

# BLACKHALL BULLETIN

December 2023

PRODUCED BY BLACKHALL ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH FOR THE COMMUNITY

No. 173

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# A Christmas Carol

*And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:24-25)*

What are your expectations for this Christmas and what, if any, are your Christmas worship traditions? As you might expect, I will be very busy over the Christmas period and, for me, the culmination of the celebration is a Family Service at 10:30am on Christmas Day. After that, I gather with family for a meal, the exchanging of gifts and often the watching of a film.



I'm sure, like me, many of you will have watched several film versions of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol. I've seen classics like the 1951 film starring Alastair Sim (my personal favourite) or the 1984 version with George C. Scott. I've also seen plenty of spin-offs and newly made takes on the story, such as the 1988 film with Bill Murray, Scrooged, or the 1992 film The Muppet Christmas Carol which featured Michael Caine as Scrooge. If I'm being honest, I also enjoyed the 1988 parody of the story, Blackadder's Christmas Carol, in which Rowan Atkinson, as Scrooge, took the opposite message from the one intended.

For anyone who doesn't know the story of the Dickens classic, it is a story about change and transformation. In all of these film portrayals of Dickens's story, Scrooge undergoes a magical transformation. He begins each film as an embittered, lonely, old man. At the start, he is generally vengeful, greedy and insulting to everyone he meets. Scrooge is visited by a former business partner, Jacob Marley, who warns him about where his behaviour and attitude will lead him. Marley then, with the help of the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future proceeds to show Scrooge the reality of his actions. The visions of ghosts have a profound effect and, in the final act of all the films, Scrooge is beside himself with childlike joy. He demonstrates exceptional generosity and, in particular, tries to make things better for his employee, Bob Cratchit and his family.

However, in all the films I've mentioned, there is one thing that Scrooge never does. He does not go to church on Christmas Day. Yet, according to Dickens's story, Scrooge does walk the streets on Christmas morning on his way to church. This event is quite wonderfully portrayed in the 1999 film version of A Christmas Carol, starring Patrick Stewart. Here, Scrooge not only goes to church but also joins in by singing the chorus of "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen" with great gusto.

Although, there is nothing in the book to suggest that Scrooge becomes a frequent churchgoer, there is also nothing to suggest that he doesn't. Many people, who are not regular churchgoers, will make a special effort to attend at particular holy days such as Christmas and Easter. Scrooge's example can remind us that our response to the birth of Christ is something to be shared with other believers. We not only gather for Christmas dinner and festivities but also for Christmas worship. We come together, as was written in my opening scripture passage, to "*provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some*" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

I'm not suggesting that all Christians must attend corporate worship on Christmas Day though this is expected in some traditions, such as Roman Catholicism. We, at Blackhall St Columba's, host a number of services and special worship services around this time, many of them livestreamed. On Christmas Eve, we hold a 6pm Family Christingle Service and an 11:30pm Watchnight Service which spills over into the first minutes of Christmas Day. Worshipping on Christmas Eve allows us to begin our celebrations with corporate worship, remembering the true meaning of Christmas. There should be no fixed rules for how anyone celebrates Christmas, but I would encourage you to find some time to gather with God's people in worship on or around Christmas Day.

In Dickens's novella, Scrooge is transformed from being bitter, miserable and miserly to being happy, joyful and generous. It was part of the evidence of this transformation that Scrooge went to church on Christmas morning. The story of Scrooge reminds us that Christmas should be celebrated in community with others. As we gather with our families and or friends this year, let us remember that, in addition to the enjoyment we get from the occasion, it is, in fact, an occasion to worship God who sent his son, born in a stable and laid in a manger, to reconcile us back to Him. So, this year, in addition to the family festivities, let's be sure to take some time to gather for worship, even if we do so virtually.

God bless all and Merry Christmas

Fergus



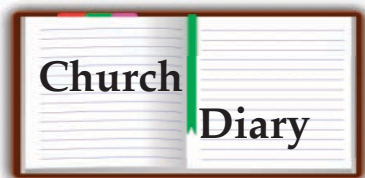
Some images from the Remembrance weekend Services at Blackhall St Columba's



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## DECEMBER

3 <sup>rd</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship Junior Singers & gift service
10 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship & St David's Brass Band <b>with Drylaw Parish Church at Blackhall St Columba's</b>
17 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship Lessons & Carols
17 <sup>th</sup>	4.00pm	Blue Christmas Service – to remember those we have lost at this festive time.
24 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am 6.00pm	Morning Worship Family Christingle & Junior Singers
	11.30pm	Watchnight service
25 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship
31 <sup>st</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship – favourite carols

## JANUARY 2024

7 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship
14 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship
21 <sup>st</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship
28 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship <b>at Drylaw Parish Church</b>

## FEBRUARY 2024

4 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship Service of Holy Communion
	3.00 pm	Afternoon Communion
11 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship
18 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship
25 <sup>th</sup>	10.30 am	Morning Worship Youth Service <b>at Blackhall St Columba's</b>

## The Prayer Circle



Do you know someone in need of prayer? A friend or relative perhaps who is unwell, grieving or find themselves in a position where they don't know where to turn?

Blackhall St Columba's Prayer Circle is a small team of people who will pray frequently for anyone in need of help in complete confidence. We are also happy to accept prayer requests giving thanks for a happy event or asking for God's help with any forthcoming personal endeavour or challenge.

Please contact Prayer Circle secretary Betty Watt at [lzbthwatt@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:lzbthwatt@yahoo.co.uk) or Fergus Cook at [Fcook@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:Fcook@churchofscotland.org.uk) or 0131 466 7503. Or, alternatively, please put your request slip into the locked box on the table in the church vestibule.



## NEW PUBLIC ACCESS DEFIBRILLATOR - (iPAD) at Blackhall St Columba's Church



We are happy to report that a life-saving defibrillator has been installed in the yellow cabinet located on the church hall, by the War Memorial. It faces the Queensferry Road, and

is clearly visible from the road.

It has been registered The National Defibrillator Network as being available 24/7, seven days a week, so that 999 call handlers can direct anyone responding to a cardiac arrest, to their nearest accessible defibrillator. Instructions on how to access the defibrillator in an emergency are detailed on the plaque beside the yellow cabinet.

The defibrillator has been provided by St John Scotland Community Defibrillator Scheme. They work with community groups, charities or individuals looking for support to install a defibrillator in their area.

Every week in Scotland around 70 people have a cardiac arrest in a public place, at home or at work. Starting CPR as soon as possible will give the best chance of survival, but being able to use the defibrillator within the first few minutes of collapse increases that chance even further.

This link for more details of the scheme

<https://www.stjohnscotland.org.uk/home/defibrillators/st-john-and-the-city>

Currently, enquiries are being made through St John on how to access CPR training as well as a demonstration of the iPad. Training sessions will be advertised locally in the Kirk News, Blackhall Bulletin and the Church website when they become available.



*Wishing all our readers a Merry Christmas  
and a very Happy New Year  
From the Minister and congregation of  
Blackhall St Columba's*

# A BIG THANK YOU FROM FRESH START

Following the Harvest Service on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> October at Blackhall St. Columba's Church, a car load of fruit, vegetables and non-perishable items (that had been on display during that service) were delivered to The Pantry Shop at FreshStart in Ferry Road Drive. The staff and volunteers were delighted by the scale of the donations and very grateful to place them on their shelves. The Pantry and Finance Office were also delighted to receive £60 in cash which had been donated on the Sunday by some of the church members instead of goods. The cash will be used to purchase items that are rarely donated but always in demand by the Pantry Members.

Pantry manager Denise and Hub manager Abi are grateful that Blackhall St. Columba's Church is so generous to FreshStart and chose them to receive the Harvest Gifts-a big thank you from them and FreshStart.



The Pantry shop at FreshStart has been running now for around two years. The demand has grown significantly in the last year and now has around 300 members. Local residents on low incomes can apply to become members of The Pantry which entitles them to come once a week, pay the weekly subscription of £4.50 and then select the food and other items to a value of around £20. Unlike a Foodbank this is shopping with dignity and provides choice. With many different nationalities and cultures in the area that is very important. The Pantry is also a social space where staff and volunteers get to know the members and often help them to source other help through FreshStart or their partner organisations.

We regret to say that our Harvest Service donations will not be long on the shelves as this is a 52 weeks a year need, supporting 300 households.

Blackhall St. Columba's Church and the community have in the past (and hopefully going forward) been great at donating household goods but please remember The Pantry too. A few extra items in your weekly shop and then dropping them off on a Friday between 10 and 11.30am collection time in the church halls could make all the difference. Many thanks for your support and please keep the donations coming if you are able.

Lilian and Michael Cockburn  
FreshStart Co-ordinators



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## BLACKHALL ST COLUMBA'S CHURCH WATCH Team (Working Altogether To Care and Help)



### CHRISTMAS FAIR SATURDAY 2ND DECEMBER DOORS OPEN 2PM

We held a very successful Coffee Craft Morning earlier in October. Although the weather that day was very wild and wet, we had an amazing turnout, thank you all who came for your support.

This year's charity, HOPSCOTCH, is based in Silverknowes. It provides holiday breaks for young carers and vulnerable children at their Ardvullin Adventure Centre. For more info, please see [www.hopscotch-charity.org](http://www.hopscotch-charity.org).

The WATCH team, are in full CHRISTMAS FAIR mode working away, organising and preparing for the Fair day, when Santa we hope, will manage to pop in even though it is a very busy time for him.

Refreshments will be served in the Sanctuary to the accompaniment of Christmas Music.

As always, there will be a variety of STALLS for you to visit as you can see from the list below.

Books – children's & adults, Bottles, Bric-à-Brac including CDs & DVDs, Cakes & Preserves, Craft, Fashion Accessories – nearly new, Hampers, Sweets–home made, Tombola – unwanted gifts or unused items, Toys Games & Jigsaws

If you have any item/items you would like to donate to any stall they will be gratefully received in the church hall on:

FRIDAY 1st DECEMBER from 10am - 12pm, 2pm - 4pm, 7pm - 9pm

SATURDAY 2nd DECEMBER from 10am to 12pm

Envelopes for the Hamper Draw will be available from the Church Office, in the halls and at the Fair.

We also have Envelopes for the Tombola Prize Draw with some extra special donations to be won. These will also be available from the Church Office, halls and at the Fair.

The Team would like to sincerely thank the community, businesses, members of the congregation and friends for all their help and support.

A full list of the business donors and total raised for HOPSCOTCH will be in the March Bulletin.

Looking forward to seeing you on the 2nd December.

Lynn Bunney WATCH Team

# Merry Christmas



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## Getting to Know You.....Sally Lyall of Captivate Theatre

*In this second interview in the new series, we meet a local lady who has inspired countless children and young people, in our community and beyond, to take to the stage and perform musical theatre, with resounding success.*



Sally moved to Blackhall in 1999, while teaching at Whitburn Academy. When son, Jack, started at Blackhall School, she became fully involved with the local community, getting to know many people she is still close to today.

Running a drama club was always her dream, but she wasn't sure anyone would come. After starting in a hired space at Stewart's Melville, with her own children and all their friends, she found there was no shortage of children keen to join and so began the after-school Blackhall Drama Club. She now has classes at Blackhall, Davidson's Mains and Fettes, teaching over 200 children a week. She also runs Fringe Summer Schools that are both great fun and highly successful, with some regular adult performers having started with her at the age of 4! This year, she directed five shows, from Matilda jun to Les Miserables, each earning outstanding reviews. Sally acknowledges that being part of the Blackhall Community gave her the confidence to start up Captivate and provided her with much needed support in the early days.

### **Where did you live as a child, and can you share one of your earliest memories?**

*My early years were spent in Halifax and one of my earliest memories was the house literally shaking in the biting cold wind that blew through our housing estate.*

### **Where did you go to senior school, and what was important to you at that time?**

*My family moved to St Ives in Cambridgeshire, and I spent many happy years at St Ivo Secondary School. My life was dominated by sport and drama – I played netball and hockey and was involved in all the school plays. An abiding memory was having just one line in our school musical – I lacked the confidence to sing in those days (I still can't sing well but I'm not embarrassed any more). I was heart-broken to have so little involvement, when many of my friends had big parts.*

*This has definitely influenced how I run my classes and cast my shows. Yes, of course I have to cast the best person for the role, but I'm always mindful that everyone should have plenty to do and should feel involved and valued. When I do end of term shows for my classes, everyone plays their part and has their moment.*



### **What about your student days?**

*I went to Goldsmith's College in London, to study English and History. I was too nervous to do drama and thought drama students would be wacky confident types that I'd be terrified of. Having met them, they were all lovely, so I switched to English and Drama – a decision that changed my life.*

### **What brought you to Edinburgh?**

*When I left university, I did what everyone else from my course did – tried to get an agent, tried to get acting work, but did mostly waitressing. It was in 1990 that I decided I'd had enough of that lifestyle and moved to Edinburgh to find Stuart, whom I'd met in Portugal. We had a gorgeous flat on Rose Street and I've loved Edinburgh ever since.*

### **Given your training and background, you must have seen some great stage performances – which actor made the deepest impression on you?**

*Mark Rylance as Hamlet in the mid 80s. He's an incredible actor and I reckon I saw it five times.*

### **And your favourite film?**

*Withnail and I. Stuart and I know all the lines and there are some crackers.*

### **Your favourite food?**

*Thai, absolutely. When we lived in Rose Street we used to go to a wee Thai restaurant. I think it was Edinburgh's first. The flavours are incredible and now there are Thai restaurants everywhere.*

### **What is your "happy place" and how do you relax?**

*Stuart and I have recently got a camper van and that has become my happy place. In fact, as I write this we are on the ferry to Barra. I love being able to take off at a moment's notice and I love the peace and quiet we find. Every year, the Fringe is incredibly busy. I do very long days, am rubbish at delegating and there's huge pressure to succeed. To take off in the van at the end of this is just the tonic and it's amazing how quickly I manage to relax.*

### **What is the most important thing life has taught you?**

*That as you get older, things get easier – well, for me, anyway. Young people, these days in particular, have a tough time. There are so many pressures and, worrying about what other people think, embarrassment and lack of confidence often feature. I can't say that I never doubt myself these days, but I am so much more confident than I used to be and drama has definitely helped.*

*I think Drama should be in every school curriculum, from an early age, for confidence-building, socialising, sharing, listening, speaking up – and just being brave enough to stand up in front of a group and not feel anxious.*

*I hope that Blackhall continues to provide the 'village' community which makes it such a special place to live and bring up children. It's wonderful that so many young people in Blackhall have been part of Captivate's story. We'll soon be announcing the Edfringe Summer School shows for 2024 so keep an eye out on social media and come and see us at Edinburgh Academy next August.*





## “FOLLOW THE STAR” to BLACKHALL’S CHRISTMAS TRAIL

FRIDAY 22nd DECEMBER 2023 (12.30-3.00pm and 5.00-7.00pm)



Why not take a moment or two to be reminded of the Good News of Christmas amid all the hurly burly of Advent. Let yourself relax and enjoy what Christmas is really about. If you have little ones yourself or “grand” little ones or if you find it hard to suppress your own inner child still, just make your way along to Blackhall St Columba’s Church this Christmas to experience something very special that is happening in the heart of our community - our very first “Follow the Star Nativity Trail” on Friday 22nd December.

On the last Friday before Christmas (the day school closes for the holidays), throughout the day and into the early evening, Blackhall St Columba’s is hosting an interactive exploration of the Greatest Story Ever Told using the church itself and all its halls and buildings. (If you haven’t seen the church since its renovation a couple of years ago, why not take this opportunity to come in and have a look around?)

Find out the true meaning of Christmas in a novel and exciting way as you hear the Angel Gabriel’s message and go on your own journey to follow the star and discover the shepherds, King Herod and some wise women on the way until you finally reach the stable and find the most wonderful gift we have ever been given.

As if that wasn’t enough, we are also offering a Christmas Nativity Escape Room for the older children who come along. In addition, there will be lots of Christmas crafts, some seasonal musical entertainment and, of course, plenty of Christmas treats and refreshments. There couldn’t be a better way to start your Christmas celebrations!

Our doors are open from 12.30-3.00pm and 5.00-7.00pm and all are welcome.

There will be no charge, but if you wish, you may make a donation to *Hopscotch*, a local charity which provides respite breaks for children in Scotland who have challenging and stressful home environments.

We look forward to seeing many of you there.



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# CAMEO CLUB

The Cameo Club is held in the large hall at St Columba's between 10.30 and 12.00 every second Friday and is for the community to meet and socialise at. On the Fridays in between our programme dates you can now go to the Soup 'N' Chat, a church outreach initiative. which is held in the Small Hall 12-2pm.

Early in the Summer we had our Outing to Pettycur Bay in Fife where we enjoyed a sunny day along with a first-class lunch (fish and chips included) and wonderful views across the Forth to Edinburgh. As I write we are due to be welcomed on a different Outing for coffee and cake at Northcare Suites on Telford Road. Thirty-two members will meet in the bistro there.

In September we celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a Clarsach player on 8<sup>th</sup> and a vocalist on 22<sup>nd</sup>. On October 6<sup>th</sup> we welcome back Douglas Anderson who plays the guitar and sings Scottish and Irish songs. On October 20<sup>th</sup> we have a new musician to us, who will be playing the accordion.

We always hope to see new faces either as members, or to join our team of volunteers. We particularly need drivers to help transport members for our 10.30 starts and take them home again at 12md. If you need any more information, please contact the numbers below.

Margaret Brown 332 5957

Fiona Drinnan 343 6762

# KNIT AND NATTER

We are now well underway with the current session of Knit and Natter and a new challenge given to us in the run up to the Nativity Story Trail on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December.



We have not forgotten Pregnancy Counselling and Care who always welcome our donations of knitted baby and toddler items.



Over a number of months, we have been knitting more poppies for a new Remembrance project which will be hung in the Sanctuary. We have other plans for the rest of our poppies, but are not quite there yet.

If you would like to join us in the Sanctuary on Monday evenings, you will be made very welcome. You do not have to be a "good knitter", there is something to suit everyone.

For further information please contact me at [stcknitnatter@gmail.com](mailto:stcknitnatter@gmail.com)

Lilian Cockburn

**SOUP n CHAT**  
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Blackhall St. Columba's Art Club

The Art Club is in full swing again following the summer break. Autumn brings us lots of interesting subjects and colours to paint and draw. Then, before we know it there are no leaves on the trees and an abundance of berries and fallen apples are available for the birds.

The Club has welcomed new members this term and we hope for more to join us in the New Year.

Our Christmas Exhibition in the Blackhall Library has unfortunately been cancelled due to the closure of the building. Meanwhile there are artworks on show in the large hall by artists, on the Art Notice Board. Some of our artists are also involved with preparing pictures for the Community Nativity event being held in the church halls here at St Columba's on 22nd December.

Following the Christmas break the Art Club will resume on Monday 15th January. Our annual exhibition will run from 21-26 May with our chosen charity still to be selected.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a good New Year.

Marge Whiteside

## NORTH WEST HERITAGE your local history group

We hold a series of monthly talks between September and March (apart from December) which are held in Davidson's Mains Parish Church North Hall at 7.30 pm. For further details please contact the Secretary, Charlotte Cowe, 336 2494 email [charlotte@dmains.co.uk](mailto:charlotte@dmains.co.uk)

### WEDNESDAY 24TH JANUARY 2024

**H.M.S Tarlair 1915-1919.** The story of the Admiralty Experimental Establishment Station at Aberdour  
Speaker: Diana Maxwell

### WEDNESDAY 21ST FEBRUARY 2024

**Tales from the City Archives.** Speaker: Ashleigh Thompson (Edinburgh City Archives)  
Wednesday 20th March 2024

### WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH 2024

**Scotland's Hidden Treasure:** The remarkable story of the oldest Royal Regalia in Britain, hidden not once, not twice, but three times!

Speaker: Kathy Crawford Hay

### WEDNESDAY 17TH APRIL 2024

**Davidson's Mains Park Celebrates its centenary**

Speaker: Dr. Denis Smith. Followed by AGM

## TUESDAY TOPICS

Hello from Tuesday Topics which got off to a good start with Cathie Purves who showed us how to modernise and upcycle our elderly furniture.

As I write we haven't had any other meetings but look forward to some fascinating talks between now (October) and the beginning of December, including our Charity Night which is for Fresh Start.

On December 2nd we have our usual sweet stall at the Christmas Fair and would therefore be most grateful for contributions of (preferably) homemade sweets on Friday 1st or Saturday morning. As we are supporting Hopscotch, which is a children's charity, let's try to make as much money as we can from our sweets.

December 12th is our Craft night when Debbie Pearce will be helping us with ideas to make decorations for Christmas. Festive drinks and nibbles will make the evening go with a zing!

We have our post Christmas lunch out on 16th of January when we are going to Howies. Bookings will be taken before Christmas so do make sure you come along.

On January 30th Colin Cursiter is coming from the Police to talk to us about Cyber Security and help us with knowing what to look out for when people are trying to Scam you.

Do come and join us. You'll be most welcome. You don't have to be a member of the Church or even to live in the neighbourhood. We are open to all for friendship and interesting evenings. If you need any more information, you can phone Lyndy Paton on 0131 332 7377 or Sheila Mackintosh on 0131 336 1357

## SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING

By the time you receive your copy of the December Blackhall Bulletin, we will be looking forward to our Christmas Party on Thursday 7th December.

Scottish Country Dancing is held in the large hall of Blackhall St Columba's Church on a Thursday evening from 7.30 - 9.15 pm. We are a mixed class with an average of 20/24 per night. Muriel Stenhouse, our teacher, walks us through the dances (some old and some new).

Why not come along to our spring term starting on Thursday 18th January 2024? The fee is £16 with a cuppa and biscuit at half time. You can be assured of a warm welcome

Margaret Brown  
332 5957

## Congratulations Bangla Kitchen Winners for Best Indian Takeaway East

At the fifth Annual SPICE Awards held at Doubletree by Hilton Glasgow Central on 11<sup>th</sup> September our own Bangla Kitchen was a winner once again.



The owner (pictured above receiving their award) and his family would like to take this opportunity to wish all their customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## LET'S CELEBRATE !

In the ten years since I began editing the Blackhall Bulletin there have been many events to celebrate and we have tried to include them all. From 100<sup>th</sup> Birthdays, Wedding Anniversaries, Honours bestowed by the late Queen, fund raising for different charities, Awards for achievements and many many more. But we can't celebrate them unless we know about them ! So that's where we need your help. If you know someone who is celebrating something special or fundraising for a charity and you want to tell people about it, let us know, **BUT** only after you have asked if they are happy that you share their news.

On this page we are celebrating the success of Bangla Kitchen and of Eve Nairn-Magnante. Who is Eve you ask. Well, the next page tells you what Eve has achieved and gives you a chance to support her in her achievement.

Blackhall is a great place with lots of great people - that's something worth celebrating. Let's have some good news to read.

# SANTA STEALS CHRISTMAS!

Scotland's youngest author champions inclusive publishing with a delightful illustrated storybook in multiple accessible formats for all children to enjoy



Aged six, Eve Nairn-Magnante's imagination inspired her to write her first version of *Santa Steals Christmas!* Her father typed up the tale, as told to him by Eve, stowed it safely away and made plans to produce a single printed book as a surprise Christmas gift for when she was older. Now, aged 13, Eve has published an edited, up-to-date edition of this delightful seasonal story and made it truly accessible to **all** children.

Brought to life with charming illustrations by Nicholas Child, based on sketches provided by Eve, the story takes young readers and listeners on a journey with Santa as he and a cast of Christmassy characters solve a mystery just in time for the big day. It's a joyful, optimistic tale that highlights the true meaning of giving and receiving gifts – with plenty of twists, smiles and fun along the way.

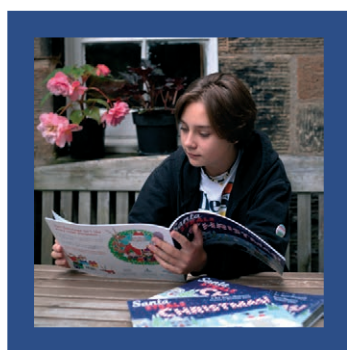
## Accessibility for all

In conceiving the original story, Eve imagined a world in which all children would feel seen and included. With that wish in mind, the print version of *Santa Steals Christmas!* was designed with Dyslexia Scotland and set in the Dyslexie font – a typeface designed by dyslexic people for those with dyslexia. A brilliant example of accessible design.

In addition to the dyslexia-friendly printed book, *Santa Steals Christmas!* has also been produced in additional accessible formats: enhanced audio description, British Sign Language video and a braille version came out in autumn.

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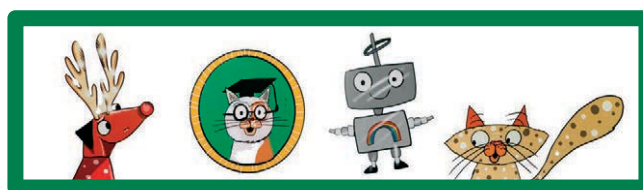
## About the author: Eve Nairn-Magnante



Born 2009 in Edinburgh, Scotland, Eve Nairn-Magnante has been creating stories ever since she can remember. At the age of six, she recounted the first version of *Santa Steals Christmas!* to her father, who immediately wanted to preserve it for her. He typed up the tale, as told to him by Eve, stowed it safely away and made plans to produce a single printed book as a surprise Christmas gift for when she was older.

Fast-forward to a meeting with one of Eve's teachers during the first lockdown, when he learned that Eve's writing projects at school were getting positive reviews. That's when he asked Eve to get involved and work alongside an illustrator to achieve her vision of the story. (Some good did come from Covid restrictions).

Working closely with children's book illustrator Nicholas Child, Eve provided sample drawings of the robots and input into the animal characters, Pretzel the dog and the two cats, Cookie and Basil and creative direction for the look and feel of the characters.



When she's not studying, writing or spending time with the family pets – cats Lucifer and Lizzie, and Harris the dog – Eve is an active member of youth-led samba drumming group Pulse of the Place, based in Leith. Eve recently travelled with the group to perform at New York City's annual Tartan Day Parade, with Gail Porter as Grand Marshal – another highlight in 2023, alongside releasing *Santa Steals Christmas!*

Eve has donated 50 copies of paperback and audio versions to Deaf Action: Dyslexia Scotland: Scottish Autism and Seescape Fife. Copies have also gone to Edinburgh Children's Hospital and Scottish Adult Learning Partnership.

It really is a book for **all** children (and their families) to enjoy. You can find out how to get your copy by going to : [santastealschristmas.com](http://santastealschristmas.com)

**Congratulations Eve on producing a book which is most certainly all inclusive and for sharing is so generously with so many agencies – a wonderful Christmas present for them to share.**



# Girlguiding

## Blackhall Guiding



Thankyou to the Blackhall Children's sports committee who gave 202 and 202B Brownies a grant which meant they they could hold their annual watersports evening paddleboarding and kayaking.

157th Rainbows awarded 2 Bronze and 1 Gold section Awards to Rainbows moving to Brownies in October. Since then they were delighted to have a special visitor come to teach them Scottish Country Dance for StAndrews Day and have a trip to decorate pottery. **Claire Slaine- 157 Rainbow Leader**

Well Done to all the Blackhall guiding members who took part in this years Edinburgh Gang Show your were all amazing!!

Our District held a Rainbow sleepover in November with girls from each of our 3 Rainbow units attending. Thanks to all the volunteers who made this possible

202 Guides have done the new Own Our Zone challenge and written to local councillors to help make their community safer and more inclusive. They've sent Blythswood boxes for children in Eastern Europe and watched their Guide friends in the Gang Show!— **Matilda 202 Guide Leader**

202 and 202B Brownies have been busy this term working on the express myself theme award by making puppets, putting on shows and learning different ways to communicate. To end the term the girls have enjoyed going to HoneyPot at south queensferry to be creative and boogied away at our annual silent disco. Some girls are building up to an exciting week in Disneyland Paris in February for 202 Brownies 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday. **Nicole Harland – 202&202B Brownie Leader**

202C Brownies have been busy working on know myself and communication. We had a fantastic weekend away at Beamish and enjoyed the Gangshow. **Helen Abbott – 202C Brownie Leader**

202a Rainbows have been working towards their Reflect St1 and really enjoyed having Boogie Beat hosting their Christmas Party. Lots of dancing and fun. **Barbara Bon – 202A Rainbow Leader**

202 Rainbows had a visit from Ted Bears hospital and were finding out about charities including Fresh Start, Edinburgh cat & dog home and Edinburgh children's hospital. They then had a special charity fundraising night. This was all part of their Take Action badge.. **Nicola McDermid – 202 Rainbow Leader**

In September the brownies went on a residential to Alwnick Castle and Beamish Museum were they went back in time to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century and also went broomstick training.



### Volunteer with Girlguiding Edinburgh?

Could you spare some time to volunteer with us? It's an exciting time to be part of Girlguiding as we get to grips with our most exciting (and biggest) programme overhaul in 100 years!

We are looking for enthusiastic adults to help with Rainbow, Brownie & Guide units city-wide,

Full training and support provided. See our website or register online for more information:

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-volunteer/>

[GGUKBlackhallDistrict@outlook.com](mailto:GGUKBlackhallDistrict@outlook.com)

# Blackhall

## Nursery

### News

December 2023



Blackhall Nursery is situated within the wonderful nature resource of Ravelston Park and Woods. At Blackhall Nursery, we put the children at the heart of everything we do. We provide a safe, healthy and happy environment where children grow and develop through play and active learning.

We started our new term in August, welcoming lots of new families as well as some returning ones. We have spent the term getting to know the children and their families. After the October holiday we began our woodland walks, where the children explore Ravelston Woods in small groups, looking out for the changing seasons, building shelters and learning how to take appropriate risk by climbing trees, balancing on logs etc. We enjoyed some sessions with Rugby Tots helping the children develop ball skills. We have learned about Diwali, St Andrew's Day and took part in World Nursery Rhyme week. December brings great excitement. We begin the month with a trip to St Columba's Church to hear the Nativity story, told with wonderful, knitted props. We will raise money through the Christmas Jumper Day and we will finish the term with our Christmas party.

Blackhall Nursery is a registered Scottish charity working in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council. We offer full day (8:25am-2:35pm) places for 3-5 year olds during term time.

You can place your child's name on the Nursery waiting list from their 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday by downloading an application form at [www.blackhallnursery.co.uk](http://www.blackhallnursery.co.uk) or by contacting the Nursery for an application form on 0131 332 8296.



## JUNIOR SINGERS

Pictured below are the Junior Singers during their performance on 8<sup>th</sup> October of "Captain Noah and his Floating Zoo" in front of their families and members of BstC congregation. The children's exuberance and enjoyment in performing were plain for all to see and an appreciative audience gave them a well-deserved applause at the end. Next on their agenda will be the preparation of their songs for Christmas.

Junior Singers are looking for new members to join their ranks and would be delighted to welcome any boy or girl in P3 to P7 who enjoys singing to come along any Thursday afternoon to the Upper Church Hall between 3.45 and 4.30pm





### Blackhall Library

Responding to a request from the Friends of Blackhall Library, the Scouts built and planted up two planters to brighten up the entrance to the Library.

### New Group Colours

On 16<sup>th</sup> June we were delighted to welcome back Stanley Vaughan who was Scout Leader until 1964 when he moved to London. Stanley handed over the new Group Colours which had been presented by former members of the Group, and a new Union Flag. Stanley was also installed as Hon. Vice President of the Group.



### Congratulations

Congratulations to Cub Scouts Lewis Bowden, Rory McKay and Xander Tweedie who were presented with their Chief Scout's Silver Award at the Group BBQ on 23<sup>rd</sup> June. Jamie Benson, Daniel McFadyen, Angus McMurray and Jake McIntosh were presented with their Chief Scout's Silver Award at the Group Camp on 23<sup>rd</sup> April. We wish them well as they move to Scouts.

### Blackhall Sports

The Scouts undertook the operation of the Coconut Shy at this year's Sports Day in June.

We thank the Sports Committee for their support for our Beaver and Cub sections



### Group Camp

In April we held our first Group Camp for many years, at the Bonaly Outdoor Centre. The weather was kind to us and the Beavers, Cubs and Scouts enjoyed an exciting programme. Many thanks to the Leaders, Explorers and parent helpers for all their hard work in making the weekend a huge success.





**You don't need to be  
Bear Grylls to volunteer.**

## Can you help?

Every week we give over 200 young people the skills they need for school, college, university, the job interview, the important speech, the tricky challenge and the big dreams: resilience and the skills they need for life.

**But we have another 60 on our waiting list.**

Will you help us to give more skills to even more young people?

We are looking for Leaders, helpers, admin, sharing a specialist skill. If you're not keen on working directly with young people that's OK too.

Trustees do lots of things out of the spotlight, and there's lots you can do from home. You will learn new skills and meet new people. For young adults it's a great way of practising skills and expanding a CV.

If you think you could help, please contact David Duffy:  
23rdgsl@gmail.com



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# BLACKHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL



Primary 3 explored print making to create these bright and colourful Muppet prints. We made some 'Guess who' paragraphs using our knowledge of adjectives to help us.



Primary 5 have been mixing colours to create colour wheels. We made pictures of eyes to demonstrate what we had learned. Our Learning Intention was to use colour mixing and lines.



Primary 7 are learning about space for space week. We have used line drawing and brightly coloured materials to make an astronaut in a galaxy background. Our learning intention was to use line drawing effectively for a display.

# BLACKHALL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

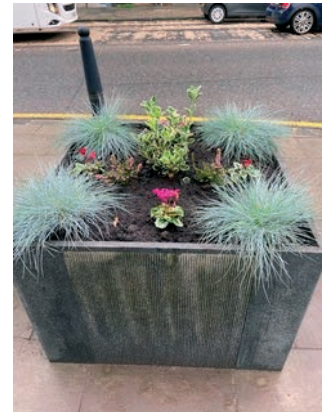
A warm welcome from your local Gardening Group, fondly known as “The Horti”. We are a small group of gardening enthusiasts and it’s been lovely to welcome some new members this year.

I’m running a trial to see how well some winter veg does in the greenhouse versus in the garden, so far the greenhouse is fairing better with the crops growing and looking stronger than those outside. I’ve got brussels sprouts, broccoli and spring cabbages going. Each season brings surprises and lessons, which is why I love gardening.

The Horti got involved in revamping the planters outside Cloudberry and what a difference they have made. Many thanks to everyone who helped and to Craigleith and Blackhall Community Council, Caledonian Horticulture and Homebase for donations and funding the revamping operation. Also a special thanks to the resident who provided tea and biscuits to keep the volunteers going! It was indeed a community effort all round. If you notice any issues with the planters please email us (email address below). The revamp has been well received by the community. Is there a project or do you have an idea you think we’d be interested in? Then please do get in touch.



My late flowering Cosmos above and two of the planters outside Cloudberry.



Our 2023/24 season continues with some interesting talks and new speakers, why not come along for some inspiration.

Our programme is as follows:

- |                                |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| 11 <sup>th</sup> December 2023 | <b>Christmas Wreath Making</b> with Louise Wood (must be booked)                     |
| 8 January 2024                 | <b>George Anderson from Beechgrove</b> , Soil health                                 |
| 12 February 2024               | <b>Janice Edwards, Bonsai Society</b> . Introduction to Bonsai                       |
| 11 March 2024                  | <b>Graham Savage, Grow Urban</b> . Houseplant surgery (bring your houseplants along) |
| 8 April 2024                   | <b>Ian Silver</b> Its all about Roses  |
| 13 May 2024                    | <b>AGM and Mr Rafferty</b> , local expert on Growing Dahlias                         |

Why not come along and join us? New members are always welcome, no experience necessary.

The Horti meets at 7.45 pm on the second Monday of the month from September to May in the small hall at Blackhall St Columba's Church. Look out for each month's poster displayed locally in the Blackhall area. You'll also find us on Facebook, search for 'Blackhall Horticultural Society' for all our latest events and news.

If you would like more information please email Sheena, Horti President, at [blackhall.horti@hotmail.com](mailto:blackhall.horti@hotmail.com)

Louise Wood

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Craigeith Men's Probus is now in full flight with their winter talks, perhaps a good link to comment on Stan da Prato's talk in mid-October on 'Migration' in which Stan told us all about bird, butterfly and animal transverse the globe. Did you know that butterflies move in the thermal currents from warmer climes? Coming to Probus is always a time to pick up lots of 'things' to talk about - be it butterflies or, in the case of Ian Campbell's talk on *Hard Times*, 'Facts, Facts, Facts' as Gradgrind stated! By the time the Blackhall Bulletin pops through your letterbox we will be looking forward to, on 20<sup>th</sup> December, Mike Lewis telling us about the 'History of Stockbridge' and seeing images of a traffic free Georgian and Victorian community with its connections to Raeburn, and Playfair. Two weeks earlier we will have learned about *Thomas Muir*, the political reformer who was tried for sedition and transported to Australia from where he escaped via an American sailing vessel, was attacked by the Spanish and settled in France, where he was made a Citizen of the Republic and died aged 33.

In the New Year we will welcome Neil McIntosh who will tell us more about the *history of Davidson's Mains*, and, as the spring unfurls, we will learn about the history of Milestones.

On a sad note, over the past few months three or more of our members have died including our past Secretary, Les Hutcheon, Bill Wilson, and Peter Turner, also a mainstay also of Maitland Bowling Club. However, we have also welcomed several new faces who are all contributing to our Wednesday morning meetings.

If you are a semi-retired gentleman, why don't you think about joining us at our meetings in Blackhall Bowling Club at 10am, for tea/coffee and biscuits, and the talk at 10.30am which normally lasts to 11.30am. It's just a three-minute walk from the bus stops in Blackhall village.

Do get in touch with us if you want any more information by emailing us at [infoipc21@gmail.com](mailto:infoipc21@gmail.com) or email me at [johnmaclennanuk@gmail.com](mailto:johnmaclennanuk@gmail.com)

John MacLennan : Past President & Tea Convenor  
<https://craigeithprobus.myfreesites.net>.

The Blackhall Probus Club is part of a UK-wide group which organizes social events for retired gentlemen in the local area. With a membership of around forty, we meet on the first and third Thursday of the month through to 18<sup>th</sup> April 2024 at the Blackhall Bowling Club on Keith Row at 10:00 to chat over tea/coffee/biscuits before listening to a talk given by experts and enthusiasts across a wide range of subjects. We also organise a number of lunches as well as Quiz, Pie and a Pint sessions after a couple of the talks. A new activity for this year is a series local walks, led by one of our members, to which partners are encouraged to join in.

Talks planned for the remainder of this session include "Life as a Procurator Fiscal", "A tale of two skeletons" and "The history of the pocket calculator" all of which bode well for a diverse, interesting and entertaining series.

We are always pleased to welcome new members, so if you would like to join us, please contact the Secretary for more details or come along to a meeting on 7<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> December or 18<sup>th</sup> January.

We look forward to meeting you.

Keith Gilroy, Secretary, Blackhall Probus Club.

Phone: 0787 327 5854

Email: [ksgprobus@icloud.com](mailto:ksgprobus@icloud.com)

## Breath-Works

Dee at Breath-Works is teaching at  
**Blackhall Court Yoga**

Gentle Vinyasa flow  
Ashtanga sequences  
Reiki Classes



Chair Yoga  
Yin Yoga

Find the timetable on the website [www.Breath-works.co.uk](http://www.Breath-works.co.uk)  
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Contact Dee 07747706053



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# HARVEST CEILIDH 2023

On Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September, over 40 people (aged from from 3 to 83) attended the much-delayed Harvest Ceilidh organised by the Outreach Team at Blackhall St. Columba's Church. Due to the pandemic and restrictions the last Ceilidh had been in March 2019 so it was an occasion to celebrate and those attending just did that big style.

Amy Donaldson and other members of the Quern Ceilidh band provided the music and Amy kept us right in the dances too. Anne Morrison (fiddler in the picture) brought along from her local group six young and talented fiddle players to entertain us and which they did most enjoyably.

It was a very successful social event and the raffle on the night raised £130 for "Hopscotch", the Church's WATCH committee's 2023 nominated charity. Many thanks to Lynn Bunney and her kitchen team who ensured that we were all well feed and watered on the night-fuelled up for the dancing.

The event was so enjoyed and those who attended requested that they do not to have to wait another 4 ½ years until the next one. I am sure, without a pandemic or other national events getting in the way, that request can be taken on board and achieved. Big thanks to all who attended from the church and community.

Michael Cockburn  
Former Outreach Team Leader



## MUSIC @ ST COLUMBA'S - ORGAN RECITAL BY DR MICHAL SZOTAK – 5<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2023

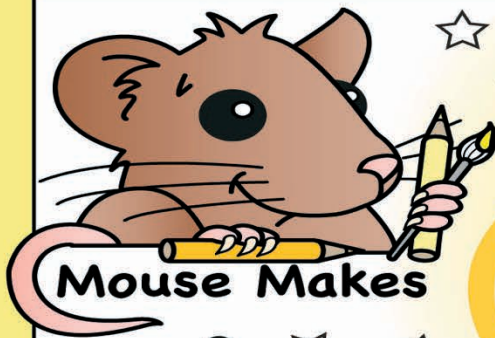
On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> November the church resounded not to the sound of fireworks but to the sound of the organ, rebuilt by Sandy Edmonstone in 2006, being played by a concert organist from Poland, Dr Michal Szostak, as part of a concert tour round Scotland.

In this edition of Music @ St Columba's we were treated to a range of musical pieces from J S Bach to a wonderful arrangement of Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> symphony. His mastery of an instrument he had only seen 2 hours prior to the concert was remarkable and there is no doubt he brought sounds from it that must have been lurking in the organ chamber for years but never given the opportunity to escape. While he was preparing it was clear the bottom F on the pedal was well out of tune and so he climbed into the organ loft and proceeded to adjust it! He is not just a player but a repairer as well and he said the organ was a fine instrument and he very much enjoyed the quality of the touch and pipework.

Whether you were there or you missed this unique occasion, we have recordings of some of the concert pieces and you can listen to them on YouTube. Michal has been invited to return back if he is ever in Scotland again, and he warmed to that idea.

Donald Cameron (Director of Music and Organist Blackhall St Columba's)





**Mouse Makes**



**GOD'S PROMISE**

*Isaiah 9:6-7*

CHILD • BORN • SON  
GIVEN • WONDERFUL  
COUNCELLOR  
MIGHTY • GOD  
EVERLASTING  
FATHER • PRINCE  
PEACE • LORD



**AN ANGEL MESSENGER**

*Luke 1:26-38*

ANGEL • GABRIEL  
JOSEPH • MARY  
FAVOUR • SON  
JESUS • GREAT  
THRONE • REIGN  
FOREVER • HOLY  
SERVANT • WORD

**ADVENT**  
comes from  
the Latin  
'AD VENTO'  
which means  
**ARRIVAL**

In Advent we  
celebrate Jesus' birth  
and look forward to  
the time when Jesus  
will come again.



**A LONG JOURNEY**

*Luke 2:1-20*

BETHLEHEM  
REGISTER • BIRTH  
MANGER • INN  
SHEPHERDS • FLOCK  
ANGELS • JOY  
GOOD NEWS • PRAISE  
SAVIOUR • CHRIST



**THE BEST GIFT OF ALL**

*John 3:16*

GOD • SO • LOVED  
WORLD • HE • GAVE  
ONLY • SON  
WHOEVER • BELIEVES  
ETERNAL • LIFE

V	R	P	R	I	N	C	E	L	R	O	D
W	O	R	D	C	F	A	T	H	E	R	E
J	A	G	M	A	N	G	E	R	G	E	B
O	W	H	O	E	V	E	R	W	I	I	J
S	J	O	Y	B	O	R	N	O	S	G	E
E	S	L	S	E	R	V	A	N	T	N	S
P	P	Y	J	C	H	I	L	D	E	P	U
H	R	O	S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	S
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E	E	H	G	A	V	E	S	R	W	N	R
S	A	E	G	R	E	A	T	O	N	L	Y
O	C	H	R	I	S	T	I	N	N	J	O
N	E	O	G	O	O	D	N	E	W	S	N
F	L	O	C	K	M	I	G	H	T	Y	B

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Two Sudokus for the quiet times ahead. The first one is slightly easier than the second.

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2		5		8	9	6		
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				4			9	7

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**Wishing You & Your Loved Ones  
The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year!**

From: **Karen,  
Copper Woman**


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 Scottish Registered Charity No SC008756

**Minister**  
 Rev Fergus Cook  
 5 Blinkbonny Crescent  
 Edinburgh EH4 3NB  
 Telephone 466 7503

**Session Clerk**  
 Eddie Thorn  
 Telephone 332 5702

**Church Secretary**  
 Mrs Joy McGonigal-Paget  
 in Church Office from  
 Tues-Thurs 9-12 noon  
 Tel: 332 4431 or email  
[secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk](mailto:secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk)

## DEADLINES

### **Kirk News (February edition)** **Friday 19<sup>th</sup> January**

Please send all items to the Editor;  
 Judith Mair either c/o Church Office or  
[Judith.mair@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:Judith.mair@hotmail.co.uk)

### **Blackhall Bulletin (March edition) -** **Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Please send all items, including **Advertising Enquiries**  
 to the Editor: Barbara Wilson, c/o Church Office  
 Home tel: 312 6035 or e-mail to:  
[bulletin@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk](mailto:bulletin@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk)

Here at Cloudberry we want to help make Christmas 2023 a special time for you, bringing you the most beautiful gifts and decorations. We have an extensive range of Christmas products available in our Barnton and Blackhall shops. From stunning tableware and decorations, to family games and Christmas themed soft toys from Jellycat, there is something to bring a bit of magic to everybody's Christmas this year.

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### **READING THE BULLETIN FOR THE FIRST TIME?**

Welcome to the area. We do hope you enjoy living here. To help you find your feet, Blackhall St Columba's Church website gives you all you need to know about activities happening there for young and old. From leisure activities like painting and dancing to our youth groups and junior singers. You can find it all at [www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk](http://www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk) or contact the office by phone (see above) or e mail [secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk](mailto:secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk) or

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