

KIRK NEWS

Spring Edition February 2026

No. 846



BLACKHALL
ST. COLUMBA'S
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

To Glorify God.....To Proclaim Christ.....and To Serve Others



Spring Highlights at Blackhall St. Columba's

The Knitted Bible Exhibition - A Blackhall Exclusive! See page 20

A short Bible Course for Lent - Using a series of eight videos to prompt discussion, we will examine the relevance of the Bible in our lives today. Come and join the chat. See pages 14 and 15 for details.

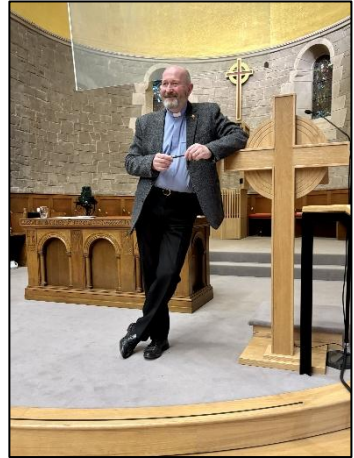
Music @ St. Columba's - The Amazing Life Gospel Choir - page 25

Murder Mystery High Tea – Come and solve the mystery! - page 25

Around St. Columba's – Join our regular gatherings - from page 30

Easter: Celebrating the Heart of Our Faith with Joy

In my last Kirk News article, I wrote about Christmas. For many Christians, Christmas is the season that overflows with celebration. Churches are decorated, carols fill the air, and families gather for special services such as Christmas Eve Christingle and Watchnight Services. Easter, by contrast, sometimes arrives more quietly. Generally, it is observed with more reverence, gratitude, and reflection, but not always with the same visible excitement or even joy. Yet Easter is not simply another date on the church calendar or season to be marked. It is the very heart of the Christian faith, and it deserves to be approached with at least the same joy and celebration as Christmas, if not more.



Fergus relaxing after a busy afternoon. Photo by Alison Hewat

Christmas celebrates the incarnation: God stepping into human history in the person of Jesus Christ. This is a miracle worth endless praise. But Easter celebrates the victory that makes Christmas meaningful. Without the resurrection, Christ's birth would be a beautiful story without saving power. The empty tomb proclaims that sin has been defeated, death has been overcome, and new life is available to all who believe.

The apostle Paul makes this clear when he writes, "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man" (1 Corinthians 15:20–21). Easter is not only about what happened to Jesus, it is about what is now possible for us. Because He lives, we have hope that extends beyond the grave.

Part of the reason Easter can feel less celebratory is that it is preceded by the weight of Holy Week. We walk with Jesus through betrayal, suffering, and the cross. This solemn journey is important; it reminds us of the cost of our reconciliation with God. But the story does not end on Friday. Sunday morning changes everything. The angel's words to the women at the tomb still echo today: "He is not here; He has risen!" (Luke 24:6). Those words are not whispered, they are proclaimed.

EASTER

Easter invites Christians into a joy that is bold and confident, not sentimental or temporary. It is a joy rooted in victory. It tells us that evil does not, and will not, have the final word, and that God's promises can be trusted even when circumstances seem hopeless. This is a joy worth celebrating openly and wholeheartedly.

As the church, we should allow Easter to shape our worship, our conversations, and our daily lives just as much as Christmas does. My hope, at Blackhall St Columba's, is that we can increase our celebration of Easter to match that of Christmas. We can celebrate with music, with gatherings, with generosity, and with testimony. Ultimately, it is about sharing the good news that Jesus rose again for all. As importantly, we can live as resurrection people: forgiving as we have been forgiven, loving sacrificially, and walking in hope.

When we celebrate Easter with joy, we bear witness to the world that our faith is not centred on a distant memory, but on a present reality, a living Savior. Christmas tells us that God became one of us. Easter tells us that, through Jesus, God conquered death. Both of these things are worth celebrating, however, it is Easter that reminds us that the story is not over but is as relevant today as it was over 2,000 years ago. Because of that, a joyful celebration is always justified.

God bless all, **Fergus**

Baptism at St. Columba's



On the 2nd of November 2025, we celebrated the Christening of Noah Charlie Millar.

Admission to Church Membership



Also on the 2nd of November 2025, Blackhall St. Columba's Church welcomed Matilda Lomas to the membership of the church by profession of faith.



Kirk Session Report

The Kirk Session met on Tuesday 11 November 2025 and Tuesday 13 January 2026.

Bethany Trust

It was agreed to donate £250 to Bethany Trust to support the Winter Programme.

Congregational Roll

It was agreed to admit the following members by resolution of the Kirk Session:

Mrs Kirstie Egner, Strathalmond Park

Mrs Lorna Fox, Queen's Avenue South

Correspondence

A note of thanks was received from Fresh Start expressing thanks for the donation of £616.71 from the Christmas Retiring Collection (50% of the total collected).

Elders Conference

The date of the conference was changed from Sunday 2 November following morning worship to Sunday 18 January.

Just One Thing

There is an article in this edition of Kirk News on [page 23](#) that explains the background to this initiative which has been supported by Kirk Session.

Presbytery Plan

It was noted that the Minister and Session Clerk were due to meet on the 19 January with representatives of the Presbytery Deployment Committee along with members of Drylaw Parish Church. It will be for the Deployment people to bring forward proposals for consideration by all parties.

Stated Annual Meeting

It was agreed that the meeting be held on Sunday 22 March in the Sanctuary immediately after morning worship.

The Church of Scotland Annual Return

As of 31 December 2025, the Communion Roll listed 524 members, a slight decrease from 529 the previous year. Over the year, 15 new members joined, while 18 passed away and 2 relocated.

Year 2026 Retiring Offerings

- ❖ February Communion The Big House, Multibank
- ❖ Easter St Columba's Hospice
- ❖ June Communion Mary's Meals
- ❖ October Communion Water Aid
- ❖ Christmas Scottish Bible Society and Fresh Start

Kirk Session Dates 2026 - The Kirk Session will meet on the following dates: -

17 February, 24 March, 21 April, 26 May 23 June 2026

Eddie Thorn, Session Clerk

Church Family News

We welcome new members.

New member admitted by Profession of Faith

Ms Matilda Lomas

New members admitted by Resolution of the Kirk Session

Mrs Kirstie Egner, Mrs Lorna Fox

Christening

2nd November 2025

Noah Charlie Miller

Deaths – Sadly the following members have passed away. Our thoughts and prayers are with their family members and friends.

November 2025

20th Mrs Kay More

December 2025

14th Mrs Joan Musgrave

January 2026

11th Rev Mary Morrison

16th Sarah Osborne



Sheila Mackintosh, Roll Keeper

CrossReach Christmas Cards

CrossReach (Social Care Council of the Church of Scotland)

A big thank you to all who supported the sale of Christmas Cards for CrossReach. From the sales, plus donations, a sum of £600.00 was raised. Well done, Blackhall!!

I personally would like to convey my sincere thanks to Jan and Hori Peasland for assisting me on the five Sundays in November 2025. They are enthusiastic ambassadors for CrossReach!

Margaret Brown (Church Link)

Church Diary



February 2026

1st	10.30am	Sacrament of Holy Communion
	3pm	Short service for those unable to attend the 10.30am service.
8th	10.30am	Morning Worship
15th	10.30am	Morning Worship
22nd	10.30am	Youth Service

March 2026

1st	10.30am	Morning Worship
8th	10.30am	Morning Worship
15th	10.30am	Mothering Sunday
22nd	10.30am	Morning Worship and Stated Annual Meeting
29th	10.30am	Palm Sunday (n.b. Clocks spring forward)

April 2026

2nd	7.00pm	Maundy Thursday Communion*
3rd	7.00pm	Good Friday*
5th	8.00am	Easter Service at Cramond Foreshore*
	10.30am	Easter Day Celebrations
12th	10.30am	Morning Worship
19th	10.30am	Morning Worship
26th	10.30am	Morning Worship

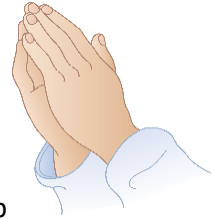
May 2026

3rd	10.30am	Sunday Worship
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*Please note the Cluster Church Services may be subject to change. Please check the church website, social media and intimations nearer the time to confirm arrangements.

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 or Fergus Cook at Fcook@churchofscotland.org.uk or 0131 466 7503. Alternatively, please put your request slip into the locked box on the table in the church vestibule.

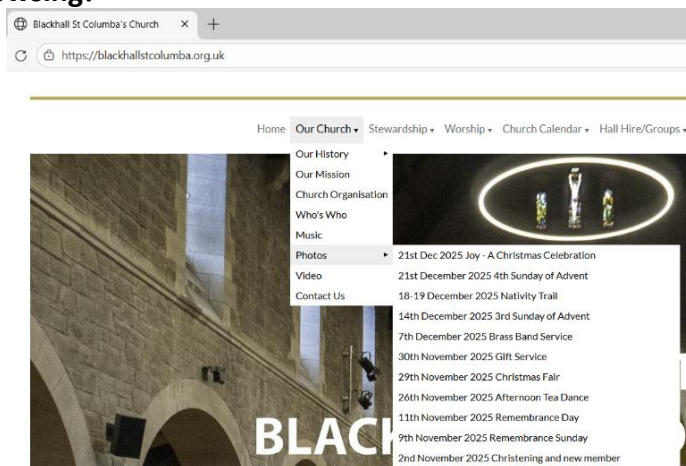
Church Photographs

Photo Library of Church Events

We must thank James Burr, our volunteer Church Photographer, who provides lots of photos for Kirk News. We can only include a few of them in Kirk News. If you want to see the rest, they are available on our website at:

[Blackhall St Columba's Church](https://blackhallstcolumba.org.uk) - [Our Church - Photos](#) - as shown below.

Enjoy browsing!



Church Flower Donation Appeal

We Need your Help!



Sunday flower arrangement

The Flowers in Church are funded by donations, and these have been falling. The flower funds are now extremely low.

We should like to be able to continue to provide Flowers and then donate them to people who may need some care or to celebrate a special occasion.

If you would like to donate, please get in touch with Lyndy Paton, Moira Laing, or Alison Hewat. All donations would be gratefully received.

If you want to donate flowers on a particular Sunday in the year, or the Sunday closest to a special date, please let us know. Some of our Donors already do this.

This picture shows two Brass Vases which were donated to the Church in 1924 by the Woman's Guild.

They have only recently come to light. They are typical church vases of the period but unfortunately one of them is leaking. They have been taken to a Brass Worker in the Borders to have them repaired. There is an old weld on the leaking vase. (That is why the bases are covered in clingfilm in the picture.)



Brass flower vases

When they come back to us, they can be used like this by anybody who would like to arrange their own flowers. The two vases can hold enough flowers to give to three people.

Alison Hewat at rajahewat1@btinternet.com or Tel 332 4842.

The Junior Singers

This has been another busy Christmas season for the **Junior Singers**. In the month of December, they sang for the residents of Strachan House and for those in Queen's Court as well as singing during the Gift Service and Christingle Service. The major event, however, was taking part in the evening of Sunday 22nd of December with the Senior Choir, Praise Group and Praise Band in the performance of "Joy".

After all that the choir deserved a well-earned rest - but they will have to wait until after their next outing! We have received an invite from the Edinburgh Highland Reel and Strathspey Society to sing during their annual concert in the Queen's Hall on the 1st of February. This is very exciting for the choir and will be quite an experience for them. Four of our girls who moved on to secondary school this year (our Senior Singers) are joining us for the occasion so we are billed as the Blackhall St Columba's Singers in the programme.

Amy Donaldson



The Junior Singers ready to take part in the "Joy" presentation

JOY! at Blackhall St Columba's

JOY! by Joel Raney performed at Blackhall St Columba's

This Advent season we did something a bit different. The choir has historically led the church in a form of nine Lessons and Carols, on the Sunday evening before Christmas. However, over the last 2 years we have had another group of singers who occasionally lead the singing from the front of the church along with our small band of musicians. In September, we found a musical which offered a modern take on that timeless format and so we started by bringing the praise singers, praise band and the choir together to practise the songs in the JOY! musical. Simultaneously, Amy Donaldson and Marge Whiteside started preparing the Junior Singers to sing some of the songs.

After much effort from all three groups and the band, an audience of about 200 enjoyed a performance of Joy! a musical retelling the Christmas story from prophecy to the Wise Men, highlighting the excitement and wonder of Jesus' birth.

My thanks to all who worked so hard in preparing for this event and to the AV team who made the whole thing available not only to those present but to those watching on-line.

Donald Cameron, Director of Music



The Entire Company

JOY! at Blackhall St Columba's



The Band in action



Phillipa Wood (L) sings the solo section



The adult choir section led by Donald Cameron



Muriel Stenhouse reading the lessons.



The Junior Singers provide the actions

Readings for Lent - Bible Exploration Course

The Easter Story and Bible Exploration Series



The Bible Course
NEW EDITION





BLACKHALL
ST. COLUMBA'S
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**Want to
explore how
you can
apply the
Bible to your
daily life?**

**Join *The Bible Course*
New Edition**
biblesociety.org.uk/thebiblecourse

**All welcome to join the
course at
Blackhall St Columba's
every Sunday 6 - 7pm
8th February - 29th March**



Course introduction

Each year, as we approach Easter, we try to have some material available that helps focus on the Easter Story. However, for many who are not church goers, this can be of little interest.

This Year's Resource Bible Society Video Series

This year the Bible Society has produced a series of 8 excellent videos presented by Dr Andrew Ollerton. The aim of the series is to introduce the Bible as a story from Genesis to Revelation and help understand how the whole thing ties together. If you have ever wondered why the Old and New Testaments appear to show very different faces of God then this course is for you. If you ever wondered if the 10 Commandments still apply or why Jesus came to the world when he did, then all this is answered in this course.

Readings for Lent - Bible Exploration Course

Course Format and Presentation

The format is going to be we meet on Sunday evening (starting 8th February) from 6-7pm, watch the video for the day and discuss or question or disagree with what was said. There are no "wrong" questions and we will all explore this book and the message it contains since it has had such an impact on the world for over 2000 years. There are daily Bible readings to help see how the book itself hangs together and these will be made available every week for those who want to follow along but that is not a condition for attendance and everyone will be welcome on the 8 Sundays before Easter.

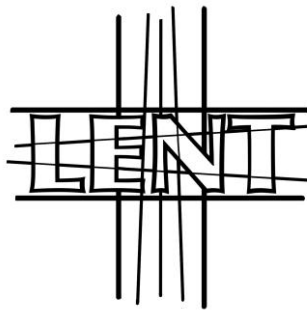
Who is it for?

We trust this will make an interesting opening for some who have never seriously looked at the Bible but also a refresher for those of us who have read parts of the Bible but struggle to see the overall picture it presents.

We will meet on Sunday evenings from 6–7pm (starting 8th February) to watch a video, discuss, and ask questions about the book, with an open atmosphere—no questions are off-limits. Over eight weeks leading to Easter, we'll explore why this book has been significant for over 2000 years. Optional daily Bible readings will be provided, but participation is open to all, with no requirements.

This series welcomes those new to the Bible as well as those seeking a clearer understanding of its overall message.

Donald Cameron



Burns Supper 2026



The Company at the Blackhall St Columba's Burn Supper 2026.

On Saturday the 24th of January, around ninety people gathered in the large hall to celebrate Scotland's National Bard Robbie Burns. Our Burns Supper featured a host of talent. The catering was supervised expertly by Lynn Bunney whose team provided a delicious three course meal. Matilda Lomas and her Ranger Guides undertook the waitressing duties most efficiently. The centre piece, of course, was the haggis which was piped in by Lochie Scott and addressed by Hamish Mair. The Selkirk Gace, with some embellishment, was given by Fergus Cook.

Master of Ceremonies for the evening, and the moving spirit behind the event, was Sandy Weir who kept the evening flowing well. The toast to the Immortal Memory was proposed by Eddie Thorn who gave an amusing and erudite summary of the Bard's life. The Lassies were toasted by Alan Hunter in expert fashion and the reply made by Shona Cook was equally impressive. The music of Burns and other Scots favourites was provided by Johnny Collington who sang and played the guitar, with the assembled company joining in enthusiastically. There was a good atmosphere of conviviality and fellowship with Auld Lang Syne concluding a successful evening.

The proceeds of the evening will benefit the Church Flower Team, Alzheimer's Scotland (in lieu of payment to our entertainer Johnny Collington) and to the general fund of the church to upgrade the audio-visual technology.

Blackhall St Columba's Burns Supper 2026



Christmas Gift Service Donations

Colin O'Flaherty thanked the congregation for their 2025 Gift Service donations, which were sent to Edinburgh Prison Gift Collection for Christmas distribution to prisoners' children. Here is his letter of thanks.



Toys donated at the Gift Service 2025

Dearest Friends,

I hope all of you had a lovely Christmas and New Year.

Thank you so much for your support for the fortieth Christmas gift collection.

Number of children who received gifts: -

Two hundred and forty-seven children received Christmas presents. Over a hundred of these children received some of their Christmas presents at one of the six Christmas parties that took place in the Visitor's Room. These were organised by the family contact officers and Barnardo's at the Visitor's Centre. The Visitor's Centre has kept any leftover gifts, which will be distributed over the year so that more children can benefit.

We met our goal: ensuring every child visiting the prison centre receives a Christmas gift each year.

Here is a note from Patrizia from the Visitor's Centre.

"We gave extra presents to the families that were more in need, as we did in previous years. Also, several families were unable to visit before Christmas, so we are still donating presents to children. Thank you so much to everyone who donated the gifts for the children. All the children were "over the moon" with the presents received."

Thank you again for your support.

Best Wishes

Colin

The WaTch Committee



**Edinburgh
Children's
Hospital Charity**

Our chosen charity for 2025, the Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity, benefited from a successful coin collection in July and August, a Craft Coffee morning in Autumn, and the Christmas Fair, along with a generous donation from the Country Dancers after their afternoon tea dance. We were pleased to present Pippa Johnston, representing ECHC, with a cheque for £14,300 at the morning service on January 18th of 2026.

I had the pleasure of touring the Children's Hospital and seeing the dedicated staff and volunteers in action and it was truly uplifting; despite being busy, the hospital maintains a calming atmosphere for the children.

A massive thank you to the congregation, stall holders, coffee and tea team, bakers, crafters, Santa, and the Blackhall community for making this all possible.

Lynn Bunney, WATCH Team



The Watch Committee presenting Pippa Johnston from the Children's Well-being Team with a cheque for £14,300.

The Knitted Bible

We are very excited to be hosting the **Knitted Bible** in the sanctuary from Friday 13th March until Friday 20th March 2026 and hope that you will come along to see it and bring your family and friends. It was originally created in 2008 by the congregation of St. George's United Reformed Church in Hartlepool, Teeside. It started as a single scene depicting The Last Supper and grew and grew into a full-scale exhibition involving members of the congregation and friends from other churches who knitted, sewed and built this amazing display.

The Knitted Bible consists of over 30 separate scenes from the Bible from the creation story in Genesis to the Last Supper and the Resurrection by way of many of the best known characters of the Bible such as Adam and Eve, Noah, Joseph, Moses and David and Goliath and including, of course, Jesus and the many miracles He performed. The craftsmanship and detail are amazing. A reviewer from the Guardian wrote an article about visiting it and concluded by saying, "See it if you can; I went twice. I am neither Christian nor a crafter, but you would have to have a heart of stone (unlike the boulder in scene 32, the Resurrection, neatly knitted in grey wool) not to be moved by this endearing and intricate labour of love."

In addition to being able to see for yourself this unique exhibition, we will be providing refreshments for all and a variety of activities for our younger guests. The display will be able to be viewed each weekday (except for Tuesday and Thursday when it will be available only in the afternoon and evening sessions) from 10am to 12.30pm, 1.30-4pm and 6-9pm. On Saturday 14th March, it can be seen from 10am- 1pm and 2-5pm and, on Sunday 15th, it can be seen from 2-5pm. (On Friday 20th, only the morning slot will be available). It will take over an hour to see all the tableaux.

Quizzes, crafts, and musical accompaniment will be offered on Saturday. The event is free, but donations are welcome and will benefit St. George's United Reformed Church and our Building for the Future Fund.

We encourage everyone to see the Knitted Bible display and hope both local and distant visitors attend. To ensure a successful event, we need volunteers for the tearoom and as stewards. If you'd like to help, please contact Shona Cook (07981 970054).

The Knitted Bible Exhibition

**BLACKHALL ST COLUMBA'S INVITE YOU TO VIEW
OVER 30 EXHIBITS OF STORIES FROM
GENESIS TO REVELATION**

**LEAVE AT LEAST AN HOUR TO VIEW
THE WHOLE DISPLAY CREATED BY
ST GEORGE'S UNITED REFORMED
CHURCH**



FRIDAY 13TH MARCH	10-12.30PM/1.30-4PM/6-9PM
SATURDAY 14TH MARCH	10-1PM/2-5PM
SUNDAY 15TH MARCH	2-5PM
MONDAY 16TH MARCH	10-12.30PM/1.30-4PM/6-9PM
TUESDAY 17TH MARCH	1.30-4PM/6-9PM
WEDNESDAY 18TH MARCH	10-12.30PM/1.30-4PM/6-9PM
THURSDAY 19TH MARCH	1.30-4PM/6-9PM
FRIDAY 20TH MARCH	10-12.30PM

CRAFT ACTIVITIES ON SATURDAY & SUNDAY



ADMISSION FREE ~ DONATIONS WELCOME ~ REFRESHMENTS

Gift Aid

MISS 25%

An annual tax reclaim under Gift Aid was made recently providing a very welcome and essential, £33,152.88 boost to the kirk's general funds. This was provided by kind, banked donations of £124,444 and £8,000, the maximum allowed, for small cash donations in the collecting plate etc. Plus, interest of £42 from the taxman as well would you believe!

A great thank you to ALL who give to the church but if you pay tax, including capital gains tax, you can sign a simple Kirk document which enables us to claim back the tax you've paid on your giving. For example: - you earn £100, pay tax at your personal rate but, with 20% always the rate applied solely for the scheme, £20 is deducted leaving £80. Let's say, you then give the £80 to the church who then claim the tax you have paid and so the Church gets back the £20 which is, of course 25% of the £80 donated.

So, this 25% has, does and will keep St Columba's going. However, over the years the amount we have been able to claim has not kept up with inflation and so it's important that everybody reviews their giving at least annually. Please Gift Aid if possible and let's not miss 25% as a return on our giving.

Another Miss 25% we are delighted to introduce is Miss Susan Scrimgeour, our new Gift Aid Convenor as I, Sandy Weir, bow out of that role but remain on the Finance team with her. Susan is very capable and happy to answer any queries about giving that you may have with everything kept, as always, in strictest confidence. Let her know if you want to sign up to Gift Aid if you have not done so before or, just as importantly, you already have but have since stopped paying tax.

Susan's contact details are: - Email sscrimgeour@hotmail.com

Mob 07977 907901

JUST ONE THING - To increase participation in donations to Ferryhill Primary Sharing Shelf, the Kirk Session would like to introduce a new initiative for 2026. There are a lot of hungry people just a short walk from our doors, and sharing shelves can make a big difference.

Since 2024 Blackhall St. Columba's Church has been supporting the Ferryhill Primary School "Sharing Shelf" to stop children coming to school hungry. A number of members have been very supportive and thank you for that. A "Sharing Shelf" works on the basis parents are allowed to take up to six items and the school can access the shelf for its "Breakfast Club" if required. It is not just breakfast items needed for donated items, as you will see from the list below, all items donated are supporting low-income families very near to us and we all are aware hungry children do not do well in learning.

The closure of the Pennywell Pantry has significantly affected Ferryhill families, and the Kirk Session encourages everyone to bring one listed item each Sunday to make a meaningful difference.

We are grateful for the support of all who have donated food. Some people bring food regularly; some bring it occasionally. If everybody brought "Just One Thing", collectively we could make a big difference. Of course, not everyone will be able to do this and if you're currently bringing more than one item, that's great, please continue to do so. The sharing shelf fully depends on donations as it does not receive any council or external funding.

Please bring one item to donate at church on Sunday. Needed items include cereals, biscuits, tinned foods (beans, meat, spaghetti, fruit, rice pudding, soup, vegetables), pasta, rice, sauces, jam, chocolate spread, instant meals, tea, coffee, sugar. Non-food items: toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo.

Thank you for your support.

Michael Cockburn

Dates for Your Diary January - April 2026

On Saturday 24th of January, our Burns' Supper took place in the large hall and it was a huge success. If you missed out this year, then put it in your diary now for next year and book early through Sandy Weir. weirsmachine@blueyonder.co.uk

Sunday 8th February: Movies@St.Columba's- "The Love Punch" (Certificate 12)

With Valentine's Day just around the corner, why not head along to the church sanctuary at 2.30pm for a touch of hilarious romance courtesy of Emma Thompson and Pierce Brosnan? They play ex-spouses who reunite rather grudgingly to hatch a plan to seize a \$10 million diamond from an unscrupulous French financier at his upcoming wedding after he has stolen their pension pot. They are helped by best friends, Celia Imrie and Timothy Spall, and the result is feel-good and hysterical.

There is no charge for this event and no tickets are required but donations towards the refreshments and treats will be gratefully received.

Sunday 1st March: Sunday Lunch at the Toby Carvery

We have booked lunch at the Lauriston Toby at 1pm at a cost of £15.79. If you would like to come along, enjoy a delicious lunch and spend time with friends old and new, contact Barbara Duguid on baduguid@gmail.com (07773 884556) or Libby Cameron on libbyd21@hotmail.co.uk (07889 676418).

A deposit of £10 is required by 15th February. Note, places are limited- so don't delay.

Friday 13th - Friday 20th March: The Knitted Bible (see website and posters for specific times throughout the day and week)

The Knitted Bible was created by St. George's United Reformed Church in Hartlepool and consists of over 30 knitted scenes from the Bible. It is quite an amazing achievement. This is the first time a Church of Scotland has hosted this fantastic display and you cannot miss it! It will be available to view each weekday morning (excluding the Tuesday and Thursday), afternoon and evening and at selected times on Saturday and Sunday. There will be refreshments served and activities for kids as well. No tickets are required and there is no charge for this event but donations will be gratefully received.

Saturday 21st March: Music at St. Columba's - The Amazing Life Gospel Choir.

Please join us in the sanctuary at 7pm for the choir whose members come from all over Scotland and are led by Angela McKenzie, a very lively and entertaining pianist. This concert will set feet tapping and bring back a few memories with some golden oldies. Come along and bring a friend. Refreshments will be served and, while there is no charge for the event and no tickets are required, but donations will be gratefully received.

Sunday 26th April: Murder Mystery High Tea

Please join us in the large hall at 4.30pm for an evening of murder, mystery and intrigue with fish and chips and fellowship thrown in. We welcome back our friends from 'Can you catch the Killer?' who will entertain us, test our detective skills and have us laughing along with them. Refreshments in the form of a high tea (fish and chips from the Corbie) will be provided. Tickets must be purchased and cost £25.00 each. Places are limited and it is essential to book your spot as soon as possible. To do so, contact Shona Cook by email- shonacook505@gmail.com or by 'phone- 07981 970054.

Shona Cook

Remembering Elma Scott

Elma was born on the 22nd of October 1933 in Edinburgh. She was baptised Elizabeth Margaret but has always been known as Elma. The first 2 letters of Elizabeth and of Margaret. She was baptised in Old Parish Church Corstorphine where she grew up. She had a very happy childhood.



She initially attended Corstorphine Primary then Queen Street School which was renamed Mary Erskine School in 1944. On leaving school Elma decided to go into Nursing and trained at the Princess Margaret Rose Hospital part of the Royal Infirmary Edinburgh. On completing her training, she went on to do her Midwifery at the Western General Hospital where she stayed for most of her working life apart from 4 years at the Simpsons Memorial Maternity Pavillion and a secondment to the then National Board as the Professional Advisor for Midwifery. By the time she retired in 1992 she was the Senior Midwifery Tutor at North Lothian College of Nursing and Midwifery

Elma enjoyed her work and always said it was a privilege to care for Mothers and babies and then to teach others to become midwives. She had had an early wish to work as a Missionary but following her mother's death she decided to stay at home and look after her father. However, she was happy to know she had trained others to do this important work and enjoyed hearing from former students in Africa, India and Nepal.

Church has always played a big part in her life and her faith was very important to her. She joined Corstorphine Church where she taught in the Sunday school. On moving to Blackhall in 1960 she joined St Columba's where she was to stay for the rest of her life. Initially she taught in the Sunday School and felt privileged to be ordained to the Eldership in 1974. She was appointed Presbytery elder in 1981. In 1997 she was appointed Session Clerk the first female to hold this role in St Columba's. She was a great support to Alex Douglas and always put the Congregation first during her 6 years in the role.

Eulogy to Elma Scott

Even after standing down as Session Clerk, she still regularly helped in the Church office and was always there to support and give advice to her successors, always in the strictest confidence

In her free time, she loved to read, do the Scotsman crossword daily and travel. It was really after her retirement that her extensive travelling started. Elma's close friend and work colleague Sheila retired in the same year and they started travelling with holidays in Japan, Hong Kong, Madrid, Tenerife, the Passion Play in Oberammergau and New Year celebrations in Bruges, even a wine tasting trip in California and many more. One of the shortest trips Sheila and Elma did regularly, in fact every Saturday, was to Mimi's in Comely Bank for a bowl of soup and a coffee. Like a lot of restaurants around Edinburgh that she frequented over the years, I am sure the staff will miss that smile and a genuine interest in how they are today.

Elma has always been a very organised person so it came as no surprise that following her death we discovered she had detailed her wishes for her funeral. Nicola her lawyer read to me the note Elma had given her that the service was to be here at Warriston Crematorium which it was. The service was to be taken by the Minister of St Columba's which Fergus did but there was to be no flowers but if there must be flowers, they had to come from Banks of Stockbridge and I can assure you they were.

When Elma was admitted to hospital five weeks ago, she wasn't on any medication besides eyedrops, and the hospital had no record of her—perhaps due to her daily Sherry or her single status. In her note, she wrote: "Through the Church I have made many good friends, but also from school and work, all of whom enriched my life." I hope she knew how much she enriched ours.

Alan Hunter

Sunday Worship at Advent



Scottish Country Dancing



Thanks to so many responding to the invitation in the November Kirk News, the hall was filled for our St Andrew's themed Tea Dance. With Amy's ceilidh band, Quern, giving their time to play for us; and with generous contributions of food from local stores - especially from William at the Craigcrook Deli in the Dip - complementing the home baking provided by the dancers; we were able to raise over £400 from ticket sales. A table laden with raffle prizes

resulted in another £200 plus; and a contribution from the class enabled us to donate £800 to the Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity, to add to the funds raised by the church since the summer.

Church photographer, James Burr, took a fine selection of pictures in the first part of the programme and these can be seen on the church website. I hope the few I have shared below give a wee taste of what was, for everyone concerned, a memorable afternoon.

After our annual Christmas party, with live music from Matthew McLennan and gifts distributed by "Santa" Cameron, we had a short break, before starting back mid-January. It was good to welcome a couple of new dancers from the local area and we look forward to getting to know them this term.

Still room for YOU to join us though. You'd be made very welcome in the large hall any Thursday at 7pm.

Muriel Stenhouse



Around St Columba's

The Buon Appetito Club

Calling all ladies! It is always good to gather over delicious food for a time of fellowship with friends old and new and get to know each other better. Hence, the Buon Appetito Club which meets roughly every two months throughout the year to enjoy the delights of Italian food.



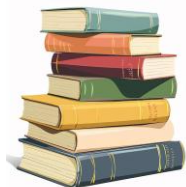
Our next outing will be for dinner at **Guiliano's**, 18-19 Union Place on Friday 6th March 2026 at 6.30pm.

If you are interested in coming along, please contact Shona Cook by email (shonacook505@gmail.com) or mobile (07981 970054) by 15th February. There are a limited number of places and so don't delay. Get in touch to secure your place.

For future outings, please, check the church website for details.

Shona Cook

Blackhall Book Club



The book club here at Blackhall St. Columba's started up during Covid when we met on Zoom! Now we meet in the sanctuary and it has grown and grown with over thirty members currently. (Not everyone comes to every meeting!) If you enjoy reading, are willing to try a book you might not chose yourself and think you would like a chance to discuss the book with others while enjoying a cuppa, then you might like to join us.

We are a very relaxed, informal group which meets every six weeks or so in the church on an evening which we chose collectively and which can vary from one meeting to another. There is no obligation to come to every meeting and, although finishing the book is preferable, it is not essentialcome along for the chat after our discussion and enjoy the home-baking! If you would like more information, contact **Shona Cook** on 07981 970054.

Shona Cook

Around St. Columba's

PEACE Services

Our fortnightly, mid-week services are called Peace services because PEACE stands for People Enjoying A Christian Encounter and that is exactly what happens. Services take place in the small hall every other Wednesday from September through May at 12 noon. Afterward, attendees can enjoy a light lunch featuring soup, homemade baked goods, tea, and coffee. If you need transportation to the church, a pick-up service is available. The services are informal and typically last 30 to 40 minutes. This year we have been looking at modern musical theatre classics like “Les Misérables” and considering their theological relevance for us today. If you would need help attending and would like to come, please [contact Ruth Laidlaw on 07513 967974](tel:07513967974).

The next few services are-

4th February 2026 - Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity

18th February 2026- “You'll never walk alone”

4th March 2026- “Climb every Mountain”

18th March 2026- The Knitted Bible

1st April 2026 - Easter

15th April 2026 - “Any Dream will Do”

29th April 2026 - “Tradition”

13th May 2026 - Cruse Scotland

27th May 2026 – Communion

Shona Cook

Blackhall Art Club



The Blackhall Art Club will be holding its annual sale and exhibition in the church halls from the 12th of May to 17th May 2026. This event provides an opportunity for members to showcase their artwork and to raise funds for a charitable cause. Please put the dates in your diary. We look forward to welcoming you then.

Marge Whiteside

Around St Columba's

FreshStart

A new year and since the warehouse opened after the festive break, the demand for Starter Packs has not let up. With spring cleaning just around the corner, any surplus household items on the list below will be happily received by FreshStart. Donations can be handed in on Friday mornings between 10 and 11.30am to one of our team of volunteers on duty. If you cannot make Friday but are at the church halls on other days with items for FreshStart then please speak to the church officer. Any issues with the above - then please contact us via the church office and we shall do our best to make arrangements to collect.

If you have already cleared out surplus items but still would like to help, you can donate money via their website (www.freshstartweb.org) or use their Amazon wish list (details on the FreshStart website).

Starter Pack Items Needed:

- Pots, pans, and kitchen utensils (no knives or scissors)
- Dishes, cutlery, mugs, tea towels
- Bedding for all bed sizes (new/clean duvets, covers, sheets, pillowcases)
- Blankets, towels, face cloths, curtains (good condition)
- Small appliances: kettles, toasters, lamps, irons, vacuums, radios, microwaves
- Personal care: shampoo, shower gel, deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, sanitary products

Please donate items you would be happy to receive. Thank you for your generous support in 2025—FreshStart appreciates your continued help in 2026.

Lilian & Michael
C/O Church Office
0131 332 443

Around St Columba's

"Soup n Chat"

Back after the festive break, Soup n Chat started on Friday 16th of January 2026 and continues on the dates below. We are always looking for more people to enjoy the soup, chat and good company and there is no issue bringing along a neighbour or friend with you. The more the merrier and a warm welcome awaits you.

Friday 13th February - 12noon to 1.30pm in the Small Hall

Friday 27th February - 12noon to 1.30pm in the Large Hall

Friday 27th March - 12noon to 1.30pm in the Large Hall

Friday 10th April - 12noon to 1.30pm in the Small Hall

Friday 24th April - 12noon to 1.30pm in the Large Hall

We are seeking "chat hosts" and members able to provide transport to and from the halls. WE are happy to provide information on these rolls. If you want information about these roles, please ask. It's great fun and truly serving the community.

Michael Cockburn

Lead and admin Volunteer.

Edinburgh Floral Art Club - Edinburgh Floral Art Club meetings take place in the large hall at Blackhall St Columba's Church in February, March and April as below. All are welcome to come along ready for a 2pm start, visitors £10 per meeting, New members always welcome and if we have a demonstrator the wonderful arrangements are raffled off at the end, each meeting finishes with refreshments and we start to wind up around 4pm.
Suzie Stark, Chairman 07888942561

Syllabus

Friday February 13th – "The Club Entertains": Talk and quiz by Philip Kingscott, followed by afternoon tea.

Friday March 13th – Patti Dawson (Morland, Penrith): Demonstration, 'A Special Place'.

Friday April 10th – Jane Gordon (Elderslie): Demonstration, 'Coast and Country'.

Tuesday Topics

It's possibly a bit late but can I start by wishing all our members a very Happy New Year? I'm glad to see the days getting a little longer. We had a very sociable lunch out at Howies on the 6th of January which I think everyone enjoyed and we are now waiting to hear about 'Therapets' on the 27th of January. Anne Clark is coming to talk to us and we hope she may bring one with her.

Then on 24th February we are having another visit from Edinburgh Zoo. We have had two wonderful talks from them about Giraffes and the Wild Cats so this time we are going to hear about the Chimps from the Budongo Trail. Those of you who came to the first meeting will remember David Hughson who talked so eloquently about the Edinburgh Poor House. His wife, Odile, is coming on the 24th of March to talk to us about 'The Auld Alliance'. Odile is French so it promises to be a very interesting evening. Again, about History, we have the 'Lost Treasures of Scotland' with Kath Hay. She spoke to us last year about St Kilda so you know we are in for a good evening on 28th March

Tuesday Topics meets on the last Tuesday of the month in the small hall for talks, entertainment and fellowship....and a cup of coffee or tea and chat. Membership is £20 or just £3 for an occasional meeting. All are welcome.

Any queries to **Lyndy Paton**. 07460212174 or **Sheila MacIntosh** 0131 336 1537.

Lyndy Paton



Around St Columba's

Cameo Club

The Cameo fortnightly meetings have begun again. We meet in the church halls from 10.30am to 12 noon on alternative Friday mornings commencing Friday 6th in February 2026. New members are welcome to come along. Transport can be arranged for those who would require a lift. We have had a rich programme of entertainers at our gatherings and we look forward to more this year. Our membership of around forty is growing.

We always need help with serving coffees, tidying up, chatting to members and transporting members from home and back to Cameo meetings. If you can volunteer with us, please contact Fiona Drinnan 3436762.

The Christmas Fair 2025

A huge sum was raised for the Watch Committee Charity at our Christmas Fair. Thank you to everyone who donated, manned stalls, served tea, provided entertainment, counted money and spent money.



Nativity Trail 2025



*The start of the Nativity Trail.
What is Advent?*



Meeting the angel, Gabriel.



The journey to Bethlehem



The Shepherd's Story



An audience with King Herod



The story of Santa Claus



The entire front of stage cast of the Nativity Trail 2025

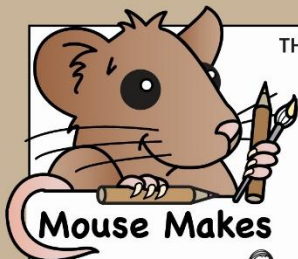
Nativity Trail 2025

On the 18th and 19th of December Blackhall held the Nativity Trail. Through a series of tableaux, the Christmas Story was acted out by a huge cast of talented performers drawn from our congregation. From the archangel Gabriel to King Herod, the shepherds and wise men the trail concluded with the nativity scene in Bethlehem. The true meaning of Christmas was explained and brought to life through the narrative, costumes and detailed sets.

In addition, craft activities, an escape room and refreshments were offered and all free of charge! Our visitors included several hundred people from the congregation, the wider community and the primary sevens from Blackhall and Ferryhill Primary Schools. All the participants from the congregation are to be congratulated on another successful event.

Remembrance at Blackhall St. Columba's 2025





Read the story in
Luke 4:1-13

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

After Jesus was baptised in the River Jordan where did the Holy Spirit lead him to? v1

How many days was Jesus being tempted by the devil? v2

What did Jesus eat? v2

What did the devil tempt Jesus to turn a stone into? What did Jesus say? v3-4

What did the devil offer Jesus if He worshipped him? What did Jesus say? v7-8

What did the devil ask Jesus to do?

What did Jesus say? v9

FIRST TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:

"If you are God's Son order this stone to turn into bread."

JESUS REPLIED:

"Man shall not live on bread alone."

Read Deuteronomy 8:3

WE LEARN:

Read the Bible
Learn God's word.



SECOND TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:

"I will give you power and wealth if you worship me."

JESUS REPLIED:

"Worship the Lord your God and serve only Him."

Read Deuteronomy 6:13

WE LEARN:

Put God first
Worship only Him.



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

JESUS • BAPTISED • RIVER • JORDAN • HOLY SPIRIT • LED
WILDERNESS • DESERT • FORTY DAYS • HUNGRY • DEVIL
TEMPTATION • STONE • BREAD • WRITTEN • SON • WORLD
KINGDOMS • GLORY • WORSHIP • SERVE • GOD • HIGH
JERUSALEM • TEMPLE • SON • JUMP • DOWN • LIFT • FOOT • LORD • TEST • LENT

THIRD TEMPTATION

THE DEVIL SAID:

"If you are God's Son throw yourself down, the scriptures say God will take care of you."

JESUS REPLIED:

"Do not put the Lord your God to the test."

Read Deuteronomy 6:16

WE LEARN:

God cares, trust
Him do not test Him.



 <p>BLACKHALL ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND</p>	 <p>@ BStCC_EH</p>
<p>Website</p> <p>https://www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk/</p>	 <p>Blackhall St Columba's Church</p>

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(bulletin@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk)

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(judith.mair@hotmail.co.uk)

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We are happy to accept articles on any relevant subject.

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