

# KIRK NEWS

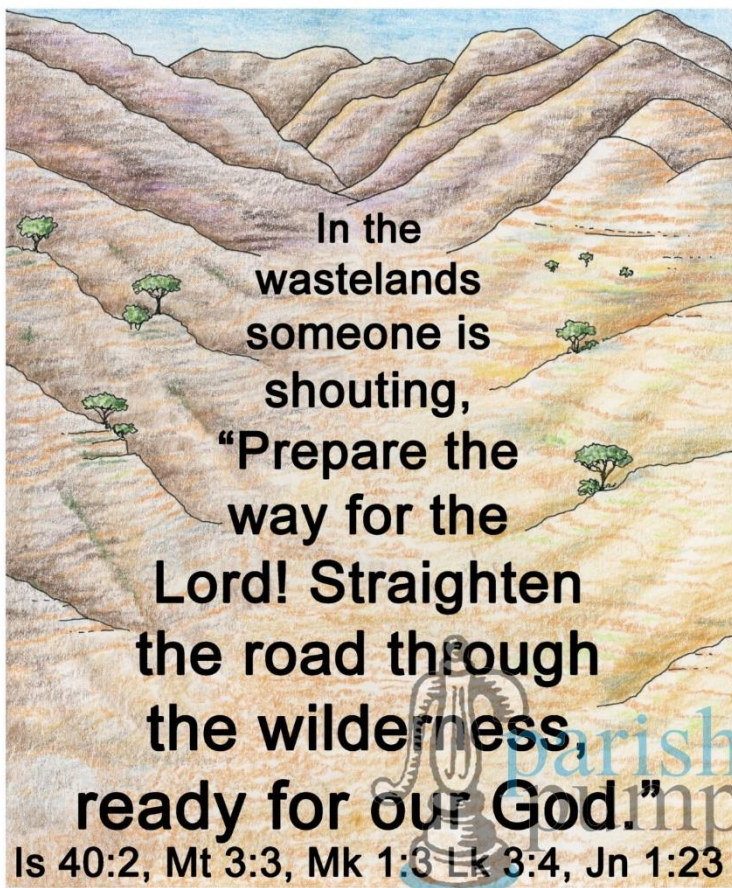
Spring, February 2025

No. 844



BLACKHALL  
ST. COLUMBA'S  
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

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



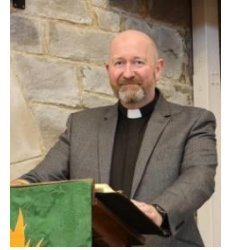
In the  
wastelands  
someone is  
shouting,  
“Prepare the  
way for the  
Lord! Straighten  
the road through  
the wilderness,  
ready for our God.”

Is 40:2, Mt 3:3, Mk 1:3 Lk 3:4, Jn 1:23

## Generosity

What is the most generous gift you've ever been given?

As you know, I read a lot of stories and recently I was looking through '100 short stories for Seniors,' (I know, I'm far too young for such a title). I found a couple of stories that got me thinking. The first was a story from America. Back in April 2020, at the height of the Covid Pandemic, an Atlanta media mogul, Tyler Perry, offered to take care of the grocery bills for all shoppers during what was termed 'Senior Hour' at a supermarket chain called Kroger Supermarkets which had 44 outlets in Metro Atlanta. Mr Perry's offer wasn't announced to the shoppers in advance, and I have no idea what this generous offer cost him. The story I read focused on one delighted shopper who was totally surprised when the cashier told him he should make sure he was at the till before 8am without saying why and then, at the till, was informed of Mr Perry's offer. Despite the bill being \$290, the shopper paid nothing. This sounds like a fantastic thing to have happened for a lot of people. I'm sure many of them were very grateful and, for some, it might have made a real difference to their lives at that time.



There was another story in that book about generous giving. It was about a billionaire called Yvon Chouinard. Chouinard was the founder of an outdoor clothing company called Patagonia which sells high quality outdoor clothing. In 2022, Patagonia was valued at \$3 billion when Chouinard, the majority owner, gave the company away. He donated the company to a trust and a non-profit organization which was set up to fight climate change. Chouinard said at the time; "instead of extracting value from nature, and transforming it into wealth for investors, we'll use the wealth Patagonia creates to protect the source of wealth." The New York Times reported that the structure of the Patagonia's founder's action made it clear that he and his family would enjoy no financial benefits and, in fact, the Chouinards would face a hefty tax bill for this donation!

## Generosity

Both these stories are examples of where people have been extremely generous. However, you must have it to give it away and there is no suggestion that either are still not extremely wealthy by many other standards.

Have you ever been on the receiving end of a really generous gift? I wonder what you thought was a generous gift.

The widow's mite is a Bible story about a poor widow who gives her last two coins to the temple in Jerusalem. The story is told in the Gospels of Mark and Luke. In the story, Jesus contrasts the widow's giving with the giving of 'many rich people who put in large sums.' Jesus comments that the woman's generosity was the greatest because "she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

Although a little early yet, for some, I find myself looking forwards towards Easter. This, along with my focus recently on our need for both gratitude and thanksgiving, has had me thinking about what is said in the Gospel according to John and what I think is the most generous gift we have all been given. In what is regarded as the most well-known Bible passage in the world, we read, at John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

The gift of God's love, shown through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, is the most generous gift anyone can ever receive. The offer of reconciliation with God, an offer to become one of His children through belief in and discipleship with Jesus is an offer that is freely given and open to all.

Best wishes and blessings

Fergus

## New Elders



**Our new Elders at Blackhall St Columba's admitted on January 19th, 2025. The new Elders are Muriel Stenhouse, Fiona Marchbanks, George Davidson, Barbara Duguid and Deborah Pearce**



**Our Session Clerk Eddie Thorn and Fergus welcome the new members of the Eldership with the Right Hand of Fellowship**

# Watch Committee

## Watch Committee Fundraising

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HELP AND SUPPORT!



On January 26th, 2025, Mairead McLeod from Blood Cancer UK accepted our cheque for £10,000.

On behalf of the Watch Committee, we would like to thank the Congregation and the Community of Blackhall and District for their wonderful support and help in raising this sum of monies.

From the sale of our Pets Calendar and the proceeds of the Coin Collection, Craft Coffee Morning and Christmas Fair we raised this incredible sum of £10,000. The help from the congregation and church groups made this possible.

Our grateful thanks to everyone who contributed.

Lynn Bunney  
WATCH TEAM



*The Watch Committee present Mairead Macleod from Blood Cancer UK with a cheque for £10,000*

# Session Clerk's Report

## The Kirk Session

The Kirk Session met on Tuesdays 26 November 2024 and 14 January 2025.

### Annual Attestation of the Roll

The Clerk referred to the changes to the Communion Roll which took place during 2024. The changes to the roll are summarised in the table below:

Total number of communicants as of 31 December 2023	537
Number of communicants admitted during 2024	14
Number of communicants removed during 2024	22
Total number of communicants as of December 2024	529

### Building for the Future 2

The Moderator proposed the setting up of a subgroup to invite and consider suggestions for a project or projects to utilise the Phase 2 fund which currently stands at c£80,000. He reflected on some of the minor work that had already taken place e.g. the installation of the accessible toilet. However, he felt that the time was now right to consider what improvements might be made to the halls to complement the vision we might have for them. Mike Whiteside and Jim Bishop agreed to join the subgroup along with Sheila Mackintosh, who would provide a link to hall users. Brian Duffin will chair the subgroup.

### Church Office

The Clerk reported that we have been without a secretary since the end of June last year. During that period, office cover had been provided by Ruth Laidlaw, Susan Scrimgeour and himself. Sheila Macintosh has looked after hall related matters. Although there are no specific times when the office is open, there is sufficient cover for the arrangements to work well.

Intimations are relayed to the Minister by Wednesday of each week and are included with the order of service emailed to Elders. The Clerk proposed to proceed in a similar vein, and this was agreed.

### **Church Deliveries**

To accommodate deliveries and equipment servicing in the church buildings the Clerk said that he was speaking to the Church Officers with a view to them drawing up a weekly rota. This rota would clearly show which Church Officer would be on duty each day and during which hours. This would be prominently displayed and at the Moderator's suggestion this could also be included on the Church's website.

### **Correspondence**

A note of thanks had been received from Bethany Christian Trust for a donation of £250.

### **Craigleith / Blackhall Community Council**

Michael Cockburn had intimated his wish to retire from his role as Church representative on the Community Council. Michael was thanked for his years of faithful service representing the Church. James Burr volunteered to take on this position.

### **Nativity Trail**

The Moderator referred to the very successful Christmas season in the Church from the Nativity Trail and continuing through to the various Christmas Services. He had received a lot of very positive and encouraging feedback not only from the immediate Blackhall community but also from further afield.

**New Elders**

At the November meeting, the Kirk Session approved the admission of the following members who had been ordained previously at other congregations: George Davidson, Barbara Duguid, Fiona Marchbanks, and Deborah Pearce.

In addition, it was agreed that Muriel Stenhouse would be ordained and admitted to the Eldership.

**Outreach Committee**

Agreement was forthcoming to allow the Outreach Committee to undertake the running of a series of events, possibly starting in March 2025, where topics which have some kind of ethical, moral or religious/spiritual basis would be explored.

**Presbytery Plan**

There was nothing to report regarding the Plan. Kirk Session awaits hearing from the Presbytery Deployment of Resources Committee on the way forward.

**Retiring Offerings**

It was agreed that the 2025 retiring offerings will be as follows:

<b>Occasion</b>	<b>Charity</b>
February Communion	The Fuel Bank Foundation
Easter Services	St Columba's Hospice
June Communion	Mary's Meals
October Communion	Water Aid
Christmas Services	Scottish Bible Society and Fresh Start



## Roll

Session agreed to admit, by certificate of transference, the following new members:

Margery Bruce, Silverknowes View

Horace Peasland and Janis Peasland, Barnton Avenue West

## Stated Annual Meeting

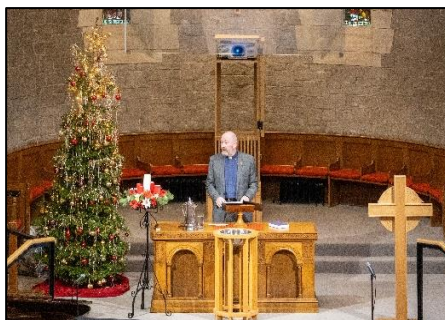
It was proposed by the Clerk and agreed by Session that this would be held on Sunday 23 March 2025

## Kirk Session dates

**The Kirk Session will meet on the following dates** (all Tuesdays at 7.30 pm except for April and May when these meetings will start at 7.45 pm)

**18<sup>th</sup> February, 18<sup>th</sup> March, 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 20<sup>th</sup> May, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

**Eddie Thorn, Session Clerk**



*Fergus on the first Sunday of Advent*



## Follow the Star - Mary's Journey

Following last year's first ever Nativity Trail at Blackhall St Columba's, we ambitiously hosted our second one last December. There is no doubt that, with well over 400 visitors over the two days, it was an unmitigated success.

Although the Nativity story remained the same, obviously, we focused on a different aspect this year, Mary's Journey. It was the culmination of a tremendous amount of work by many, many people and I would like to take this opportunity to express my personal thanks to all who helped make this event happen. It was truly a team effort. As these things tend to do, it grew and grew from a very simple idea to become something quite amazing. About 80-90 of our congregation came together to make this happen from the committee which planned the event to the set building team, the costume department, the catering team and the group organising the crafts as well as all the numerous volunteers who helped with a variety of tasks on the day and beforehand, not to mention the fabulous cast of characters. We ran a brand-new Escape Room for the slightly older children and had a challenging quiz for our more mature visitors to enjoy.

This year we were able to welcome children from Ferryhill Primary as well as Blackhall Primary and we received very positive feedback from them. A huge number of people came along to our open sessions on the two days of the event and we had people queuing up outside to get in. What a wonderful sight!

It was hoped that people would be encouraged to take a moment or two to be reminded of the Good News of Christmas amid all the hurly burly of Advent and to let themselves relax and enjoy what Christmas is really about.

The Nativity Trail, "Follow the Star - Mary's Journey" was an interactive exploration of the Greatest Story Ever Told using the church itself and all its halls and buildings. Our visitors were encouraged to find out the true meaning of Christmas in a novel and exciting way as they heard the Angel Gabriel's message and went on their own journey with Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem. They discovered the shepherds, King Herod and the innkeepers on the way.

## Nativity Trail

At the end of the trail, we reached the stable and found the most wonderful gift we have ever been given.



*The Stable at the end of the trail*

On top of that, of course, we also offered a new Christmas Nativity Escape Room for the older children who came along and there were lots of Christmas crafts, some seasonal musical entertainment and, of course, plenty of Christmas treats and refreshments. The Christmas Tree Festival which was running alongside the Trail was an added bonus.

We have had some tremendous feedback already from those taking part and from those who attended via word of mouth, social media and email. It seems that people were quite blown away by the sheer scale of the trail itself and by the quality of the “production”. This event could well become a Blackhall tradition and continuing with it can only be a good outreach to the community.

I am in the process of trying to gather information together from those taking part in the trail and the escape room to establish what we could do to make this event even better in the future. I already have some ideas of how to add to what we did as well.

**Shona Cook**

# Nativity Trail

For those who couldn't make it along this time, here are a few photos of the trail. James Burr kindly took some photos and these are available to view on the church website.

**Shona Cook**



# Blackhall St Columba's at Christmas

## Christmas Tree Festival 2024

Over the course of three days visitors were able to admire and appreciate 23 beautifully decorated Christmas Trees.

Each organisation chose a Christmas Carol or song as their theme and their imagination went wild. Every tree was unique and the skills on display were a joy to behold! We had a light-hearted quiz which involved the visitors trying to match the tree with the piece of music.

Thanks go to all the organisations who took part in the event and to all who came to visit.

Ruth Laidlaw

*A forest of Christmas Trees  
in the Sanctuary at  
Blackhall St Columba's  
Christmas Tree Festival 2024*



### Dates for Your Diary from February to April 2025

#### **Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February: *Daffodil Tea Dance.***

Please join us for a Tea Dance in the large hall between 1.30 and 4.00pm. There will be social dancing with a Scottish theme in aid of Blood Cancer UK hosted by the Scottish Country Dance Group with live music from The Quern. Tickets, which include Afternoon Tea, are £5 each and can be paid for on the day. Please contact Muriel Stenhouse to register your interest - **07908 805364**.

#### **Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> February: *Movies @ St. Columba's* *Chariots of Fire***

Please join us in the sanctuary at 3pm for the film which helped launch the British invasion of Hollywood in 1981 – the telling of the stories of Eric Liddell and Harold Abrahams who raced for gold at the 1924 Paris Olympic Games. One ran for his faith and the other to leave prejudice behind. There is no charge for this event and no tickets are required but donations towards the refreshments and treats will be gratefully received.

#### **Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February: *Music @ St. Columba's* *Bruce Davies***

Please join us in the sanctuary at 7.00pm for the second concert by this popular guitarist and singer/songwriter. His friendly Scottish folk style makes for easy listening and while he is a Christian his concerts are attractive to people of all faiths and none. Come and bring a friend. Refreshments will be served and while there is no charge for the event and no tickets are required, donations towards Bruce's work will be gratefully received.

#### **March (Date To be confirmed): *“Community Conversations”***

This event is a new venture for St Columba's which we hope will bring members of the congregation together with others from the wider community to hear about and discuss matters of common interest and social concern.

**WATCH THIS SPACE FOR DETAILS**

## Outreach Events

### **Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March: *Music @ St. Columba's***

#### ***"Heart and Soul Swing Band"***



Please join us in the Sanctuary at 7.00pm to hear the Church of Scotland's own jazz band. Gospel, spirituals and favourite hymns are all given the Big Band treatments. They come together to raise fund for the Church of Scotland AIDS Fund. Come and bring a friend. Refreshments will be served and while there is no charge for the event and no tickets are required, donations towards the CofS AIDS fund will be gratefully received.

### **Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April: Sunday Lunch**

#### ***Sunday Lunch at the Toby Carvery***

We have booked lunch at the Lauriston Toby at 1.00pm at a cost of £14.49. If you would like to come along, enjoy a delicious lunch and spend time with friends old and new, please contact Barbara Duguid on [baduguid@gmail.com](mailto:baduguid@gmail.com) (07773 884556) or Libby Cameron on [libbyd21@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:libbyd21@hotmail.co.uk) (07889 676418). A deposit of £10 is required by 13<sup>th</sup> March.

### **Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> April: *Dessert Island Discs***

Please join us in the Sanctuary at 7.30pm 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 is no charge for this event.

## **Outreach Team**

# Church Diary



## February 2025

2nd	10.30am	Sacrament of Holy Communion
	3pm	Sacrament of Holy Communion
9th	10.30am	Morning Worship
16 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Morning Worship
23rd	10.30am	Youth Service

## March 2025

2nd	10.30am	Morning Worship
9th	10.30am	Morning Worship
16th	10.30am	Morning Worship
23rd	10.30am	Morning Worship
30th	10.30am	Mothering Sunday

## April 2025

6 <sup>th</sup>	10.30am	Morning Worship
13th	10.30am	Palm Sunday
17th	7.00pm	Maundy Thursday Communion
18 <sup>th</sup>	7.00pm	Good Friday
20 <sup>th</sup>	8.00am	Easter Service at Cramond Foreshore
	10.30am	Easter Service
27th	10.30am	Morning Worship

## May 2025

3rd	4pm	Saturday - Monte Cassino Service
4th	10.30am	Sunday Worship



## The Junior Singers

The **Junior Singers** had quite a busy Christmas Season, singing first in church during the Gift Service. Next up was a concert for the residents of Queen's Court, followed by leading the singing in Strachan House's Carol Service. They then brought the term to an end by participating in the Christingle Service. As usual, they gave of their best and, according to the comments afterwards, were much appreciated by the various residents and congregations.

On our return, after the Christmas break, we were delighted to welcome several new members. Junior Singers is open to all children (girls and boys) in P3 – P7. We meet in the upstairs hall of Blackhall St Columba's on Thursdays from 3.45pm till 4.30pm and we are always happy to welcome new singers to the group. There is no charge and no audition – we only ask that the children enjoy singing. If your child is interested, come along any Thursday during term time or phone Amy Donaldson (0131 332 1354) for more information.



*The Junior Singers in church on Advent Sunday*

# Remembrance at St. Columba's in pictures



## Connect

“**Connect**” is a recently formed group, offering the opportunity to meet with others from the church family, to discuss contemporary issues from a Christian perspective. We meet on Sundays from 6-7.15pm around a table in the coffee area of the sanctuary, making it easy to enjoy a hot drink and a pastry or muffin at the start of the session.

It’s a very informal group, with the emphasis on getting to know one another as we share our ideas on the theme for the evening. It’s also a very varied group, with participants in their twenties and seventies and most decades in between! Among us, we have a range of life experiences, and we are all at different stages on our journey of faith.



You’d be very welcome to join us and, if there is a topic you would like to suggest, then we could include that in the weeks between now and the end of March.

In particular, we plan to look at the issue of Assisted Dying, based on the recent material provided by the C of S and on other media, but benefiting from the knowledge, views and experience in the group too. You might like to join us for that topic, with no pressure to commit to the group beyond those weeks.

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

## Music @ St Columba's



On 19th October, we were treated to a concert of virtuosic piano playing by **Bernice Sammut Attard**, a young pianist from Malta where she has won several awards. She completed her studies at the Royal Conservatoire in Glasgow, so she is almost a true Scot!

She played a number of studies (etudes) by a wide variety of composers from classical Chopin to modern Glass. Having dealt with that remarkable range of musical styles so competently, she then moved on to bring us the full Beethoven Sonata No 23 in F minor, "Appassionata." She delivered the sonata with the passion it requires as well as the considerable skill demanded, having warmed up her fingers with such a display in the first half.

The audience of around 70 were thrilled by the whole evening and we no doubt she will succeed in her chosen career.



*Father's Song at St Columba's*

**Father's Song** is a group of men from all over Scotland who sing a range of Christian music. On 16th November they sang some worship songs which we would use in a church service and then other pieces with a more formal presentations which encouraged a sense of worship among all who were there.

In between the songs, members of the choir gave witness to their faith in Jesus Christ though good times and bad. The genuineness of these introductions to the songs gave the whole evening a spiritual content and brought encouragement to all those present. Many commented on how unusual it was to see such a large group of men singing Christian music.

## Music @ St Columba's

The 100+ strong audience, a number with no church connection, enjoyed the variety of music, supported by a very competent band led by Ian Watson. Ian also leads Praise Gathering a 400 strong choir (of which Father's Song is a subset) from all over Scotland which gives 2 or 3 concerts each year. They were in the Royal Concert Hall in Glasgow this year but they are coming to the Usher Hall in Edinburgh next June. Father's Song itself will be singing in Charlotte Chapel at the West End in March and we will give information on both these events nearer the time.

I am sure we will be hearing from them again if the response of the audience is any guide.

## Dates for your diaries

**Bruce Davies** - The next [Music @ St. Columba's](#) performance is from Bruce Davies on the 22nd of February at 7pm in the Sanctuary. It will be the usual format, no tickets required but donations are welcome.



**Bruce Davies**  
*40 years of acoustic music at its best*

**EDINBURGH,  
BLACKHALL**  
Blackhall St Columba's Church  
**Saturday 22nd February 7.00pm**  
Columba Road, Edinburgh, EH4 3QU  
Call 07957-573895 for more details

www.bruce-davies.com

The poster features a photograph of Bruce Davies on the left, smiling and playing an acoustic guitar. The background is black with yellow and white text. The website address is written vertically on the left side of the photo.

## Bruce Davies

Bruce is a Scottish folk singer who has been enthusing concert goers around the country and beyond for 40 years. His folk singer/guitarist format matched with a friendly chatty style makes this a very happy evening out. Some songs you will know, and others are new but they are always melodic and competently presented. His concerts are always well attended so arrive in good time and bring a friend so you can introduce them to the church family in an easy environment. Refreshments will be served during a short interval, and it will end around 8.45pm.

## Heart and Soul Swing Band



*The Heart and Soul Band*

The Heart and Soul Swing Band will perform on the **22nd of March at 7pm in the Sanctuary.**

This band is the official Church of Scotland Band and they do a mix of Gospel, spirituals and traditional jazz music. They don't play very regularly, so we are fortunate to have managed to secure this date with them.

I can assure you of a fun evening as they play and sing songs old and new. You might even be tempted to join in due to the infectious nature of their music. If your feet are not tapping, then get someone to check your pulse. They raise money for the C of S AIDS fund and all donations will be given to that charity. As always, tickets are not required but donations will be gratefully received.

Donald Cameron OBE LLCM

Director of Music, Blackhall St Columba's Church of Scotland

# Church Family News

## New Elders

George Davidson, Barbara Duguid, Fiona Marchbanks, Deborah Pearce and Muriel Stenhouse

## Baptism

Elliot Graham Kerr Walker baptised on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2024

## New Members admitted by Certificate of Transference.

Ms Margery Bruce  
Mr Horace and Mrs Janis Peasland

## Deaths

### November

23 Mr Angus Troup  
29 Mr Ian Hutchison  
29 Mrs Janet Whiteman

### January

19 Mrs Emma Sklaroff



## Sheila Mackintosh, Roll Keeper

\*\*\*\*\*

## A Message from Frances Douglas on the death of her husband John

*I would like to thank the Church most sincerely for the support I have received after the death of my husband John. Cards, texts, emails and flowers and especially those who attended the funeral were a real comfort to me. John wanted a celebration as he felt very grateful to have reached 90 and he certainly got one today.*

*Special thanks to Rev. Fergus Cook for taking part in the service.*

*Frances Douglas*

## Baptism



*Elliot Graham Kerr Walker was baptised on Sunday 1st December 2025*



## World Day of Prayer



**World Day of Prayer  
Ecumenical Service  
Friday 7<sup>th</sup> of March 2024**

**Prepared by the WDP  
Committee of the Cook Islands  
With the theme of  
"I made you wonderful"  
Psalm 139:14**

**This year the service will be  
held at 2.30pm at Holy Cross  
Episcopal Church, Davidson's  
Mains**



### Art in Worship

Some of our artists from the Art Club were invited by Donald Cameron to produce paintings for the Christmas lessons and readings service. Five pictures were created with reference to the readings from Luke Chapter 2 and Matthew Chapter 2.

The paintings were integrated into the service and displayed in the church during the Christmas period.

The Art Club also enjoyed making hand painted boxes and mobiles for the Christmas Tree Festival. A big thank you to the artists who were involved.

### Marge Whiteside



## Around St Columba's

### PEACE Service

The fortnightly PEACE service is a great opportunity to meet with fellow Christians in an informal setting. We meet at 12 noon in the Small Hall. There is a short act of worship followed by a lunch of homemade soup and sweet treats.

Don't worry if you can't make it under your own steam, transport can be arranged. For more information, please contact - Ruth Laidlaw [ruthlaidlaw@gmail.com](mailto:ruthlaidlaw@gmail.com) or 07513 967974

### PEACE Syllabus 2025

5<sup>th</sup> February – Pioneers UK – Ruth Box

19<sup>th</sup> February - Church Planting – Rev. Alan Childs

5<sup>th</sup> March – Alpha – Donald Cameron

19<sup>th</sup> March – Chaplain to the Lodging House Mission – Deacon Claire Herbert

2<sup>nd</sup> April – Chaplaincy at St. Columba's Hospice – Rev. Suzie Stark

16<sup>th</sup> April – Chaplaincy in the Royal Navy – Rev. Fergus Cook

30<sup>th</sup> of April – Prospects Across Scotland – Ivy Blair

14<sup>th</sup> May – Review of the Year – Shona Cook

## Praise Group



**Praise Group:** - At Blackhall St Columba's we use a variety of musical styles in our worship. Some of the newer songs really don't go easily with a pipe organ so we have a small Praise Band with singers who lead the new songs.

We have recently expanded the band to include 3 violins. If anyone is interested in participating in this either singing or playing an instrument about 4 or 5 times a year please contact Donald on 07957573695 or [donaldcameron2010@gmail.com](mailto:donaldcameron2010@gmail.com) and we will provide music and have an opportunity to rehearse with you a week before we play.

### Tuesday Topics

Is it too late to wish all our members and visitors a very Happy New Year? We started the year with a very jolly Xmas lunch at Howie's at the beginning of January. It always seems a good time to have a lunch out as January is such a dismal month and we all need a pick-me-up.

Some of our members took part in the Annual Christmas Fair on the Sweet stall Where we made our usual contribution to the total amount. A few of us also decorated a Christmas tree for the tree exhibition which was held in the church in December. Many thanks to those who helped.

This month we have another meeting on 28th January when Kath Hay is coming to tell us of "The Killing of St Kilda". This promises to be a most interesting evening.

On February 25<sup>th</sup>, John Jeffrey is coming to speak to us about his Bee keeping. He and his wife are also Guide dog Puppy walkers so we may hear a little of that.

Members might remember Rebecca who came to talk to us about the Giraffes in Edinburgh Zoo. She gave us such a good evening that she is coming back to tell us about the Zoo's work with Wildcats and the Zoo's efforts to reinstate them in the wild here in Scotland. Rebecca will be with us on 25th March.

That leaves us with the last Tuesday in April which we intend to have as a Social Night, so put it in your diary.

As usual we offer a welcome to both members and visitors on the last Tuesday of the month to come and join us in the Small Hall at 7.30pm for interesting talks and friendship over a cup of tea or coffee.

For further details

Lyndy Paton. 0131 332 7377 or 07460212174

### Cameo Club

In December the Leonardo Murrayfield Hotel provided Cameo members with a superb Christmas Lunch and they looked after us in style. We also decorated the Cameo Christmas tree for the Christmas Tree Festival at this time – thank you to the ladies who helped.

Fortnightly meetings began again on January 10<sup>th</sup> with a musical morning. There was some foot-tapping and singing-along with Alan Weatherhead, who is a Cameo favourite. We have an accordionist on the 7<sup>th</sup> of February, and Rose McBeth – another regular entertainer – on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February. Our dates for March are the 7<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>. All meetings are from 10.30am - 12.00 noon. New members are welcome to come along any time.

Unfortunately, one of our drivers damaged her ankle in a fall and is unable to drive now. We would like a replacement driver to collect and deliver home the lady who now needs a lift. If you would like to get involved, in any aspect of volunteering with Cameo, please contact the number below.

I assure you the volunteers enjoy the meetings as much as the members. Drivers can, of course, opt out of staying for the entertainment if they prefer. In whatever capacity, we would be glad to see some new faces on our team or as members.

Contact Fiona Drinnan, 343 6762



## Around St Columba's



### Buon Apetito

Calling all ladies! Whether you are a relatively new member of our church or have been at Blackhall St Columba's for years, it is always good to gather over delicious food for a time of fellowship with friends old or new and to get to know each other better.

There is a Curry Club within Blackhall St Columba's for the men amongst us and, therefore, it seems only fair that there should be something for the ladies too. Hence, the "Buon Apetito" Club which meets periodically throughout the year to enjoy an Italian meal.

Keep checking the website under "events" for details or, if you don't have access to the internet, give your name to Shona Cook (07981 970054) and she can keep you advised of the outings. The next outing is to Caffe Centro at 38 George Street on Friday 28th March 2025 at 7pm. If you wish to be added to the list of those attending, please give your name to **Shona Cook** by 1st March.

## 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 put your request slip into the locked box, marked "Prayer Requests," on the table at the back of the church.

### Country Dancing

Since the last edition of Kirk News, we have been joined by some new dancers and, while everyone is very welcome, it is great to have a growing number of men in the group. With four sets dancing each week, we have the benefit of encouraging the more experienced members to partner those who are less familiar with the formations; and together we have covered a range of reels, jigs and strathspeys.



While several of the class are members of Blackhall St Columba's, the majority are from the local community or from other churches, both local and further afield. In fact, one of our group is actually an Anglican priest, and she has brought along her husband, a former church organist, and another couple from their church in Morningside.

A highlight of the winter session is always the Christmas Party and, as you can see from these photographs, a good time was had by all. (Can you identify our jovial Santa?)



Finally, by the time the News is printed, we will have had our first charity event – a Daffodil Tea Dance, with traditional music from Amy Donaldson's group, Quern, and a wonderful afternoon tea, organised by Lynn Bunney and provided by the generous home bakers of the fellowship.

## Around St Columba's

It has been good to have the support of some of the church folk to share tables with the dancers and other guests, and I do hope we make a decent amount for Blood Cancer UK.

Muriel Stenhouse



*Country Dancers' Christmas Party*

## Edinburgh Floral Art Club



**Edinburgh Floral Art Club** resumes its meetings on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> of February. This meeting gives us a chance to get to know one another over afternoon tea and we will either welcome a speaker or have some flower-related crafting for to do.

Our next meeting after that will be on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> of March when we welcome demonstrator Julia Loudon from Earlston. She will talk us through her various arrangements based on her title " Tales of the Unexpected".

## Around St Columba's

We are delighted to be joined by visitors (cost £10), no need to book or anything just turn up at the large hall at the church and you will receive a warm welcome. Our April meeting features Steve Ludlum from Dundee on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April, his title is "Spring has Sprung."

If you enjoy working with flowers or watching expert demonstrators at work, sharing their knowledge and tips, then this is for you. If more information is needed do, please, 'phone our **Chairman, Suzie**

### Data Protection

As life changes, so does the work we do within our church and parish. This may mean you come off one rota and go onto another.

Please, if this is the case, will you destroy all paper copies of the rota you have come off and delete any lists from your computer, your phone or your tablet. The laws about Data Protection are quite clear, you don't keep personal data about individuals if you no longer do the job which requires you to have these details.

If anyone has taken on a job which requires them to organise rotas with the personal details of individuals, please could they let me know so this information can be registered. Likewise, if you have given up responsibility for a rota, please will you let me know so that you can be taken off the register.

Organisations using the church premises should have their own Data protection arrangements and are not covered by the Parish arrangements.

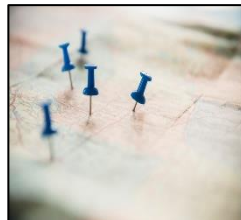
**Alison Hewat**



### Church Magazine Deliveries

Blackhall Bulletin, the Parish Magazine, is delivered to everyone within the Parish Boundaries and to all Members out with the Parish.

It is also delivered to local shops, so that they may be picked up by Customers.



We are looking for people to deliver small bundles of magazines to the local Blackhall shops.

This happens three times a year. If you interested in helping, please could you contact me. Alison (Hewat rajahewat1@btinternet.com or Tel 332 4842)

### Church Flower Deliveries



As you know the flowers in the Apse are delivered to people after the Morning service.

We are looking for volunteers to join the Delivery list.

The job is not difficult. The people delivering receive an email telling them who are to get the flowers. After the service is over, they take the flowers down and turn them into bunches for delivery. There are usually three or four names on the list. Anyone volunteering would be on the rota to deliver for a month but there is always the possibility to swap months or individual Sundays if that is necessary.

Please feel free to ask me questions if you are interested.

Alison (Hewat rajahewat1@btinternet.com or Tel 332 4842)

## Burns Supper 2025 at Saint Columba's



*A selection of photographs of the Burns Supper by church photographer James Burr. More photographs can be found on the church website.*

### **Burns Supper 25<sup>th</sup> January**

The pictures above show that an assembly of nearly 80 had a wonderful evening enjoying each other's company. They met in the Large Hall of St Columba's Church which was draped for the occasion, as indeed were many of those attending, whilst celebrating all things Scottish! The traditional recipe for a Burns Supper was followed with piper. An Address to a Haggis was made and the Selkirk Grace was given. A lovely 3 course meal was had with your own alcoholic or soft drink, followed by a hot drink and shortbread.

As if that wasn't enough, guests were then entertained both humorously and informatively with an Address and Toast to the Immortal Memory of the Bard. An Address and Toast to the Lassies was then conducted followed by a reply from the Lassies. The entertainment continued with an excellent musical interlude featuring beautiful solo singing accompanied by piano. The grand finale was a performance of Tam O' Shanter which was simply glorious.

Those in attendance were all delighted. If you missed it, the good news is that there will be a chance to experience and enjoy it for yourself.

This annual top event in Scotland's calendar is scheduled in Blackhall for the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2026, same place and open to all. So, mark your diaries now and tell others!

**Sandy Weir**



*The traditional recipe for a Burns Supper*

## The Christmas Fair at Blackhall St Columba's 2024



*Some stalls, stall holders, the crowds and bustle at the Christmas Fair 2024. A huge fund-raising exercise for this year's Watch Committee charity Blood Cancer UK.*

### The Christmas Gift Service Donation

**Colin O'Flaherty** wrote to the congregation to express his thanks once again. The gifts donated at the Gift Service on the 1st of December 2024 were for the children of prisoners. The gifts were delivered to Colin's team who made sure an appropriate gift was delivered to each child.

Here is an excerpt from his letter of thanks.



*The gifts donated at the Gift Service*

*Dearest Friends,*

*Thank you, for your support for the Edinburgh Prison Christmas Gift Collection. Your kindness and generosity made sure that two hundred and twenty-three children had Christmas presents to open on Christmas morning.*

*The gifts were given out at the six Christmas parties organised between the family contact officers and the Barnardo's staff from the visitor's centre. The Christmas parties took place in the visitor's room in the prison allowing the children's parent or guardian to take part.*

*The number of children that received gifts was down on last year's wonderful achievement. This was because the number of children that passed through the visitor's centre was down on last year. We achieved our aim, which is to ensure that every child that visited the visitor's centre received Christmas presents.*

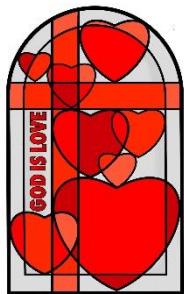
*I am already looking forward to this year's 2025 Christmas Gift Collection. It will be the fortieth year in a row that the gift collection started by Rev John Murie will have taken place.*

*Thank you again.*

*Colin*

## St Valentine's Day

### The Origin of St Valentine's Day



The legend..... The Roman Emperor Claudius II needed soldiers. He suspected that marriage made men want to stay at home with their wives, instead of fighting wars, so he outlawed marriage.

A kind-hearted young priest named Valentine felt sorry for all the couples who wanted to marry, but who couldn't. So secretly he married as many couples as he could – until the Emperor found out and condemned him to death. While he was in prison awaiting execution, Valentine showed love and compassion to everyone around him, including his jailer. The jailer had a young daughter who was blind, but through Valentine's prayers, she was healed. Just before his death in Rome on 14<sup>th</sup> February, he wrote her a farewell message signed 'From your Valentine.'

So, the very first Valentine card was not between lovers, but between a priest about to die, and a little girl, healed through his prayers.

## Holocaust Memorial Day 2025

Holocaust Memorial Day 2025 on the 27<sup>th</sup> of January marked 80 years since the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. More than 1.1 million people were murdered at Auschwitz-Birkenau, over 90% of whom were Jewish.

King Charles said at the ceremony at Auschwitz-Birkenau - *"The act of remembering the evil of the past remains a vital task"* and noted the *"depths to which humanity can sink when evil is allowed to flourish."* That knowledge should be used to inspire people to *"build a kinder and more compassionate world"*.

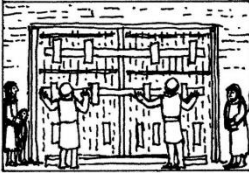
# Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

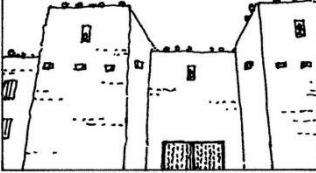
It can be read in the Bible in Joshua chapter 6 verses 1-27

Joshua led the Israelites across the river Jordan. They camped near the town of Jericho and prepared to fight.

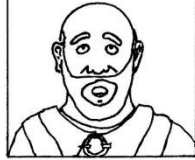
The people in Jericho locked the town gates.



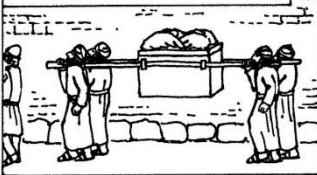
They thought they were safe.



God told Joshua what to do.



On the first day, the priests carried the sacred chest,



they blew trumpets, and walked round Jericho once.



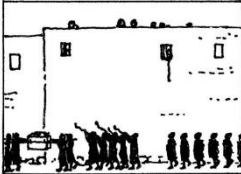
The army followed not saying a word.



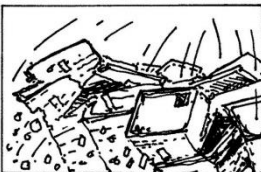
They did this for 6 days.



On the 7th day they walked round 7 times.

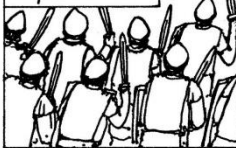


The army gave a victory shout!

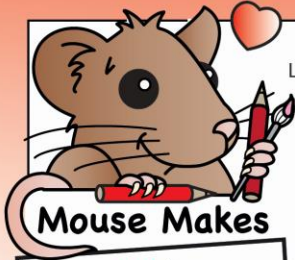


The walls of Jericho collapsed.

The army rushed into the town and captured it.



Jericho was destroyed.



## Mouse Makes

### "Love is

love is \_\_\_\_\_  
 It does not, \_\_\_\_\_  
 it does not \_\_\_\_\_  
 it is not \_\_\_\_\_  
 it does not \_\_\_\_\_

others, it is not self- \_\_\_\_\_

it is not easily \_\_\_\_\_

it keeps no record of \_\_\_\_\_

Love delights in \_\_\_\_\_

it always \_\_\_\_\_

from 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

The steadfast **love** of the Lord never \_\_\_\_\_;

His \_\_\_\_\_ never come to an end; they are new every \_\_\_\_\_

Lamentations 3:20-23

I pray... you will understand... the greatness of Christ's **love**,

how \_\_\_\_\_

and how \_\_\_\_\_

and how \_\_\_\_\_

that **love** is.

Ephesians 3:18-19

God is **love**.

whoever \_\_\_\_\_

in **love** \_\_\_\_\_

in God, and God \_\_\_\_\_

in them.

1 John 4:16

Give \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord, for He is \_\_\_\_\_

his steadfast **love** endures \_\_\_\_\_

Psalms 136:1

### HOW DOES GOD **LOVE** ME?

#### God sent me a saviour:

He sent His one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him.

1 John 4:9

#### God gave me His spirit:

He has given you the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His **love**.

Romans 5:5

#### God called me His child:

See what great **love** the Father has for us that He would call us His children.

1 John 1:3

### DID YOU KNOW?

Jesus told us to:

**LOVE** the Lord your God with all your **heart**, all your **soul** and with all your **mind**.

Matthew 22:37

**LOVE** your neighbour the same as you **love** yourself.

Matthew 22:39

GOD • **LOVE**

PATIENT • KIND

GRACIOUS • PEACE

JUST • TRUTHFUL

TRUSTING • LOYAL

HOPEFUL

PERSEVERES

ENDURES

HUMBLE

SELFLESS

PROTECTS • DEFENDS

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

 <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>

<p><b>Minister</b> Rev Fergus Cook 5 Blinkbonny Cres. Edinburgh EH4 3NB Tel: 0131 466 7503 <a href="mailto:fcook@churchofscotland.org.uk">fcook@churchofscotland.org.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Session Clerk</b> Eddie Thorn Tel: 0131 332 5702 <a href="mailto:sessionclerk@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk">sessionclerk@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Church Office</b> Tel: 0131 332 4431 <a href="mailto:secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk">secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk</a></p>
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([bulletin@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk](mailto:bulletin@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk))

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**For contributions to Kirk News**

([judith.mair@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:judith.mair@hotmail.co.uk)) or to the Church Office

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