

Columba News

October
2023
No. 254



Autumn days are here



Autumn is here and the sun sinks over Arran and Kintyre marking the end of long summer days

Waiting to welcome you

Sundays	Team	Leader
October 22	Team 4	Ms G. Watson
October 29	Team 5	Mrs N. Mackie
November 5	Team 6	Mr J. Hume
November 12	Team 7	Mrs H. Fullerton
November 19	Team 8	Mrs F. Boyd
November 26	Team 9	Mrs E. Gardiner
December 3	Team 10	Mr G. Park
December 10	Team 11	Mrs J. Paterson
December 17	Team 12	Ms H. Cousins

Evening Services:

October 29: Team 5; November 26: Team 9



From the manse

October 2023

Dear Friends,

It is a real joy for me to be the Minister at St Columba. A joyful, happy, and loving congregation, I find the office-bearers and members of the congregation to be enormously affirming, supportive, and encouraging.

It is a privilege and pleasure to conduct worship in our very beautiful and peaceful sanctuary.

The Columba window reminds us that the Celtic saint walks with us and that together we are pilgrims on the journey with God and into God.

Walking is an important part of my daily life. At times I think, 'Oh, no, I've got to go out again' but, whether I look forward to it or not, I always return from my walk feeling better for the exercise, stimulation, and fresh air. What would I do without Rosie?!

In the photographs, Rosie is helping in the garden. She's very good at making an hour's work extend to three hours.

One of my regular walks is at Rozelle Park and I've included a photo of



the bridle path one morning: it's a spiritual and therapeutic place to walk and soak in nature's tranquillity.

We are so fortunate to have so much accessible countryside on our doorstep. A favourite place for Rosie and me is the circular walk at Cornish Hill.

I've included two photographs: one is of Rosie on a rock with Loch Cornish behind her, while the other is of a magnificent Golden Ringed Dragonfly spotted on our walk.

In faith, with the eye of the heart, we may see God in all things; every bush aflame with the fire of God. In moments of stillness, we may be aware of God's presence and sublime love saturating the whole of creation.

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

Revd Dr Scott S McKenna



Sacrament of Holy Communion

The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated in the church on Sunday, October 29.

There will be a service 10.30am and an evening Communion service at 6.30pm.

Please also note the clocks move back an hour that weekend.

The Kirk Session has decided that the time is right for the Communion services to revert back to the traditional style of serving the elements from the October Communion.

The small capsules of bread and wine the church used during Covid will also be available at the door if some members would prefer to use these instead of the common plate.



It's a new look to Sunday mornings at Ayr St Columba

After a comprehensive poll of members,
the Kirk Session has decided going
forward to combine the early service
at 10am and the one at 11.15am
into one morning service forthwith
at 10.30am from Sunday, October 29

*Tea and Coffee will be served after the morning service
each week. Please come and join in the Fellowship*

Bob keeps you 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 13th June 2023. A summary of issues discussed at this meeting is given below:

The Moderator welcomed Mr David Donaldson, Divinity Student, to his first meeting of the Kirk Session. Mr Davidson had already completed seven of his ten weeks with us.

Following discussion, members of Session agreed that the serving of elements at Holy Communion should recommence in October. Capsules would be available for those who were not sufficiently comfortable to use the common plate.

Although we would not be moving to a union with St Andrews and the Auld Kirk anytime soon, partnership with them would continue to de-

velop. Members of each congregation were invited to attend events organised by partner churches.

The following pulpit exchanges had been arranged for the coming months:

Sunday 20th August: Revd Gemmell at Ayr St Columba, Revd Okeke at the Auld Kirk, Revd McKenna at St Andrews.

Sunday 19th November: Revd Okeke at Ayr St Columba, Revd McKenna at the Auld Kirk, Revd Gemmell at St Andrews,

Presbytery approved the sale of the present manse of Ayr St Columba in favour of a more efficient and smaller building and as approved by the General Trustees in due course.

Ayr Auld Kirk Parish Church: Presbytery approved the expenditure of approx. £70,000 for window replacements and doors within the Halls and Kirk House.

Kirk of the Covenant Church building, Dalmellington: Presbytery approved the sale of the building in accordance with the Presbytery Mission Plan.

The Clerk said that he was not aware of any timescale being set for the start of the buildings review process. Presbytery had asked the three ministers if they were prepared to enter into a team ministry. All three had said that they were not prepared to do so at this time. Apart from the fact that there had been no guidance issued relating to team ministry, it was unwise to expect the three ministers to run the same parish at the same time. Only one of the ministers would be appointed as the Moderator of the Kirk Sessions and the rules suggested that if that person departed, the remaining ministers would not be eligible to become Moderator.

The Clerk suggested that we consult with Newton Wallacetown Church with a view to making a joint approach to Presbytery to set a date for the transfer responsibility for Lochside without waiting for the Local Mission Church procedure to be set up. This was approved

Miss Muriel Wilson said that she wished to gauge interest in a retreat at Iona and in a visit to the Gurdwara Sikh centre. Members could sign the forms in the Carrick Park vestibule to register interest in participating in either of these events.

The visit to the Mosque in Glasgow had gone very well. Members from the Auld Kirk, St Andrews and from Troon had joined the trip. Miss Wilson gave a detailed report on what had been a very impressive and enjoyable experience.

R A Bartholomew
Session Clerk



John is opening guest at Monday Fellowship

The Monday Fellowship session got under way on October 9 with a talk from our own Rev. John Mathews OBE.

Our next meetings are on October 23 when Bill Grant will be talking about his time at Westminster followed by "The History of Craufurdland Castle" by Mr/s Houison Craufurd on November 20.

On November 27 we are guests of the Guild.

December 4th is a talk on Tenovus Scotland by Iain McFadzean. Leading up to the Christmas break on December 18 we will hear all about Kilmarnock Prison given by Ian McMillan, Assistant Governor.

All our meetings are held in the Midton Hall at 2pm and all are very welcome to attend.

John Ferguson, Secretary

Tech hitches fail to dampen St Columba Guild talk

St COLUMBA GUILD *Whose we are and Whom we serve*

The Guild got off to a flying start but not without the technical hitches when "modern" technology let us down at our opening meeting. Our innovative speaker, our Minister no less, managed to improvise and held us spell-bound with the description of his prepared graphics as he pointed to the blank wall behind and we, the audience, imagined his pictures which we visualised.

The Guild theme this year is "New Wine, New Wine Skins" and despite the hitch in technology, Scott wholeheartedly held our attention without his prepared graphics. Scott, we bow to you in admiration. If that had happened to a member of our committee, it would have been just short of a disaster!



We had a lovely meeting of returning and new members with a great air of fellowship over our usual cup of tea and chat.

Thank you, Scott, for making our first meeting so interesting!

All are welcome at Ayr St. Columba Guild.

Dorothy Bone, Convener

Maureen Fullerton, Secretary

Scott's sermon preached on Sunday, September 17
from Exodus 14 19-31

Today's Scripture lesson is brutal. The army of the Pharaoh, the horses and chariot drivers, were drowned at the command of God. God threw the army into a panic. God told Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians'.

Typically, we know the story as Moses crossing the Red Sea – Charlton Heston did it the best – but scholars tell us that, if the story is historical at all, the crossing was likely to have been over a marshland in the northern part of Egypt, not the Red Sea to the south. Known as the Sea of Reeds, the marshland was and is particularly prone to rapid and unexpected flooding. Whether it was the Red Sea or the Sea of Reeds, it does not really matter. What matters is that in this Bible story the Egyptians are drowned because God, the LORD, commanded it.

Is this we God we gather each week to worship? With its epicentre high



in the Atlas Mountains, the 6.8 magnitude earthquake in Morocco has killed over 2,900 people. Many are injured and many have lost their homes. In one village, a resident named

Fatouma said that her 'whole body is shaking'. She now lives in a tent made of blankets and wood. She looks onto the pink minaret of the village mosque. It is her only beacon of hope. Fatouma says, 'May God protect us. We are fighting for life – slowly'. How do we think of God in a natural disaster such as an earthquake?

Nearly 20,000 people are feared dead in eastern Libya following the extreme flooding. Described as a calamity of epic proportions, a biblical catastrophe, the bursting of two dams has wrought unimaginable devasta-



tion. How do we speak of God in such a situation?

Of course, the even greater figures of loss and suffering in the two world wars of the twentieth century dwarf most other terrible events. The graphic calculated torture of the Holocaust is etched on our minds. Where was God?

These questions, these hard questions, are not new. On 1 November 1755, the Portuguese city of Lisbon was subject to an earthquake, fires,



and a tsunami. Of the city's population of 200,000 men, women, and children, it is estimated that around 40,000 of

them were killed. It is a particularly poignant story for Christians, for people of faith, because being the Feast of All Saints, a holy day of celebration, many of the city's residents were in church that morning attending services of worship. We will remember the earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean on Boxing Day 2004, which killed over a quarter of a million people. How do we speak of God in such situations?

Does the Exodus story of the Egyptians being drowned at the command of God work for us in any way? Do we see indiscriminate suffering as the will of God? In his novel, *The Brothers Karamazov*, in detail far too graphic to cite here, the 19th century Russian writer, Dostoyevsky, said that the greatest challenge to his faith was the suffering of children. Although a novel, the author drew on reported cases of torture. While some people employ so-called scientific arguments against the existence of God, like Dostoyevsky, it is for me suffering and the suffering of children that is the hardest argument to put to God, or put against the existence of God.

Dostoyevsky understood the arguments of free will. He understood that in the Christian faith we may speak of eternal harmony and the discovery of ultimate truth. But, for him, in the end he rejected entry into God's

kingdom. The tears of one tortured child was a price too high and, through his novel, Dostoyevsky returned his ticket of entrance. It is quite something that the divine spark within us, our conscience, dares call the God of Eternity to account.

The Bible has many stories, and they are written across many centuries. Ideas of God changed and, in our time, continues to evolve.

Our thinking in every human endeavour changes, and so too concerning God. Would we ever dare say that the Egyptians died at the hand of the LORD? Would we ever dare say that an earthquake, fire, or flood is the work of God: do tectonic plates collide at the command of God? Perhaps we do not need to think of Morocco, Libya, Lisbon, the Indian Ocean, the Holocaust, or a Russian writer, to think of loss, tragedy, and indescribable suffering; perhaps it is nearer to home?

Thinking evolves. The Book of Exodus is first and foremost a book of Judaism, of the Jewish people. In that tradition, the rabbis offered a new story, a commentary uncomfortable with the original text. In the later rabbinic story, it is said that, while the Egyptians drowned, the angels in heaven laughed and rejoiced. But when God heard their celebrations, God rebuked them saying, 'My children are dying, and you laugh and rejoice!' Our thinking about God evolves, always.

In the Hebrew Bible, our Old Testament, I wonder at times if part of the evolution of thought concerning God is a move away from the God of action, the God of the Exodus and Moses, towards the God of Elijah, the God expressed in the still, small voice, in the sheerest silence.

In the Jewish tradition, after the horror of the Holocaust, it is said that the God of the Exodus is dead. What do we think about God; about natural evil such as earthquakes and moral evil such as torture?

It may be that there are no satisfactory answers to the problem of evil in our world. In face of suffering, most answers sound trite. After the 2004 tsunami a reporter interviewed a man in Sri Lanka, a father who had lost four of his five children. As the father named each child, he became more and more overwhelmed with tears.

We cannot deny him the reality of that suffering with a simplistic Christian response.

What we do see when we look at Jesus, at the Christ, is a life of forgiving sins, healing those who suffer, casting out evil, and conquering death. However we may metaphorically or imaginatively interpret these stories, we gain a sense that God is with us *in* our suffering. God's presence is not an overpowering presence.

In his letter to the Romans, St Paul asked:

*Who will separate us from the love of Christ?
Will affliction or distress or persecution or famine
or nakedness or peril or sword?*

*.....
No, in all these things we are more than victorious through
him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death,
nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things
to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else
in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God
in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Living under the might and brutality of Rome, Paul knew what moral evil was: he saw it enacted every day. Yet, underlying what he saw with his eyes, in faith with the eyes of the heart, he saw a deeper truth: that no power in this world will in the end defeat God. It is a different way of seeing.

In the Exodus story, the LORD who commanded the Egyptians be drowned was YHWH, the LORD. The story ends that YHWH saved Israel: YHWH saves. In Hebrew, 'YHWH saves' becomes the name *Joshua*; in Aramaic, it is *Yeshua*; and, in Greek it is *Jesus*. In the Gospels, YHWH, the God who saves is revealed again only this time that God in Christ is powerless, nailed to a cross, and crucified. This time YHWH is the God of love, forgiveness, healing, and renewed life.

Maybe this answer is still not enough for Dostoyevsky? What about you?

Remembrance Sunday

*Our Remembrance service will be held in the church
on Sunday, November 12.*

*The Service will start at 10.30am and there will be
the two minute silence at 11.00am. All welcome.*

Get set for the Seniors' Christmas Party

SATURDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2PM - 4.30PM



**ENJOY A FESTIVE
AFTERNOON TEA**

*ENTERTAINMENT WILL BE BY
ISOBELL MONTGOMERIE
AND THE
RURAL REVELLERS*

**A GLASS OF CHEER AND OF
COURSE SANTA AND HIS ELVES**

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO JOIN THE FESTIVITIES
PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM BELOW AND RE-
TURN IT TO THE OFFICE OR TO THE POSTING BOX
AT THE CARRICK PARK CORRIDOR**

Senior Christmas Party

Please reserve..... a place at the
Seniors' Christmas Party on Saturday, December 9.

Forms should be handed in by Friday, December 1





One of the local churches (86% of the population is Christian) with concrete pews! No wonder they hardly sit- the children, young people, women all take their turn at singing and dancing at the front

The main aim of our visit to Malawi was to meet with those involved with Abbas Rest and to find out first hand how things are progressing.

We spent days at the Compound in Chiringa where the charity's office is housed, talking with and listening to a variety of different groups.

Abbas Rest is run in Chiringa by four Trustees, a p/t Project Worker and a full time Community Worker. We enjoyed very much hearing about their work and responsibilities.

One of their important roles is to supervise the distribution of bags of maize during the "hunger months"- January and February- to those most in need. Difficult decisions have to be made!

There are six other villages we "look after" and we visited each of them when we were there and met with the chiefs. The ravages of Cyclone Freddy were so evident. Many houses had been destroyed as well as a maternity hospital and HIV clinic and fields of crops washed away.

We also met with some of the 45 secondary pupils we support. Although primary education is free, secondary has to be privately funded. They were so grateful for our help and the girls spoke about the menstrual hygiene kits as being so beneficial, allowing them to attend school every day. They need jobs when they leave school (not always easy to find) and we discussed with our Trustees whether we might employ some to undertake repair work around the compound.

We were delighted to hear that our solar powered water scheme (partly funded by Ayr Rotary) is one of the few still supplying water after the Cyclone.

Other good news came from the local social welfare officer who is very pleased with the work we're doing. He spoke of the "transparency" of our

Muriel makes a visit to Abbas Rest in Malawi

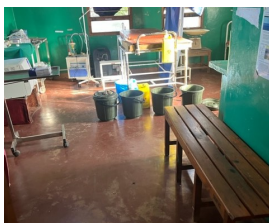
By Muriel Wilson



Fresh fruit and vegetables for sale in the local market



Our first "shower". You mix the hot and cold water



The Labour ward in the local maternity hospital



Meeting with the very colourful local chiefs!

charity i.e. there are no "ghost orphans" for whom money is being claimed and who don't actually exist!

When we weren't in meetings we were absorbing the local sights and sounds.

We attended a local church with concrete pews! However no one stayed sitting down for long-they were all up singing and dancing. They sent greetings and thanks to St Columba and called us their "Scottish family." It was such a joyful service!

At another church they presented us with three live hens as a "thank you" present! We gave them back explaining that we really couldn't keep them as we were travelling!

We found the markets endlessly fascinating. On sale were fresh fruit and veg: roasted mice for a wee snack!: clothes: bags: goat steaks: live hens and much, much more.

There was always a constant stream of people on either side of the main roads, either walking and carrying their. On one occasion we saw a live pig strapped on the back of a bike!

Malawi is the third poorest African country. The infrastructure is underdeveloped and the workforce inadequately trained. The economy depends on outside help from the IMF, World Bank, other countries and charities.

The main road through the country is badly in need of repairs (potholes galore!) and the Chinese are funding it.

It seems to me that Malawi will require outside help for years to come.

It was hard at times not to feel overwhelmed by the poverty and poor resources.

I was very aware that what Abbas Rest is doing is a drop in the ocean but nevertheless it IS a drop! It makes such a difference to those we are



The Abbas Rest team in Chiringa - 4 Trustees, P/T manager and community worker



This family lives on the shore of Lake Malawi and the Dad is a painter- I bought 2 of his paintings



Some of the 45 secondary pupils whose education we support. They are very grateful for our help but also spoke about the need for jobs after they finish school.



We visited a project supported by the Rotary who bought goats for the youth to look after. They will breed with them and sell the meat.



Saying goodbye to Dave, our wonderful driver of the 4x4



We delivered POP bandages to this Prosthetics/Orthotics Centre in Kamuzu Hospital

able to help.

Yet, in important ways the Malawians have things to teach us. They are content with a VERY simple lifestyle and indeed put up with pretty awful living conditions. They are patient and resilient with a huge capacity to accept tragedy, adversity and disaster. They are also very friendly and warm hearted and welcoming.

People of St Columba - thank you again for all your generosity!

You have helped improve the lives of some remarkable people and they are very grateful!

**Time to book your seat
at the Congregational
Christmas lunch**

Western House

Sunday, December 3
Noon for 12.30pm

Main Course/ Dessert
Soft drink or a glass of wine
Tea/Coffee and Tablet

Cost £30 (collected on the day)

If you would like to have lunch a list for names will be
placed in The Carrick Park vestibule from October 29th -
November 30

**Busy time at the South
West Presbytery**

*Note of Presbytery Meeting of the South West which took place
within the Howard Centre, Kilmarnock on 2 September 2023*

Presbytery Appointments: 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 Pres-



bytery Clerk.

Finance: Presbytery noted that almost all congregations accounts for 2022 have been inspected in the new Presbytery and should be sent to OSCR by 30 September 2023, if not already done so.

Presbytery Planning Committee: The Presbytery Planning Committee continue to work towards implementing the Presbytery Mission Plans from the 6 legacy Presbyteries.

Within the Irvine area, it has not been possible to unite all six congregations, therefore a five-way Union is being progressed as one of the intermediary steps towards fulfilling the PMP.

Several Kirk Sessions have requested delays in the final closing dates for their buildings. Any delay is for a maximum of 6 months from the date identified in the PMP and only considered for extreme circumstances. Following review of the legacy Presbytery of Ayr, the review of Dailly Kirk Session was upheld by the Review Panel. Planning has not yet been in a position to determine consideration of this but will do so, as soon as possible.

Presbytery approved various Basis of Unions including 5 churches in the Cumbrae, Fairlie and Largs area into a Team Ministry.

Press Releases: Presbytery encourages all congregations within the bounds when preparing Press Releases connected to Presbytery business to consult with the Presbytery Clerk and the Communications Department of the Church.

Catalyst Mission Conference: Presbytery noted that the Catalyst Mission Conference will be held on Saturday 11 November 2023 in the Carrick Centre, Maybole and encourages congregations to send delegates.

Mission Facilitator: Presbytery agreed to employ a Mission Facilitator (0.5FTE, 2 year post) to work besides Mission Committee, Presbytery and congregations to assist with commitment to the 5 Marks of Mission/ Mission Mapping

Seeds for Growth : Presbytery encourage 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.

School Chaplaincy: Presbytery encourage those involved in School Chaplaincy to attend the Schools Ministry Roadshow which will be held on Saturday 7 October 2023 at St George's Church Hall in Dumfries.

Safeguarding: Presbytery noted the request from the Safeguarding Committee 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
- * encourages 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 manse 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.

George Park
Presbytery Elder

Get set to make your own Christmas wreath

On Saturday, November 25 from 2-5pm a new venture will be taking place! There will be an opportunity to create Christmas Wreaths in the Midton Hall.

All the greenery etc that is required for making the wreaths will be provided on the day as well as teas and coffees. Details of costs will be provided later and there will be plenty of helpers to advise.

Do think of coming along and getting the Festive Season off to a good start!

Any queries please contact Sarah Gow or Muriel and also add your name if you are interested to the list in the Carrick Park corridor.



Time to enjoy a day retreat

A Day Retreat is planned on Saturday, November 4 at the home of Ian and Mandy Stirling.

Ian and Mandy Stirling are hosting another day retreat at their lovely home just outside Ayr on the theme of “Waiting”. It will start at 10am and finish at 3pm.

Coffee, tea, home baking and lunch will all be provided by our hosts.

Directions to their home will be available later on.

You can sign up - there will be a form in the Carrick Park corridor.

Still places available for Iona retreat

There are still a few places available on the weekend retreat on Iona next year from Friday, September 19 to Monday 22nd at Bishop's House, the Episcopalian Retreat House.

Further details can be obtained from Muriel Wilson.

Sunday School makes a return for a new session

THE Sunday School prize giving took place on Sunday, June 11 at the 10am service before breaking for the Summer.

In the afternoon we had a very successful visit to the Heads of Ayr Farm Park where 10 children and 4 adults enjoyed a hot and sweaty afternoon taking part in various activities and indulging in some welcome cold drinks and ice cream. Photographs of this were included in the Summer edition of Columba News.

In light of the decision to have just one service at 10.30am, from 29th October, the Sunday School will meet at the later time of 10.30am and join the church worship service until 10.45am. They will then move to the Midton Hall for a short time. The hall will be the venue for tea and coffee after the service but a compromise has been reached whereby the tables will be pushed back to allow the children to use two thirds of the hall for the more active part of the session from 10.45 - 11am. They will then move to the Orr Room or the Struthers Room, if more space is required, to allow the tables to be set up for the refreshments after the service.

Keith Fullerton

Beryl will take the group to India

Beryl McKinlay will speak to the Table Talk group on Monday, October 30 at 10.30am about her holiday to India earlier in the year and will show her slides. "India Through the Eyes of a Scottish Tourist" is the title of her talk.

All are very welcome to this informal gathering where coffee, tea and biscuits are served.



Diary dates

The Business Committee will meet on Tuesday, November 28 at 7pm and the Kirk Session's next meeting is on Tuesday, December 12 at 7.30pm

TAKING AN ECO LOOK by Andrew Muirhead

Food and Gratitude

I plan to write about food today because it is near harvest time. Food is so much more than fuel for the body. There is much to consider.

In the Christian tradition, we say Grace before eating a meal. This was the norm in the past, even if those present were not Church goers. Over time this habit has faded and many non-Church goers see Grace as anachronistic, with words used such as "Thee", "Thy", "Lord", "Amen". In some Christian traditions, people hold hands and sing Grace together. I have seen families sing Grace, who never normally sing together and who would not normally hold hands. Sometimes this is done in restaurants and other public settings. What is going on here? Is this a statement of identity? Is this a means of demonstrating piety? Is this genuinely giving thanks?

Words are a means of communication, but it is possible to commune with something greater than oneself in meditative silence without using words at all. Most religions have a tradition of giving thanks in some form, especially for food.

What can we learn from the psychology of being grateful or ungrateful? Robert Emmons, an American professor of psychology has written exten-



***"Saying Grace" by Joseph van Aken
(1699-1749)***

sively on this subject. Psychologists sometimes recommend keeping a gratitude diary as a means of countering depression. Gratitude is considered beneficial to mental health and helps to promote happiness and ingratitude has long been criticised. Indeed, the Scottish philosopher David Hume, wrote in 1739, “*Of all crimes that human creatures are capable of committing, the most horrid and unnatural is ingratitude*”. Robert Emmons puts it differently and in a more modern format, using bullet points (2013), he offers the following characteristics of ingratitude:

- excessive sense of self-importance
 - arrogance
 - vanity
 - unquenchable need for admiration and approval
- sense of entitlement

If we are grateful and develop the habit of counting our blessings, then there is good evidence that our happiness is improved. Can we really measure happiness? Does it predict anything? Well, yes is the answer to both questions.

One can say Grace out loud of course. The Selkirk Grace is popular and poetic. I think that you may agree that gratitude is important and needs to be practiced regularly. I am going to stick my neck out and suggest that Grace before a meal can take a variety of different forms.

At one extreme, I remember picking up a ready meal at a convenience store before walking to rooms that I had hired to interview people. I misjudged timing and I had to eat my sandwich in 2 minutes between clients and then half hour later I took another couple of minutes to consume the rest of the meal.

Even so, I took a moment to feel grateful that I had something to eat during a busy day and that I had been able to purchase the food at minimal cost and in barely any time. I recognised my poor judgement and resolved to do better next time.



Robert Burns, Author of the Selkirk Grace



At the other extreme, I attended a dinner party. The hostess who served her guests said, "I am so pleased you could all come, so I can enjoy your company. I hope you enjoy the meal." The meal had been thought through carefully to suit everyone's taste and laid out attractively. We all replied appreciatively. Is this valid? No mention was made of "Thee", "Thy", "Lord", "Amen".

Perhaps the most important example is an ordinary lunch, either alone or with a spouse. Do we make the effort to be thankful for the food and any company we may have? Despite the cost-of-living crisis, food is still relatively cheap, varied and plentiful from an historical perspective.

We live much longer than humans did in the past (check the date of birth and death of Joseph van Aken, the artist who painted "Saying Grace" above. His life was not short by the standards of the day).

Neither our grandparents nor our grandchildren had it or will have it so good. Do we make the effort to consider what is good for our own health and good for our world? Gratitude should be more than just words, it should translate into action and willingness to invest time, thought and treasure.

I think that gratitude should be reflected in the choices we make in day-to-day life. Meals are often shared. Do I insist on my choice of menu or seek to find consensus with friends and family? Am I grateful that the food in front of me is a treat for my dining companions even if it is not my first choice?

Until recently, 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 crisps and sweets 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 this formula is very far from adequate.

I will write about healthy food and organic food in future.

Andrew Muirhead 07526662044, a.g.muirhead@googlemail.com

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

Who to contact

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Church Charity Number: SC014338

Church Services (Midton Road):

10am - Family Service;
10am Sunday School,
11.15 - Morning Worship;
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





The newest of this session's groups, "Read and Chatter", meets on a Friday once a month, dates are determined by the group.

A good regular group are attending and enjoying the books on the reading list and the ensuing chat.

There is always a welcome cup of tea or coffee to keep the chat flowing!

Congregation and Parish Register



August-September

RE-BURIAL

Joan Craig

DEATHS

Janet Hamilton

Hamilton Smith

Anne Patterson

Isabell Fraser

Jessie Monaghan

BAPTISM

Arthur Colin Macleod, infant son of Colin and Karen

NEW MEMBERS

Mrs Janette Graham

MarchmontPodiatry

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Keep fit and relax

The group meets every Wednesday at 1.45pm and is going from strength to strength. The new session has got off to a great start welcoming back members from last year and new folks looking to improve breathing and fitness.

The relaxation and cuppa that follows are the real influences and if you would like to join you too will be warmly welcomed!

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Time to knit and natter

This group meets every Tuesday at 10am in the Struthers Room. The group has welcomed new members and all are enjoying the knitting, crocheting and refreshments. But there is always room for you. If you can knit, would like to learn or just fancy the natter you will be warmly welcomed.

**Copy deadline for the
Christmas issue will be**

Sunday, November 12

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



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