

# Columba News

December  
2025  
No. 266





## Memories of Harvest Thanksgiving

*See page 15*



## Waiting to welcome you

### Sundays

December 7

December 14

December 21

December 28

January 4

January 11

January 18

January 25

February 1

February 8

February 15

February 22

March 1

March 8

March 15

March 22

March 29

April 5

### Team

Team 11

Team 1

Team 2

Team 3

Team 4

Team 5

Team 6

Team 7

Team 8

Team 9

Team 10

Team 11

Team 1

Team 2

Team 3

Team 4

Team 5

### Leader

Kerrie Bennet-Lee

Hazel Steele

Jo Bruce

Ann Naismith

Iain McCrae

Jane Murnin

Bill McCulloch

Terry Swinn

Wendy Campbell

Alan McHarg

Linda Hunter

Kerrie Bennet-Lee

Hazel Steele

Jo Bruce

Ann Naismith

Iain McCrae

Jane Murnin

**Easter Sunday**



# From the Interim Moderator

*Dear Friends,*

By the time you read this pastoral letter we will have been vacant for almost a year. Except we are not 'vacant!', I would say we have become more vibrant because this in-between period allowed us to reflect on what has changed since we last called a minister, and what we now need that might be different in a new leader for future years. The dictionary meaning of vibrant to show intensity of activity and energy! I feel this is not an exaggerated description of the present thinking of our congregation.



The numbers at public worship on a Sunday morning are keeping up. Often when a minister leaves it causes a gap in leadership and as a result there can be a slow drifting away in attendance at church. That hasn't happened so far in St Columba Church.

Perhaps evidence for this is: we have just commemorated Armistice Day Sunday and the church was full! As I '*worked the room*', both before the service and afterwards at tea/coffee, the number of parents attending to support their child as they presented the colours in the Scouts, was encouraging. Some of them live within walking distance from the church, and have had a previous connection with the church going back to when they were young. Which is something to reflect upon! The common comment was that they enjoyed the service and everyone was very friendly.

When my late wife, Mabel, and I first came to Sunday worship at St Columba a dozen years ago, we intended to go around the local churches to choose one that we thought we could fit in with. St Columba was the first church we attended and the people we sat beside were so friendly that the following Sunday we said to one another - "if we don't go back again they might send us the church flowers!" So we made St Columba our home.

I want to report to you that there is also a vibrancy among the members of the Nomination Committee. They have set to with great enthusiasm, creativity and purpose and I can tell you - without giving away any confi-

dentiality - that we have met three times to: get a sense of what we need to do; set down a description of what kind of congregation we think are, therefore, what qualities we are looking for in our new minister? I am pleased to say that we have worked through these questions and the advertisement is now, as of mid November, on the Church of Scotland's website (the place where ministers seeking a new call would look within the Church, and those outside Scotland).

People are so kind in asking after me sensing I have taken on an additional workload in retirement. I can tell you that I'm loving it - and hope that comes through in my engagement with all of you. - (and I might apply for the post myself!!).

It was said that Abraham Lincoln didn't like ministers who preached cut and dried sermons... Lincoln commented: "when I hear a man preach, I like to see him act as if he were fighting bees!" Perhaps we should include that in the job description for our new minister!?

With all good wishes for Christmas and the coming New Year,

**John**

**Interim Moderator**

## Sacrament of Holy Communion

**Jesus said, "I am the Bread of life. He who believes in Me will never hunger."**

This is your invitation to be present at the Lord's Table on Sunday, January 25 at our Morning Service at 10.30am, when we will participate in the greatest act of Christian worship, sharing in Christ's Body and Blood with His people around His Table.

## Catch a coffee and a chat at Oasis

The popular Oasis cafe is back in full swing.

The cafe now operates on a fortnightly basis with the December dates 4th and 18th.

**The Kirk Session will hold its next meeting on  
Tuesday, December 9 at 7.30pm**





## Ayr St. Columba Christmas 2025

### SATURDAY 22 NOVEMBER

10am – 12noon Coffee Morning in aid of ABBAS REST

### SUNDAY 30 November – First Sunday of Advent

10.30am Morning Worship

4.30pm Time to Remember Service

### SUNDAY 7 DECEMBER – Second Sunday of Advent

10.30am Morning Worship

### SATURDAY 13 DECEMBER -

1.30pm – 4.00pm Seniors' Christmas Party

### SUNDAY 14 DECEMBER – Third Sunday of Advent

10.30am Morning Worship

### SUNDAY 21 DECEMBER – Fourth Sunday of Advent

10.30am Morning Worship – *Sunday School Nativity*

4.30pm Lessons and Carols

*(followed by Mulled Wine and Mince Pies)*

### TUESDAY 24 DECEMBER – Christmas Eve

3.00pm Carol Service **at Auld Kirk**

7.00pm Family Worship **at St Columba**

11.30pm Watchnight Service **at St Columba**

### WEDNESDAY 25 DECEMBER – Christmas Day

There will be no Service

### SUNDAY 28 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."

## It's a busy time for the Ministry of Flowers

As we move through November, preparations are well under way for the Festive Season. The church and halls will be decorated as usual as we look forward to celebrating the Nativity.

We, in the flower team, really appreciate all the support we receive from the congregation and we know that the flowers we provide, both in the chancel and as posies gifted to those among us who may need a little support at a sometimes difficult time are also greatly appreciated.

We are deeply indebted to those who donate money to help us provide this service but I'm afraid our funds now need a little boost. If you can help in the months ahead please put any donation in an envelope with your name and Flower Fund written on it and hand it in to the church office.

Any cheques should be made payable to Ayr St Columba Flower Fund. Thank you so much.

***Anne Drennan***



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## Numbers increasing at the Monday Fellowship

The Monday Fellowship has enjoyed a start to the session with very interesting speakers on varied topics.

Our numbers have been very steady in the mid-30's and increasing.

The closing speakers of 2025 are Barbara Graham who will be talking about Nurse Edith Cavell on December 1 followed by Dr. Mike Blair with a scenic travel around "Scottish and Worldwide Landscapes"

Our 2026 session starts with David Wallace testing our knowledge with



a Quiz on January 12.

Following David we have the following:

- 26th January - PC Blair McGarva on "Prevention of Scams and Frauds"
- 9th February - Ann Moulds talking about "Understanding Stalking"
- 23rd February - Ken Offord a Film Cameraman on his life in film.
- 9th March we have the pleasure of Sheriff Iona McDonald OBE on the subject of the Lord Lieutenancy.

The session closes with the AGM on March 23 followed by our annual End-of-Session lunch at the Balgarth Pines Hotel.

We do have a very varied programme and would warmly welcome anyone who attends.

*John Ferguson*  
*Secretary*

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## Turning the pages at *Read and Chatter*

Our second year of R&C started off in Loch Doon then Ayr in Kirsty Wark's "House on the Loch".

Then we "travelled" into the Himalayas climbing to live with the Sherpas in "The Sky Beneath Us" by Fiona Volpe. Moscow, Rome and USA followed with "The Woman in Moscow" and finally back home to Scotland, Mull, in "The Last Girl to Die".

We have learned to spy, murder and make yak briquettes to fuel our houses( if you can find any yaks of course!).

If you would like to join us on any of our adventures we meet every 4th Friday in the Carrick room at 10am.



## **Fireside Puzzles for Christmas**

*Here are a few exercises for the brain as you relax over the Christmas season.*

*Solutions can be found on page 19*

### **Puzzle 1**

Mary has some pencils and some jars.

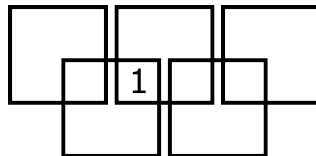
If she puts 4 pencils into each jar, she will have one jar left empty.

If she puts 3 pencils into each jar, she will have one pencil left over.

How many pencils and how many jars does she have ?

### **Puzzle 2**

Can you place the numbers from 1 to 9 in each closed section so that the total of the numbers in each large square is the same. The 1 has already been placed.



### **Puzzle 3**

Two friends were driving from their home to Edinburgh.

Archie drove the first 90 miles, and Phoebe took over for the rest of the journey.

On the way back, Archie drove to begin with, and Phoebe took over for the last 100 miles.

Who drove the furthest, Archie or Phoebe ?





# Seniors Christmas Party



*Join us on Saturday, December 13  
from 1.30pm until 4pm*

*Enjoy a festive afternoon with good company,  
afternoon tea, music and best of all Santa*

*The entertainment will be provided by  
Isobell Montgomerie and the Rural Revellers*

*It's guaranteed to start those toes tapping  
ready for Christmas*

If you would like to join the festivities, please  
complete the form below and return it to the office  
or the posting box in the Carrick Park corridor

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## Seniors' Christmas Party

Please reserve.....a place  
at the Seniors' Christmas party on Saturday, December 13

## Walkers forced to drink coffee

The October walk was cancelled because of the pouring rain! But the group went to Dobbie's for coffee instead.

At the end of September the group had a short walk at Dundonald .

Leader Helen is stepping back after Christmas but intends to still walk when available.

## For the garden of your daily living, try this

Plant three rows of Peas - *Peace of mind, Peace of heart, Peace of soul.*

Plant four rows of squash - *Squash gossip, Squash indifference, Squash grumbling, Squash selfishness.*

Plant five rows of Lettuce - *Lettuce be faithful, Lettuce be kind, Lettuce be patient, Lettuce be thoughtful, Lettuce really love one another.*

No Garden is without Turnips - *Turnip for meetings, Turnip for service, Turnip to help one another.*

To conclude our Garden we must have Thyme - *Thyme for each other, Thyme for family, Thyme for friends.*

Water freely with patience and cultivate with love.  
There is much fruit in your garden - what you reap is what you sow.

**Copy deadline for the Easter issue will be  
Sunday, March 8**

**Copy should be emailed to [editor.columbanews@gmail.com](mailto:editor.columbanews@gmail.com)**





Ayr St Columba  
welcomes the  
Moderator of  
the General  
Assembly



## **It's all knit and natter for a very good cause**



*Cynthia...our star pupil, showing her craft work*





IF you happen to be in the church on a Tuesday morning you will surely have heard the nattering, if not always the clinking of needles of our growing friendly group.

Recently, as well as our own projects, we have been knitting for Hamlin Fistula, a charity that sends blankets to a women's hospital in Ethiopia. In October, we sent a fabulous total of 24 beautiful blankets, adding to our 16 in February.

We are a welcoming group who share our ability to knit, sew and crochet.

So whether you are a complete beginner or should be on "Game of Wool" you would be made very welcome any Tuesday from 10am in the Struthers Room.



***Our blankets arrived at the HF offices***



***Big birthday, big cake***



***Even on holiday we manage a few stitches***





## Time to make a special Christmas for a child

We are proud to be supporting the Night Before Christmas (NB4C) again this year.

It is unimaginable that a child will have no experience of the joy of Christmas despite their parent's best efforts. NB4C is an amazing Charity totally run by unpaid volunteers, making a huge difference - here, in our back yard. All donations no matter how big or how small will make a difference.

Toys and gifts can be left in the box provided in the Carrick Park Vestibule. Envelopes are available at both doors or from the office for cash donations. Wouldn't you like to know that you had made a difference this Christmas, that you had given a child the chance to smile.

If you would like to know more about this superb Charity there are posters and flyers around the Church. Let us show a child that we care.





# Busy time for the St Columba youngsters

Jam and chutney  
making for  
Abbas Rest



## Getting eco matters in focus at Harvest Thanksgiving





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# Kirk Session business news

*A meeting of the Kirk Session was held on 14<sup>th</sup> October 2025, moderated by Revd John Matthews. A summary of issues discussed at this meeting is given below:*

The Moderator read out an email from Revd Bill Hewitt, convenor of the Vacancy Advisory Committee, in which he passed on the responses of Graham McWilliams, the Presbytery Planning Convener, to questions raised by our Nominating Committee.

The current plan of a five-year reviewable charge for Ayr St Columba meant that, under current guidance and with no other changes, Presbytery has no intention to review the charge before five years from the date of induction of the minister.

If the Auld Kirk and St Andrews become vacant in, for example, two years, the Minister of Ayr St Columba becomes the Minister of the Union, subject to the other congregations voting in favour of him or her.

The Moderator emphasised that there was a degree of uncertainty in the situation and, if we were to take on additional parishes, additional help from Presbytery would be required, possibly in the shape of an Assistant Minister.

*The Moderator thanked everyone for their positive comments on the Service he had conducted with his son, Revd Stuart Matthews. He said that it had been a lovely experience to share worship with his son.*

The Moderator said that it was important to consider the issue of Stewardship before a new Minister was appointed. Mr Tom Cairns had produced an excellent report on the trajectory of the church's finances which had been shared with the Treasurer, Session Clerk and Interim Moderator and which gave a basis for decision making. He asked for Session's permission to have a conversation with church members on the issues. This was agreed.

*The Clerk advised members that he had received confirmation that the Moderator of the General Assembly, the Rt Revd Rosemary Frew, would conduct worship at Ayr St Columba Church on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. She would be accompanied by her husband, Mr Dave Frew.*

The Clerk said that having taken account of the views expressed at the last Session meeting, from the October Service of Holy Communion he would ask Elders on Communion Duty to sit in the

Choir seats. The Choir would be asked to join the congregation. The Communion elements would remain on a table at ground level. In October he would keep the status quo regarding elements and serve grape juice only, but he would be interested to know if there was any feeling that we should return to serving both port and grape juice next year.

*Mr John Ballantyne brought members of Session up to date on the plans for a new door system at the Carrick Park entrance. Two options were being considered.*

Mr Keith Fullerton informed Elders that a trip to the Astoria Cinema to see a live recording of 'The Nutcracker' was being organised for 10<sup>th</sup> December. This would include a meal at the Tudor restaurant.

*Mr Fullerton asked for permission to have a retiring offering at the close of the Communion Service on 26<sup>th</sup> October in aid of the children of Gaza. It was clear to all how much suffering there was in Gaza. Money donated would be sent via UNICEF. This was approved.*

**Vote on Departure:** The Clerk explained that during each Vacancy a Kirk Session had to decide on whether or not to depart from the Church of Scotland's practice regarding Ministers in same-sex relationships. A vote to depart would mean that applications could be considered from, amongst others, individuals in same-sex relationships. More importantly, it would be a signal to all potential candidates that the Church was not narrow minded. As a result, it was likely that more people would consider applying for the Minister's position.

Voting forms were distributed and completed. They were counted in front of the Kirk Session. The number of votes cast was: FOR departure from the Church's practice 43; AGAINST departure from the Church's practice 4.

The Clerk announced that the Kirk Session had decided that Ayr St Columba Church would depart from the Ministers and Deacons in Same Sex Civil Partnerships and Same Sex Marriages Act (Act 1 2015).

***R A Bartholomew, Session Clerk***





Copy deadline for the Easter issue will be  
**Sunday, March 8**  
Copy should be emailed to editor.columbanews@gmail.com

### Solutions to Fireside Puzzles for Christmas

**Puzzle 1:** Mary has 16 pencils and 5 jars.

**Puzzle 2:**

|   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| 8 | 6 | 9 |   |
| 3 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| 7 | 5 |   |   |

**Puzzle 3:** Phoebe drove the furthest.

**Reasoning:** Assume the total distance of the journey is **D**.

On the road to Edinburgh Archie drove **90** miles, so Phoebe drove **(D - 90)** miles.

On the way back Phoebe drove **100** miles, so Archie drove **(D - 100)** miles.

So, overall, Archie drove **(90 + D - 100)** miles = **D - 10** miles

And Phoebe drove **(D - 90 + 100)** miles = **D + 10** miles, which is **20 miles** more than Archie !

### Visit to “mass climate lobbying event”

## Discussion with MSPs

**STOP CLIMATE CHANGE**  
**SCOTLAND**

## Scotland's Climate Coalition

[www.stopclimatechange.scot](http://www.stopclimatechange.scot)  
@stopcc  
Stop Climate Change Scotland is a charity, registered in Scotland.

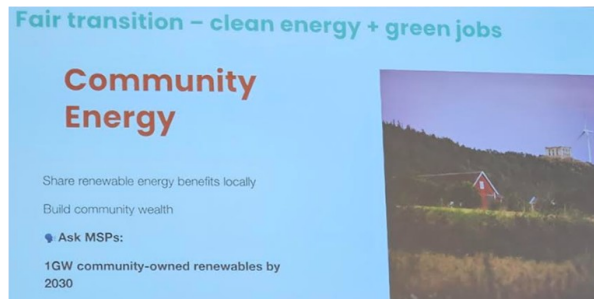
*Poster showing affiliated organisations*

## Reality of Green transition, Herald article

Please look at the slide about Green jobs once again. Now consider an



article in the Herald on 28.10.25 by Josh Pizzuto-Pomaco. He wrote about a report by the STUC. He noted that for every £1,000,000 generated by Scotland's wind electricity industry, 1 job was created. By



This was on a screen while a representative from the world wildlife fund recommended that we ask for community energy,

contrast, the fossil fuel industry generated 13 or 14 jobs for a similar turnover. Apparently wind makes up over half of the low carbon economy in Scotland. Does this amount to “A fair transition with clean energy and green jobs?”. How might community energy differ from any other type of energy?

The STUC has recommended that investment could be adjusted to support other green projects at the expense of wind. For example Alexander Dennis manufactures electric buses and nearly had to shut its Scottish factory due to lack of orders locally. The STUC suggests that this and other projects might prove a better investment at this stage. I ask why is it necessary for the STUC to make this report at all?

## Reality of the Green transition, BBC article

On 14.10.25, Zoe Conway reported that according to the National Audit Office, “98% of homes that had external wall insulation installed by the previous government have problems that will lead to damp and mould if left unaddressed.” Also “29% of the homes that were given internal insulation also need fixing.” Apparently 10s of thousands of homes are affected.

## What might be done?

It is no simple matter to make a radical change in the way our country operates. Even so, it might be possible to do a bit better. We have representatives, have you expressed your opinion to them?

Can you imagine a way to do things better and still respect the natural world and our representatives? If so, this might be a good moment to speak truth to power.

*Andrew Muirhead a.g.muirhead@googlemail.com*

## Congregation and Parish Register



*October-November*

### DEATHS

Kenneth Pitt

Mary Maitland

Robert Stewart McNeillie

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'But those who trust in  
the Lord for help will find  
their strength renewed.  
They will rise on wings  
like eagles; they will run  
and not grow weary;  
they will walk and not  
grow weak.'

*Isaiah 40 v31*



## Who to contact

### **Interim Moderator:**

Revd JOHN MATTHEWS

### **Associate Minister:**

Revd. DAVID T. NESS, LTH,  
17 Winston Avenue, Prestwick.  
Tel:- 471625

### **Session Clerk:**

ROBERT A. BARTHOLOMEW,  
30 St Leonard's Road, Ayr. Tel:- 265794

### **Depute Session Clerks**

KEITH FULLERTON  
GILLIAN WATSON

### **Treasurer:**

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4 Gower Place, Ayr KA7 4SL  
Tel:- 445182

### **Director of Music:**

MATTHEW HYNES,  
20A Academy Street, Ayr KA7 1HS  
Tel:- 870449

### **Gift Aid Convener:**

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

### **Free Will Offering Convener:**

GRAEME SAVAGE,  
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### **Roll Keeper:**

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### **'Columba News' Editor:**

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### **Beadle and Church Officer:**

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### **Church Secretary:**

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30 St Leonard's Road, Ayr  
Office 269524  
[irene@ayrstcolumba.co.uk](mailto:irene@ayrstcolumba.co.uk)

**Church Office:** Carrick Park, Ayr.  
Tel:- 269524 Office hours: 9am-noon, Mon,  
Tues, Thurs and Fri

**Church Charity Number:** SC014338

### **Church Services :**

10.30am - Morning Worship;  
10.30am Sunday School,

**Webmaster:** Iain Bartholomew,  
email: [website@ayrstcolumba.co.uk](mailto:website@ayrstcolumba.co.uk).  
[www.ayrstcolumba.co.uk](http://www.ayrstcolumba.co.uk)

## What's on in the halls

### **MONDAY**

5.30pm **RAINBOW BROWNIES**  
Aynsley Bell, 07914 842118  
2pm: **MONDAY FELLOWSHIP**  
(fortnightly):  
Mr T. R. Swinn, 441896

### **TUESDAY**

**10am: Knit and Natter**  
Carol Morrison, 07999444200

### **WEDNESDAY**

2pm: **FITNESS with FRIENDS:**  
Mrs Margaret Doncaster, 477381  
5.45pm: **9<sup>th</sup> AYR BROWNIES,**  
Sally Bentham 07817169436

### **THURSDAY**

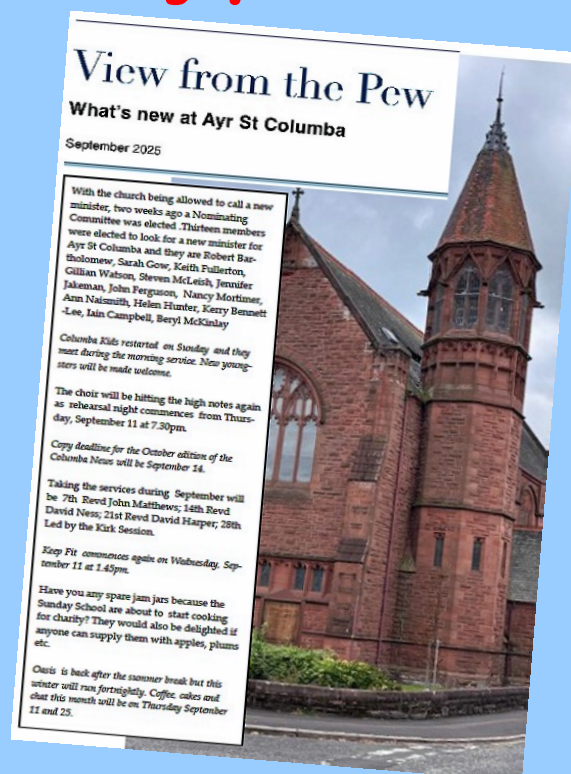
10am-noon: **OASIS CAFE**  
Mrs M. Doncaster 477381 Mrs P. Naylor  
570020  
6.30pm: **CUB SCOUTS:**  
Mr Jereon Bolte 07511489755  
7.30pm: **SENIOR CHOIR:**  
Matthew Hynes, 870449

### **FRIDAY**

6pm: **BEAVER SCOUTS:**  
Fiona Wilson, 290414  
7.30pm: **SCOUTS:**  
Jereon Bolte, 07511489755



# Did you see our new monthly publication?



Hope you all enjoyed our extra newsletter that was launched in September. The new monthly email publication *View from the Pew* will land in members' email boxes at the beginning of each month. If you haven't signed up for church emails then a number of printed copies are available at the church door.