

Cornerstone

The Quarterly Magazine of Strathblane Parish Church of Scotland

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Advent Message

Rev John Wilson, Locum Minister

As we approach the season of Advent in our church calendar our minds turn to special celebrations. But let me ask you a question. When did you look up to the sky at night?

When we look up on a clear night, what do we see? We can see the moon and the millions of stars in the sky that are thousands of light years away. We enjoy them and admire the beauty of the many galaxies.

For a moment or two, let us think about a star, not in the sky but in our lives.

Do you remember the star you found on your school homework as a child, when you had produced good work? Or does the word star turn your mind to the world of entertainment or sport, that star performer or player whom you think is wonderful? Or maybe it will be a star that has significance for some but can also bring memories. The Star of David is the symbol of the Jewish faith. Alas it was used in a derogatory way during the war. This is a star that maybe still brings back sad memories.

Often it was by the stars that sailors navigated their ships on their journey from place to place. No satellites to send signals and no computers to receive them and so advise them where they were. Even as we maybe do when are using our Satnav.

I was challenged by a statement that said:



"Find a way to look into the sky and worship God."

In our day we can learn so much about the stars and galaxies. We can use optical instruments of varying sizes to look to the heavens.

We may well remember a very important star. A star that was so bright that it stood out from all the rest around it. It was seen by, some say Wisemen, others say Kings. The number who followed that star is uncertain. We assume three because there were three gifts. But that star led these men to the very place where Jesus was. They came to worship the baby who was known as the King of kings.

Over the Sundays in Advent, we too will be worshipping that same King. That Saviour grew up and fulfilled a significant act that can affect our lives. Yes, we celebrate how he came as a baby; but later He died in our place to be the Saviour of the world. Let us praise and glorify Jesus in all our services.

May I on behalf of my wife, Elizabeth, and myself, wish you all a very happy, joyful and safe Christmas and blessings into 2024.

John

Church Family

Sent with our prayers:

by certificate of transfer:

Mrs Avril Lawson 26th August 2023

Mrs Cathy Adams 1st October 2023

But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1: 7

Welcomed to our family:

by certificate of transfer:

Mrs Alison Morris 27th August 2023

Deaths

Mrs Margaret Smith 15th November 2023

Now the dwelling place of God is with men, and He will live with them and be their God. Re 21:3

Letter from the Interim Moderator Peter Murdoch

Dear Friends,

As we look forward to Christmas and a New Year, we remember the Light of the World and thank God for the hope he gives us through his son Jesus

I am most grateful for the warm welcome and support I have received from your office-bearers, elders and members I have been impressed by their dedicated work in supporting the worship, prayer care and outreach of the congregation as well as diligence shown in stewardship of property and finance. I am especially thankful for the invaluable spiritual and pastoral leadership shown by the Rev John Wilson as your locum minister. I am encouraged by the recent meeting of Strathendrick Teens, Scripture Union starting in the Church and other activities with our younger people.

Even in the short time I have been associated with you, I have also been very impressed and thankful for the administrative help given in so many ways by Traci Leven, who is stepping down from the role following her move to Torrance. We wish her every blessing in the future and in the meantime Lynne and colleagues are looking to see how the various responsibilities might be covered going forward.

I have promised to keep members informed of progress made towards planned readjustment. Representatives of Presbytery's planning com-

mittee have had an initial meeting with the Kirk Session to discuss the Planning process and in particular the proposed linkage of Strathblane with Killearn congregations. Presbytery are having a similar meeting with the Killearn Kirk Session. Five of our session have had a very cordial meeting with Killearn counterparts last month and meet again on 16th November exploring and preparing a potentially mutually acceptable framework for linkage. The two congregations are getting to know each other better and the recent pulpit exchange was part of this process. In due course, probably in the New Year, an electoral roll will be prepared prior to votes by session and membership including adherents on formal proposals one Sunday after morning worship some time later.

Please continue to encourage, support and pray for all in the congregation and for our neighbours.

The prophet Isaiah wrote "Forget the former things: do not dwell in the past. See I am doing a new thing!" I pray that not only might you all enjoy and appreciate the joy and light of the world brought to us through the coming of Jesus Christ, but that we might also discern and treasure the new things-and blessings that God has in store for us in coming months and the year ahead.

Wishing you a Happy Christmas and every Blessing in the coming year.

Peter

Our interim moderator, Peter Murdoch, has very ably and helpfully, written about our latest steps in the matter of linkage and we are grateful to him for this.

In addition, a small group from Sessions both here and Killearn have met, very cordially, together to put together a "Basis of Linkage" template covering among other things, suggested times of services, details of manse properties and other practical points.

This document has been sent to Perth Presbytery in the first instance, and will then be sent to 121 George Street for legal ratification.

When we receive the ratified form back to our two Sessions, we can move on to the next steps in the process.

An up to date electoral register will be produced, including adherents, and all congregation members will be advised, from the front of church, and by letter of the date this roll will be available to view, in order that all may check that their names are correctly included.

A date will be selected for a congregational ballot immediately after the Sunday morning service in the church on two points

- To agree the basis of linkage of both churches
- To vote on acceptance, or not, of the current minister of Killearn as minister of the joint charge

These two votes will take place in both churches on the same day.

As a Session we understand that all this may seem challenging to take in, so please, do contact your elders to ask any questions you may have. They will do their very best to make matters as clear as possible.

Please continue to pray for this process and those who are involved in its procedures. We can move forward, knowing that, if we "wait on the Lord" He will guide us in the best way for the Glory of His Kingdom here in our two parishes.

Admin Assistant

Lynne James, Session Clerk

It is with mixed emotions that we let you all know that our tremendously capable and hardworking Admin Assistant is leaving her post in the New Year.

Traci has been a solid foundation for much of the work around all aspects of church life, preparation of worship AV, presence on social media, producing our quarterly magazine and many, many other tasks which have helped the church run smoothly over these last years.

She has truly been invaluable and we will find it very hard to replace her.

We do wish her well in her new home church, now that she is firmly and happily established in Torrance Parish Church and she goes with our prayers and blessings in this new chapter.

We do now have a vacancy for a part time Admin Assistant of 4 hours per week as follows..

The main duties will be general church office administration, the preparation of material for worship services, collating material for quarterly church magazine, dealing with social media posts and coordinating Kirk Rooms lets.

Applicants will be expected to be confident in the use of E-mail applications, Word, Excel and PowerPoint.

For further details please contact Session Clerk Lynne James
Lynnej1257@gmail.com or, Mobile Number 07796871607

Prayer Course

Mission & Discipleship Group

The Mission and Discipleship team have been thinking long and hard about a follow-up to our series of videos on Living Christianity which we held in the Kirk Rooms last year. We have now looked at another study entitled The Prayer Course, a short series of eight videos which ask the question "Why Pray?" We hope to start this in January. These are informal meetings, (including a cup of tea and a biscuit!) when we discuss the video, what we have taken from it, and how to include what we have learned into our daily Christian lives. We hope to see again those of you who attended the last series, and warmly invite all who would like to join us this time.

Perth Presbytery Ian Mills

As your new Presbytery Elder, I was intrigued to read in the Church of Scotland website that 'For many elders and members within the Kirk, the word "Presbytery" is synonymous with problems'. No doubt there will be some more experienced elders who will agree with that! Yet in addition to their administrative functions in the Church of Scotland structure, there is a quite clear direction that Presbyteries are charged with 'supporting congregations within their area'. So where does all of this fit in to our church experience especially in the current climate of change.

The Church of Scotland's presbyterian governance system is organised on the basis of courts. At national level, the court is the General Assembly which meets in May of each year and is attended by around 400 Ministers and 400 Elders. At district or area level, the court is the Presbytery which consists of Ministers and Elders from the congregations within the presbytery area. At a local level, the court is the Kirk Session which oversees the local congregation and its parish and consists of elders presided over by a minister. Both Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions meet on a number of occasions during the year.

On 1 January 2023, Perth Presbytery (www.perthpresbytery.org.uk) was formed covering the geographical areas of the former Presbyteries of Angus, Perth, Dundee, Dunkeld & Meigle and Stirling. This is part of a restructuring agreed by the General Assembly in 2019 and which will result in the number of Presbyteries across Scotland being

reduced from more than forty to under a dozen. Perth Presbytery is the third largest covering a population of over 510,000, although only around 8% claim to be Church of Scotland members. Many of the 150 congregations within its boundaries are already operating as linked charges, especially in rural areas. The Mission Plans agreed by the legacy presbyteries envisage more linked charges with the discussions now underway between Strathblane and Killearn congregations being one example

The Presbytery Clerk (himself an ordained Minister), manages a small team of staff based in Perth. Full meetings of Presbytery with representation from each congregation are held four times a year with the formal business of Presbytery being carried out by various committees whose membership consists of Ministers and lay people (mainly elders). These committees cover a range of issues including Finance, Property, overseeing Ministerial vacancies, providing training including Safeguarding etc.

At the most recent Perth Presbytery meeting, the Presbytery Moderator commented that whilst it was inevitable in the first year of the new Presbytery that the priority had been to focus on organisation and administrative matters, we should now move forward and concentrate on the main business of the church which is 'mission'.

At this stage, I am prepared to give the fledgling Perth Presbytery the benefit of the doubt and hope that rather than regarding the Presbytery as being a 'problem', Strathblane Church will be able to access support and encouragement as both the Presbytery and ourselves move forward into unchartered territory.

Cuppa Time Georgina Marshall

I am pleased to report that Cuppa Time has been going from strength to strength in the last couple of months. Our numbers have been going up as more people enjoy friendship and fellowship with us on Thursday afternoons. Our Christmas Special is on the 21st December, and we hope that as many of the congregation as possible will come along and support us.

Cuppa Time is on every Thursday in the Kirk Rooms from 2pm to 4pm.

Christmas Gift Appeal Mission and Discipleship Group

The annual Gift Day for collection of presents for children is Sunday 3rd December. Gifts should be new, in their original packaging and unwrapped.

This year, once again, we are supporting Glasgow City Mission Family Centre in Govan and the Salvation Army. The age range is from birth – 16 years. A request has been made for some family games if possible e.g. Ludo, Connect 4, Monopoly, Uno, Frustration as well as some unisex Legos sets. Also, toiletry sets and socks for older boys and girls would be appreciated.



Beginning our meetings on 2nd October, we had four very talented young musicians, pupils from Balforn High. Sadly, their time was limited—hopefully we will see them another time. We had a lovely afternoon.

On 16th October we had Sarah Black giving us updates on her wonderful work for Changing Lives Malawi, and how those receiving help are thriving. It was truly inspiring.

The 30th October was another lovely time with John Campbell, a retired parish minister: magic tricks, singing and playing four different instruments—guitar, accordion, mouth organ and melodic. A fun time which we all enjoyed.

On Monday 13th November we enjoyed having Lindsay Kirk from Comfort International, with news of her charity work in Central Africa. Again, it was very interesting.

Our next meeting will be on 27th November from Tropic Skin Care by Gillian Anderson.

On December 4th we look forward to our Christmas Entertainment with Esther and Friends.

Into 2024, we look forward to:

8th January—travel talk with Ann and John Roy.

22nd January—Burns afternoon with Mike and Ruth Downam

2nd February—Jasmin—Dance for older people

19th February—A film and afternoon tea

4th March—Spring outing

18th March—AGM, and slides from two local prize-winning photographers, Stevie Jackson and Chris Bell

11th May—Spring Fayre

13th May—Guild Dinner.

Last but not least, thanks to our committee, who have all contributed to making it all happen. And of course, to all our friends who come along to support us along the way. Our meetings are open to everyone, and a warm welcome awaits with tea, coffee and biscuits. And you can keep up with all our meetings in Cornerstone. Thanks again to all.

Addendum (from Isobel Brown):

Margaret Smith: It was with great sadness that we learned this week of Margaret's passing. Margaret had been unwell for some time and had fought her illness very bravely. She will be greatly missed both in the Church and by her friends in the Guild where she was a very popular member for a long time. It was only two years ago when Margaret gave up her role as Secretary—she was very diligent in her role there. Margaret will be known locally for her role at the local surgery where she worked as receptionist and secretary to Dr Livingstone.

Our thoughts are with her husband, Alistair, son Andrew, Lorne and her little granddaughter Fern, not forgetting Bhria at this very sad time for them all.



Flower Ministry Christine Cresswell

Many thanks to all who have been helping with arranging flowers and delivering them while I have been poorly.

Tearfund Lunch Lynne James

A huge thank you to all who came and those who helped at the Tearfund Lunch on Sunday 19th November. With some donations still to come in at the time of going to press, more than £400 has been donated.



Missionary News

Wednesday Prayer Group

Lorna Ferguson has recently been appointed to OMF's highest board of governance which provides insight and counsel to its international leadership team.

She continues her regular activities in Japan... e.g. Mums and baby outreach, leading church service (in Japanese), training colleagues in Crisis Management.

She asks for God's help to focus on each thing, and that she can do everything in a way that glorifies Him. She has recently had a visit from Mathew, met briefly with Alistair and hopes to see Daniel when she travels to Bangkok. Calum continues with football in Scotland.



Carolyn Kemp - after some (very busy) weeks of sabbatical leave—is taking up the post of Member Development among Diaspora workers, with the task of supporting them spiritually, personally and in their ministry.

She has also been appointed to a leadership development group of four persons with the roving remit of developing effective ministry teams both in SE Asia and at home.

On a personal note, Carolyn has an eye problem which has been lingering for two years and is not getting better.

James & Kirsty have been out and about: in October they were in Kenya, where they had the opportunity to get to know the global leadership team.

In November they were at the OMF conference in Scotland where James was speaking on the topic of "global migration and the future of world mission" - a subject exercising the minds of many mission agencies at the present time.

In December it's back to Thailand for mission leaders meetings.



James, Kirsty, Deborah and Susanna



Meeting with the global leadership team

Catherine has been working on Spain reaching out to Muslim families for some time now. She is now at home in Glasgow helping to care for her mother.

She is working on projects which will support the missionary work and outreach to Muslims. One of these projects is the setting up of a Spanish website which can introduce Muslims to Christ. She hopes this will go live soon after some work on a video. She is also devising a course for an online Spanish Bible College. She has enrolled in an online Master's Degree course with All Nations Bible College. Students include a Nepali at college, a missionary in Thailand and a Ugandan in his home country Uganda. There are 7-8 nationalities at 8-9 locations in a variety of ministries. They meet on line for seminars and study groups. Catherine has changed her status with UFM from missionary partner to missionary associate. This means she is involved in missionary work instead of doing missionary work. She is more easily able to respond to family needs as required.

God has been with Catherine since her return to Glasgow in 2022 and blessed and guided her. He continues to reassure and guide her as she continued to serve Him.

Stamps and Collections for The Leprosy Mission

Marjorie Peddie

We are still accepting donations of postage stamps, old and new, for Liz Kerr to sort before passing them on. Additionally, I am still happy to receive the Blue TLM tubs and to send on these contributions to this very worthwhile Charity. If you cannot find me, these can be left at the door from where they can be taken into safe keeping.





Dear Friends

Thank you for being faithful praying people

Last week the 'Work is Worship' team went away to plan and budget the trainings for 2024. It was a busy and good time together. We completed almost all our tasks. The team loved the peaceful guest-house where we met in Tamale, and its food. Some mornings our prayer times lasted an hour. I thank God for building such a good team of people who have the message that God is interested in us every day of every week, and are willing to travel to tell others.

As you know, God has given me a heart to help people who struggle in poverty. Also, I cannot teach what I don't do. Hence the development of Zurugaluu where we plan to employ widows to produce food items for commercial sales, running the social enterprise in ways that worship God. I thank God for the Zurugaluu building progress. The

roof is on the second building, the window frames are in, now waiting for the doors to be made and fixed. The internal electrics are all done, apart from threading in the actual wire which will be done after the doors are in – otherwise it could be stolen for its opportunistic sales value. The shower and toilet block needs its flat roof completed ready for the water storage tanks, then it needs plastering and tiling. These last 2 will be expensive. Anyone who would like to give to help with the costs is most welcome to do so via SIM UK. Cheques made payable to SIM UK, can be posted to SIM UK, 6 Trust Court, Histon, Cambridge, CB24 9PW. Please enclose a note to say it is for project 94023, Food & Agricultural Research and Training, Phase 1. SIM UK's phone number is 01223 788288, if you have questions. Online giving works too, through <https://sim.co.uk/support/donate/>. Online, the account number is 94023, with the same project name. I too am giving financially – I can't ask you without doing the same. We continue to wait for the hook-up contractor to do his final day of work to hook us up to the national grid.

On the farm, we harvested bambara beans and peanuts. We will mill the beans into flour and try out making noodles from this healthy flour. Our peanuts will be sold for revenue for the project. Our neighbour families seem happy with their harvests. The rains were late, and people feared famine, but once the rains started, they were consistent, and people tell me they have enough food for the coming year. Thank you God.

Our tomatoes did OK, but with too much manure, they died when they reached 3 feet, not making it to the 7 feet height we anticipated. The next tomato seedlings are in, ready for the next planting out.

This is all for now from me. Am praying for you with the adjustments happening in your church. I can imagine this is not easy. May you enjoy your preparations for our traditional reminders that Christ came and will come again. God and his promises remain the same.



Blythswood Care Shoebox Appeal Margaret McIntyre

I would like to thank everyone for their support in helping with the Blythswood shoe box appeal. As you all know, I am committed to this cause. Ukraine will get the most help this year. Many of the Ukrainians are sheltering in neighbouring countries, Poland has been very good to them. The lorry drivers will deliver the presents as usual.

This year Anne Balfour has been given a reprieve— she handed in her box in record time! I am sorry to say that Mary Stevenson is the one to take the stick this year. Had she been a little bit later, I would have had her chasing after the Blythswood Care van down the street!

Enough of the larking...the good news is that we have achieved our record number of boxes, and three hundred and thirty one boxes will be transported to give a little happiness this Christmas.

Donations for the shoebox appeal have amounted to £713, plus four large bags of warm clothing. With the additional Gift Aid, once again we should have enough to cover the transport costs of our boxes. Every year God provides it all.

Now is the time to begin collecting shoeboxes for me again!

Thank you
Margaret.



Our Parish Church Anne Balfour

"The church is a beautiful building of modern Gothic, reared in 1803."

Rev Hamilton Buchanan, Second Statistical Account of the Parish of Strathblane, 1841.

At a time when the Church of Scotland is in flux and the future status of many church buildings is under discussion, it is worth remembering just how long Christians have gathered for worship in Strathblane.

Recently Strathblane Heritage Society launched its own website. It includes a 6,000-word illustrated essay about the history of the parish church between 1216 and 1982. See www.strathblaneheritage.org/the-parish-church/ We thought Cornerstone readers might enjoy reading a truncated version and seeing some of the images used to illustrate it.

The parish of Strathblane is more than 800 years old. The "parochia de Strathblachane" is first mentioned in a document defining the boundaries of the parish of Campsie. Though undated, references to historical figures in this document show that Strathblane was already a parish in 1216. (A chapel dedicated to Kessog, the Dark Ages saint, may have existed previously.)

Mary, Countess of Angus, sister to King James I of Scotland and wife of Sir William Edmonstone of Duntreath, and who died around 1458, was buried inside Strathblane Church. A brass plaque marks the spot.

Post Reformation

After the Reformation the first Protestant service was held in Strathblane in 1560. However, a shortage of ministers throughout Scotland left Strathblane with a Reader, John Cuik, but having to share a minister, Johnne Stoddert, with Fintry and Campsie. The Rev Stoddert's annual salary was £66 13s 4d.

By 1600 Strathblane had its own minister. In his history of the parish (www.strathblaneheritage.org/the-parish-of-strathblane-and-its-inhabitants-from-early-times/) John Guthrie Smith details the comings and goings of all 13 ministers up to and including the Rev Daniel Ferguson (1874-1886). [There have been nine since.]

The Rev John Cochran, recently graduated from Edinburgh, arrived in 1650. A new manse was built and he purchased a sand glass in order to time his sermons. He also expected self-restraint from his parishioners as the next entry in the session records shows him spending twelve shillings "for hinging of the joggs at the Kirk doore". The joggs, as Guthrie Smith explains, was an ancient Scottish instrument of punishment, consisting of an iron collar fixed to the wall by a chain. The neck of any wrong-doer (including absentees from church) was inserted and remained there for a period as a form of humiliation and warning to would-be transgressors. He did not stop there. Inside the church "ane new publick place of repentance" was installed and "ane harne gowne" [a sackcloth robe] purchased for the use of "adultereris". In addition, fines were collected and used to pay for repairs, general church expenses and poor relief.



Strathblane Church 1897 (courtesy of Angus Graham)

Mr Cochran managed to keep Strathblane out of the unrest over the National Covenant about how the church was governed that convulsed much of Scotland in the 17th century. Though he probably had Episcopalian leanings, seemingly he was not inclined to clipe to his Archbishop on those of a Covenanter persuasion. He retired in 1690 by which time Presbyterianism had been restored, along with William and Mary. A new church was built in 1700 but was from the start considered inadequate.

In 1716, according to Guthrie Smith, the session felt it necessary to call in the Civil Guard to arrest a woman called Janet Martin for persistently refusing to produce a "testificate of her morality". Session records report that the woman was arrested and brought to the manse "on her way to the Pit of Mugdock". The Pit of Mugdock was a drowning pit used to execute women and girls found guilty of a crime, though a more likely punishment in such a case as this would be imprisonment in the dungeon of Mugdock Castle. In the event, Guthrie Smith reports: "Janet humbled herself, the terrors of the pit or prison at Mugdock being too great for her, and she was finally pardoned, doubtless after a due use of the public place of repentance and the harne gowne."

Scandalous & Improper Proceedings

In 1774 another issue was exercising the kirk session. By now the Rev Archibald Smith, son of the minister of Fintry, had been installed at Strathblane. In those days the Kirkhouse Inn was a tavern directly outside the church gate and, according to Guthrie Smith "often the scene of very scandalous and improper proceedings, doubly improper for being so near the sacred edifice." During one appearance at the session, the landlord threatened to "kick up the kirk officer's heels and trample him like dirt under his feet if he would but presume to go to his house and call his wife," who was being summoned to give evidence regarding an alleged irregularity that had taken place at the inn. The case ended up before the presbytery, where he made his case against the minister, swearing that "the reasons of this prosecution against him were that he would not allow the minister's hens to eat his corn" He lost the case and was put under a sentence of "lesser excommunication".

First Statistical Account, 1796

In 1791 the Rev Gavin Gibb, former minister of Fintry, came to Strathblane and finally procured a new church for the parish. As he wrote in the First Statistical Account: "The church is a mean building, erected at the beginning of the present century, and having never been lathed or plaistered, the bare walls and roof without ceiling, present a very sorry appearance for a place of worship."

In 1802 the heritors unanimously resolved to build a new church, which was ready by 1 January 1804. It was agreed in 1805 "no burials to be in future inside of the church".

The new church was not ideal. The ceiling was flat, the seats were uncomfortable and some of the ornaments were considered in poor taste, particularly the gilded pineapple on the canopy over the pulpit! Nevertheless, it was a big improvement over the previous building.

Rev Gibb's successor, Dr William Hamilton, fell out with the heritors over both his salary and the building of a new manse, which was sorely needed. The elegant new manse [now known as the Old Manse!] was constructed on the opposite side of the Blane to its predecessors and was ready for occupation in 1828.



Strathblane Manse, completed in 1828

Rev Hamilton died in office in 1835, four days after preaching his final sermon. The vast sandstone monument erected in his memory by friends and parishioners dominates the eastern side of the churchyard. Its lengthy inscription praises his wisdom and love of science as well as "the warmth of his affections" and Christian life.

The Second Statistical Account records that in 1841 Strathblane Church had seating for 450 people and the average number of communicants was 250.

Up to this point it had been accepted that the patron of the parish – in this case the Duke of Montrose – would present a new minister each time a vacancy arose. That is what happened again in 1841, when the Rev James Pearson took up the role. But two years later 450 evangelical ministers broke away from the Church of Scotland to form the Free Church. They argued that the church and not the government should control clerical appointments and benefits. The ripples of the Great Disruption reached Strathblane when three members of the kirk session resigned, though no Free Church was built in the parish until 1867.

Further substantial improvements were made to the parish church and its environs during James Pearson's tenure. Formerly the churchyard was very badly kept and there was no proper path from the church gate to the church. The church itself was substantially

altered by the Edmonstone family in 1870. The pitch of the roof was increased, seating improved and the gilded pineapple replaced by a cross.

Though he rarely strays into social history, Guthrie Smith provides a fascinating account of the changing garb of Strathblane worshippers, comparing the 1880s with half a century before. He reported that formerly some old women still wore white "mitches" [close-fitting linen caps] and that women and girls often would carry their shoes and stockings with them, stopping at the Kirk Burn to put them on before entering the church. We know how people dressed for the Sunday service by 1880 because there is a photograph in the Strathblane Heritage archive of the tastefully-turned-out church choir from around this time.



Strathblane Church Choir c1880

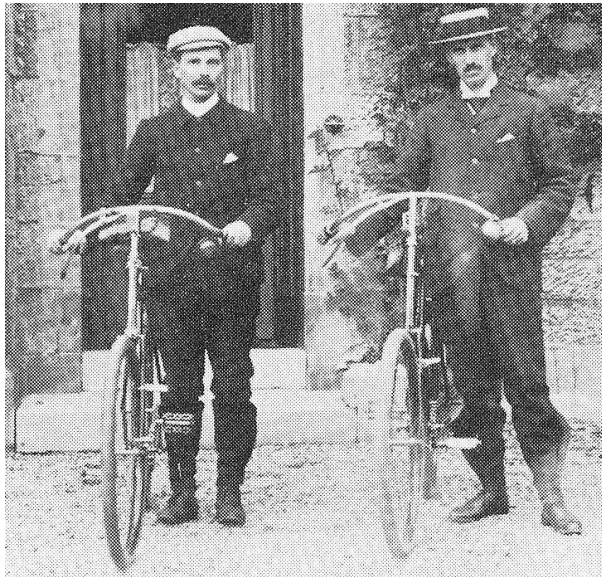
Electing the Minister

In an appendix to his parish history written during 1886, John Guthrie Smith reveals that a new parish minister has been chosen, following the premature death of Daniel Ferguson. Guthrie Smith himself was the convenor of the vacancy committee for this, the first election of a minister in Strathblane since the abolition of patronage in the Church of Scotland. Five candidates were considered and a young Glasgow University graduate, the Rev William Begbie Moyes was elected "by a large majority". Guthrie Smith expresses the hope that "he will add another to the long line of excellent and distinguished ministers of Strathblane". Indeed. The Rev Moyes remained Strathblane's minister until 1934, a tenure of more than 47 years, the longest in the history of Strathblane parish.

In September 1909 Rev Moyes had the honour of preaching to King Edward VII during his official visit to the parish. The church was packed and an estimated 5,000 people assembled in the vicinity of the church. The minister preached a short sermon on "The Peace of God which passeth all understanding". In March 1910 the new church organ was dedicated.

First World War, 1914-1918

It is commonly said that the First World War changed the face of rural Scotland forever. As

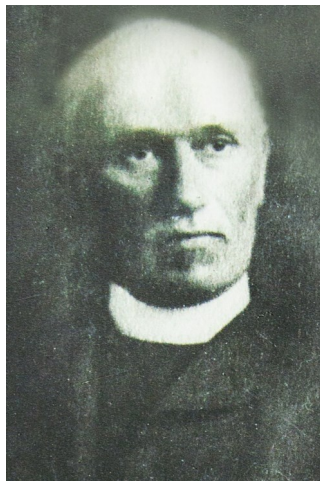


Revs Theodor Johnson and William Begbie Moyes with their bicycles

many of the parish volunteered for service, the parish church began to keep a list of where they were so that Christmas boxes could be sent to them. This list, in an ordinary notebook, still survives and is a fascinating record of where people from the parish served and fell in the name of their country.

Members of the congregation contributed money regularly throughout the war years to ensure those serving their country were not forgotten. Boxes containing money, food and other comforts were sent to serving men at Christmas.

Inevitably, church life was affected. In April 1917 the Rev Moyes announced that he had volunteered to serve with the YMCA in France. The following year, six months before the end of the war, his son Wilfrid Blake Moyes, aged 30, a decorated sergeant in the Queen's Royals (the Royal West Surrey Regiment) was killed during the Somme Crossing.



Rev William Begbie Moyes

In February 1919, the Rev Moyes led a memorial service in Strathblane for those who had fallen in the War. The congregation stood as a list of the dead, including Wilfrid, was read out along with their regiment, battle honours and date of death. In his address the Rev Moyes said: "In our hearts we are not sad for them – for ourselves we are sad – for them we are proud."

Further changes were made to the area around the church. Two old cottages that had flanked the church gate were cleared away. In 1932 a cemetery was added on land between the church and the Kirkhouse Inn, as the churchyard was approaching full capacity.

The Amalgamation, 1934

In 1929 the Church of Scotland and what was now known as the United Free Church had amalgamated, finally healing the rift created by the Great Disruption of 1843. However, the union did not happen in the parish until 1934 when the ministers of both churches

retired. Over the years they had become firm friends and sometimes went on cycling trips together.

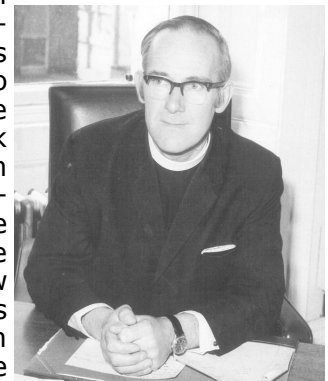
After 1934 the United Free Church in Blanefield continued to be used for the Sunday evening services and for the Sunday school. Even five years after the amalgamation had taken place nationally, some staunch local members of the United Free Church refused to attend services in the parish church. Like the Rev Moyes during the First World War, his successor, Rev Frederick Kennedy served as a chaplain during World War Two. In 1947 the parish church organised a "Welcome Home Dinner" in the Edmonstone Hall. "Victory trifle" was served and the Rev Kennedy gave the address.

Third Statistical Account, 1951

In the Third Statistical Account, produced in 1951, the Rev Philip McCardel reported that he also conducted summer services for the Glasgow and Clydebank families occupying the huts at Carbeth. More than 400 of the 1100 adult residents of Strathblane were members of the Church of Scotland and at that time the Sunday school roll was greater than that of the primary school.

Revs George Lugton & Malcolm Ritchie

The Rev George Lugton, ordained and inducted into the parish of Strathblane in 1955, was a particularly popular minister. During his time the parish church underwent major renovation. For two years services reverted to the former United Free church, while the work was carried out. In 1961 land was obtained opposite the parish church for the building of a new manse, which was completed in 1964. In the meantime, the United Free church and its manse in Blanefield were sold.



Rev George Lugton

He was succeeded by the Rev Malcolm Ritchie who had come to Strathblane from his first charge in Broughty Ferry where he had played a key role in comforting the bereaved after the lifeboat disaster of 1959 in which all eight members of the Broughty Ferry lifeboat were lost in a storm.

Once installed, he quickly became involved in the planning, construction and finally the opening in 1973 of the Kirkrooms. (In 1976 Strathblane ceased to be part of Dumbarton Presbytery and became part of Stirling Presbytery. Later it would join Perth Presbytery!)

Subsequent ministers lay outside the scope of this essay. They were the Rev Alex Fleming (1982-1995); the Rev Alex Green (1995-2010); the Rev Richard Begg (2011-2016); the Rev Murdo Campbell (2017-2023).

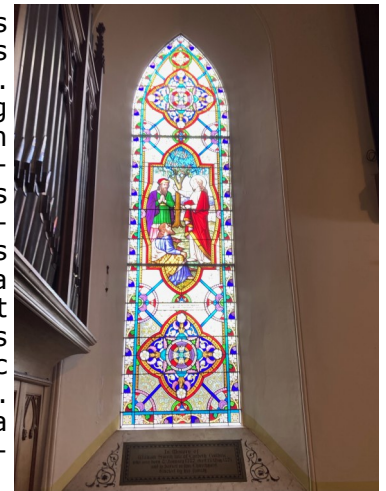
Recently I have spoken to visitors to our Sunday services who have admired and asked questions about our stained glass windows - remarking how beautiful they are. This made me realise that I have become so used to seeing our windows week by week that I just take them for granted. I started looking at the windows "with new eyes" and appreciating not only how lovely they are but also the stories they tell us.

This led me to go back to the booklet which Rev. Alex Fleming wrote about our windows in 1994 and I decided to write this article. I have chosen to write about the window that is beside the organ. This window is in memory of William Smith of Carbeth Guthrie and was built in 1871. Some of you will remember that it was rebuilt in 1987.

At the top of the window is a tiny roundel with the monogram IHS - the Latin form of the Greek word for Jesus.

The main panel illustrates the text of John 1 verse 47, the words of which appear on a tablet under the panel. "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile" (King James Bible) It retells the story of the call of Nathaniel. Christ stands on the right with his

hand held out towards the disciples. Round his head is a nimbus. The disciples are looking at him. Nathaniel with his hands held in the position of prayer. Philip is seated looking at Jesus. Behind the figures is a landscape showing a lake with a sailing boat on it. The three figures are under a very realistic fig tree with fruit on it. Each individual fig is a small piece of pinky-orange glass.



At both sides of the window and at the bottom, small quadrants and semi circles of flower patterned glass have been installed.

In the window the character of William Smith is identified with those fine qualities of Nathaniel which were admired by Jesus - a comparison those who donated the window would wish us to make.

(Thanks to Alex Fleming for the information.)

AUX JESUS DA NAZARE

Ella Hyam

I just had to stop and take a photo of this smart wee boat tied up on a jetty in a small bay on the south coast of Portugal. It reminded me that Jesus is everywhere, even 2000 miles away from home.

However, I wondered what the AUX meant, and the various translations I read did not seem to make any sense. So I asked a lady who had good English about the AUX. She explained that this wee boat went out to help any fishermen if they were in difficulty out in the bay. I understood that translation. AUX was maybe short for auxiliary. Jesus of Nazareth goes to help anyone who asks Him.



A King's Story - Poem by Christine Cresswell

Beneath the mountain's jagged scar
we cannot see beyond each rise,
but fear what hidden danger lies
deep down in midnight's black inside.

With hopes and dreams we've come this far,
on faltering step and camel ride,
still searching for a new-born king,
our heavenly guide, this brilliant star.

Palatial towers of marble, stone,
pink-hued by sun's first slanting ray.
We've reached our goal! This is the day!

But deep dismay - no infant king.
And where's his kingdom? Where's his throne?

What end to weary travelling!
Star-led, once more upon our way,
to Bethlehem's humble home we came.
On bended knee our gifts we bring
to Him who's given us everything.
So homeward by a different way,
our lives can never be the same.

Do some still search, as years rush by,
travelling along a rocky way?

Or on life-journey's quest so far
perhaps turn back to rest, to stay?
How many things prevent and mar
our progress to the Saviour King,
but when we truly seek, we find
Love, greater than the brightest star.



In rural northern Malawi, there are teenagers working hard at Bright Futures Secondary School. Prior to the school being built, none of these students would have had the opportunity to continue their education past primary school as secondary school has to be paid for. These vulnerable teenagers benefit from a free education and free cooked school lunches, their only proper meal each day. If we can get more teenagers matched with sponsors, then more will have the opportunity of a brighter future. It's only £25 p/m to sponsor a student. You can sponsor as an individual, a family or two friends can split the cost.

Or could you commit £5 or £10 per month to help pay for nutritious school lunches? How can we expect students to concentrate if they haven't eaten? Food prices continue to rise and we very much need prayers as well as financial support please.

As the rainy season is about to start, we are going to be planting more fruit tree saplings. Eventually, this project will provide food for the children, a sustainable income if some of the harvest is sold and the more trees that are planted will prevent soil erosion and, of course, will be good for the planet. If you would like to help with this project, it's £10 for 4 x fruit tree saplings. This would make a good alternative gift to give at Christmas.

At Bright Futures Secondary School, as part of their Agricultural classes, they are about to build a pigsty and buy their first piglets. Future piglets will be sold, with the proceeds going back into Bright Futures Secondary School to help pay for the extra teachers needed next year when there are four classes. If you would like to support this project and buy a piglet either for yourself or as an alternative gift then it will cost £50.

I was warmly welcomed at Strathblane Guild last month when I gave a talk and showed photos from Malawi. Also at the Christmas Card sale, people were very generous buying the cards we have had printed from my mum's (Christine Cresswell) lovely paintings (see back page). We are very grateful for the support and interest that everyone has shown for our projects in rural northern Malawi which help hundreds of vulnerable young people. Every blessing, Sarah x

Contact details for me—Sarah Black at Changing Lives Malawi are phone: 07985315007 or email: contact_us@changinglivesmalawi.com
Please do get in touch if you would like to help change lives.



Providing food for hundreds of children who took part in a Rugby Festival last month.



Agness & Brian, S2, showing their new shoes. We were delighted to receive three big boxes of shoes from the charity Sal's Shoes so, all students at Bright Futures Secondary School, who needed new shoes, were gifted a pair of preloved shoes.



Left: S1 students using their new microscope.

During the recent Rugby World Cup held in France, my brother-in-law and I attended the Scotland v Romania game in Lille. Luckily this was the game which Scotland won 84-0 – less said about the rest of the tournament the better! On the morning of the game, we joined a large gathering around the square in the centre of Lille where it was obvious who were the people supporting Scotland given the number of blue rugby shirts on display, not to mention several kilts. Also, the general demeanor of the crowd created a positive mood both amongst the Scotland supporters themselves and any passers by including the few Romanians we came across. I am aware there are certain sporting occasions when so called 'supporters' can generate a negative reaction by their intimidating behaviour, but this was not the case in Lille.

Whilst showing support for a sports team can be identified through wearing an item of clothing associated with the team, this is not necessarily so prevalent amongst those who support the church. The early Christians adopted the symbol of the fish as a secret sign during the time of persecution by the Romans. This symbol was derived from the Greek language where the first letter of the words 'Jesus Christ, God's Son the Saviour' spell 'ichthys' which



means 'fish. Also, it is not uncommon to see people wearing a cross – sometimes in the form of a necklace. However, the Bible identifies more fundamental requirements than simply wearing an item of clothing or a badge to illustrate support for the church and the

Christian faith. Our actions need to align with our beliefs.

Attending church and participating in church activities is an obvious and visible means of showing support especially in a community like Strathblane where the church is a focal point of village life. This is highlighted in the Presbyterian Mission Plan which has been the subject of much discussion recently and which states 'Rural congregations, though relatively small, are often vibrant expressions of Christ and are often community focussed and though traditional in expression, are often outward looking'. Whilst it is recognised that not everyone is physically able to participate in the life of the church as they may have done at one time, it is still possible through their prayers and continuing interest in church life to demonstrate support and belief in Christian values.

Serving others is another example whereby we can demonstrate our commitment to the church and Christian values. In John Ch15, Jesus said 'This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you'. There are many other verses in the bible which highlight the importance of service. One definition of service I came across stated 'choosing to do something for someone else (often in secret) without expecting anything else in return'.

In addition to active involvement in the life of the church and in serving others, another visible means of upholding Christian values is through our own day to day behaviour. 'What would Jesus do?' is often quoted as being the best question to ask oneself prior to making a decision or dealing with a situation.

So whilst my Scotland rugby supporters shirt will be brought out again when the next round of internationals begin in February, like the rest of us, I will endeavour to show continuing 'support for the church' to ensure, unlike the Scotland rugby team, that we win every game.

Sunday Club and Messy Church

Lynne James

I am delighted to say that our young people are woven into our Christmas run up to Christmas

Our Festive Messy Church will be held on Sunday 10th December and as well as sharing a festive meal together, the families will be decorating the Christmas tree in the church, and "liberating" the lovely flight of knitted angels, around the church pews! As in previous years they will also help pack the little Christingle packs ready for the Christmas Eve Christingle Service. What a blessing they truly are.

Our Sunday Club children have been so helpful this year, firstly helping set out the buffet for Murdo's leaving party earlier this year. and, more recently, helping set up for the Tearfund Lunch held on 19th November to raise funds for Tearfund's Appeal for the Middle East.

It has also been a joy to have the children participate in the morning services..and I personally much appreciate their willingness to mirror..and better..my actions for songs in morning worship!

Charity Christmas Card Sale

Many thanks to everyone who attended and helped at the Charity Christmas Card sale on 28th October, organised by the Fellowship Group. As well as the attending charities benefiting from their sales, £318 was raised for Church funds from the sale of tickets.

Below are the figures for unrestricted given for 10 months to 31st October 2023, compared with the first 10 months in the previous year.

	2023	2022	Change	Change
	£	£	£	%
Gift Aid	32,381	35,354	-2,973	-8.4
Non Gift Aid Envelopes	210	550	-340	-61.8
Open Plate	3,116	2,943	173	5.9
	<u>35,707</u>	<u>38,847</u>	<u>-3,140</u>	<u>-8.1</u>
Other Donations	2,094	1,484	610	
Gift Day	0	2,720	-2,720	
Legacies	0	15,106	-15,106	
Guild	542	0	542	
Fund Raising	454	0	454	
Weddings/Funerals	690	575	115	
	<u>39,487</u>	<u>58,732</u>	<u>-19,245</u>	

Twelve Days of Christmas

Marjorie Peddie



This carol originates from the time Catholics were being persecuted in England. It served as an aide memoirs to pass on the essentials of their faith.

1st day. The tree is the symbol of God and true love, and the partridge is Jesus.

2nd day. When Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph sacrificed two turtle doves to the Lord God as a sign of their devotion to Him.

3rd day. Is symbolic of Faith, Hope and Love.

4th day. Represents the four gospels. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

5th day. Represents the first 5 books of the Old Testament.

6th day. The six days of Creation before God rested on the seventh day.

7th day. These are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, understanding, knowledge, counsel, fortitude, piety and fear of the Lord. These are given to us at Baptism.

8th day. Represents the Beatitudes.

9th day. The nine fruits of the Spirit: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

10th day. The Ten Commandments.

11th day. Eleven faithful disciples.

12th day. The twelve points of belief in the Apostles Creed.

These are things to ponder on next time you sing this carol.

Cornerstone and Farewell

Traci Leven

I began producing *Cornerstone* in Spring 2013—so I have done 11 full years of editions— 44 editions in total. It has been a privilege to serve the church in this way. A huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to the magazine over this time with a wide range of interesting articles, photographs, and notices. Thanks to those who have helped in checking drafts also, particularly the eagle-eyed Wylma! I also beg forgiveness for everyone I hounded for their contributions as each deadline loomed! It's hard to believe this is my last edition. I pray that God will provide the right person to take over this task, and would ask also that you could consider whether you may be someone who could help.

While I do not know who will be taking over, I assume that, following the normal calendar, the deadline for submissions for the Spring 2024 edition will be **Saturday 17th February**. The church email address will continue to be monitored by the Session Clerk before a new admin assistant is appointed, and this can be used for contributions: strathblanekirk@gmail.com.

Thank you so much to everyone at Strathblane Kirk who has so greatly enriched my life. Traci

Sunday 3rd December	Morning Worship, 11am
Sunday 10th December	Communion Service, 11am Festive Messy Church, 3.30pm Kirk Rooms
Sunday 17th December	Lessons and Carols Service, 11am
Thursday 21st December	Cuppa Time Christmas Special, 2pm Kirk Rooms
Sunday 24th December	Christmas Eve Family Service, 11am Christingle Service, 4.30pm Watchnight Service, 11.30pm
Monday 25th December	Christmas Day Service, 10.30am (bring a toy!)
Sunday 31st December	Morning Worship, 11am

Regular Events

Every Sunday:	11am Sunday Worship, church Sunday Club
Every second Monday:	2pm Guild in the Kirk Rooms (see page 5 for the syllabus)
Every Wednesday:	11am Bible Study, Lynne James 7pm Prayer Time, Kirk Rooms
Every Thursday:	2pm Cuppa Time 7pm Bible Study, Wylma Dunbar

Key Contacts

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Peter Murdoch

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Session Clerk

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lynnej1257@gmail.com

Treasurer

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Church Office

strathblanekirk@gmail.com

Church Website

The church website is

www.strathblanekirk.wordpress.com.

Dial-A-Sermon

To hear the latest available sermon recording, call 01360 606060

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Church' ([www.facebook.com/](http://www.facebook.com/StrathblaneKirk)

[StrathblaneKirk](http://www.facebook.com/StrathblaneKirk)) to see news and updates.



Some of the cards from paintings by Christine Cresswell being sold to raise funds for Changing Lives Malawi



An Autumnal shot of the church by local photographer, Chris Bell



Photographs from our Harvest Thanksgiving Service on 1st October. A very generous abundance of donations was brought to church to support the work of Start Up Stirling. Special mention to Anne Balfour who made the pictured bread, and to Christine Cresswell and helpers who decorated the church.



Tearfund Lunch, 19th November