

Columba News

December
2023
No. 255



While shepherds watched



*The full
list of
Christmas
services
on Page 5*

Waiting to welcome you

Sundays	Team	Leader
December 10	Team 11	Mrs J. Paterson
December 17	Team 12	Mrs H. Docherty
December 24	Team 1	Mrs C. Morrison
December 31	Team 2	Mr A. McKinlay
January 7	Team 3	Mr C. Naismith
January 14	Team 4	Ms G. Watson
January 21	Team 5	Mrs N. Mackie
January 28	Team 6	Mr J. Hume
February 4	Team 7	Mrs H. Fullerton

Evening Services:
January 28: Team 6; February 25: Team 10

From the manse

December 2023

Dear Friends,

*Our God, heaven cannot hold him
Nor the earth sustain;
heaven and earth shall flee away
when he comes to reign:
in the bleak midwinter
a stable place sufficed
the Lord God almighty
Jesus Christ.*



What an exquisite poem which each year we joyfully sing. For many, the carols and familiar lessons take us back to a simpler world, a place of warmth and safety. In the hardships we face and in the terrible suffering of our world, it is comforting to experience again the reassurance of the Christmas story. In the mind's eye, we walk alongside Joseph and Mary, enter David's town – Bethlehem, the house of bread – and rest in the stable – the cave – a place of darkness where light is born. We hear for ourselves the cries of new birth. This is the power and powerlessness of God in the world.

Though I have many questions, doubts, and hesitations about faith and the cruel suffering in human history, including across the world now, still it is nourishing and rewarding to discover as if for the first time the spiritual solace of the Christian story: Christ was arrested, tortured, died, and raised from death. At the hands of the most powerful nation on earth, Jesus was brutally and shamefully killed. The gospel is that God was present in that agonising suffering. God is present in all suffering: Christ is crucified until the end of time. And, the gospel is that God vindicated Jesus: evil, suffering, and death do not have the final word.

The God of the Exodus story, of parting the sea and pillars of fire and cloud, together with the God of miracles, are part of the rich, rich tapestry of our tradition: myths conveying truths. I believe that we are co-creators with God, that the power of God and the miracles of God, are seen through our decision-making and how we live our lives. God is encountered and experienced within us, and within our story. We are to live in Christ:

Christ is born in us again and again.

Be assured of my love and prayers during the sacred seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. And, of course, a Happy Christmas from Rosie!

It is always a pleasure for me to see you at church and, if you are able, I very much look forward to welcoming you.

Blessings and peace to you.

Scott

Rev'd Dr Scott S McKenna



Nativity time in nearing

The Sunday School are enjoying a busy start to their session. But now the focus is on preparing for their Nativity presentation which will be held on Sunday, December 10 at the morning service at 10.30am.

Get set for the Seniors' Christmas Party



**SATURDAY 9TH DECEMBER
2PM - 4.30PM**

**AFTERNOON TEA WILL BE SERVED,
ENTERTAINMENT PROVIDED BY ISOBELL
MONTGOMERIE AND THE RURAL
REVELLERS WITH SANTA AND HIS ELVES.**



Ayr St. Columba Christmas 2023

SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER

2.00pm Christmas Wreath making (*pre-booked event*)

SUNDAY 26 NOVEMBER

10.30am Morning Worship

6.30pm Service of Remembering

SUNDAY 3 DECEMBER – First Sunday of Advent

10.30am Morning Worship

12.00pm for 12.30pm Congregational Lunch (*pre-booked event*)

SATURDAY 9 DECEMBER

2.00pm Seniors' Christmas Party

SUNDAY 10 DECEMBER – Second Sunday of Advent

10.30am Morning Worship

Sunday School Nativity Presentation

SUNDAY 17 DECEMBER – Third Sunday of Advent

10.30am Morning Worship

4.30pm Lessons and Carols

(*followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies*)

SUNDAY 24 DECEMBER – Fourth Sunday of Advent

10.30am Morning Worship

11.30pm Watchnight Service

MONDAY 25 DECEMBER – Christmas Day

10.30am Christmas Day Service

SUNDAY 31 DECEMBER – First Sunday after Christmas

10.30am Morning Worship

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given:
and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God,
The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."



John Mathews opens the new Monday Fellowship session

We are now well into our autumn meetings and as I write this we have had three very good opening speakers starting with Revd. John Mathews OBE followed by Bill Grant and George English.

We are looking forward to welcoming the Hoison Craufurds of Craufurdland Castle on November 20 followed by our own Iain McFadzean representing the Charity "Tenovus" on December 4 and on December 18 we have Ian McMillan, deputy Governor at Kilmarnock Prison talking about his life and times there.

We were guests of the Guild at their meeting on Monday, November 27.

All our meetings are at 2pm on the dates quoted above and we meet in the Midton Hall. All are very welcome to attend and we look forward to seeing lots of new faces at our future meetings.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Our January meetings start on the 15th with a light hearted look at life from Political Cartoonist Ian McAnnulla.

John Ferguson, Secretary

Beryl takes the Table Talkers on an exciting trip to India

Beryl McKinlay gave a wonderful slide show of her travels in India on Monday, October 30, a country she has visited many times.

She first set off on her own aged 50! (Alan was golfing!) She was keen to explore the country where her father had served as a naval cadet during the war.

On that first trip she joined a group who were visiting the Golden Triangle - Delhi, Agra and Jaipur.

On her second visit our intrepid traveller hired a car and a driver and set off by herself to explore Rajasthan!

On her third and subsequent trips Beryl had managed to convert Alan and he now travels with her and is as passionate as she is about India!

The presentation Beryl gave came about through a project connected with the Edinburgh- India Institute which promotes the many links between Scotland and India. The East India Company had many Scots within its organisation: Indians came to Scotland to be educated and medical missionaries went to India. There were Scottish tea planters: the cotton and jute trades: locomotives for the Indian railway were built in Scotland and many fine buildings in India house iron and glass work made in Scotland.

What is striking about the many beautiful temples and buildings we saw was the tremendous variety of styles of architecture reflecting the different religions practised in this vast country -from the glorious Sikh Golden Temple in the city of Amritsar to the magnificent Islamic architecture of the Taj Mahal. It is a very familiar building to us but it was fascinating to hear that not only were vast quantities of marble required to build it, but that 40 precious stones including carnelian, turquoise, jade, jasper, pearls and diamonds were brought from all corners of the empire to enhance its beauty. It is above all a monument to romantic love. Shah Jahan built it to enshrine the body of his favourite wife Muntaz Muhal who died giving birth to her 14th child.

We saw the sacred river Ganges and the mighty river Brahmaputra, as wide as the sea.

We learnt about the famous Paisley pattern, used on shawls in Kashmir and brought to Britain in the mid 18th century by the East India Company. We saw in Kolkata St Andrew's church, built in 1815 and still holding distinctive Presbyterian services and having responsibility for the Scottish cemetery.

We learnt of the darker side of Indian history too where battles and massacres had taken place and of the troubles on the Kashmiri border following the partition of India in 1947 which are still ongoing.

Beryl had researched each slide so thoroughly. We benefited from her enthusiasm and detailed knowledge of the country she loves so much.

Thank you Beryl very much!

Muriel Wilson

Copy deadline for the January issue will be

Sunday, December 31

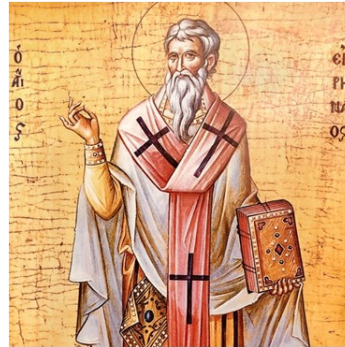
Copy should be emailed to
editor.columbanews@gmail.com

Scott's sermon preached on Sunday, September 24
from St Matthew 20 1-16

The parable of the labourers in the vineyard offends us. It offends our sense of justice and fairness. In the parable, the workers who worked all day, after completing a full day's graft, are paid the same as the workers who started work only at the eleventh hour. There is no trade union in the land which would accept such an inequitable pay deal. What, then, are we to make of this passage?

Over the course of the history of the Church there have been a number of different interpretations. From the early Church Fathers to the Middle Ages, scholars understood that the passage could not in any sense be interpreted literally. Workers were hired at five different times of the day: early morning, nine o'clock, noon, three o'clock, and the last hour of daylight.

For the second century Church Father, Irenaeus, the 'day' represented the whole of known time: from the beginning of creation to the present day. Irenaeus said that God called some people at the beginning of human history; others were called at various points through the history of the Old Testament, while the most recent were called by Jesus and the Christian Church. For Irenaeus, there was only one God: the owner of the vineyard



is the same God from the beginning of time to the time of Christ. Despite being called by God at different moments in human history, the reward in God was the same. The later Church Father, Origen, said that the 'day' in the parable represented a human life; your life and mine. Some of us may be called at the beginning of the day, at infant baptism, while for others it would be as youths, adults, old age, or even on one's death bed. It does not matter whether we have served God for forty years or forty minutes, the reward is the same. In the fourteenth century, the parable was of-

ferred as solace for those who'd lost a loved one, a child, at an early age: no matter how short one's life on earth, the reward in heaven will be the same.

Leaving aside all notion of being a good person in this life and receiving a reward in heaven, what may we say of the piece? We are to leave aside all notion of a reward because if we do things, whatever they are, for reward, then the motive is not one of love and selflessness. If heaven is a metaphor for love, then it must be said that we don't get to heaven through selfish motive.

What do we mean when we speak of being 'called' by God? Too often we are made to feel inferior or inadequate because we have not had a 'Damascus Road' conversion with dazzling light and a voice from heaven. To my mind, a call may be as gentle and imperceptible as the fading sun; a slight, gradual, voiceless, subtle perception. A call may be a line in Scripture which speaks to the heart; or it may be the witness of those who work and care for others. However we may describe it, whatever vocabulary we may use, each of us has been 'called' through the pages of our own story, otherwise we would not be here this morning.

It is surely comforting to hear week by week of the compassion and generosity of God rather than a God of judgement and exclusion. I continue to be moved by the story of Jonathan Aitken. Over the course of his very successful career, Aitken had been a war correspondent in Vietnam, a television presenter, the chief executive of TV-am, the chairman of a City of London merchant bank and in politics he served as an MP for 23 years, including serving as Defence Minister and in the Cabinet as Chief Secretary to the Treasury. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison for lying under oath in a civil libel case.

On his first night in prison, he was subjected to a 'quizzzy': a quizzzy was the shouting of abuse and threats by other inmates. Aitken said:

Nothing prepared me for the viciousness, the venom, and the violence of the quizzzy. I was terrified. I felt utterly helpless and totally vulnerable. The pressures of fear inflamed my already raw nerve-ends in agonising pain.

Before he was sentenced, Aitken had already faced the pressures of defeat, disgrace, divorce, and bankruptcy. On the evening of his first night in prison, with the din of the quizzzy penetrating his cell, he said, 'in the frightened loneliness of my cell no earthly power was capable of offering me protection. So I knelt down on the concrete floor and tried to

say a prayer’.

Before he had entered prison, a friend had given him a book entitled, ‘Praying the Psalms’. There was a set psalm for each day. So, on the night of 8 June, Aitken turned to the page for that day. It was Psalm 130. He read:

*Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord
O Lord hear my voice
Let your ears be attentive
To my cry for mercy.*

Aitken said, ‘A warm and comforting wave of reassurance flooded over me’. In an instant, he no longer felt as lonely, scared, helpless, or vulnerable. He realised that the author of the psalm had been there before him. With lots of time on his hands, he found the cell a good place to pray. For Aitken, the power of the prayer was very real. Nothing outside of him had changed, but within he felt himself to be a different person. For Aitken, his personal experience, that life-changing, life-enhancing experience, was his most powerful proof for the existence of God: God as a living reality.

Just before he left prison, he was asked by his friends in prison to talk about Psalm 130. The talk was advertised on the notice board. On the day, as everyone gathered in the chapel, the prisoner named ‘Big Face’ walked in. The term ‘Big Face’ comes from the days when notorious criminals had their faces plastered on big posters. Big Face was the ‘head honcho’, a gangland boss coming to the end of his 34-year imprisonment for a string of revenge killings.

Aitken told the inmates that Psalm 130 was his favourite psalm, and that it had been the favourite psalm of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Bunyan, and Wesley. After the talk, Big Face asked Aitken to come to his cell the next day to repeat the talk to him and his mates. On the day he was released, Aitken thanked those who had read the psalms with him. He

thanked Paddy, Phil, Clinton, Christian, Rob, Mickey, Slim, Ude, Buster, Harry, Poncho, and Antitank. These included a blagger (armed robber), a dipper (pick pocket), a kiter (fraudster) and a life (murderer).



The strange parable of the labourers in the vineyard tells the story of a generous God, a God whose love, forgiveness, and healing are present to those who stop and listen to a call, an intuition, a spiritual niggling, or stop out of a need, a deep need, that can be met nowhere else. What do you hear in this story?

**The Kirk Session's next meetings are on
Tuesday, December 12 and
Tuesday, February 20.**



LIFE AND WORK MAGAZINE

The editorially independent magazine of the Church of Scotland is packed every month with features, news and opinions on Christian life within Scotland and further afield.

One of the magazine's most important features is reader feedback- the letters pages are lively and very revealing about general attitudes within and beyond the Church.

As the Church pays annually for the magazines, it receives a discount, so we are able to offer an annual subscription rate of £42, to anyone paying before the end of December 2023.

Cheques should be made payable to St Columba Church.

Home delivery can be arranged for elderly or housebound members.

Hazel Steele



LIFE AND WORK MAGAZINE

Annual subscription for 2024 = £42 payable before December 2023

☐ I enclose my subscription for 2024.

Cheques made payable to **Ayr St Columba Church**

☐ Home Delivery required?

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

Please return to me **as soon as possible**, either to the church office or to my home address.

57 Auchendoon Crescent, Ayr KA7 4AT



Walkers enjoy the grounds of Dumfries House

The walking group have enjoyed two recent outings. In September they headed along the cycle path at Troon and in October they were at Dumfries House where the autumn colours were magnificent!!

The November walk was a loop around Monkton..

There will be no walk in December, but in January we will have a 'late Christmas' lunch following a short walk at Coodham. Details of our spring walks are being finalised!





Busy time at the Guild coffee morning

"Whose we are and Whom we serve"

We have had a splendid start to our new Session with great fellowship and friendship at our Monday afternoon meetings. In the lead up to Christmas we had a very busy time with our coffee morning on November 18, the first we have felt able to hold since Covid put a stop to large gatherings.

Our final meetings before Christmas are on **Monday 27th November** when we welcome the members of the Monday Fellowship to learn more about **"The Night Before Christmas"** and **Monday 11th December** when we have a **Christmas Afternoon Tea with entertainment by Loudoun Friends**. All are welcome to these afternoon meetings.

I must take this opportunity to thank our Office Bearers and committee members for their continued dedication and hard work week by week and also our Guild members for their commitment and fellowship.

Our first meeting in the New Year is on the afternoon of **Monday 8th January** when Mr Dennis Rattenbury will speak about **Ayrshire Smugglers**.

On behalf of the Guild, I thank you for your support throughout the Session and wish you all a very happy Christmas season.

Dorothy Bone Convener





Fireside puzzles for Christmas

As you relax beside a warm fire this Christmas, why not exercise your little grey cells on these challenges. You can check your solutions on page 26

1 Veterinary Question

A vet notes that when a cat and a rabbit stand on her scales the total weight is 10kg. When the rabbit stands on the scales with a dog the total weight is 20kg. Together the cat and the dog weigh 24kg. What is the total weight when all three animals stand on the scales?

2 Dotty Heads

Three Masters of Logic wanted to find out who was the wisest amongst them. So they turned to their Grand Master, asking to resolve their dispute. "Easy," the old sage said. "I will blindfold you and paint either red, or blue dot on each man's forehead. When I take your blindfolds off, if you see at least one red dot, raise your hand. The one, who guesses the colour of the dot on his forehead first, wins." And so it was said, and so it was done. The Grand Master blindfolded the three contestants and painted red dots on every one. When he took their blindfolds off, all three men raised their hands as the rules required and sat in silence pondering. Finally, one of them said: "I have a red dot on my forehead." How did he guess?

3 Number Placement

Digits 1 through 7 are printed above the box, in the box, and beneath the box. Can you continue the scheme being used and place 8 and 9 correctly?

1	7	4
5	2	
3		6

4 A Heartfelt Message

When his fiancée had been on a business trip for a month, John sent her this message:

Dearest Sally,

“a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t v w x y z “!

John

Xxx

What was the meaning of his message?



Keeping up to date with the Kirk Session news

A meeting of the Kirk Session, chaired by the Moderator, The Revd Dr Scott McKenna, was held on 12th September 2023. A summary of issues discussed at this meeting is given below:

The Moderator named 10 members he intended to approach with a view to inviting them to become Elders. Members of Session gave their approval for all the individuals identified.

A Paper giving the totals of responses to the congregational consultation on Sunday Services had been issued to Elders ahead of the meeting. Having discussed the details it was agreed that the current practice at Ayr St Columba Church of holding two services on Sunday mornings at 10.00am and at 11.15am be replaced with the practice of holding a single service on Sunday mornings commencing at 10.30am.

It was further agreed that this new arrangement would start on Sunday 29th October 2023.

Appointment of Depute Session Clerks: The Moderator proposed that Mrs Gillian Watson and Mr Keith Fullerton both be appointed to the position of Depute Session Clerk. Each had shown strong commitment to the church and possessed skills that were relevant to the role. The main role of the depute Session Clerks would be to form part of a team with the Moderator and the Session Clerk to discuss issues as they arose. Members of Session warmly approved the appointment of both individuals.

Mr George Park, reported on the Presbytery Meeting of the South West which took place within the Howard Centre, Kilmarnock on 2nd September 2023.

The Rev Alison McBrier, Minister at Caldwell linked with Dunlop Parish Churches has been appointed as the Moderator of the Presbytery of the South West from September 2023 to September 2024. The Rev Taylor Brown has been appointed as Depute Presbytery Clerk.

Presbytery encouraged congregations to submit ideas for Seeds for Growth funding to the Mission Committee for evaluation. More information on the grants available, can be found on the Church of Scotland website.

Safeguarding: Presbytery noted the request from the Safeguarding Com-

mittee for Presbyters to consider individuals willing to become Safeguarding Trainers and bring their name(s) to the Committee. This is particularly urgent in the Ardrossan, Kilmarnock and Irvine and Ayr areas.

Remits from the General Assembly of 2023 in respect of congregations urge all congregations to engage with the work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group in particular the research outcomes of the Research Group on Ethnic Minorities and the work of the Disability Inclusion Working Group urge congregations to follow the Net Zero Pathway and use the Energy Footprint Tool (both published by the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team) to help them measure and reduce their emissions in line with the Net Zero 2030 target.

encourage congregations to offer prayerful and financial support to the rebuilding of lives and churches in Syria and Lebanon through 'Standing Firm - Rebuilding lives in Syria'.

Encourage uniting congregations to ensure that the Guild is involved in discussions and enabled to explore ways in which Guilds merge or work in new ways.

instruct congregations to ensure that all retained manses are fully wind and watertight and meet the Repairing Standard as per the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 by 31 December 2024.

instruct congregations to provide a valid Energy Performance Certificate and a report on compliance with the Repairing Standard along with the next Manse Condition Schedule sent to Presbyteries.

remind every Kirk Session that no person may be employed or appointed to undertake or carry out regulated work unless that person is a member of the PVG Scheme or the Disclosure and Barring Scheme or has provided the Safeguarding Service with an appropriate overseas check and has been cleared by the Safeguarding Service.

authorise the Safeguarding Service to audit periodically congregational safeguarding records and practice and instruct Kirk Sessions to facilitate and co-operate with such audits. Encourage congregations to become familiar with the revised Handbook and to provide a link to the Handbook on their own Church website. (The new revised Safeguarding Handbook can be found on the Safeguarding Service area of the Church's public website).

encourage all those in congregations who are no longer undertaking regulated work for the Church to contact Disclosure Scotland and the Safeguarding Service as soon as possible so that their records can be

brought up to date.

note that under Giving to Grow congregational contributions will reduce from a total of £47.7 million in 2020 to £38.9 million in 2023 and urge congregations to engage with the National Stewardship Team and the range of its resources to develop new streams of income and generous giving. Urge congregations to consider making voluntary contributions towards our ministries during the transition phase as the scheme is implemented and to develop Giving Agreements in the longer term.

The Moderator thanked Mr Park for his report.

The Clerk reported that the first round of pulpit swaps with our partner churches had gone well. Revd David Gemmell had been well received at St Columba, Revd McKenna had preached to a small congregation at St Andrews and Revd Stanley Okeke had preached at the Auld Kirk.

14 members had attended the social event at the Auld Kirk manse in August. It had been an enjoyable and worthwhile exercise and it was hoped that more joint social events would be arranged in the future.

Upper Crofts Manse: Our request to sell the current manse and purchase a more suitable property had been approved by Presbytery and also by the General Trustees. As a result, the search was underway for a new property and the Upper Crofts manse had been put on the market.

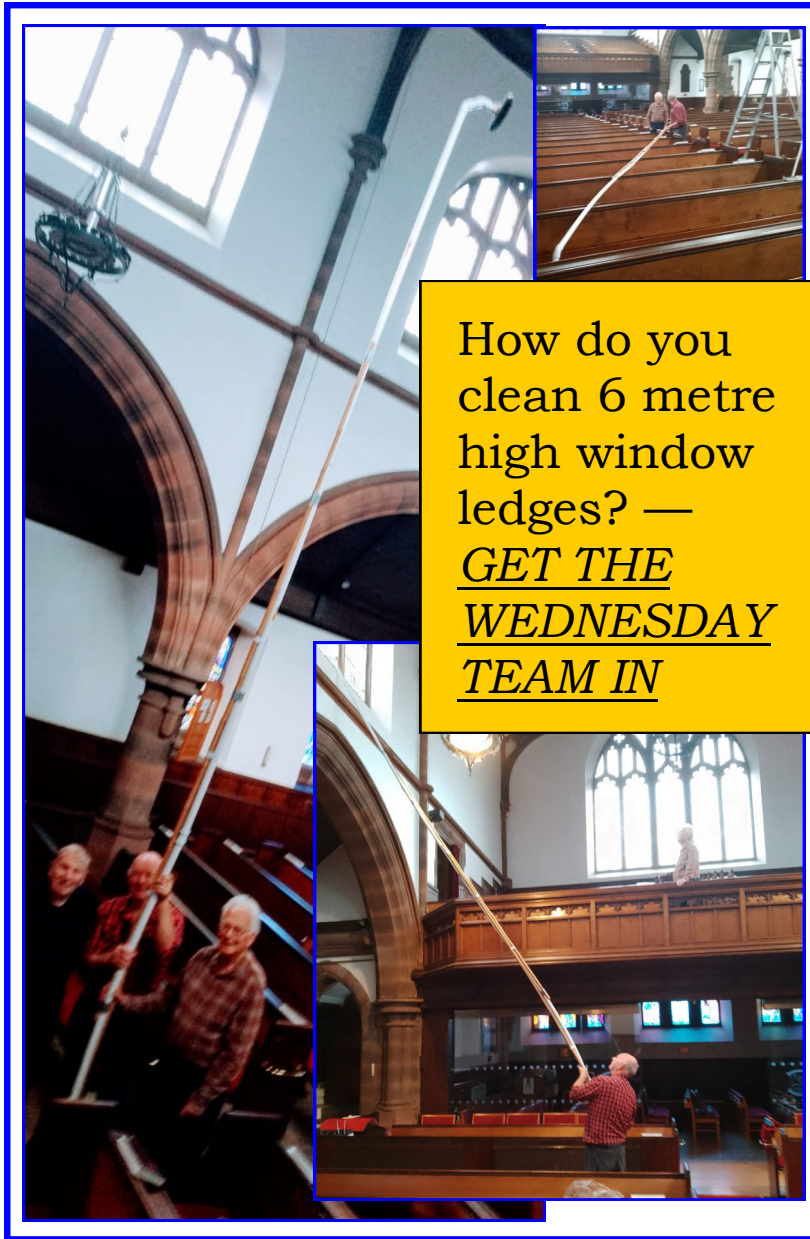
The Clerk said that he had been made aware that the foundation stone at Lochside Church had been laid on 2nd May 1934. So next year would see the 90th anniversary of the building. It had been suggested that we contact the Church of Scotland to request a visit from the Moderator or other dignitary to mark the occasion. So, if members of Session approved, the Clerk said he would write to the Principal Clerk to explain the situation and to request a visit. This was approved.

Mrs Jane Hunter said that the visit to the Royal Yacht Britannia had gone very well. Members from the Auld Kirk and St Andrews had been invited and those from the Auld Kirk had been in touch to express their appreciation and to say that they now were now looking forward to the Senior Christmas Party. Mrs Lorna Paterson praised the excellent work done by Mrs Hunter and Mrs Christian in organising and leading the visit and this was echoed by others who had been involved.

R A Bartholomew, Session Clerk

**Diary
date**

**The next Business Committee meeting will be held at
the church on Tuesday, January 30**



How do you
clean 6 metre
high window
ledges? —
GET THE
WEDNESDAY
TEAM IN



I want to eat a healthy diet that does not put a strain on our world.

Organic versus Ultra processed food

Key words: Organic, Ultra processed food, (microbiome, health)

We all have access to plenty of food. If we concentrate too much on convenience, we will fall prey to unhelpful advertising. Ultra processed food is heavily marketed and it can damage our health. Organic food is good for our land and helps with our health, but can be expensive. Is it still possible to eat well within a reasonable budget?

We should be aware of what our food contains and be prepared to think more about our diet and cook from scratch as often as we can.

Recent research has shown that the formula for a healthy diet is complicated. I thought that eating “5 a day” amounted to a healthy diet. In addition; consuming plenty of roughage; keeping salt, sugar and saturated fat intake down; keeping overall calories down; reducing junk food such as biscuits, sweets and crisps was the key to maintaining good health. I believed that eating organic food made little difference to health but would help the environment. It turns out that my formula was inadequate.

Professor Tim Spector (an epidemiologist from Kings College London) is a very widely published academic on the subject of nutrition. He is the author of “Spoon fed” and “Food for life”. He appears on many YouTube videos. He has influenced my present views on diet.

We know that eating a lot of butter and cream can raise triglyceride and cholesterol levels in the blood and this is a risk factor in heart disease and strokes. Taking drugs called Statins can help to reverse this effect.

Most people thought that we should therefore avoid dietary saturated fat where we can, so that we can remain healthy without the help of prescriptions. According to Prof Spector, there is now evidence that full fat cheese and live yoghurt, especially Kefir yoghurt, which has especially high levels of live micro-organisms, does not raise blood fats. Fermented foods containing live organisms are usu-



ally good for us. They contribute to the “microbiome”.

The [microbiome](#) is the mass of organisms that live in our gut. It modifies the nutrients we absorb.

Full fat Kefir yoghurt does not raise harmful blood fats

Food companies frequently add chemicals to food to improve shelf life and alter consistency. Their marketing records them as “preservatives” or “emulsifiers” or “artificial colouring” etc. These additives make the food into “Ultra processed food”.

We are not told that these chemicals have another effect, they stimulate appetite. On average, people who eat mainly ultra processed food, consume 10% more calories and those who eat little else, have an appetite increase of up to 25%. All supermarket breakfast cereals, nearly all supermarket bread (including bread baked on site and sourdough) are ultra processed. It is very difficult to cut out all ultra processed food but we can reduce it and its impact on us by avoiding snacking on it and as well as reducing the proportion we eat.

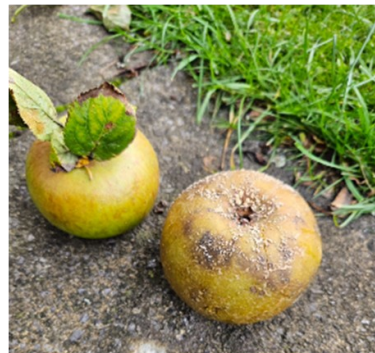
Farmers normally spray their crops with insecticide fungicide and fertiliser to improve yield. Topsoil is lost over time if chemical fertiliser is used. The ability to grow crops will be lost if we fail to change our farming practices.

Insects and fungi are vital in the environment and are killed by insecticides and fungicides. Some pesticides are related to nerve agents such as Novichok. They are tested on animals as single agents by our Government, in order to determine “safe” concentrations. They are not tested in combinations that are found in our food. Some of these pesticides kill organisms in our gut, just like they do in our fields. In other words, our microbiome is damaged by pollutants but there has not yet been research to determine how this might affect us.

Freshly picked apples, healthy on the left and rotten on the right, one price paid by Organic farming .

When it comes to livestock farming, we sometimes hear of unnecessarily unkind treatment of animals, routine use of antibiotics or other intensive farming methods that result in antibiotic resistance, pollution of waterways and more.

Is there a way around this? It appears that consumers are trapped by



high prices for organic food or the need to accept inferior or potentially harmful products such as ultra processed food and food containing contaminants.

For answers, you can view Prof Spector's YouTube videos or take a look at my take on the subject in my next article.

Andrew Muirhead

Email a.g.muirhead@gmail.com

Ultra processed food YouTube video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xo_sdjQD_pw

Organic food YouTube video [The truth about organic food - according to science | Tim Spector - YouTube](#)

Loss of topsoil <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/only-60-years-of-farming-left-if-soil-degradation-continues/>

The microbiome [How your microbiome can improve your health - BBC Future](#)

“Waiting” on the day retreat

On Saturday, November 4, eleven members of the congregation took up Ian and Mandy Stirling's invitation to enjoy a day retreat on the theme of Waiting at their home in the Carrick Hills.

We began by introducing ourselves, Ian first. My name Ian and I am waiting for...! ...A simple enough sentence, but one which immediately got each of us thinking – and talking!

Ian then guided us on an exploration of the theme, using a wealth of materials and interspersed with readings, songs, music and poetry, both ancient and modern, all carefully chosen to encourage thought and debate.

Mandy's love of cooking shone through at lunchtime, when we were treated to an array of delicious home-made breads, chutneys, soups and cheese, followed of course by a selection of wonderful home baking brought along by some of our participants.

Our venue was a delight. The Henhouse is a cosy spacious barn heated by a log burner and we couldn't fail to be inspired by the views of the beautiful autumn countryside from every window. A stroll round the gar-

dens after lunch refreshed us, ready for the afternoon session. We may only have been 3 or 4 miles from town, but the peace and tranquillity of Ian and Mandy's home made us feel a million miles away from the everyday.

Our day certainly wasn't a detached withdrawal from reality. It was an opportunity for each of us to take time out from what can be a volatile, fast moving world and enjoy a warm lively sense of fellowship and affinity. Ian and Mandy provided us with space, freedom and inspiration to step away from routine and other demands on our time, in order to connect and reflect on interesting and meaningful concepts within our own lives and the wider world.

I'm sure I speak for everyone there when I say we had a wonderful day and went home feeling refreshed and ready to make time for regular reflection in our everyday lives.

A huge thank you to Ian and Mandy from all of us for their kindness and time taken to make our day such a success.

Linda Scott

Congregation and Parish Register



October-November

DEATHS

Alexander Harkness
Elizabeth Davidson
William (Bill) Anderson
Ann Aitchison
Catherine (Kitty) MacDonald

NEW MEMBERS

Margaret Higgins

Who to contact

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Revd. Dr. SCOTT S. McKENNA.
scottsmckenna@aol.com
Tel:- 01292 226075

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Revd. DAVID T. NESS, LTH,
17 Winston Avenue, Prestwick.
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Tel:- 443271

Director of Music:

MATTHEW HYNES,
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Tel:- 870449

Gift Aid Convener:

PETER G. MACDONALD,
23 Dongola Road, Ayr. Tel.- 264059

Free Will Offering Convener:

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IRENE E. BARTHOLOMEW,
30 St Leonard's Road, Ayr
Office 269524
irene@ayrstcolumba.co.uk

Church Charity Number: SC014338

Church Services (Midton Road):

10.30am - Morning Worship;
10.30am Sunday School,
6.30pm - Evening Services
(Last Sunday of the month)
2pm: HOLY COMMUNION
(Last Wednesday of Month)

Church Services (Lochside):

10am Morning Worship

Webmaster: Iain Bartholomew,
email: website@ayrstcolumba.co.uk.
www.ayrstcolumba.co.uk

What's on in the halls

MONDAY

5.30pm **RAINBOW BROWNIES**

Aynsley Bell, 07914 842118

2pm: **THE GUILD** (fortnightly):

Mrs D. Bone, 441651

2pm: **MONDAY FELLOWSHIP**

(fortnightly):

Mr T. R. Swinn, 441896

TUESDAY

10am: Knit and Natter

Carol Morrison, 07999444200

WEDNESDAY

2pm: **HOLY COMMUNION** (4th Wed):

Church Office, 269524

2pm: **FITNESS with FRIENDS:**

Mrs Margaret Doncaster, 477381

5.45pm: **9th AYR BROWNIES,**

Sally Bentham 07817169436

THURSDAY

10am-noon: **OASIS CAFE**

Mrs M. Doncaster 477381 Mrs P. Naylor
570020

6.30pm: **CUB SCOUTS:**

Mr Jereon Bolte 07511489755

7.30pm: **SENIOR CHOIR:**

Matthew Hynes, 870449

FRIDAY

6pm: **BEAVER SCOUTS:**

Fiona Wilson, 290414

7.30pm: **SCOUTS:**

Jereon Bolte, 07511489755



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Solutions to Fireside Puzzles

Veterinary Question Solution

Since the cat and the rabbit weigh 10kg, but the dog and the rabbit weigh 20kg, the dog weighs 10kg more than the cat. Together the dog and cat weigh 24, so the only possibility is that the cat weighs 7kg and the dog weighs 17kg. Thus, the rabbit weighs 3kg. This means that the three animals together weigh 27kg.

Dotty Heads Solution

The wisest one thought like this:
I see all hands up and 2 red dots, so I can have either a blue or a red dot. If I had a blue one, the other 2 guys would see all hands up and one red and one blue dot. So, they would have to think that if the second one of them (the other with red dot) sees the same blue dot, then he must see a red dot on the first one with red dot. However, they were both silent (and they are wise), so I have a red dot on my forehead.

Number Placement Solution

Each number on the top has straight lines only. Each number in the box has mixed straight lines and curves. Each number at the bottom has curves only. Therefore, 8 & 9 go beneath the box in the same line as 3 and 6.

A Heartfelt Message Solution

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Reflection on the message of the birth
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