

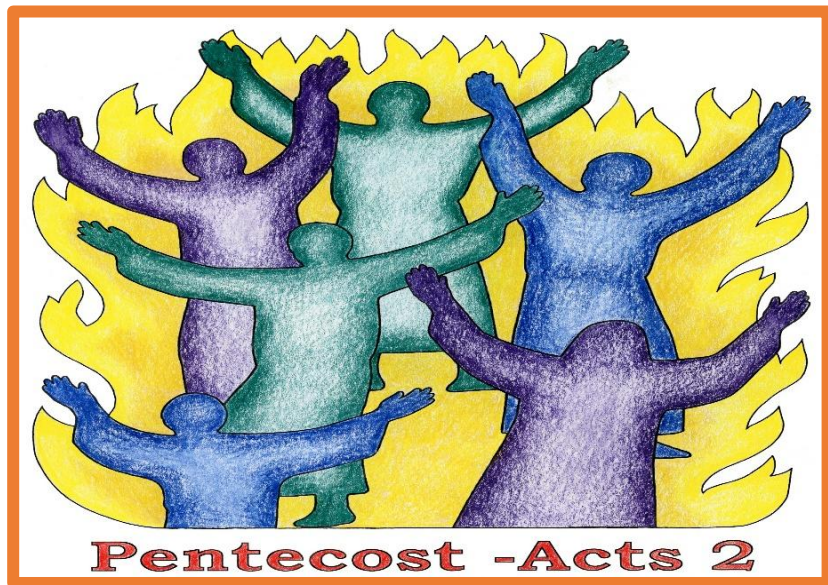
# KIRK NEWS

Summer Edition May 2026  
No. 847



BLACKHALL  
ST. COLUMBA'S  
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

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



## Summer Highlights at Blackhall St. Columba's

**Celebrate Pentecost with choir collaboration - page 12**

**Learn about the Book of Romans? - See page 15**

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**Music @ St. Columba's - St. David's Band perform - page 18**

**A Picnic in the Park - Fun and games for everyone - See page 21**

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

**Community Art Exhibitions - See pages 34 and 38**

### Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!



*Fergus preaching on Easter Sunday 2026*

Recently, I was invited to a ‘Peace Symposium’ organised by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community in Scotland. Their Mission Statement of ‘Love for all, Hatred for none’, had me thinking again about a subject I have spoken of and commented on before; that the use of sacred scripture to justify violence is one of the most enduring and troubling distortions of religious faith. Throughout history, but especially, it seems, at this moment in time, texts intended to guide moral life have been selectively quoted, stripped of context, and weaponised to support war, exclusion, and political domination.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the modern rise of “Christian Nationalism,” an ideology that fuses religious identity with state power and frequently bends scripture to serve political ends.

At its core, this distortion depends on a familiar tactic: emphasising passages that appear to legitimise authority or conflict, while ignoring the broader ethical framework of compassion, humility, and self-sacrifice that defines the teachings of Jesus. Scholars and critics of Christian Nationalism note that it often conflates faith with national identity, turning a universal message into a tool of cultural and political control. In some contemporary contexts, this has meant invoking Christianity to justify harsh immigration policies, exclusion of minorities, or even militaristic rhetoric, despite the clear emphasis in the Gospels on care for the vulnerable and love for one’s neighbour.

## From the Minister

This contradiction becomes stark when read alongside Jesus' own words in Matthew's Gospel. In Matthew 23:25–37, Jesus delivers a scathing critique of religious leaders who present an outward appearance of righteousness while harbouring corruption and injustice within. He declares: *“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence... First clean the inside... then the outside also will be clean.”*

And later on, *“You are like whitewashed tombs... on the outside you appear righteous... but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”*

These are not mild admonitions. They are a direct condemnation of those who manipulate religious authority for appearances, status, or power.

I believe that the force of this passage lies in its clarity: violence, in whatever form, done in the name of religion is not righteousness, it is precisely the failure of it. Those who claim divine justification while perpetuating harm are, in Jesus' own framing, repeating the errors of those who *“kill the prophets.”*

Modern Christian Nationalism often mirrors this pattern. It may invoke biblical language about authority, nationhood, or divine favour, yet ignore central teachings such as loving enemies, rejecting retaliation, and prioritising mercy over legalism. Early Christian traditions themselves emphasised non-violence and refusal to align faith with state coercion, underscoring how far such ideologies depart from their roots.

Importantly, this issue is not confined to Christianity. The misuse of scripture to justify violence has appeared in all three Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. It appears typically in moments where political power seeks religious legitimacy. In each case, selective reading replaces holistic understanding, and sacred texts are turned into instruments of division rather than reconciliation.



Yet when read in their fullness, all these traditions consistently point in another direction. The Hebrew prophets call for justice, mercy, and humility. The teachings of Jesus centre on love, forgiveness, and peace-making. The Qur'an repeatedly emphasises compassion and the sanctity of life. While each tradition contains complex historical texts, each of them, when taken in context deliver a core message of non-violence and peace.

As always, the problem, then, is not with God or even scripture itself. but in human beings and their misuse of the scripture they have been given. When religious language is employed to sanctify war and conflict, when it is used to justify exclusion or marginalisation, it reflects human ambition rather than divine intent. As Matthew 23 makes unmistakably clear, outward displays of piety cannot conceal inward corruption.

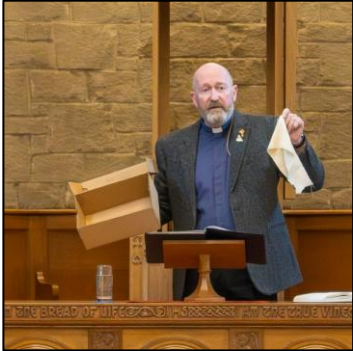
In the end, any ideology, whether labelled Christian Nationalism or otherwise, that depends on coercion, domination, or violence stands in tension with the deepest principles of all the Abrahamic faiths. At their heart, these traditions do not condone violence; they challenge it, calling their followers instead to justice, humility, and peace.

**God bless all, Fergus**



*Fergus gives the benediction*

# Easter Sunday at Blackhall St Columba's



*The empty tomb with folded grave clothes*



*Christ has risen!*



*Spring flowers in the church grounds*



*Easter Cross Display*



*The Sanctuary flower display*

## Early Rise Easter Service with our Cluster Churches



*Wet and windy weather meant the traditional outdoor service was held at Crammond Kirk Halls this year.*

# Kirk Session Report

The **Kirk Session** met on Tuesday 17 February and Tuesday 24 March 2026.

## **Congregational Roll**

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

Mrs Cynthia Bridgeford, Hillpark Grove

Mrs Sheila Christie, Craigleith Hill Avenue

## **Correspondence**

A note of Thanks has been received from the following:

- Poppy Scotland for collecting £129.50.
- The Big House for donation of £329.50 (February Communion Retiring Collection);
- The Scottish Bible Society for donation of £616.72 (Christmas Retiring Collections);
- Colin O’Flaherty, HMP Saughton Prison for the Christmas Gifts
- Commonwealth Graves Commission for £413.75 from VE Day Event.

## **Defibrillator Team and First Aid Boxes**

Betty Watt has stepped down from her role in this Team after many years’ service. The Session Clerk has written thanks to Betty for her years of dedicated service.

The Team now consists of Lorraine Maxwell, Isobel Morton, and Philippa Wood.

## **Fabric**

Mike Whiteside, Fabric Convener, updated Session regarding the following:

- Hall Lighting upgrades – Work looking into this is ongoing.
- Hall Acoustic Improvements – There are several options being considered. It was advised that this included both AV and Sound issues.
- Sanctuary and Hall Heating Control and Improvements – These issues are being monitored with concern over some of the pumps. It was advised that these were not related to the issues created by Scottish Power.

# Kirk Session Report

- Roof over the Church. A comprehensive Report by Lindsay Duguid advised that there were works requiring urgent attention and it was agreed after discussion that three quotes are required to take this further. It was also agreed that once the quotes were available these would come before Session.
- Kitchen. Lindsay Duguid had prepared a Report which was circulated regarding a quote, in the sum of £1,536, for the work required in the Kitchen area. It was agreed to accept the quote and instruct the required work to be carried out. It was further agreed to accept the estimate, namely £935, to fit a sink in the kitchen.
- Utility area in the Sanctuary. A quotation in the sum of £8,270 had been circulated with the agenda papers for the work to be done in the cupboard in the Sanctuary. This was accepted and Lindsay Duguid asked to instruct the work.

## **Building for the Future 2.**

Again, a Report had been circulated covering this topic. There was an in-depth discussion covering this including the possibility of Planning being required for an extension to the front of that part of the halls accommodating the kitchen and blue door. The consensus was felt that the timing was not right, and this should be carried forward to after the Summer. Session agreed to this.

## **Finance**

The Treasurer, Adrian Johnston, had previously circulated an update for the year end of the Accounts. In addition, after a Finance Team Meeting in January there were four items requiring Kirk Session Approval.

- To approve the adoption of the proposed Budget for 2026. This was proposed by the Treasurer and seconded by Alan Hunter. The vote was unanimous to approve.
- To allocate £20,000 from the 2025 Surplus to the Fabric Reserve which was again proposed by the Treasurer and seconded by Muriel Stenhouse. The vote was unanimous to approve this.

The 2025 Accounts were approved on 24 March.

**Governance**

Jacque Lowe had informed Session that she now wished to stand down from her Safeguarding Co-ordinator role in which she had served for almost 20 years. The Clerk will write to Jacque expressing Session's heartfelt thanks for her unstinting service. The Clerk also thanked Deborah Pearce for agreeing to replace Jacque and welcomed her to the role.

**Nurture Committee**

The Nurture Committee will be reformed under the convenorship of George Davidson who will co-ordinate the formation of a new committee.

Nurture will embrace developing the library, building on pilgrimage visits, oversight and co-ordinating the role of house groups, Connect, running courses and possibly the Sunday Club.

**Office Administrator**

Session has agreed to recruit an Office Administrator on the basis of the Office being open for 2 hours daily Monday to Friday. The 2 hours would be agreed with the successful candidate and would be within the 9am to 12 noon band. Once finalised the appointment and arrangement will be publicised to the Congregation and wider community.

**Presbytery Plan**

At the moment there was nothing to report. The Moderator commented that this remains a work in progress although little has so far been achieved. The Moderator indicated that we will be affected in time although no concrete proposals had been made concerning ourselves and Drylaw. It was the intention that members of the Presbytery's Deployment Committee would meet with both Kirk Sessions.

**Watch Committee**

The Clerk had newly received an email from Lynn Bunney recommending that this year's charity to be supported should be the Edinburgh branch of Parkinsons Disease UK who propose to open a café in the Drylaw area.

# Kirk Session Report

This would then give Parkinsons Disease UK a base in both the north and south of the city. The proposal to support Parkinsons Disease UK received the unanimous approval of Session.

## Weekly Intimation Sheet

The Session Clerk indicated that he had been advised by some members of the Congregation that they were not receiving these sheets. He asked that all Elders, as is required, ensure that these details are passed onto all members in their Districts

## Wheelchair

As one of our wheelchairs had passed its useful life, we gratefully received a more or less brand-new wheelchair from the parents of Jonny Coy. The Clerk has written and thanked Mr and Mrs Coy.

## Kirk Session Dates 2026

The Kirk Session will meet on the following dates: -  
21 April 26 May 23 June 2026

Eddie Thorn  
SessionClerk



*Trinity in Celtic knot*

# Church Diary



## May 2026

3rd	10.30am	Morning Worship
10th	10.30am	Morning Worship – Christian Aid Week
16th	4pm	Monte Cassino Service of Remembrance on Saturday afternoon.
17th	10.30am	Morning Worship
24th	10.30am	Morning Worship - Pentecost
	3pm	Cramond Foreshore Joint Service with Cluster Churches*
	7pm	Pentecost Service with Davidson's Mains Church
31st	10.30am	Morning Worship – Trinity Sunday

## June 2026

7th	10.30am	Sacrament of Holy Communion
	3pm	Short service of Communion for those unable to attend the 10.30am service.
14th	10.30am	Morning Worship
21st	10.30am	Morning Worship Family Service for Father's Day
28th	10.30am	Morning Worship

## July 2026

5th	10.30am	Morning Worship – WATCH Charity Campaign
12th	10.30am	Morning Worship
19th	10.30am	Morning Worship
26th	10.30am	Morning Worship

## August 2026

9th	10.30am	Morning Worship
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\*Please note the Cluster Services may be subject to change. Please check the church website, social media and intimations nearer the time to confirm arrangements.

Join our Sunday Morning services online at [www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk](http://www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk)

## 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. Alternatively, please fill in a prayer request card, and slip it into the locked box, marked "Prayer Requests," on the table the back of the Sanctuary. Some Prayer Request cards can now be found beside the bibles on the back of the seats in the Sanctuary, as well as on the table beside the Prayer Request Box.



## Church Family News

We welcome new members!

### **New members admitted by Resolution of the Kirk Session**

Mrs Cynthia Bridgeford

Mrs Sheila Christie



### **Deaths**

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

### **February 2026**

5th Mrs Wilma Murray

### **March 2026**

30th Rev Ria Plate

**Sheila Mackintosh, Roll Keeper**

## Pentecost Church Collaboration

**Pentecost Service: Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> May at 7pm at Blackhall St. Columba's.** Since “The Cluster Churches” began, we’ve had few chances to gather with other churches in our group (Pennywell/Cramond, Davidsons Mains, Drylaw, and Blackhall St Columba's). With separate Easter and Christmas events, joint efforts aren't practical. However, on Pentecost Sunday—24th May—we'll hold a combined service at 7pm in Blackhall St Columba's, featuring the Davidson's Mains choir and our choir together.

All Cluster church members are invited to join us. We hope to have Christians from different parts of the world participating, giving us some sense of that Acts 2 experience. There will be plenty of good music for us to enjoy. Please put the date in your diary and support this initiative and maybe we will make some new friends in other churches.

**Donald Cameron, Director of Music Blackhall St Columba's Church.**

## World Day of Prayer 2026

The service this year on Friday 6th March was written by Ecumenical Women from Nigeria based on a verse from Matthew's Gospel 11:28 *“I will give you rest; Come”*.

The service took place at St Margaret's Roman Catholic Church, Davidson's Mains, with participation from its Nigerian attendees. Representatives from Davidson's Mains Parish Church, Blackhall St Columba's, Northwest Kirk, and Holy Cross Episcopal Church also attended.

The service next year on Friday 5th March will be written by WDP International Committee “United in Prayer for Justice and Peace!” This will be held in Davidson's Mains Parish Church.

**Margaret Brown**



## Christian Aid



With baking and plant stalls

**Saturday 16 May 2026**

**10am – 12noon**

**Blackhall St. Columba's Church**

**Tickets £4**

**Please come and support us.**

**Donations of home baking to be sold would be appreciated.**

**Christian Aid Registered Charity SC03915**

## Connect with Lent

For the eight weeks leading up to Easter Sunday, the Connect group was led by our minister, Fergus, joined by folk from both Blackhall and Drylaw churches, for this year's Lent Conversations.

Based on a recent study published by the Bible Society, "The Bible Course" guided us through the books of the Old and New Testaments, from Genesis to Revelation. Each week featured a video presentation by Dr Andrew Ollerton, building up a unique visual model of how the 64 individual books fit together to tell the story of God's interaction with his people.

The suggested daily readings and ideas for reflection were followed up each Sunday, with a focus on one particular Bible passage for discussion in small groups; and this gave us the opportunity to get to know one another better as we related the key themes to our own lives.

The videos by Dr Andrew Ollerton used very impressive digital technology to take us to the Garden of Eden, The Burning Bush and for a sail on Noah's Ark as well as showing Solomon's temple in full 3D colour. The purpose of the series is to show the relationship between the Old and New Testament parts of the Bible. Andrew had created a visual timeline which helped us see the connection between the Passover in Egypt and the Last Supper as well as the significance of the Lamb being present in Revelation at the end of time. Lots to think about and everyone found the series illuminating and instructive leaving us wanting more.

With more than 20 participants each week, people with a variety of experience of life and of the Christian faith, the conversations were always lively; and the three leaders, Fergus, Donald and Muriel, found their groups to be very responsive to the topics raised by the study material.

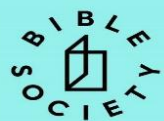
## Connect

At a social evening on April 12th, when we shared supper together and discussed the impact of the course, the group were keen to continue our Sunday evening meetings. Starting on Sunday 10th May, we will use Dr Ollerton's study material on the book of Romans, including his video teaching material and discussion topics. Further information will be shared by Fergus and included in the weekly intimation sheet you receive from your Elder, but please consider joining us to "Connect with Romans".

# Want to know more about **ROMANS?**



**10<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 31<sup>st</sup> May, 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> June**  
**with videos and discussion**  
**All welcome**



# The Amazing Life Choir at Blackhall St. Columba's



*The Amazing Life Choir led by Director Angela Mackenzie*



*Donald Cameron accompanies 'How Great thou Art' on the organ*



*The soloist*



*Audience participation was encouraged*



*Sir Brian Souter gave a gospel message*

**The Amazing Life Gospel Choir** - On Saturday 21st March we had a visit from some of the Amazing Life Gospel Choir led by the charismatic Angela McKenzie on the piano. The mixed choir, from all over Scotland, sang a range of modern Christian songs which took us from Country Dolly Parton style to more meditative songs. There were a couple of soloists for some of the bigger pieces and adding a cello to one of the songs gave us a fresh sound to enjoy. There was a good number of men in the group which is quite unusual these days and it was good to see their enthusiasm for the message of the Gospel that they proclaimed so powerfully.

Angela has such an engaging personality, it was impossible to sit and observe when she wanted participation and we even sang along to "Country Road" a cappella at one point. However, Angela is a lovely singer as well as gifted pianist and we were treated to a solo performance from her backed by the choir. The evening ended with Sir Brian Souter giving a very clear Gospel address challenging us all to follow Jesus Christ, giving our lives over to him. We all left the evening feeling uplifted in a time when wars and rumours of wars abound and we were reminded that the one we worship is the Prince of Peace, personally and universally.

### **St. Davids Band Concert**

We always enjoy having the band leading one of our services during Advent but it does restrict them somewhat to Christmas music. We have invited them to give us a proper concert so they can show us the breadth of their musical tastes and skills. We have settled on **Saturday 16th May at 7.00pm in St Columba's** with the usual refreshments, opportunities to gather together and enjoy music which will have you singing along and tapping your toes. As always, there is no charge for tickets but donations for the work of the band will be much appreciated.

**Donald Cameron, Director of Music at Blackhall St. Columba's**

**Music@St Columba's**  
**St David's Brass Band**

**Saturday 16th May 7.00pm**  
**Blackhall St Columba's**  
**All Welcome**

**An evening of music  
for all the family**

**Admission free**  
**Donations welcome**  
**Refreshments**

## Flower Ministry

**Flowers in Church** Thank you to all those who have so kindly and generously donated funds to the Flower Fund. As you well know costs continue to rise and Flowers are no exception. Your donations are always welcome and much appreciated. We look forward to you all enjoying the flowers that are bought from your thoughtful generosity.

The Brass Vases are back from the Foundry which repaired them and the cost has been covered anonymously. They were tested for leaks before their return. They will be put to good use.

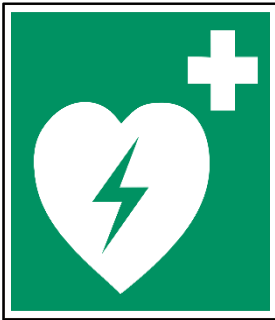
Do go and look at them. They are typical church vases of their time (1924).



*The brass vases on display in the Columba Aisle of the church.*

**Alison Hewat**

## Defibrillator and First Aid Provision



The provision of First Aid in the church was undertaken by Betty Watt. She has now stepped down from her role after many years of service. Lorraine Maxwell will now be the Lead Guardian of the Defibrillator Team with Isobel Morton and Dr Phillipa Wood as Supporting Guardians. Isobel will assume responsibility for First Aid Provision keeping supplies replenished and she will oversee the accident book and wheelchair provision.

We thank Betty Watt for her years of dedicated service to the church.

## Outreach Events - May to August 2026

**Saturday 16th May at 7pm: Music @ Blackhall St Columba's St David's Brass Band.** The band will be playing a wide range of classical, jazz and brass music for us to enjoy - so this will be a great evening out. Refreshments will be served. As always, there is no charge for tickets but donations for the work of the band will be much appreciated.

**Saturday 23rd May at 7pm: Desert Island Discs**  
Please join us in the sanctuary at 7pm to be whisked away to a desert island to meet with our latest shipwrecked adventurer who will share their choice of music and chat about their life. This will be followed by the sharing of some delicious, sweet treats and a time of fellowship. Tickets are not required and there will be no charge for this event. Donations to church funds will be gratefully received.

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> June: Blackhall Sports Day, Ravelston Park**  
The annual event at Ravelston Park is from 12 to 4:30pm. Our church will have a stall to engage with the community. If you can help, contact Shona Cook at 07981 970054.

**Sunday 14th June Church Picnic** - (straight after the morning service).  
Let's celebrate summer together this year with a picnic at Ravelston Park, Craigcrook Road (at the nursery end). Please bring your own deckchairs, rugs etc and a picnic. We hope to have games for all ages too. In the event that the weather is not favourable, we will have our picnic in the church hall.

**Wednesday 15th or 22nd July (TBC): Trip to Rosslyn Chapel**  
We're organising a trip to Rosslyn Chapel in July (date TBC). We aim to join the 10:30am guided tour which ends at noon. This will be followed by lunch and the 1pm worship service, then returning home. Tickets are £12 for adults and £10 for concessions. Car sharing may be arranged based on numbers. If interested, please contact Shona Cook at 07981 970054 by 31st May 2026.

BLACKHALL ST COLUMBA'S  
**CHURCH PICNIC**  
**IN RAVELSTON PARK**

**Fun & games for all the family**

**SUNDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 1PM**

**BRING YOUR OWN PICNIC**  
**ALL WELCOME**



## The Knitted Bible Exhibition

During mid-March, our church sanctuary served as the venue for the Knitted Bible exhibition, providing an opportunity for individuals who might not otherwise have access to view it. The Knitted Bible was created by St. George's United Reformed Church in Hartlepool in the north of England. It features 36 meticulously knitted scenes from the Old and New Testaments including the Creation, Noah's Ark, Moses and the Ten Commandments, Jonah and the Whale, the Birth of Christ, Jesus's many miracles, the Last Supper and the entire Easter story from Palm Sunday to the Resurrection.

Apparently, the original plan, in 2008, was only for a knitted Last Supper but the imagination and enthusiasm of the congregation and friends (about 50 knitters) ran wild. St. George's URC very kindly lends the exhibition out to other churches and we were lucky to be the very first Church of Scotland to host it.

We sincerely thank everyone who contributed to the event's success - those who collected the exhibits from North Yorkshire, planned and set up the exhibition, volunteered as stewards or craft table helpers, and those who prepared and served refreshments during the eight days we were open. Your support was invaluable. Thank you all.

People travelled from far and wide to see the exhibition coming from different parts of Edinburgh, the Borders, Falkirk, Glasgow and further- a- field. One lady travelled all the way from Shetland specifically to see the Knitted Bible. We had classes visit from Blackhall and Ferryhill Primary Schools and several people came more than once. Several visitors spent a long time studying the different scenes and enjoyed reminiscing about learning the stories as a child. People came and then told their friends and word spread resulting in about 940 visits. There was no charge for coming but donations were encouraged and we are delighted to say that we raised well over £3000. This means that we could make a generous donation to St George's United Reformed Church and make a significant payment to our church funds.

**Shona Cook**

## The Easter Story from the Knitted Bible Exhibition



*The Last Supper - The disciples gather in the upper room for Passover.*



*The Way of the Cross – Jesus carries his own cross to Golgotha. There he was crucified with two others – one on each side of Jesus.*

*Mary Magdalene finds the stone rolled away from the tomb entrance and the tomb was empty.*



*The Risen Christ appears to the disciples on the shores of Galilee. Jesus directs the disciples from the shore to cast their nets onto the other side of the boat. Their catch is so plentiful they struggled to draw up their net. Jesus prepares a breakfast of fish for the disciples.*

## Blackhall St. Columba's Golf Outing



**INVOLVEMENT CUP 88:** I am writing to extend a very warm invitation to you to play in this year's Event which is being held on **Friday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2026 at Ravelston Golf Club, commencing at 1.30 pm prompt.** The competition will be followed by a two-course meal in the Clubhouse.

The format of the Outing will follow a similar pattern to previous years where the Event will be played as a Stableford Competition over 9/18 Holes. Also, those who wish to come for the High Tea only are very welcome. Please keep the date **free** and I will be in touch with all the details in May.

With very best wishes,

**Frances Douglas, Secretary**

[francesdouglas.1@btinternet.com](mailto:francesdouglas.1@btinternet.com)

## The Buon Appetito Club



### Calling all ladies

It is always good to gather over delicious food for a time of fellowship with friends old or 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 Mamma Roma, 4-7 Antigua Street, on Friday 26th June 2026 at 7.30pm. If you are interested in coming along, please contact Shona Cook by email ([shonacook505@gmail.com](mailto:shonacook505@gmail.com)) or mobile (07981 970054) by 31st May.

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**

## Calling all Church volunteers!

**Dear Volunteers,** If you are among the VOLUNTEERS who support our church, you are cordially invited to a **Coffee Morning on Saturday, May 23rd at 10:30am in the Sanctuary.** This event serves as an expression of gratitude for your valuable contributions to church activities.



We also welcome those interested in joining our group of volunteers. We invite individuals willing to assist in areas such as driving, baking, preparing coffee, greeting guests, engaging in conversation, supporting new initiatives, serving refreshments, washing dishes, or moving furniture. Please attend to learn more about how you can participate. We look forward to welcoming you on the 23rd.

**Lynn, Ruth, Deborah & Val**

## WATCH Committee

The **WATCH** committee is dedicating its support to Parkinson's UK this year. Despite the charity's name, all money raised will stay in Edinburgh. In Edinburgh, Parkinson's UK operates Butterflies Cafes, which provide volunteers offering information, assistance, and support to individuals impacted by Parkinson's disease.

At present there is a cafe in Marchmont, Fairmilehead and Niddrie but none in Northwest Edinburgh. This will be our challenge, all monies raised by us will be used to help open a cafe in NW Edinburgh, probably in Muirhouse or Drylaw. This is just a simple synopsis of what is required, thankfully all we have to do is raise the funds to make it happen! Stephen Brannan the Chairman of the Edinburgh Branch will be in church on Sunday 5th July to launch our fundraising with our usual coin collection and explain how the charity works.

Dates for your Dairy include our fundraising Craft Coffee morning on the 26th of September 2026 and the Christmas Fair on the 28th of November 2026.

**Lynn Bunney, WATCH Team**

## Blackhall St Columba's Junior and Senior Singers

In the last edition of Kirk News, we said that the Singers were busy preparing for their performance in the Edinburgh Highland Reel & Strathspey Society's Annual Concert in the Queen's Hall. We're delighted to report that they performed really well and delighted the audience with their singing, enthusiasm and (quote) professionalism in their marching on and off stage and moving between songs. Malcolm Wood again played for them giving them all the support they needed. Marge and I couldn't have asked for any more. Many compliments have been received since their performance – even as far away as Dunfermline!

And it doesn't stop there! We have now received an invite to sing the same programme, although slightly reduced in length, in the Telephone Choir Concert in the Church Hill Theatre on Friday, 1st May. Unfortunately, that is a holiday weekend so not all the Singers will be taking part on this occasion but I'm sure, even with our reduced number, they will do their very best as usual.

We now have a small Senior group who were in Junior Singers last year and who are now in 1st year at secondary school. They give a tremendous boost to the younger singers and we now refer to the whole choir as Blackhall St. Columba's Singers. Anyone interested in joining either group are very welcome. The Junior section meets after school on Thursdays, 3.45 – 4.30pm with the Seniors, S1+, joining them around 4.15pm till 5pm. We have a short time together with both groups then the Seniors have their session after the Juniors leave.

*In the photo the Blackhall Singers are awaiting their turn to perform during the rehearsal in the Queen's Hall.*

**Amy Donaldson**



## The 'JUST ONE THING' initiative

In January this year in order to increase participation in donations to Ferryhill Primary Sharing Shelf, a new initiative was launched and called **Just One Thing**. The concept is easy - if everyone brought just one food item each week to church the impact would be huge. There are a lot of hungry people just a short walk from our doors, and the sharing shelf is making a big difference.

Between January and 31st March 2026, a total of 1,018 items were delivered to Ferryhill Primary School for the "Sharing Shelf". The benefit to families has been huge and less hungry children will make better learners.

Since 2024 Blackhall St. Columba's Church has been supporting the Ferryhill Primary School "Sharing Shelf" to stop children coming to school hungry. Speaking with the school they are very grateful that not only have we stepped up to this task but since January increased the donations significantly.

We understand many members give to Food Banks and FreshStart and yet again we are asking for your support. This is need driven and even if you cannot help every week, please give when you can. The sharing shelf fully depends on donations as it does not receive any council or external funding.

The school requests donations for the sharing shelf, including:

- Canned goods (beans, meat, spaghetti, fruit, rice pudding)
- Canned or packet soup
- Pasta or rice
- Pasta sauces
- Canned vegetables
- Jam or chocolate spread
- Tea or instant coffee
- Sugar

Thank you to everyone contributing "**Just One Thing**" to support this cause.

### Visit to Glengoyne Distillery

On Friday 6th March 10 members of “Drambusters” (Blackhall St. Columba’s whisky appreciation society) headed west through the countryside of Stirlingshire to the unique distillery of Glengoyne.

To get there we enlisted the help of PEP minibus who even provided a driver who appreciates whisky. Clearly, he could not indulge on the trip but he did receive the “drivers pack” which meant he would be able to enjoy three fine malts once he returned the minibus keys to the PEP office and was home.

Glengoyne is a unique independent family-owned distillery. The whisky is distilled in the Highlands (whisky region name) but it matures across the road to the south and therefore in a whisky region that is in the “Lowlands”. The white line in the middle of the road is the boundary.

The members were invited into the former manager’s house where the lounge was set up with comfortable seats and we were welcomed by our host for the tasting, Vivienne. After a short talk about the history of Glengoyne by our host she invited the group to use all our senses to appreciate the first of the three drams. The first dram was a superb 10-year-old Glengoyne. As instructed using our eyes you could appreciate the colour, the sparkle when held up to the sunlight, the aroma when the glass is lifted to the nose and then the taste. The second dram was a 12-year-old and greatly appreciated by the group however we were in for a treat with the third. Our host gave us a choice of a “Cask Strength” or a “White Oak” matured whisky. Being a friendly bunch we went half and half on the choice and then shared.

Our host then chatted about the other distilleries owned by Glengoyne and then invited us, before returning to the bus for the trip home, to speak to the knowledgeable staff in the shop should we wish to take a little bit of Glengoyne home. Before we all rushed to the shop to make purchases, as a gesture of thanks to our host, Vivienne was presented with a Blackhall St. Columba’s Church Pen and I must say she seemed rather pleased by the gesture.

## Around St Columba's

The visit to Glengoyne was superb, the weather on the day had been great and the scenery around the distillery just stunning. Our thanks to Vivienne and the staff at Glengoyne for making it “a grand day out”. Our thanks to PEP too. The Drambusters meet monthly from September to June (with 1 or 2 trips out included) and if you want to know more about us, please get in touch - details below.

### **Michael Cockburn**

Drambusters Admin. [cockburn\\_carfrae@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cockburn_carfrae@yahoo.co.uk)



*Drambusters Glengoyne Outing*

# Around St Columba's

## "Soup n Chat"

By the time you are reading this Soup n Chat will have celebrated 3 years of continuous operation and it remains a much-appreciated time of fellowship for our members and wider community. We have a core group of regular attendees as well as others who dip in and out: all are welcome. As with last year, we will be taking a well-deserved break in July. You can still come along and join the group on the following dates;

Friday 8 <sup>th</sup> May	12noon to 1.30pm	In the Small Hall
Friday 22 <sup>nd</sup> May	12noon to 1.30pm	In the Large Hall
Friday 5 <sup>th</sup> June	12noon to 1.30pm	In the Large Hall
Friday 19 <sup>th</sup> June	12noon to 1.30pm	In the Large Hall
Friday 3 <sup>rd</sup> July	12noon to 1.30pm	In the Large Hall

We welcome everyone - so bring a friend or neighbour. We are looking for new volunteers to be "chat hosts" and drivers and members who would be willing to provide transport to and from the halls. I am happy to provide information on these roles. It is great fun and a rewarding way to serve the community.

**Michael Cockburn**, Lead and admin Volunteer.

## Curry Club

Do you like curry and would like a night out with the like-minded guys? If you are over 18 (no upper limit) and like the sound of a group of guys who meet 5/6 times a year over a curry please get in touch. Blackhall St. Columba's Curry Club has been running for over 20 years and is still going strong but appreciates some new members would be good for all.

If you would like to know more about the Curry Club, please contact me on [blackhallcurry\\_club@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:blackhallcurry_club@yahoo.co.uk).

**Michael Cockburn**  
Club co-ordinator

## Around St Columba's

### Knit n Natter



This year Fergus asked us if we could make some figures and props so that he could share the Easter Story with children in a more visual manner, using a similar idea to our Knitivity.

We got stuck in, but felt some items were best not knitted - so I approached Peter Price and the Men's Shed who were happy to use their skills and talents to help us out. Thanks guys, we were delighted with the tables and cross.



By next Easter we hope to have added to this collection making a more complete story telling kit.

If you would like to join us and were perhaps inspired by the wonderful Knitted Bible you are most welcome on a Monday evening in the Sanctuary. For further details please email [stcknitnatter@gmail.com](mailto:stcknitnatter@gmail.com)

**Lilian Cockburn**

### Scottish Country Dancers

With Holy Week being a little earlier this year, we had just eight weeks of dancing before our Spring Fling at the end of March, but our party programme was just as varied and our finger buffet, provided by the dancers to share, was just as much of a feast.

Two of our couples have become grandparents for the first time recently, and they were both “down south” visiting their precious babies on the night of the party. Cold and coughing bugs had put several others out of circulation, so the group photo is a bit smaller in number than usual. However, we look forward to starting back again on Thursday 23rd April for our final 6-week session.

As always, we invite you to join us some Thursday evening, from 7 – 8.45 to have a go at dancing to some lively Scottish music and to enjoy refreshments with our friendly group from Blackhall and beyond.

(On Thursday 7th May, however, the church hall is being used as a local polling station and this will keep us from dancing together ..... so, we look forward to a night out instead!)

Contact **Muriel Stenhouse** on 07908 805 364 for further information.



## Around St Columba's with Cameo

### Cameo News

We have been enjoying getting together this year with music from our own Cameo Choir (See below), listening to Johnny Collington who performed at this year's church Burns' Supper, and seeing round the Knitted Bible display which was very impressive.

With the promise of warmer weather round the corner, our thoughts are turning to our Summer Outing to North Berwick, on 29 May. Please note that there will be no meeting in the church hall on that day, nor the on 15 May. Instead, members have been invited to Northcare Suites on Telford Road for coffee and pastries. Car lifts for the latter will be provided for those who receive them. Our regular meetings will resume in the church halls from 10.30-12noon for the Edinburgh Telephone Choir Ensemble on 12 June. On 26 June, we will enjoy the morning with Marie and Robin Leach. Further entertainment information will be available online at [blackhallstcolumba.org.uk](http://blackhallstcolumba.org.uk).

We meet every other Friday year-round and we look forward to having you join us.

**Fiona Drinnan - 343 6762**



**The Cameo Choir (photographed above):** We gathered singers from the church choir and congregation to come along and entertain Cameo guests on Friday 6th March. Everyone enjoyed coming together and joining in with a variety of songs.

**Marge Whiteside**

**Blackhall St Columba's Art Club**

# **Exhibition and Sale 2026**



**Thurs 14 May to Sat 16 May 10.30am - 4.30pm  
and Sun 17 May 11.30am - 1pm**

**Blackhall St Columba's Church Hall, Queensferry Road  
FREE ENTRY**

### **In support of Maggie's Centre, Edinburgh**

Edinburgh-based cancer support centre offering social and emotional support on a drop-in basis. Built on the grounds of Western General Hospital, Maggie's is a warm and welcoming space, with expert staff on hand to offer support, information and practical advice. All Maggie's Cancer Support Specialists have expert knowledge about cancer and treatment, and many are NHS-trained.

Registered Charity (SC024414)

## Around St Columba's

### **Blackhall St Columba's Art Club**

Our artists have been busy in preparation for our annual exhibition on the 13th to 17th May, creating paintings and cards. This year, the club is supporting Maggie's Centre in Edinburgh and we invite everyone to come along and help us support this worthy cause.

**Marge Whiteside**

## FreshStart

**FreshStart** extends heartfelt thanks for your ongoing donations of household goods and food items to the Pantry Shop. Demand remains high, especially since the council and other social housing agencies are now offering more renovated properties to those experiencing homelessness. While it's encouraging progress, the need for housing continues to exceed what is available. With more people settling in, requests for starter packs have increased; in 2025 alone, 18,589 starter packs were distributed, assisting 1,850 families—a remarkable accomplishment made possible by your support. Additionally, diverting 70 tonnes of household items from landfill benefits the environment, making this effort doubly rewarding.

You can donate household goods every Friday morning from 10 to 11:30 am by handing them to one of our team volunteers on duty. If you can't come on Fridays but are at the church halls on other days with items for FreshStart, please talk to the church officer. If you've already cleared out surplus items but still want to contribute, you can donate money via their website ([www.freshstartweb.org](http://www.freshstartweb.org)) or use their Amazon wish list, which is also listed there.

**Lilian & Michael**

FreshStart Co-ordinators, C/O Church Office Tel. 0131 332 4431

## Around St. Columba's

### PEACE Service

The remaining Peace Services are as listed below. They are held in the Small Hall at 12 noon.

**13th May 2026 – Cruse Scotland**

**27th May 2026 – Communion Service**

Although the PEACE services will stop on the 27th of May for the summer, we will reconvene in September. The date and details will be advised in due course.

Many attendees depend on volunteer drivers for lifts and we could do with a few more. If you can help, please contact Ruth Laidlaw at [ruthlaidlaw@gmail.com](mailto:ruthlaidlaw@gmail.com) or 07513 967974. We also welcome volunteers to make and serve soup; this requires only two sessions per term – so it is not a huge commitment but it's very satisfying to be part of the team. To volunteer, contact Ruth at the same details.

### Edinburgh Floral Art Club

The remaining meetings are listed below -

- On Friday 8 May, the AGM will be held in the Large Hall, St Columba's Blackhall Church, followed by a hands-on flower arranging competition, please ring Suzie Stark for more information!
- **Saturday 13 June 10am - 12 noon, Coffee Morning in the Large Hall, Blackhall St. Columba's**
- Friday 11 September, 2pm - 4pm The new session begins with a guest demonstrator. Details to follow in the next Kirk News.

Visitors are always welcome, Friday afternoon tickets are £10, it is a lovely way to find friendship and fun through a mutual love of flowers.

**Suzie Stark**, Chairman, on 07888 942561.

## Around St Columba's

**Tuesday Topics:** We have had a very successful year with interesting talks. As I write this, we still have one meeting at the end of April with Kath Hay whom many of you will remember from last year and her talk on St Kilda. This time she is speaking about the "Lost Treasures of Scotland". In May we have organised a visit to the Theatre to see the Southern Light's 'Guys and Dolls' on Wednesday 13th May at 7.30. That is the last event before we close for the summer.

Details of next year's talks have not yet been arranged but they will be in the Kirk News and Bulletin in the autumn. Thank you to all our loyal members and the many visitors we have had this past year. Anyone wishing to help arrange next year would be welcome!

**Lyndy Paton** 07460212174, **Sheila Mackintosh** 07774717968

## Pentecost



Pentecost marks a vital event in Christian history, the remnant of Jesus' followers, just 120 of them, were together in an upper room in Jerusalem. They were afraid to show their faces in case the authorities arrested them. But on the day of Pentecost, they had an amazing collective experience.

They described it in terms of wind and fire, a great surge of spiritual energy and confidence. Afraid no longer, they burst out on to the streets where crowds were gathering for the festival, led by Peter they began to tell them about Jesus and His resurrection. As they did so, although many of the people in the crowd were foreigners who spoke other languages, everyone heard them in their own tongue. Peter told them that what they were seeing was the fulfilment of an old prophecy when God would pour out His Spirit on humanity, men and women, young and old.

As a result of His words and the extraordinary spectacle, 3,000 people believed and were baptised in the name of Jesus. They were the nucleus of what in 100 years would be a Church that would turn history upside down. For Christians Pentecost is in effect the birthday of the Church.

Art Exhibition at St. Ninian's Church, Corstorphine

Corstorphine  
**ART**  
Group

# Art Exhibition 2026

*St. Ninian's Church Hall, Corstorphine, Edinburgh*

**Saturday  
25<sup>th</sup> July to  
Saturday  
1<sup>st</sup> August**

*(Closed on Sunday  
26th July)*

## **Opening Times**

10.30am - 4.30pm

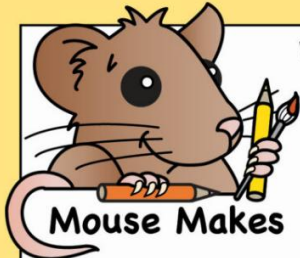
*(10.30am - 3.30pm on  
Saturday 1st August)*

## **Admission Free**

Enjoy a wide selection  
of original works by  
local artists. Most items  
exhibited are for sale.



*Painting: Quiet Repose by Barbara Kufel*  
<https://www.facebook.com/CorstorphineArtGroup>  
[www.corstorphineartgroup.com](http://www.corstorphineartgroup.com)



## WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

The Spirit of  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Genesis 1:2

The  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 of the Father.  
 Acts 1:4

The Spirit of  
 A \_\_\_\_\_  
 Romans 8:15

H \_\_\_\_\_  
 John 14:26

The Spirit of  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 John 16:13

The Spirit of  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Acts 16:7

The Fruit of the Spirit  
 Galatians 5:22-23

\_\_\_ O \_\_\_

\_\_\_ Y \_\_\_

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What  
 happened when  
 the Holy Spirit  
 came at Pentecost?

read  
 Acts 2:1-41

How many believers  
 were baptised  
 that day?

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

Look up the Bible verses and fill in the  
 missing words. Look for them in the  
 word search then look for these words below.

HOLY • SPIRIT • COUNSELLOR • COMFORTER  
 ADVOCATE • TEACHER • LORD • PROMISE  
 GLORY • GRACE • FAITH • DOVE • FIRE • WIND

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

## Publication deadlines

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**For contributions to the Blackhall Bulletin:**

[bulletin@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk](mailto:bulletin@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk)

September 2026 issue contributions by 30<sup>th</sup> July 2026

**For contributions to Kirk News:**

Please send all items to the Editor: [judith.mair@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:judith.mair@hotmail.co.uk)

**August 2026 issue contributions by 17<sup>th</sup> July 2026**

We are happy to accept articles on any relevant subject.

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