

KIRK NEWS

August to October 2026
No. 848



BLACKHALL
ST. COLUMBA'S
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

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



The Lord supports those that stumble,
and lifts up those who are down. Ps 145:14

Autumn Highlights at Blackhall St Columba's

Festival of Flowers - Tour de 4 - fund raiser - page 19

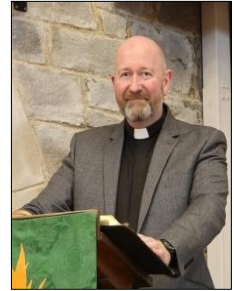
Music @ St Columba's – The Bristo Community Concert Band - page 25

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Awesomely Approachable The psalmist writes in Psalm 47:2, “For the Lord Most High is awesome, the great King over all the earth.”

What is it to be ‘awesome’, though? The word ‘awesome’ is used frequently nowadays. It is particularly evident in American culture, where everything from films to a pizza might be described as ‘awesome’.



The meaning of words has evolved over time. The Russian ruler Ivan the Terrible got his famous name because he was, in fact, ‘awesome’. In older times the word *terrible* meant something like awe-inspiring, or even terrifying. He was, in effect, Ivan the Awesome, meaning that he was a really powerful person whom you might respect, obey out of fear and generally leave alone and try to avoid. It is wholly appropriate that, as the word *terrible* evolved, it stuck with Ivan, as he was, by all accounts, a thoroughly nasty character.

In modern English translations of the Bible, the word *awesome* is used to describe God many times. This is a change from some older translations, such as the King James Version, which used words like *terrible*, *dreadful* or *fearful*. These are all attempts to translate Hebrew words that convey the idea of profound reverence, wonder and holy fear.

I think the word *awesome*, as we understand it today, is a far better description of the God that Jesus reveals to us in his ministry. The testimony of the Bible presents us with a truly awesome God: the Creator and Sustainer of all life, all-knowing and all-powerful and yet, at the same time, loving, merciful and forgiving. As important as all that is, through Jesus we are also introduced to a God who is approachable.

Even though God is approachable, I think he still deserves and commands our respect. One of the most amazing things about God, and something that sets him apart from every earthly ruler, is that he does not force our obedience.

He has given his creation—us—free will. God gives us the ability to choose him, or not.

Past generations of Christians understood and expressed this as ‘the fear of the Lord’. [Proverbs 1:7](#) tells us, “[The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.](#)”

Unfortunately, the word *fear* has also changed in meaning over the years. Today, when we speak of fear, we usually mean being frightened or anxious. We fear illness, war, financial uncertainty or the things that keep us awake at night. That is not the primary meaning of the biblical phrase *the fear of the Lord*.

To fear the Lord is not to be terrified that God is waiting to punish us for every mistake we make. If that were true, Jesus would never have encouraged people to call God “Father”. Throughout the Gospels we see Jesus welcoming sinners, eating with those whom society rejected, touching those considered unclean and offering forgiveness to people who thought they were beyond hope. Again and again, he showed us that God's heart is full of compassion.

At the same time, Jesus never reduced God to being merely a friendly companion. He taught us to pray, “[Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.](#)” God is our loving Father, but he is also holy. He is close to us, yet he is utterly different from us. He knows everything about us, loves us completely and still calls us to lives of holiness and faithfulness.

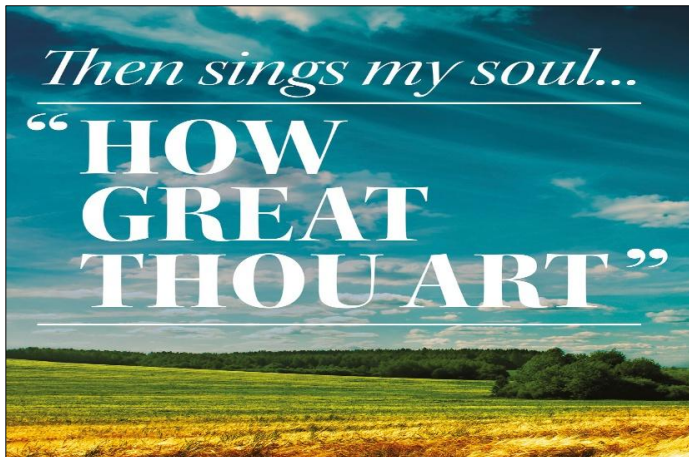
Perhaps a better way to understand the fear of the Lord is to think of standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon, gazing into a clear night sky filled with countless stars, or watching the sea in the middle of a storm. Such experiences remind us how small we are and how great the world is. They fill us with awe and wonder. We are not necessarily afraid, but we recognise that we are in the presence of something far greater than ourselves.

The God who created all of that is infinitely greater still. Yet the wonder of the Christian faith is that this awesome God wants to know us personally. He does not remain distant. In Jesus Christ he entered our world, shared our humanity, carried our sins to the cross and rose again so that we might share in his life.

That changes everything. We do not obey God because we are cowering in fear. We follow Christ because we have encountered the overwhelming love of the One who first loved us. Our reverence grows out of gratitude. Our worship flows from wonder. Our obedience is the response of children who know they are deeply loved by their heavenly Father.

So, when the Bible speaks about the fear of the Lord, it is inviting us into a relationship marked by both reverence and love. It reminds us never to take God lightly, while at the same time encouraging us never to doubt his welcome. The God who is awesome in power is also abundant in grace. He invites each one of us to come to him through Jesus Christ, not shrinking back in terror, but drawing near with confidence, trusting that the One who made the universe also knows us by name and delights to call us his own.

God bless all, **Fergus**



Sunday Worship



The Praise Singers



The Praise Band



Communion Sunday



Fergus on Pentecost



The sun streaming in through the stained-glass window



The Junior Singers

Kirk Session Report

The Kirk Session: The Kirk Session met on Tuesday 21 April, Tuesday 26 May and Tuesday 23 June 2026.

At the start of the meetings tributes were made by the Session Clerk to Elders who had passed away. Over the three months tributes were delivered for John Crombie, Jean Wishart and Dugald MacNeill.

Church Officers

It was decided that going forward the Church Officer role would be retitled Facilities Officer.

Congregational Roll: It was agreed to admit the following members by resolution of the Kirk Session: Alastair Ramsay and Mrs Katherine Ramsay.

Communication Committee: Hamish Mair intimated his wish to retire as Convener of the Communication Committee and was thanked for his commitment to the role. Session agreed to James Burr taking over from Hamish.

Correspondence: A note of thanks has been received from the following:

St Columba's Hospice for the proceeds from the Easter Services retiring collection, namely £729.

Fabric: It has been necessary to carry out essential repairs to the church roof. Three estimates were obtained and Session agreed that Bain & Irvine be instructed to carry out the work at a cost of £18,669 + VAT.

Finance: At the April meeting Adrian Johnston, Congregational Treasurer, presented a report on the Congregation's finances for the first three months of the year.

In summary: -

- Offerings were £900 lower than for the same period in 2025.
- Taking into account legacies (£7,500) there was a surplus of £8,139 year to date.
- Total funds stood at £374,000 as of 31 March.

Hall Convener: Ruth Laidlaw intimated her wish to retire as Hall Convener. It was agreed that Sheila Mackintosh would take over the role. Ruth was thanked for her work and the commitment given to the role.

Just One Thing: Michael Cockburn provided an update on the 'Just One Thing' initiative adding that since January to end May 1,616 items had been received from the Congregation and delivered to Ferryhill Primary School's 'Sharing Shelf' project. Session agreed that over the Summer holidays when the School is closed the donations will go to the Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre for their 'Larder Shelf'.

Presbytery Elder: Eddie Thorn was reappointed Presbytery Elder.

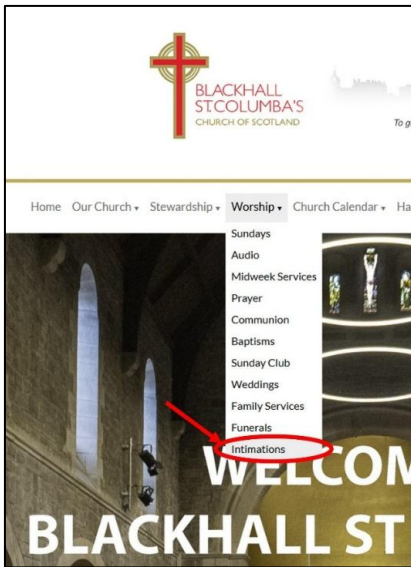
Presbytery Plan: Discussions with both the Presbytery Deployment Committee and Drylaw Church have been ongoing. Subsequent to the Kirk Session meeting on 23 June there was a further meeting when it was provisionally agreed that members of the Presbytery Deployment Committee would meet with both Kirk Sessions on Saturday 31 October 2026.

Soup 'n' Chat: Michael Cockburn reported that 'Soup 'n' Chat had now been running for three years and although numbers had declined what was offered was still much appreciated and enjoyed by those who attended. It was noted that extra drivers were much needed.

Kirk Session Dates 2026: The Kirk Session will meet on the following dates: -
22 September, 20 October, 8 December 2026

Eddie Thorn, Session Clerk

An Intimation about Intimations!



The weekly service intimations are a great way to keep in touch with everything going on in our Church. They are now available on the Blackhall St. Columba's website www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk

You can find intimations at the bottom of the "Worship" drop down menu - as shown.



Alternatively, you can use this QR Code

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 lbthwatt@yahoo.co.uk or Fergus Cook at 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.



CRAFT COFFEE MORNING

AT BLACKHALL ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH

HELD BY THE WATCH COMMITTEE

IN AID OF



Parkinson's UK

For every Parkinson's journey
in **EDINBURGH**



SATURDAY 26TH SEPTEMBER 2026

ADULTS £5.00 OVER 5 £1.00 UNDER 5 FREE

10.00 - 12.00 noon

ON SALE WILL BE ITEMS MADE
OF WOOD, GLASS, DESIGNER
JEWELLERY, HOME BAKING,
JAMS AND OTHER PRODUCE.

PLEASE HELP US RAISE
MONEY TO PROVIDE A
WELL NEEDED MEETING
PLACE FOR THOSE WITH
PARKINSON'S DISEASE IN
NORTH WEST EDINBURGH.



Tower Repairs

Scaffolding at Church Entrance

Many of you will have noticed the scaffolding erected beside the Church entrance. This gave a roofing company safe access up to the Tower and, in general, other aspects of the Church and Hall Roofs. While any missing slates or small leaks have been repaired when they were found, a general survey of the overall condition had not been done for a while. This especially applied to concerns with the Flat Roof on the Tower and other key areas.

Initially a 'Drone' survey presented pictures of the areas followed by a manual check. This led to a report on the conditions found and Kirk Session agreeing to fund the necessary repairs by the selected company.

The Tower itself was also increasingly becoming a 'Doocot' so the opportunity was also taken to engage a company that would clear up the mess, move the pigeons out and close up where they were getting in. Time will tell how effective these steps are in dissuading determined and clever birds.

In addition, this month, both blue notice boards in the grounds have been removed for refurbishment.

A busy spell of works but very worthwhile.

The pictures show the scaffolding and the rarely seen views from on top of the Tower.

Mike Whiteside with my thanks to Lindsay Duguid who took the lead on the Roof repairs



Tower scaffolding



Above and left: Views from the top of the tower

Blackhall St Columba's Singers

In the May Blackhall Bulletin, we mentioned that the Singers had accepted an invite to sing in the Telephone Choir Annual Concert in the Church Hill Theatre. We can now report that the choir performed really well and their confidence and obvious enthusiasm for singing was remarked upon by several members of the audience. In fact, one went so far as to say that for him, they were the stars of the show!

The choir starts up again, after their summer break, on Thursday 3rd September but they have already started planning their next "Musical Evening" in the church when they hope to perform, among other things, the "Rooster Rag" – watch this space!

If you know of anyone who enjoys singing and would be interested in joining our group, please pass on the following information. We now have two choir groups meeting on Thursdays. The Junior Singers (P3 – P7) meet in the upstairs hall from 3.45 to 4.30pm with the Senior Singers joining them at around 4.10pm. We do some work together then, when the Juniors leave to go home, the Seniors carry on till 4.50pm. For any more information, please contact Amy Donaldson, 07711 659 849.

Christian Aid Week at Blackhall St Columba's



Another successful Coffee Morning took place in May, with members of the Gardening Club, formerly the Horticultural Society, joining us and bringing a large selection of plants for sale.

Sales of generously donated baking raised £915. We are grateful to everyone who contributed or helped make the event such a success. Envelope donations of £868 brought the total sent to Christian Aid to £1,783.

Sheila Mackintosh

WATCH COMMITTEE Diary and Appeal

The time has come once again for the WATCH committee to organise our fundraising for 2026. This year we have chosen to support Parkinson's UK (Edinburgh branch). The branch aims to open a Social Cafe in NW Edinburgh. This vital service will provide individuals living with Parkinson's and their caregivers with a relaxed environment to gather, access support and share information.

Our **COIN COLLECTION** began at the beginning of July and with the help of our young folks and Frances, the coins continue to arrive each week. We are thankful to everyone who contributes (it's not easy to find coins these days!).

Our **CRAFT COFFEE MORNING** will be on Saturday the 26th of September from 10am until 12 noon. We will serve delicious coffee and pastries and you will be able to peruse the beautiful craft stalls including jewellery, glass ornaments, wooden artefacts, cake and provisions stalls, hand crafted crochet, knitting and sewing. There will also be a Raffle. **All donations of baking, provisions or crafts will be gratefully received.**

The **CHRISTMAS FAIR** (It's never too early) will be held on the 28th of November 2026 from 2pm until 4pm. Santa will be in attendance along with his Elf and helpers, more information will follow in the next edition of the Kirk News.

The Watch Committee appeals for **volunteers** to assist at the WATCH Coffee Morning and Christmas Fair. If you would like to lend a hand at the Coffee Morning or Christmas Fair then there are plenty of ways to get involved. Can you assist by serving coffee, contributing home baking, managing a stall or the dishwasher! Whether you can spare a whole morning or just a little bit of time, your help would be greatly appreciated. If you want to get involved then please get in touch with Lynn Bunney or Rosie Watt.

Lynn Bunney, WATCH Committee

Church Pilgrimage to Rosslyn Chapel



The Pilgrims

Twenty-nine people from Blackhall St Columba's enjoyed a short pilgrimage to Rosslyn Chapel on Wednesday 15th of July 2026. After some free time to explore the grounds and hear historical stories from some junior guides, we were given a formal guided talk about the history of the Chapel. This was followed by a short time of worship led by the local Episcopalian Priest. Once everyone had finished at the Chapel, we made our way over to The Original Rosslyn Inn where we enjoyed lunch before heading off in our various ways. The sun was out and it was a wonderful time especially for those who had never visited the Chapel before. Thanks to Ruth Laidlaw and Shona Cook for all their organisation and to all who came and thanks especially to those who gave others lifts.

Fergus Cook

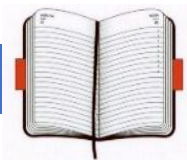


Rosslyn Chapel



The Pilgrimage Lunch

Church Diary



August 2026

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

September 2026

6 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
13 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
20 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
27 th	10.30am	Morning Worship

October 2026

4 th	10.30am	Morning Worship – Sacrament of Holy Communion
4 th	3pm	Short service of Communion for those unable to attend the 10.30am service.
11 th	10.30am	Harvest Thanksgiving
18 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
25 th	10.30am	Morning Worship

November 2026

1 st	10.30am	Morning Worship
8 th	10.30am	Service of Remembrance
11 th	10.45am	Wednesday morning - Service of Remembrance at the War Memorial on Remembrance Day

*Please note the 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

Church Family News

We welcome new members to our congregation.

New members admitted by Profession of Faith

Miss Heather Cook, Mrs Amy Kennedy, Mr Cory Kennedy

New member admitted by Resolution of the Kirk Session

Mr Alastair Ramsay

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

May 2026

7th Mr John Crombie

11th Miss Jean Wishart

28th Mr Roderick Dee

June 2026

16th Mrs Katherine Ramsay

21st Mrs Irene Mason

22nd Mrs Anne Burton

July 2026

29th Mr Kenneth Mason

31st Mrs Anne Pake



Wedding

30th May 2026: Helen Hunter to Jason Hassard



Helen and Jason were married on Saturday 30th of May 2026 in Blackhall St Columba's Church. The ceremony was conducted by Rev Fergus Cook.

Helen and Jason are photographed at the church entrance.



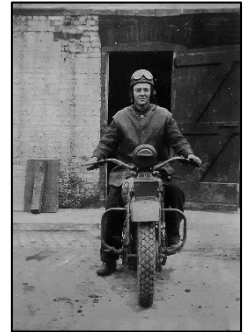
Sheila Macintosh, Roll Keeper

Monte Cassino Remembrance

On Friday 22nd May 2024, local residents Tom and Gillian Atkinson visited Blackhall St Columba's with their Canadian visitors, Rev Dr Sharon Wilson (cousin of Gillian) and her husband Rick Woodhouse. Sharon is a recently retired minister of the United Church of Canada and her ancestors lived in Auchterarder, Scotland. They were interested to hear about our Monte Cassino cross and our connection with the Monte Cassino Society because Sharon's father, Russell Wilson, fought in the battle of Monte Cassino.

Russell Wilson was a dispatch rider with the Canadian Royal Canadian Corps of Signals. At the battle of Monte Cassino, he had to take cover in a ditch. The Germans had destroyed the village across the Liri River and were using the rubble to provide cover for their snipers guarding against Allied access to the various temporary bridges. He had to stay there for three days, because every time he raised his head it attracted enemy fire. Fortunately, Russell survived and went on to serve in Belgium, Holland and Germany.

After the war, Russell returned to Hamilton, Ontario where he married Lillian Faichney and began a 40-year career in the steel industry working for DOFASCO as a manufacturing engineer. Like most Italian Campaign Veterans, he shared little about that time in his life. In his eighties he was diagnosed with PTSD related to his WWII service.



*Russell Wilson - Image
provided by Rev Dr
Sharon Wilson*



Tom, Sharon, Rick and Gillian

In 2023, Rick and Sharon travelled to Italy to explore the places that left such a penetrating mark on her father. Sicily, Ortona, Monte Cassino, Anzio, Rome and Florence today are remarkable places which retain so many memorials to the sacrifice of people, both combatants and civilians.

Tom, Gillian, Sharon and Rick enjoyed their visit to Blackhall St Columba's and loved hearing about how Rev R.W. Watson Mathewson brought the "Cross of Monte Cassino" to Blackhall St Columba's.

James Burr

The Monte Cassino Remembrance Service 2026



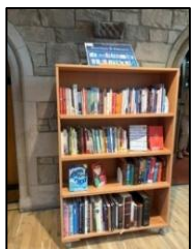
Blackhall St Columba's commemorated the Monte Cassino Campaign in our annual Service of Remembrance on the 16th of May 2026. The service was conducted by Rev Fergus Cook.

Our Congregational Photograph



Our Congregation

Our Church Library



Have you browsed through the book collection in our church library? We invite you to look at the selection available to you at coffeetime next Sunday!

Kathryn reviewed a book from the collection.

"What is the Bible", by Rob Bell. Harper Collins Publishers, 2017

"Simple yet profound, entertaining and humorous, Bell's brilliant book demonstrates how over time the Bible writers

progressively grasped and revealed the nature of God. He exposes the real meaning, context and connection behind difficult tales, such as the Akedah, Noah's Ark, or Jonah and the Whale. He does not circumvent the violence of the Old Testament. Jesus' Life is placed into his contemporary Jewish context so that it illuminates His speech and actions.

There is no impenetrable theology. The book is accessible to all, and Bell's insights are so fascinating it is difficult to put it down. Be prepared to have your mind blown open. So many of our questionings about fact or fiction or relevance will be illuminated. The best book on reading the Bible I have read."

Kathryn B Westbrook

Church Picnic in the Park



On Sunday 14th June around twenty of the congregation and three dogs met in Ravelston Park after church for a picnic. Although to begin with it was quite dull, the sun soon came out and it was very pleasantly warm.

After lunch and a good variety of chat,

Shona offered us the challenge of two puzzles which we took up with a fair bit of head scratching and collaboration. The choice was either a story in which was hidden the names of around seventeen books of the Bible or a sheet of dingbats – puzzles made of letters which make a word or phrase.

A most enjoyable afternoon which will hopefully be repeated next year.

Lilian Cockburn

A Festival of Flowers

30th October - 1st November 2026



A flower display from a previous Festival of Flowers

Blackhall St Columba's Church will host a Festival of Flowers in support of the 'Tour de 4' cycle event, the brainchild of Sir Chris Hoy, which was set up following his diagnosis with Stage 4 cancer in 2023. Proceeds from the Festival will be distributed among five cancer charities nominated by the 'Tour de 4': Prostate Cancer UK, Breast Cancer Now, Maggie's, Cure Leukaemia and Macmillan Cancer Support.

The Festival of Flowers, including refreshments, live music & crafts displays will be held in Blackhall St Columba's Church on:

Friday 30th October 10:00 - 18:00

Saturday 31st October 10:00 - 18:00

Sunday 1st November 14:00 - 17:00.

Entry is free, but donations would be appreciated.
If arriving by car please, please park to avoid causing inconvenience to residents.



www.tourde4.com

For more information, or if you or a group wish to sponsor a display, please contact **Rosemary Kemp** flowerfestival26@outlook.com

Thursday 17th September at 7pm - (date to be confirmed) Community Conversations - The Anxious Generation

We continue our topical conversation series with a discussion on how today's technology- and social media-focused society affects children's mental health. There will be a presentation with an opportunity to ask questions too. If you are concerned about this issue and want to know more, please come along. This is open to members of the church and the wider community and is free of charge.

Saturday 3rd October: Music @ St. Columba's – The Bristo Community Concert Band

Please join us in the sanctuary at 7pm to enjoy this fantastic local community band, established in 2014, which enjoys playing and performing a wide range of music. There are no tickets needed for this event but donations for the band and towards the refreshments will be gratefully received.

Sunday 11th October: Harvest Lunch

This will follow the Harvest Service and take place in the large hall. It will be a wonderful way to share what the Lord has provided with friends old and new. Further details will follow later.

Friday 30th October to Sunday 1st November: Festival of Flowers

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- Friday 30th October 10:00 - 18:00
- Saturday 31st October 10:00 - 18:00
- Sunday 1st November 14:00 - 17:00

Saturday 28th November: WATCH Committee Christmas Fair from 2-4pm The annual Christmas Fair will take place once again in the church buildings with all the favourite stalls like the book stall and the home baking stall along with the popular goodie baskets and the tearoom etc. Come along and support our marvellous committee which is raising funds this year for Parkinson's Disease UK. Please refer to the church website for more details nearer the time.

Sunday 6th December: Movies @ St Columba's

Join us at 6.30pm for a modern classic Christmas movie, **'Elf'** (PG). This feel-good movie is a family favourite and stars Will Ferrell as Buddy the Elf, a human raised by Santa's elves. Please feel free to dress (up) as you wish. We defy you not to leave smiling and with a spring in your step.

Seasonal refreshments will be served. There is no charge but donations to cover costs will be gratefully received.

Thursday 17th and Friday 18th December: Nativity (further details to be confirmed nearer the time)

This year our 'Nativity' is going to look a little different. We will be staging a performance called 'It was on a Starry Night' in the sanctuary each evening at 5.30pm. As well as our joyful, musical performance of 'the greatest story ever told', there will be an escape room for children aged 8 upwards, a tearoom and our wonderful biennial **Christmas Tree Festival**. What a fantastic way to help us all prepare for the big day itself!

Art Club

Our annual exhibition was held in May and we were delighted to raise £1,491 this year for Maggie's Centre in Edinburgh. We thank everyone who came along during the week to support the event. Club members meet weekly on a Monday morning and our term starts up again on Sept 7th. Please contact Membership Secretary Joyce Whytock if you are interested in joining.

Family.whytock@blueyonder.co.uk.



The Art Club Exhibition Gallery

From the Flower Team



The Flower Team would like to thank everyone who contributes in any way to the Flowers in church and to those who take them out to the people of the Parish.

The flowers are a marvellous and particular example of God's amazing beauty and bounty: growing examples of what is available on our marvellous planet. They bring comfort, joy and solace to so many. Those who help to do this in whatever way are spreading so much to so many.

Thank you

Alison Hewat

Christmas Celebration

*** SAVE THE DATES ***

A Christmas Celebration 'It was on a Starry Night' Thursday 17th/ Friday 18th December 2026

It may seem early to mention Christmas, but it is never too soon to save the date for a special

festive celebration. This year, Blackhall St Columba's Church is doing something a little different, and we are delighted to share our plans so you can add 'It was on a Starry Night' to your diary.

We warmly welcome people of all ages to Blackhall St Columba's Church, at the heart of the Blackhall community, to experience our Christmas celebration for themselves.

Here are the important details-

What - A CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION CALLED 'IT WAS ON A STARRY NIGHT'

Where - BLACKHALL ST COLUMBA'S CHURCH

When - THURSDAY 17th and FRIDAY 18th DECEMBER 2026 at 5.30pm

On the last Thursday and Friday before Christmas (just as schools close for the holidays), throughout the day and in the early evening, we will be spreading the Good News by hosting this performance of the Greatest Story Ever Told in our sanctuary. We want members of our community to join us in finding out the true meaning of Christmas told in word and in song. Hear the Angel Gabriel's message, discover what it meant for Mary and Joseph and see how the shepherds reacted. Encounter King Herod and end your journey in Bethlehem in the stable to discover the most wonderful gift we have ever been given. After the performance, we are also offering a brand-new Christmas Nativity Escape Room for the older children who come along. There will be seasonal treats and refreshment available AND our biennial **Christmas Tree Festival** in the large hall.

There couldn't be a better way to enjoy Advent and start your Christmas celebrations!

We look forward to seeing many of you there.

Shona Cook





*The Pulpit Fall
at Pentecost*

Pentecost Choir Collaboration

Although we are neighbours, our choir and that of Davidsons Mains have never, in my time, worked together on a common service. So, it was with some excitement and anticipation that Phil Coad, organist at D' Mains, and I started a conversation before Christmas 2025 about doing some sort of joint service.

Both churches have commitments over the Easter period so it was agreed we should have a joint choral service at 6pm on Pentecost Sunday evening on the 24th of May. Both choirs worked hard independently preparing the songs and then we held a couple of practices where we came together for the first time in the weeks before the event.

On the evening Phil and I shared the joyful task of accompanying the pieces sung by the 29-strong joint choir. We were thrilled to see 72 in the audience which was sensitively led by ministers Fergus Cook and Dan Robertson using the Scriptures to explain what Pentecost is about. The choir sang a mix of pieces ranging from classical John Rutter "I Will Sing With the Spirit" to the stirring Brooklyn Tabernacle "Total Praise". The congregation joined in heartily with several hymns and the time together was rounded off with tasty refreshments and fellowship between the two churches.

We hope to repeat this success at some other time and we will be in touch once the plans are made.



Above: Phil Coad the Director of Music at Davidson's Mains Parish Church

Left: Donald Cameron conducts the combined choirs of Blackhall St Columba's and Davidsons Mains Parish Church



The Bristo Community Concert Band

Music @ St Columba's has one big event planned for the autumn and that is the **Bristo Community Concert Band on Saturday 3rd October at 7pm**. This band brings people of all

ages from all over Edinburgh and they really produce a remarkably competent performance. I heard them for the first time last year and immediately decided to book them for our series. This is the first date they could give me. If you love good music from a wide variety of styles from classics to American Songbook then put the date in your diary. As usual there is no charge but donations will go to help the band as they give a lot of their time to charitable causes.

They have basic rules for joining in and you might be interested to know their guidelines! However, do not be fooled into thinking this is sounds like an amateur band it is not!

Golden Rules for Ensemble Playing

1. Everyone should play the same piece.
2. Stop at every repeat sign and discuss in detail whether to take the repeat or not. Listeners will love this a lot!
3. Carefully tune your instrument before playing. That way you can play out of tune with a clear conscience.
4. Take your time turning pages.
5. The right note at the wrong time is a wrong note and vice-versa.
6. If everyone gets lost except you, follow those who get lost.
7. If a passage is difficult, slow it down. If it's easy, speed it up. Everything will work itself out in the end.
8. If you are completely lost, stop everyone and say, "I think we should tune".
9. Happy are those who have not perfect pitch, for the kingdom of music is theirs.
10. If the ensemble must stop because of you, explain in detail why you got lost. Everyone will be very interested.
11. A wrong note played timidly is a wrong note. A wrong note played with authority is an interpretation.
12. When everyone else has finished playing, you should not play any notes you have left.

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

News from Connect – Sundays at 6pm

Our Worship Team is responsible for sketching out, under guidance from Fergus Cook, the shape of the services throughout the year. You will see a list we have just agreed below. However, occasionally we came up with a new idea and seek Fergus' agreement. There is a "Connect Group" which meets on Sundays at 6pm for just over an hour and we take time to consider a range of interesting topics and share our insights. Last year we used the Bible Society's "Bible Course" which was an 8 week walk through the whole Bible. – yes, the whole thing. It was presented on video by Dr Andrew Ollerton and he showed us a visual way of seeing the layout from Genesis to Revelation. Each week we considered another part of the Bible and then he showed how it all is pulled together with Jesus Christ as its object. At the end of the series on March 26th, we discussed - what next! Dr Ollerton also has a series taking viewers through the book of Romans. Despite this being one of the most difficult books in the Bible to understand, it is also the most important one for Christians to understand as it shows us the basis of our faith and the grace of God as demonstrated in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. After a short break following Easter, we began this series, with around 30 members from our church and a few from Drylaw Parish Church meeting on Sundays. Together, we have discussed deep theological topics and grown in confidence in the foundations of our faith, seeing that there is no conflict between scientific and historical evidence and that faith grounded in historical fact is not a leap in the dark, but a logical step in understanding.

We paused for the summer on 21 June and will meet again in the autumn. Everyone is welcome to join us. If you would like to watch the series before deciding, search for "The Romans Course Session 1" on YouTube. If you are not sure how to do that come

along when we announce the date and you will enjoy sharing a new experience with friends over a cup of tea or coffee.

At the end of July, some of the group came together for a second "Re-Connect" evening, at the home of Bill and Maha Campbell. We shared holiday stories past and present before enjoying an absolute feast of good things provided by the hosts.

Donald Cameron



Connect enjoying a catch up and some hospitality

Special events at Blackhall St Columba's



The St David's Brass Band returned to play some of their favourite pieces. They will be back to celebrate Christmas!



Blackhall St Columba's hosted the "come and sing" Mozart Requiem organised by the Jubilo Choir and led by choir director Paul Gudgin, on the 6th of June, raising funds for Edinburgh Direct Aid International.



The Coffee Morning, plant and produce sales in May raised £1,783 for Christian Aid.

Around St Columba's

Scottish Country Dancing

Traditionally, the Blackhall Country Dance group has taken a long summer break, while several of the regular dancers are involved in the local bowling club or the croquet club at Balgreen.

Last year, however, some of the newer dancers asked if we might continue for a bit longer - and, because that proved so successful, we again ran six extra weeks before the June holiday weekend. With smaller numbers, we had the opportunity to practise some of the less familiar formations and we enjoyed learning dances that were past favourites of individual members.



We extended our final evening with a programme including all the dances we had learned, and a DIY picnic to share. It was an ideal time to welcome our Link Elder, Mrs Betty Watt, for her annual visit. As a former dancer herself, she joined in with a few of the dances during the evening but also took time to speak to many of the individual members.

From mid-June to the end of August, three of us from the Blackhall group went along to the "Summer Dancing Edinburgh" evenings at Fairmilehead Church. With live music from a variety of well-known accordionists, there were always lots of participants from around the other local groups and beyond, so friendships were made and renewed and we were able to "Keeeeeeeeep dancing!" There was also a very enjoyable "Strawberries and Cream Dance", run by RSCDS Edinburgh at Reid Memorial Church.

Now, however, I am busy planning for our own group re-starting in September. It will be good to get back together again and there will be two "Open Nights", at 7pm on 17th and 24th, if any of you would like to come and have a go..... Finally, I have been trying to find out when the Blackhall Country Dance group first met. Margaret Brown tells me it was well-established by the time she joined in the sixties. Any advance on that? Thanks!

Muriel Stenhouse

Buon Appetito

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 **Giuliano's, 18-19 Union Place on Friday 18th September 2026 at 6pm.** If you are interested in coming along, please contact Shona Cook by email (shonacook505@gmail.com) or mobile (07981 970054) by the end of August. No deposit is required for this one. There are a limited number of places and so don't delay. Get in touch to secure your place.

I am planning to have the following one on Friday 20th November 2026. I have not booked this yet but am thinking of Piccolino's at 103 High Riggs. A £10 deposit will be required for Piccolino's and I will take names and deposits now for that one too.

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

The Shed Boys



This photograph shows the **Shed Boys** whilst they were putting up a banner for the Christian Aid coffee morning and plant sale.

They are a dedicated group of busy workers who meet regularly and I believe, live behind the stage. Their work is carried out quietly throughout the year and is greatly appreciated.

Marge Whitehouse

The Shed Boys

Cameo Club

Members and volunteers enjoy meeting up every second week in the church halls, when delicious pancakes and coffee please all. New faces are always welcome whether to pass a pleasant Friday morning or give help.

Entertainment recently has included our successful Summer Outing to North Berwick. Photos of this can be viewed on the church website at blackhallstcolumba.org.uk – go to Home>Our Church>Photos. We were also guests at Northcare Suites on Telford Road where we were royally treated to a coffee morning. Musical entertainment at Cameo included the Edinburgh Telephone Choir Ensemble when there were favourites from well-loved musicals such as South Pacific and Oklahoma.

Our entertainment programme has been arranged for the next six months. It includes a new performer who will be playing the harp.

Further information can be obtained from the number below.

Fiona Drinnan 0131 343 6762

Knit and Natter

After a busy and productive session, we are taking a break over the Summer.

We will be starting up again on Monday September the 7th and we are always happy to welcome new members to our group. Do you enjoy knitting? Would you like to learn? Please don't think you might not be good enough. Why don't you come and join us in the Sanctuary some Monday evening at 7.30pm to find out more about what we do and enjoy the natter over tea or coffee and biscuits.



If you would like more information, please contact Lilian at stcknitnnatter@gmail.com

Tuesday Topics

As we did last year, we will meet monthly in the Small Hall at 7.30 pm. We hope our regular attenders will come again and hope to welcome anyone (both men and women) who would like to join us. The membership stays at £20 for the year or £3 per meeting if you just come occasionally. Talks usually last about 45 minutes and then after questions, we have a cup of tea or coffee. Do come and meet new friends. You don't need to be a member of the church to come. We welcome anyone from the local area who is looking for friendship and interesting talks.

- We start on **Tuesday October 6th** with a talk by **Linda McDonald 'All the Women'** (The story of MUMs Recipes – Malawi Underprivileged Mothers). This will be an update since the last time she spoke to us about 12 years ago.
- On **November 3rd**, **Dave Burke's** talk '**Faraday Base, Antarctica 1981 – 1984**' will be about the experiences he had when he worked there.
- On **December 1st**, **Andrew Laing**, senior keeper in the carnivore team, will speak about '**Tiger introductions and breeding programmes at Edinburgh Zoo**'.

We are also arranging our usual post-Christmas lunch in January.

For more information contact **Lyndy Paton** on 07460212174 or **Sheila Mackintosh** on 07774717968.

Blackhall Children's Sports Day



Blackhall St Columba's Church was represented at the Blackhall Children's Sports Day in Ravelston Park on the 6th of June. Our usual stall was in place this year. Amy and Sally Foster are seen manning the stall in the photograph.

Around St Columba's

FreshStart Although the summer tends to bring a slowdown in requests for Household Starter Packs and Pantry Food Shop Membership, this never lasts when the schools go back. FreshStart is already preparing for this post summer spike. Stocks of starter pack items have been building up, but these will soon be used up so your continuing support is very much appreciated by FreshStart.

As always, any donations of household goods can be handed in on Friday mornings between 10 and 11.30am to one of our team of volunteers on duty. Regarding this team we are looking to recruit more volunteers from the church and community. Duties are not more than 5/6 times a year and further information is available if you contact us as directed below. FreshStart would appreciate you joining the local team.

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

Lilian & Michael

FreshStart Co-ordinators

C/O Church Office

0131 332 4431

Volunteer Appeal - Tour de 4, Festival of Flowers

Your help is needed. Blackhall St Columba's Church is hosting the **Tour de 4 Festival of Flowers** on Friday 30th and Saturday 31st of October from 10am to 6pm and on Sunday 1st of November from 2pm to 5pm. We require assistance to prepare and serve teas, coffee and cakes and help to set up and clear up. We also need a team of Stewards to welcome, guide and befriend visitors to the Festival of Flowers. If you can give of your time and talents to facilitate a successful Festival of Flowers then **Lynn Bunney and Ruth Laidlaw** would be pleased to hear from you in person or by email ruthlaidlaw@gmail.com

"Soup n Chat"

WE ARE BACK FROM OUR SUMMER BREAK.

Come along on any of the following dates and join this friendly, happy group. Bring a neighbour and even if not a soup fan the "Chat" is always good.

Friday 28th August - 12noon to 1.30pm in the Large hall

Friday 11th September - 12noon to 1.30pm in the Small Hall

Friday 25th September - 12noon to 1.30pm in the Large Hall

Friday 9th October - 12noon to 1.30pm in the Small Hall

Friday 23rd October - 12noon to 1.30pm in the Large Hall

Michael Cockburn

Lead and admin Volunteer



Christmas Tree Festival

We are having another Christmas Tree Festival in December (17th, 18th and 19th 2026) so, we would like to invite your group/organisation to take part and decorate a tree.

If you would like to take part and for further information, please contact Ruth Laidlaw. ruthlaidlaw@gmail.com



Blackhall St Columba's Golf Outing 2026

Once again, the Annual Golf Outing was held at Ravelston Golf Club on the 26th of June, there were 15 players and 18 staying for a delicious high tea. Our thanks go to Ravelston for a most enjoyable day.

The winners this year were: -

Involvement "88" Golf Cup: James Burr

Murrayfield Ladies Cup: Jenny Clark, 2nd Frances Douglas

Murrayfield Cup: Graham Patterson, 2nd Matt McGowan, 3rd Fergus Cook

9 Hole Prize: Sally Foster

Nearest the Pin: 18th James Burr

Longest Drive: 17th Graham Patterson

Thank you to Murrayfield House for their sponsorship.

David Thomson and Frances Douglas, Secretary



The Competitors - The Golf Outing 2026

JUST ONE THING

Since January this year, under the initiative called “Just One Thing” the donations for the Ferryhill Primary School Sharing Shelf have significantly increased. Thank you for supporting many low income families just a short walk from our doors.

Between January and 30th June (start of the school holidays) 1,868 items were delivered to Ferryhill Primary School for the “Sharing Shelf”. The benefit to the families cannot be stressed enough and less hungry children will be better learners.

During the summer we deliver the donations to the Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre who run a Larder/sharing shelf operation which many of the Ferryhill School families can use. We are grateful for this working partnership so please keep the donations coming in.

When the schools return in mid-August, we will revert to delivering to the Ferryhill Primary School sharing shelf. Although most donations come in on a Sunday if you are at the church during the week and want to donate an item, please speak to the church officer who will ensure it goes to the collecting box. We suggest the following items for donation which are always in high demand;

Tinned items e.g. beans, tomatoes, vegetables, cold meat, spaghetti, fruit, and rice pudding. Tinned or packet soup.

Rice or pasta or cereal.

Jam/chocolate spread.

Tea/Instant Coffee.

Sugar.

Thank you for your support.

Michael Cockburn
James Burr



Blackhall St Columba's Mid-Week PEACE service

We are currently on a summer break but we resume on Wednesday 16th September at 12 noon in the Small Hall. Our first service will be Communion and this will be led by Rev. Fergus Cook and will be followed by a soup lunch. The theme for this year is **"Our journey of Faith"** and the syllabus is as follows.

PEACE Service Syllabus for 2026-2027

September 16th - Communion - Rev Fergus Cook
September 30th - Journeys of Faith - Muriel Stenhouse
October 14th - Journey to the Pulpit - Rev Derek Munn
October 28th - Pilgrim Journey to Assisi - Margaret Brown
November 11th - Journey to Peace - Rev Fergus Cook
November 25th - Charity Focus - Parkinson's Society
December 9th - Journey to Bethlehem - Shona Cook
January 6th - Map for the Journey - Muriel Stenhouse
January 20th - Journeying on the Rocky Path - Doreen Barker
February 10th - Journey into Parish Ministry - Rev Shahrukh Gill
February 24th - Pilgrim Journey, the Camino de Santiago - Ruth Laidlaw
March 10th - Journey to Kenya – Ripple Effect - Diana Porterfield
March 24th - Journey to the Cross - Martin Pearce
April 7th - Climbing the Mountains - Sandy Horn
April 21st - Journey to Wonderland - Pam and Paul Howorth
May 5th - Personal Pilgrimage - Alison Hewat
May 12th – Communion - Rev Fergus Cook

We are always looking for volunteers and we are especially in need of some extra drivers. We would like to thank everyone who currently volunteers either by driving, making/serving lunch, playing the piano, providing AV and leading worship, everyone's contribution is greatly appreciated. If you might be able to help either on a regular or ad hoc basis, please contact Ruth Laidlaw ruthlaidlaw@gmail.com

During the summer break we came together over coffee and home baking.

We look forward to welcoming you in September.

Around St Columba's

PEACE Mid-week Service Photo- album



Our mid-week PEACE Service participants enjoyed some summer baking and chat in the Sanctuary this summer.



Singers Wanted!

As Christmas approaches and our church prepares for the festive season, we are looking to grow our choir. Come and sing with us- rehearsal details are being arranged. We welcome singers of all ranges, with a particular need for male voices. Our assistant organist and choir director, Elizabeth Smith, would be delighted to see you in the choir pews, helping lift our praises to the rafters...

Data Protection

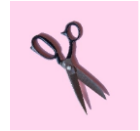
This is my annual rant about protecting our data.

There are only a few things we **MUST** do to comply with the law

1. Keep lists safely so that they are not visible to other people.
2. Delete or shred lists when you no longer have a need for them e.g. when you come off a rota or when a new version is sent to you.



3. Don't share other people's details unless there is a good reason for the task in hand.



If there is any doubt about any of this, please ask me what the rules are.

Enough people are being scammed that we should not add to the potential by giving away details through careless habits.

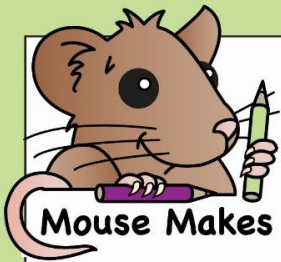


Alison Hewat

EDINBURGH FLORAL ART CLUB

Following a successful and enjoyable coffee morning at Blackhall St Columba's in June we are looking forward to our first meeting of the new session on **Friday 11th of September at 2pm in the large hall** when we will welcome Kirstin Coltman from Musselburgh whose demonstration is titled: "My Journey with Flowers". In October, we meet on Friday 9th, same time and place, and Regina O'Regan from Kinross will be our demonstrator, her demo is called "A Whole New World".

We are a friendly bunch, our meetings start at 2pm and finish around 4pm, we raffle the arrangements and enjoy refreshments after the demonstration. Visitors are welcome (£10) and new members, too (£60 per annum). If anyone wishes more information about our syllabus for the coming year (when we will celebrate our 75th Anniversary, we are one of the oldest flower clubs in the country) or simply would like to know more about the Club, then please contact our Chairman, **Suzie Stark**, on 07888 942561.



READ
John 15:1-17

How many
times does Jesus
use the word
FRUIT?

What does
Jesus command?
To _____
one another.
John 15:12,17

THE TRUE VINE

Who is the vine?

John 15:1

What does Jesus
ask us to do?

"Go and bear

_____"

John 15:16

What happens
to the branches
that do not remain
in the vine?

Thrown into the

and

How many
times does Jesus
command us
to **LOVE**
one another?

John 15:6

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

JESUS • I AM • TRUE • VINE • FATHER
GARDENER • FRUIT • FRUITFUL
BRANCH • PRUNES • CUT • WITHERS
CLEAN • THROWN AWAY • FIRE • BURNS
REMAIN • ABIDE • DISCIPLES • JOY

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

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Publication deadlines

For contributions to Blackhall Bulletin:

bulletin@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk

December 2026 issue - contributions by October 25th, 2026.

For contributions to Kirk News:

Please send contributions to the Editor: judith.mair@hotmail.co.uk

November 2026 issue contributions by 16th October 2026.

We are happy to accept articles on any relevant subject.

Thank you to James Burr, our church photographer.

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