rest is history. Archie & Anne are privileged to have two daughters, a son, and six dear Grandchildren too.

The Family celebration of the grand occasion took place at "The Lands of Loyal Hotel" in Alyth on 4th June 2023 with Family and a few very close friends.

Our church family sends its congratulations to both on this wonderful anniversary, and offers its prayers for many more.



Love From God by Esther Dingwall

God's love is absolute,
God's care is total
For everyone of us.
His love surrounds us all.

Where do we see this love?
In His people is the answer.
Through us show Your love.
Lord, we are Your people.

His love binds us together
No matter where we are or go.
Distance cannot these cords sever;
In His love we are bound together.

Thank You, Lord, for all Your love,
Received from You in many ways;
For friends and fellowship;
For care shown through all our days.

Bible Study

The Bible Study Group meets on Wednesdays in the side chapel at 7.30pm (apart from when Kirk Session meets), and there is also the option of participating by Zoom.

Please come along if you'd like to join us, or see David Howat for further details and Zoom information. You can also contact David on david@thehowats.net



Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

Isaiah 7. v 14



From the Pew to the Pulpit - A Journey to Readership (Part 1)

Some of you may have noticed that our attendance at BPC has been erratic over the past year or so. The reason for this is that I have been undertaking training for the Readership in the Church of Scotland, and on the 12th of August I completed all the training requirements. On the 17th of October I was 'Set Apart' to be a Reader in the Church of Scotland in a service held in Alyth Church.

This marks the end of a process of training that has taken more than two years, not including the time taken to complete the academic learning which is required for Readership in the Church of Scotland.

My progress to where I am now really started when I retired from my career in a Secondary school in the Highlands; I found myself looking for something to keep me active. At that time Morag was working in the Highland Theological College, part of the University of the Highlands and Islands, and she suggested that I might enjoy doing some of the Modules. There was no thought in my mind of studying full time, but somehow that is what I ended up doing!

It wasn't long after I started studying that we moved to Eday, one of the Orkney isles, where there was a small but active congregation on the island. We joined in with the services and as there was no minister we had to provide our own services each week. I was invited to help out and the Orkney Presbytery allowed me to lead worship in the church. This experience of leading worship prompted me to consider going into ministry and so I contacted the Church of Scotland to start the ball rolling.

Applying for a post in ministry is not much different from any other profession; references are asked for, academic qualifications are checked, PVG checks are conducted and interviews are held and so on. The big difference in applying to a post in Ministry is the focus on the applicant's faith and Christian life-style. Someone applying to ministry must have the support of their own minister, or Interim Moderator if there is no Minister, who can vouch for the candidate's Christian character. Without this support the candidate will go no further.

Once the candidate has come this far the focus is closely linked to ascertaining if he or she has a genuine call to service in the church. This is called Discernment and the candidate will work with two or three experienced Parish Ministers over a period of six months to explore the candidate's suitability. One to one conversations and discussions help identify strengths and weaknesses as well as thinking about which of the four ministries the candidate would be most suited to.

This is second point at which a candidate may go no further if the mentors consider that there is **no** evidence of a genuine call. If the candidate is allowed to proceed, then the decision is taken to allocate the candidate to one of the four ministries in the CoS; 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 the team agreed with that.

Keith Redwood

To be continued: You can read the second part of Keith's journey to Readership in the next newsletter!