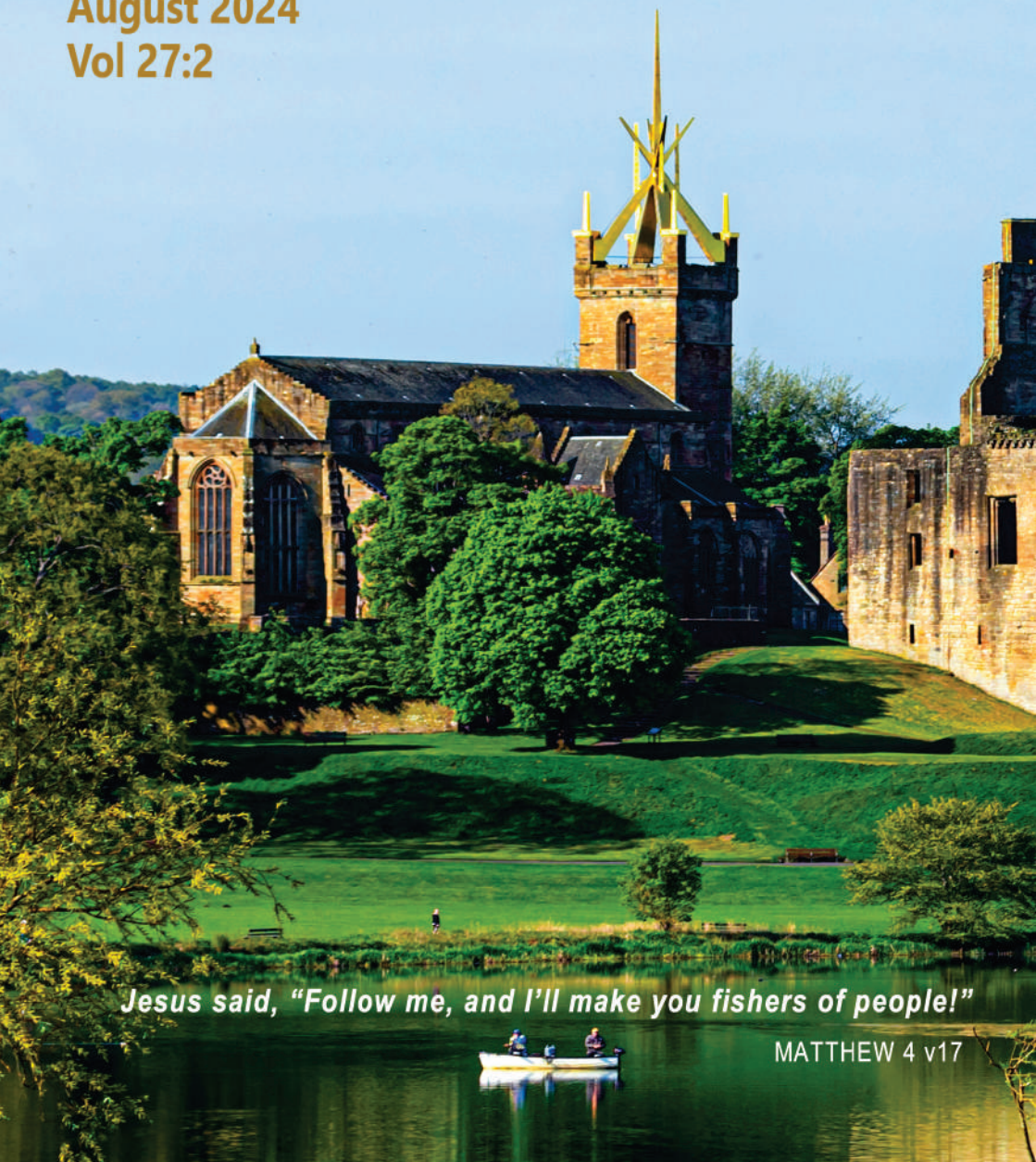


CROSSWIND

The Journal of St Michael's Parish Church

August 2024
Vol 27:2



Jesus said, "Follow me, and I'll make you fishers of people!"

MATTHEW 4 v17

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Communion

Sunday, 25th August
10am in the Kirk*
and
3pm in the Kirk Hall

***livestreamed on St Michael's web-site and Facebook**
Available to view later on YouTube

Weekly Services

10am in the Kirk*
and
10am (during term time) in Springfield Primary School

***livestreamed on St Michael's website and Facebook**
Available to view later on YouTube

Cover: Courtesy of Martin Brown

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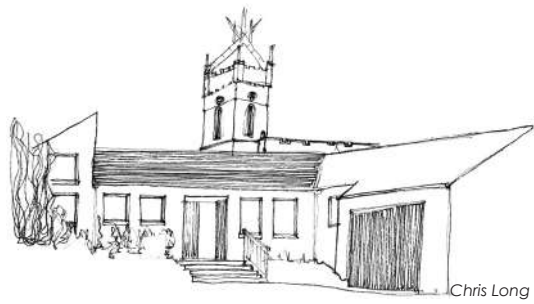
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The deadline for the November 2024 issue is 1st October 2024.

VIEW FROM THE MANSE



by Rev Dr Liam Fraser

There's an old Yiddish saying that goes like this:

Mann Tracht, Un Gott Lacht

Men and women plan, and God laughs. That's certainly how it can feel like at times. We can put all our hopes into something working out, and plan and prepare and do everything right, just to see it all fall apart. In that place of frustration and hurt, we can start to think that God hates us. That God really has arranged everything in the universe just to make us fail, and be unhappy and miserable. Yet is that really how it is?



Some of you may be familiar with the song *Hallelujah* by Leonard Cohen, which has been covered by many people over the years. Most people won't know, however, how the song came to be written. Because Cohen wrote this song over a period of decades, during the most depressive period of his life, sometimes writing the lyrics while curled up on the floor, so great was his pain. Yet he persevered, because the song is all about perseverance and strength. The sheer, demented, audacious hope that even if there is nothing good in our lives, *there is God*, and God is always good, and has given us the power to say 'hallelujah' even when everything we love has gone.

It is this hope that enables Cohen to sing:

*And even though it all went wrong
I'll stand before the Lord of Song
With nothing on my tongue but hallelujah*

When, like Leonard Cohen, curled up on the floor in pain we are tempted to despair, God invites us to look away for a moment from the evil, the nastiness, the darkness, and turn towards him, as he says to us:

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29: 11)

These are wonderful words, words that act like an anchor or lifeboat, something you can cling onto when the storms of life are threatening to drown you.

Yet notice what those words *don't* say. They don't say 'for you know the plans I have for you. That you can see how things are going to get better.' No. They say 'I – God – know the plans I have for you.' For if we knew all the plans then they wouldn't be God's. They would be ours. We'd be in control. Yet as it is, they're not our plans under our control, but God's plans under God's control.

So how are we to think about these plans?

Well some Christians believe that every single thing that happens in life is

directly caused by God, that God makes every detail of every plan happen by directly making them happen himself. And while I respect that, and am in some ways attracted to it, my own reading of the Bible and how people relate to God is that God is less like a puppet master and more like the captain of a ship, or a manager trying to get a team of people to move in the right direction or work together to achieve a certain result.



To put it another way, think about driving. Do you have GPS in your car? Well we all know that GPS is there to direct us, guide us, to help our plans of getting from A to Z be successful. Yet we also know that even GPS can't save us from getting lost on occasion, of taking a wrong turn. And so what happens when we take a wrong turn? Well, the GPS recalculates the route, letting you get to the place you're trying to get to by a different route. It could take

longer, or the conditions might be harder, but the destination is the same. Could God's plans be similar?

That was the possibility that was brought by a conversation I once had with a man called Ian Fraser. Ian Fraser was a minister and theologian who for many years ran Scottish Churches House in Dunblane. After winning the Ian Fraser prize – which people assumed was pure nepotism! – Sam and I were invited to have lunch with Mr Fraser.

After discussing his eventful life, including almost being murdered in Africa, he said that the most important thing we can know in life is that God will use even our mistakes to bless us. That God will use even the things that are *not* part of his plan, to advance his plan.

Because like the GPS analogy, God's plan is less about every detail being ordained by our Creator, and more about God bringing the best he can out of every situation, even bad ones. In that case, it's less about the plan, and more about the *planner*, about a God who is faithful and good and who cares about us so much that all of his plans are about helping and supporting us.

So how do we ensure then that we're in a place where God can prosper and bless us?

Those of us who have children, or who remember what we were like during our own childhoods, might remember the excitement of birthdays and Christmases, unwrapping gifts and presents. Yet many – and perhaps most – children are *usually* more interested in opening presents than acknowledging the person who gave them the presents. As we mature, however, we come to learn that it's our loved ones, the ones who give us the presents, who are more important than any gift.




That's similar to what God says here:

*Then when you call upon **me** and come and pray to **me**, I will hear you. When you search for **me**, you will find **me**; if you seek **me** with all your heart, I will let you find **me**, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes.*

(Jeremiah 29: 12-14)

This passage reminds us that the greatest gift is not the plan – however good – but the *Planner*, that we should not first be seeking the things that make us happy but the One who longs to make us happy. Because it's only when we search for God, seek for God, and call upon God's name that God says that he will prosper us. You can't have the blessing without the Blesser, and we will not be in a position to be guided by God unless we find God in worship, Bible reading and above all in prayer.

Because unlike that old saying that people plan and God laughs, God may laugh *with* us but never *at* us, because we have a God who has blessed us, is blessing us today, and will continue to bless, to prosper and not to harm, from here to eternity. Yet in order to fulfil God's plans for us, and put ourselves in a place where we can be blessed, we should not seek the blessing but the Blesser, who if we seek him with our whole heart will let himself be found, and restore our fortunes in ways we cannot perceive or even imagine.

The background of the page is a soft, abstract composition of light green and peach-colored watercolor washes. A thin, dark blue wavy line runs across the lower portion of the page. On the left side, there are faint, stylized line drawings of leaves and a small cluster of green dots.

For surely I know
the plans I have
for you, says the
Lord, plans for
your welfare and
not for harm, to
give you a future
with hope.

Jeremiah 29:11



UPDATE FOR CONGREGATIONS

by John Reid

Following the last update for congregations, some questions were asked. Thank you to all congregations for taking time to submit these. They were submitted to the relevant work groups, and the answers are below, although it should be noted that some discussions are ongoing!

Why should we transfer our property deeds to the Church of Scotland without obtaining independent professional advice?

The legal position regarding church title deeds is a complicated one, and the only source of legal expertise on the subject would be the Church of Scotland Law Department. They would, no doubt, be happy to provide advice on the matter if that would provide comfort to those taking the decisions.

St Ninian's Craigmalen own the deeds of all their premises. What will happen to them?

The decision on whether the title deeds to St Ninian's property remain held locally or are vested in the General Trustees, is one which must be taken by the Kirk Session of St Ninian's after due consideration of all factors involved. Discussions have taken place during St Ninian's Craigmalen Board meetings, and these are continuing.

Who will pay for employee salaries?

As part of the Union process all of the monies from the four churches will be transferred to the new church bank account. The new church will be responsible for paying the paid employees. Arrangements for paying the Ministry team will continue as at present.

What will the name be for our union of churches?

All four churches will retain their name, so that would not fundamentally change; however it would be added to the united church name. The proposal at this time is that the name assigned to the union would be 'Avon Valley Church of Scotland' with the name following. For example; Avon Valley Church of Scotland @ Torphichen, Avon Valley Church of Scotland @ St Michael's Linlithgow, Avon Valley Church of Scotland @ St Ninians Craigmalen, and Avon Valley Church of Scotland @ Avonbridge.

Here is a mock-up of how this could be presented, but please note that this is an example only to give an idea. A designer will be engaged to create the individual designs for each church, but this may provide you with a sense of the importance of each church retaining their own identity.





What is going to happen with the money that is in our individual bank accounts?

The proposal to the Kirk Sessions will be that there will be one legal entity, which means one charity number, and one bank account for the union. It is currently proposed that the fabric funds as they stand now will be used for the fabric in that particular congregation.

What happens to my Standing Order?

If you have a standing order in place now as your method for giving, this will need to be cancelled and set up again with the new bank details which will be communicated when it is confirmed.

What are the next steps?

A Basis of Union document and Team Ministry Document are being drafted for distribution to Kirk Sessions for agreement. When this is agreed, it will be submitted to the Presbytery. Following agreement from Presbytery, it will go to each congregation to vote for whether they wish to be part of the union or not.

Do you have other questions?

We encourage all members of congregations to continue to consider any questions they may have and submit these either via the online form, or via the identified members of each congregation who will be able to submit these on their behalf. Details for both options are below.

How to submit your questions If you have questions, please submit them using this form. If you do not have access digitally, please give your question to your church's Liaison Group representative and he/she will be able to submit it for you. If one person has a question, then it's likely at least 5-6 people also have the same question across the different congregations, so please do ask!

URL for question form for printed versions of this update:
<https://forms.gle/3j7SibN5fhGyiqqb6>

Liaison Group representatives who can submit your question for you if you don't have digital access are:

Avonbridge: Heather Stephens, Eddie Ireland, and Sandra Scott
St Ninian's Craigmalen: Issy Lockhart, Elaine Stewart and Ken Thomson
St Michael's Linlithgow: Stephen Marshall, John Reid and Kathryn Young
Torphichen: Nan McDonald, Innes Duncan and Julia Miller

When your question is received, it will be distributed to the relevant work area sub-group to provide the most informed answer.

SOME NEW READING MATTER

by Rosemary Nash



Perhaps you have noticed a display rack like this in the church porch or at Cross House. The free booklets are produced by Lifewords whose old name was the Scripture Gift Mission. That title describes the publications well for these are not tracts. They contain carefully selected words from the Bible.

For people who are exploring the Christian faith, there are several titles: *Encounters with Jesus*, *You Matter*, *Finding Hope* and *Follow Me*.

There are three helpful booklets for people coping with difficult circumstances such as bereavement or facing serious illness: *Daily Strength* (verses with a prayer for each day of the month), *Why me?* and *Living with Loss*. These are also available in large print. *Living with Loss* could, for example, be slipped in with a sympathy card.

Day by Day and *Perfect Peace* are easy-to-read leaflets, comforting and suitable to give to someone ill or in hospital.

Finally, there is the series of six *Little Books* – of *Chaos*, *Faith*, *Help*, *Jesus*, *Joy* and *Prayer*. Modern in format, perhaps especially appealing to younger people, these are full of wisdom from the Bible.

Please feel free to take any of these wee books for yourself or to pass on.

The website for Lifewords is at www.lifewords.global. More resources are available there, including material in other languages. How about requesting ten copies of an attractive booklet in Italian if Italy is where you are going on holiday?

You can also ask to have a Bible verse sent to you by email every day. Sign up with www.LCWords.com This stands for Life Changing Words and is part of Lifewords.

'Why?' you may ask, 'has this been introduced to St Michael's?' As Christians we know that God speaks through His word, the Bible. It is alive and active. Let's share it with people we know and love.





Six youth and two leaders went to Magnitude, where a Church of Scotland Village Marquee welcomed forty young people and twenty adults to the Festival, which itself hosted nearly a thousand teens across the four days! There were morning and evening worship sessions which explored the biblical story, as well as lots of fun events and activities through the days.

As many of you will recall, I 'cut my teeth' originally doing youth ministry in a camping setting, and this felt like a return to home territory! So, I packed my bag (dutifully kitted out thanks to my years in the Boy Scouts) and, full of a selection of my many ponchos, went camping! It was an incredible couple of days full of good conversations with not only our youth, but the youth of other churches too. I find this one of the most helpful activities for them, as they have a chance to see that there are many more Christians 'out there' than they think!

This brings us back to Holiday Club. A long running fixture of St Michael's evangelism and service to Linlithgow and surround, God's Builders is a chance to explore all the different homes humanity has built for God — though most important is the one God built with us! It is an angle on the sweep of the Bible that I am very excited for, as it allows us to tell a number of stories and dig into elements from the Bible young children often do not get to learn about in Sunday Club or Bible Class.



Looking ahead beyond August, we will be returning to our term programming – which includes all that has been mentioned above plus additional work with schools. This will be especially important as the union becomes realised and our remit will expand to include a regional aspect. As the Bible says, 'the harvest is plentiful'! My plans include MORE Godly Play stories at Sunday Club, and Godly Play stories at Messy Church, as well as a recruitment drive to get more people involved in the work with young children in St Michael's and beyond.

Oh, and lastly, if you're free in mid-June 2025: how about running a Tough Mudder with a team of folk from Linlithgow? A ten-mile course, twenty or so obstacles, a bit of fire and electricity, and a LOT of mud. What could be better? Keep your ears to the ground for more updates from me about that!



HOW ARE OUR FINANCES LOOKING IN 2024?

by *Linda Jamieson*

In the May 2024 edition of Crosswind we shared draft figures for 2023. The 2023 Annual Accounts have now been approved by the Trustees, with no material change to the draft figures previously shared. The 2023 Annual Accounts were subject to a full audit by external auditors and submitted to Presbytery Finance, with no issues raised.

It is great to see income for the first 5 months of 2024 tracking ahead when compared to the same period in 2023. We have seen an uplift in income from regular giving, online donations, freewill offerings and venue hire. We have also received in excess of £25,000 in legacy monies.

However, our costs are also increasing. Over the past few years, we have benefited from a fixed rate tariff for our energy. Our current tariff is due for renewal on 1 August 2024. As a result, St Michael's annual energy costs for the Church and Cross House is expected to increase from £19,000 in 2023 to approx. £30,000 in 2024 (includes 5 months at the higher rate), rising to approx. £46,000 per annum in 2025. We are looking at ways to reduce our energy costs and we all have a part to play, even taking simple steps such as ensuring doors are not jammed open when heating is on can make a difference.

The upkeep of 2 grade A-listed buildings presents us with great challenges and we are forecasting a significant uplift in property maintenance costs in 2024. We have forecast spending in the region of £87,000 to meet essential repairs and comply with regulatory requirements.

The final cost in relation to the Crown of Thorns capital project is still to be confirmed but indications are that full costs will be met from funds raised and any shortfall will be minimal. A huge thanks to everyone who made this happen.

The Stewardship and Finance team is made up of a small group of volunteers and we are very grateful for the work that they do in managing the day to day finances of St Michael's. As St Michael's grows, the work in managing our finances also grows and some additional volunteer support would make a difference. If you have financial and/or management skills and can spare some time, please contact LJamieson58@aol.com to arrange a chat and find out what is involved.

Thanks again for your continued support, both in terms of financial support and volunteering your skills to work tirelessly in Christian faith.

A TIME OF STILLNESS

by Elma Birrell

Every Thursday at 2pm Time of Stillness takes place in the beautiful St Katherine's Aisle. We have a core of regular attendees with occasional visitors from home and overseas. In Psalm 46:10 we hear these words 'Be still and know that I am God'. What an extraordinary idea that in stillness may be found God. This is not the only place in Scripture where stillness suggests God's presence and even provision.

Comments from some of the group:

I know when I come to Stillness that I will get time to slow down and think in a peaceful, close atmosphere where there is space to listen, think and pray.

Time of stillness is a blessed opportunity to 'switch off' the outside world for half an hour to let God speak through the readings, music and silence. We all experience a sense of community, perhaps because each is left to pursue his/her own spiritual path to a God-filled peace. I always feel lighter when I leave.

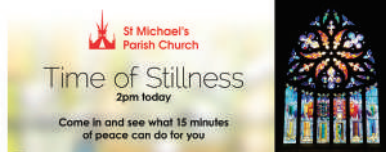
A special time for reflection and prayer, for nurturing our souls in this busy world with beautiful music and words, in the warmth of friendship and fellowship. Our numbers are small, perhaps 12/14 each week, and so we get to know each other, but we are always delighted when new friends join us. When the sun shines on the beautiful Crear McCartney window and its colours are reflected on the ancient flagstones, I think of those who have trod them before us, and those still to come. When feeling fragile and overwhelmed, I am grateful for this special time of peace, stillness, and shared fellowship.

Time to be still, when life is too fast! Lovely relaxing music. Listening for God to speak in the Stillness. A really friendly group.

Our Stillness prayer:

Dear God, speak gently in our silence. When the loud outer noises of our surroundings and the loud inner noises of our fears keep pulling us away from you, help us to trust that you are still there even when we are unable to hear you. 'Come to me, all you who are overburdened, and I will give you rest for I am gentle and humble of heart'. Let that loving voice be your guide. Amen (Henri J M Nouwen)

Come along any Thursday and experience Stillness. Stay and have refreshments and fellowship. We would love to see you. Elma and Ken



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ST MICHAEL'S BETHANY MEALS TEAM

by Alison Miller



For over 20 years, enthusiastic volunteers from St Michael's Linlithgow have been supporting Bethany Christian Trust's work with homeless people in Edinburgh. We prepare meals for 50-100 homeless people. The food for each meal costs around £100, and we aim to provide at least 5 meals from October through to April each year.

O v e r n i g h t accommodation is now provided in the Rapid Re-accommodation

Centre at the Haymarket Hub. Our volunteers buy the food and prepare it off site, then deliver it to the centre where we serve it to those in need. Over the years there have been many enlightening conversations between some volunteers and homeless people.

We hope that half of the special collection at the August communion will be in aid of this excellent cause.



We would appreciate donations of any amount to enable us to continue providing this caring service. Donations can be given by cash in an envelope labelled 'St Michael's Bethany Meals' and placed in the collection plate at any service. Or you can donate online using the scan code on this page. Or go to the web page below.

Thank you!

<https://www.stewardship.org.uk/pages/StMichaelsBethanyMeals2024>

(NB: this is quite separate from the collection of 'Bethany pennies' which contributes to Bethany's general funds.)



ST MICHAEL'S GUILD, 130 YEARS YOUNG

by Maureen Blake



In 1884, the Professor of Biblical Criticism at Edinburgh University, Dr Archibald Charteris, who had already founded the Young Men's Guild and the Church of Scotland magazine 'Life and Work', appealed via that magazine to the women of the church to inform him of the various areas of service in which they were engaged. Using the responses as evidence, he asked permission of the 1885 General Assembly to set up a committee to investigate and report back on the work being done by women in the church and the possibility of co-ordinating it more effectively. The committee duly reported back to the 1887 General Assembly which passed this deliverance:

The General Assembly approves of the suggestions for the better organisation of women's work in the Church, direct the committee to proceed in carrying them into effect, and commend the object of training women workers for service in the home and foreign fields to the liberality of the members and friends of the Church.

The Church of Scotland Women's Guild was born.

Here in St Michael's, we were ahead of the game as we already had a Women's Work Party which was well supported and active and so we did not rush to join the new national organisation. There does not appear to be any official record in our own Kirk Session minutes or in the archives of the Guild's head office of when our Work Party actually took the plunge and became a branch of the Women's Guild, but circumstantial evidence such as our branch number (91) suggests that this took place in the session 1894-1895. Hence this new session will mark our 130th anniversary as a branch of the Guild.

For many years, women were not permitted to run their own organisation! Although one of the first projects of the fledgling organisation was to open a centre for the training of deaconesses, meetings were chaired by a minister. In 1937, the Guild's 50th year, the Guild National President was allowed to chair meetings of the National Committee for the first time. Even in our own Guild minutes from the war years in the 1940s, we see that although the minister's wife was nominally the president, her husband actually chaired meetings. It was not until the arrival of Dr Steel in 1959, that his wife, Sheila, and other members took it in turns to be President and preside over meetings and the programme.

From its inception, the Guild has supported charitable projects both in Scotland and abroad. The earliest was the building of a girls' school and a women's hospital in India, closely followed by a scheme to bring fresh country produce to the poor of Edinburgh and the establishment of an orphanage. The Guild has never been afraid of tackling controversial problems from the provision of a facility for 'women who have fallen victim to intemperance' in 1904 to making and distributing baby layettes to German mothers at the close of the Second World War. Our own Guild minutes detail the purchase of wool and supply of patterns for this. Before they became mainstream causes, the Guild through partnership with other Christian organisations, has supported Aids sufferers in Africa, refugees crossing in small boats to Malta, sex workers in Leith and supporting family visitors at Perth Prison among many others.

Proud though we can be of all the charitable work achieved over the years, the strength of the Guild lies in the friendship and fellowship that members experience meeting by meeting. Most value the chance to meet to hear an interesting speaker followed by a time to chat and catch up with friends. Through happy times and sad, the love and support of other Guild members is valued and, at a time when loneliness is such a great problem in society, this is perhaps the most important service the Guild provides today.

As we celebrate our 130th anniversary this session, we look forward to not only giving thanks for the years past but also we look forward to a new chapter in our history as St Michael's joins the new union of Avonbridge, St Ninian's Craigmaiten and Torphichen Churches. St Ninian's Craigmaiten Church also has a strong, active Guild and it would not be practical because of numbers and other factors to combine the two branches into a single unit. Our two branches will continue to meet on alternate Mondays so that members of each can attend meetings of the other as they wish. Our already close co-operation will be reinforced by the new union.

Our new session begins on Monday, 2nd September at 7.30pm in the Kirk Hall. All, (men and women), are welcome to join us or to come to any meeting that interests them. The programme will be posted on the noticeboards in St Michael's Kirk and in the Servery of Cross House. The leadership team and members look forward to welcoming you!



PREPARING FOR DEATH

by Tom Brown, Pastoral Care Team

For some years now the church has had an extensive bereavement ministry led by Sheila Rae, assisted by a number of trained volunteers and overseen by the Pastoral Care Team. Positive Pathways groups have been run and been highly successful, most continuing autonomously at the end of our formal input. In addition, a number of people have been seen for individual support where this has been required.



In the course of carrying out this work we have become increasingly aware of a number of issues highlighting the fact that many of us feel ill prepared for death in a number of ways, and that many of these have longer-term impacts on those who survive us. This is something I regularly encountered in my work as a Psychiatrist, as did Sheila in her work as a Palliative Care Nurse.

The aim of this article is to highlight some of these issues and to explore the possible need for an event providing help and support for anyone who thinks they may need it.

The issues we have identified include the following:

1. Legal issues, including wills (or the lack of them!), Power of Attorney, protecting property, eg if the survivor goes into care, inheritance tax.
2. Funeral arrangements including funeral plans, burials, cremations, instructions for funeral service, hymns, readings etc.



3. Medical aspects, eg 'Do Not Resuscitate' instructions (DNR), explanation of medical procedures
4. Emotional aspects, eg discussions with family, dealing with 'unfinished business', denial and how to deal with it.

Sheila Rae with members of the Pastoral Care Team

5. Spiritual aspects, eg faith and its implications, especially if families have different views on this. There is good evidence that those with a strong faith and belief in the afterlife, and those who have no faith cope better with dying than those who are 'not sure'.

6. Social care aspects, eg pensions.

These are just some of the issues we have noted. We would be delighted to hear of others of concern to you. The object of this article is twofold – firstly to highlight these, and secondly to explore the need for an event to provide support and help in dealing with these. In addition to myself (a retired Psychiatrist) and Sheila (a retired Palliative Care nurse) we have already identified clergy, a lawyer, a funeral director and a social worker who would be willing to participate in such an event. This would probably take place in the autumn.

If you would be interested in attending such an event it would be helpful if you contact either myself (t.m.brown@blueyonder.co.uk or 07808069280) or the Church Office - info@stmichaels-parish.org or 01506 842188.



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Parish Register

FUNERALS

I am the resurrection and the life

May

Evelyn (Lyn) Smith, Linlithgow

June

William Denholm, Linlithgow Bridge
Elizabeth (Liz) Henderson, Linlithgow
John Wilson, Linlithgow
Alastair Hay, Linlithgow



July

John MacKay, Linlithgow

WEDDINGS

They are no longer two, but one

April

Laurie McAllister to Callum Muldoon

May

Michaela Simjakova to Robert Lucas

July

Rachel-Rose McWhirter to Philipp Seib



BAPTISMS

Let the children come to me

June

Isla Downes, Manchester
Isobel (Izzy) Edwards, Edinburgh
Carmen Macleod, Bo'ness

July

Cameron Smith, California



NEW MEMBERS

For we are all members of one body

by Certificate of Transference



Mr Robert Boyd
Mrs Margaret Boyd

by Resolution of Kirk Session

Mrs Isabel Kidd



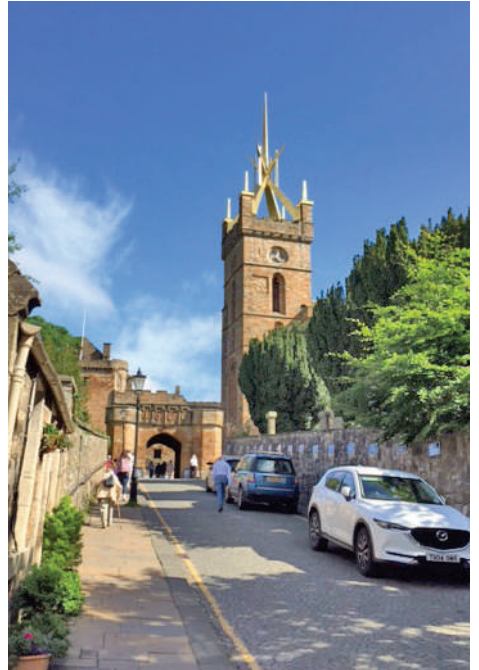
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!

by Brian Lightbody



The transformation of our iconic Crown of Thorns from dull grey to shining gold again is complete!





Dates for your Diary

EVENTS IN THE CHURCH

September

Sun 8th Sept	7.30pm	Antonine Ensemble
Fri 13th Sept	7.30pm	Scottish Chamber Orchestra
Sun 22nd Sept	3.00pm	Occasionally@stmichaels – Recital, Nordic singers

October

Sat 5th Oct	7.00pm	Linlithgow RFC Male Voice Choir
Sat 12th Oct	7.30pm	Linlithgow Arts Guild Chamber Philharmonic Orchestra Europe
Sat 26th Oct	TBC	Linlithgow String Orchestra and Bathgate Band
Sun 27th Oct	3.00pm	Occasionally@stmichaels Piano Recital (Trio)

November

Sat 9th Nov	7.30pm	Linlithgow Arts Guild Violin and Piano concert
Sun 17th Nov	7.00pm	Linlithgow String Orchestra classical concert

OTHER DATES FOR THE DIARY

September

Sat 7th Sept	3.00pm	Messy Church, Cross House
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An audience with Mary Queen of Scots) performed by Jane Collier

Fri 27th Sept	3.00pm	Cross House
Sat 28th Sept	2.00pm & 7.30pm	Cross House

November

Sat 2nd Nov	3.00pm	Messy Church, Cross House
Sat 30th Nov		Linlithgow Advent Fayre

WEBSITES

www.stmichaelsparish.org.uk – See Crosswind in full colour! Also find recordings of services, current intimations, details of upcoming events and all other church activities.



ST MICHAEL'S KNITTING GROUP

by Mairi McFarlane

If you were to walk into Room 1 in Cross House at 10.30am on the first Monday of the month, you could be forgiven for wondering if you were actually seeing the church Knitting Group. About 10 ladies would be sitting around a table, chatting, laughing or exchanging news – with no signs of knitting or knitting needles. Plenty of natter, but knitting?

Then comes the reality, as beautifully hand-knitted garments and toys appear. A lot of work and skill has gone into their making by this talented group in their own time. Here are some examples – and we are always open to other suggestions:



1. Clothes for premature babies in St John's Hospital, also Raigmore in Inverness.
2. Supporting the Salvation Army in Bo'ness with warm hand-knitted goods.
3. Supporting the continuing work of Blythswood Care in the annual shoebox appeal.
4. Knitting 'stump socks' for amputees in the Ukraine War – hard for us to imagine.

Some of you may have noticed the ongoing decoration of the window in Room 1, which brightens up that corner of the Cross – and indeed many people have commented on it. The themes are seasonal, the last one being the Marches.



There are so many worthwhile activities involved in St Michael's outreach, and we like to think the Knitting Group is one of them. All are welcome – just come along and, speaking as one with no great knitting skills, I can assure you there is no need to feel intimidated!

AVONBRIDGE PARISH CHURCH

by Heather Stephens

Avonbridge can possibly claim to be unique within the Union of the four churches, because:

we're younger than the rest,

we're smaller than the rest,

we are situated in Stirlingshire and were part of Muiravonside Parish,

and we are under threat of closure!

Although our current building only dates from 1890 there was a Church



building on the same site dating from 1804. Before there was a building, there was a congregation. In the late 18th century there were over 200 Seceders in Muiravonside and Torphichen Parishes without a Church and in 1803 they decided they wanted their own Church in Avonbridge District. They had to decide what denomination to join, with the choice being between the Associate Burgher Synod or

the Synod of Relief. The preferences of the people of the parishes were tested and a majority of 97 favoured the Associate Burgher Synod. That denomination was petitioned to send someone to conduct Sunday Services.

At the same time, it was decided to build a Church on the same site as the present Church. The first service of the new congregation was held in a barn in Middlestrath Farm on 13 March 1803. The service was conducted by the Rev John Brown who was the minister of the Associate Burgher Church at Longridge.

On 5 April 1803 the Associate Burgher Presbytery of Stirling and Falkirk agreed to the request from Avonbridge and promised to send preachers to conduct Sunday Services as often as they could. To help the congregation some members of the Associate Burgher Church in Bathgate were transferred to Avonbridge.

At first the congregation worshipped in a tent which was made for this use by James Taylor of Moss-side. On 4 June 1804 the congregation asked the Associate Burgher Presbytery of Stirling and Falkirk for permission to call a minister of their own. This was agreed and the congregation went ahead with a unanimous call to the Rev John Craig. This call was signed by 78 members and 33 adherents. The new minister was to receive a stipend of £70 per annum and a manse. This manse was built in Blackston Road.

Work had been going on in the building of a Church in 1803 and it was ready when Mr Craig was ordained and inducted to the Avonbridge Church on 6 November 1804. Although Mr Craig was plagued by illness, the congregation must have increased because in 1815 galleries were added to bring the seating capacity up to 308.

In 1820 the Church became a congregation of the United Secession Church when most of the Burghers and Anti-Burghers joined to become the United Secession Church. In 1834 the congregation of the Church was 128, the stipend was £67 and the Church had a debt of £165. This debt was wiped out in 1845. Before that date the congregation suffered from some trouble from Falkirk and Bathgate. Many of the members had been drawn away by the preaching of Rev James Morrison from Bathgate, where his father had been the minister of the Old Secession Church. This led to the formation of the Evangelical Union Church in Avonbridge in 1844.

In 1847 the denominational name of the Avonbridge Church underwent another change when the United Secession Church and the Synod of Relief joined together to form the United Presbyterian Church.

In 1889 it was agreed that a new church should be built. On 11 September 1889 the Foundation Stone of the new Church was laid by J C Bolton Esq, the Member of Parliament for Stirlingshire. It was built on the site of the old Church and had seating for 200 while a small galley at the West end of the Church seated a further 60 people. At the East end of the Church a hall was built to hold 70 people as well as a vestry and toilets. The Church was opened and dedicated by the Rev John Smith, Broughton Place Church, Edinburgh in March 1890.

The Church name changed again in 1900 when the United Presbyterian Church united with the 19th-century Free Church of Scotland to become the United Free Church of Scotland. Yet again the name changed in 1929 when the majority of the United Free Churches joined with, and took the name of, the Church of Scotland.

In 1970 there was another change of name when Avonbridge and Torphichen Churches became known as Avonbridge linked with Torphichen. Perhaps we should claim another uniqueness in the number of names held. We are due another name change when the union goes ahead.



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MECHANICAL REPAIRS, DIAGNOSTICS AND SERVICE

ABOVE AND BEYOND

by Alan Miller

A House for
the *Town*

If you've ever done Pilates or something similar, you'll know how it works. 'Stretch round... that's it... just a bit further... add an extra level like this...'. But pushing yourself that bit further is always easier when you have lots of support and encouragement! Our fundraising team are deeply grateful for all the support we are receiving as we stretch into new challenges:

- A House for the Town – to transform the much-loved but tired Cross House into a place of care and welcome with 21st-century facilities;
- Project 600 – to eliminate all the many ways water is threatening the church building itself.

It's remarkable how we seem to have picked up so many new friends along the way. Pete Wright completed his 24-hour Cycle for St Michael, raising close to £2,000. Several donors to A House for the Town have been inspired by Brian Curle's 1,200-mile Big Hike.

And the support team continues to expand. On 27-28 September, we have Linlithgow's most famous daughter returning to her birth town to reflect on her turbulent life and times in 'Fotheringhay: an audience with Mary Queen of Scots'. Tickets for the 3 performances are available on Eventbrite (via the QR code) or in Far From The Madding Crowd bookshop. Numbers are limited for these intimate audiences so don't delay!



Edinburgh Theatre Arts then bring a fun Murder Mystery Night to the Linlithgow Rose Social Club on Friday 25th October at 7 for 7:15pm. A week later, 'Songs from the Shows' will feature not one, but two West End performers singing in the church on Sunday 3rd November at 3pm. More information will follow but do keep the dates free.

Looking ahead, we're already planning for the visit of astronaut Kathy Sullivan on 31st March and 1st April. Next time you're in the church, take a good look at the east window (above the communion table) which celebrates both the HMS Challenger expedition of the 1870s and its chief scientist, Linlithgow man Charles Wyville Thomson. Kathy will connect the significance of this expedition to her space experience in the shuttle named in its honour: an opportunity definitely not to be missed.

You also are very welcome to join our support team! Early donations to our new funds encourage others to give. Go to <https://www.stmichaelsparish.org.uk/community/aspire-linlithgow/> to donate – and to help us stretch further above and beyond.

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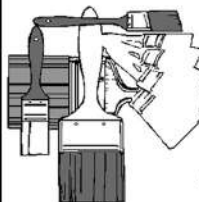
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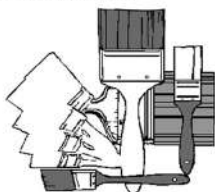
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PRAISE THE LORD, O MY SOUL!

PSALM 104

All the words below are mentioned in Psalm 104 and appear in the great east window of St Michael's church. Can you find them in the word square? They may run in any direction.

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

bread cattle
cedars clouds
donkeys goats
heavens hyrax
leviathan lions
man moon
mountains
oil pine trees
sea seasons
springs stork
sun wine

The left over letters spell out what the natural world tells us about God.



Can you find 10 differences between these pictures? Some are very small!

HOME GROUP

— A WARM WELCOME AWAITS

by Alison Miller

A small group, a home group, a life group, a connect group – no matter its label, these groups provide support and connection, the opportunity for learning and friendships. They play an important role in many churches, and they are as varied as the people who are in them.

These groups typically meet weekly or fortnightly, for a couple of hours. This might be in an evening or during the day. Most meet in person and there is also the option of an online group. Discussion might focus on notes and questions Liam writes about the Sunday sermon; they might use a study guide or video, or other resources. There can be a short time of prayer and reflection. The groups might arrange socials or community involvement.

Q – So why would I join a small group?

A – You might want to get to know some other people from our very large congregation at St Michael's. You might like to be part of a group of friendly, caring people who will look out for each other and support you along life's path. You might want to spend time reflecting on faith and the Bible and discussing this with others. You might want to contribute to building up others in the church family.

Q – Do I need to have a deep faith and know the Bible inside out?

A – Absolutely not, we're all learners and the groups welcome exploration, discussion and different perspectives! The groups are about much more than Bible study. They are about getting to know others and thinking about what we believe.

Q – Would I need to pray out loud?

A – You can join in prayer and discussion as much or as little as you want.



Group sheltering from the rain while out on a walk

Q – Do I need to be a member or attending church regularly before I can join a group?

A – We know that there are lots of reasons for people not making it along regularly to our services. You would be made very welcome at a group if you would like to try it out.

Q – I have been coming to St Michael's for years, but I am not a member of a small group. How do I work out which one to join?

A – Get in touch and we can discuss what might work for you.

Q – Any other benefits?

A – Well, apart from feeling involved, making friends and making a difference in others' lives – there is sometimes cake to go with the cuppa!

There are 5 groups meeting as part of our church at present, but this may change. One of these is a new group which will meet fortnightly on Wednesday evenings. If you are interested, please contact me for a no obligation chat. If none of these groups suit you, we'll see what we can work out. You would be very welcome to drop in for a 'taste and see' visit, and sometimes folks are occasional visitors or only join for a while. The groups will re-start after the summer break.

1. Mondays, at 7.30pm, meet in person, venue varies, organiser Alison Parkinson
2. Tuesdays, at 7.30pm, meet on Zoom and in person, organiser Liam Fraser
3. Wednesdays, a new group meeting in the home of Russell Hogan
4. Thursdays, on Zoom, organisers Margaret Henderson and Gordon Wardall
5. Fridays, at 10am, in person in Cross House, organiser Barbara Thomson

We hope that the notes and questions based on the week's sermon which are used by the home groups will be available on the church website in future.

If you have an idea for something different you would like to try, for example meetings where a variety of themes are discussed in a supportive environment, a themed book group, or whatever, do get in touch.

Email:
connect@stmichaels-parish.org.uk

Phone: 01506 844992





YESTERDAY ONCE MORE

by Iain Harrison

Back to 1974

Turning the clock back fifty years to 1974 again, it was certainly not a year to remember. There was the miners' strike, the three-day week, the oil crisis and two general elections. A state of emergency was also declared in Northern Ireland. On a lighter note, McDonalds opened their first UK restaurant in Woolwich South East London and sadly, for me at least, the last ever episode of Monty Python's Flying Circus was broadcast in December that year.

What challenges did our Church continue to face in 1974 and how relevant would they be today? As always how do they impact on the running of the Church and on our finances?

Beadle's House

In May 1974 estimates were requested to enable the eradication of dry rot. Further estimates were requested as verbal estimates received exceeded £200. Sadly, it transpired that Beadle's House would also require a new roof. An estimate of £475 had also been received for repairs to the staircase, but by September 1974 further estimates were still awaited for the eradication of the woodworm.

For whom the bell tolls

Comment was made in September that the Church bells were not being rung regularly on a Sunday morning. The Kirk Session agreed that it was desirable that the bells should be rung prior to the morning service and that the bells should stop some minutes before the service was due to start.



At the October meeting it was further agreed that the bells stop five minutes before the Church services begin. It was also agreed that volunteers be sought to assist the bellringer and cover for him when he was not available.

A solution presented itself the following month when it was reported that The Society of Friends of St Michael's offered to pay for the provision of an automatic bell ringing device. The Kirk Session voted by 15 votes to 12 to accept the Society's offer. Why up to 12 people voted against what seems like a good offer I am not sure, maybe they liked the tradition of someone having to physically ring the bells and burn a few calories!

Heritage Year 1975

Also in September's meeting, The Session Clerk reported that he had been approached by Edinburgh and Lothians Tourist Association about the possibility of St Michael's staging a Son et Lumière Performance to mark Heritage Year 1975. The Association would undertake to underwrite the production to the extent of £350. However, members of the Kirk Session recalled that previous proposals for this type of event would cost about £10,000. It was agreed to consider this further and investigate costs.

A month later at the October meeting it was decided not to proceed with staging the Son et Lumière Performance as a similar production at Glasgow Cathedral suffered a loss of £11,000, equivalent to £114,730 in today's money. In a year of rising electricity costs and a huge spike in oil prices impacting on Church finances, this was a very wise and sensible decision.

Finances

As mentioned before in previous articles the saga of the new manse was a regular feature throughout 1974 and estimates received were way above the funds available by at least £7,500. By December it was back to square one and I look forward to finding out how this was resolved and how the gap in funding was resolved. Another financial challenge carried forward was the written report from Rentokil that the organ was infested with woodworm at the base of the major wind pipes. As the company who serviced the organ had refused to accept any responsibility, I would imagine that the cost of resolving this issue would not come cheap. Again, I will be interested going forward to learn how much this would impact Church finances.



TRAGEDY ON THE LOCH

by Bruce Jamieson

Strolling round St Michael's Kirkyard recently, I came across these words of Charles Wesley carved in stone at the base of a headstone situated just above the Kirkgate wall.

*Pass a few fleeting moments more
And death the blessing shall restore
Which death has snatched away;
For me Thou wilt the summons send,
And give me back my parted friend
In that eternal day.*

The inscription was carved on the large, Knowles family headstone. Several members are recorded but one jumped out at me for I had come across the name before: 'John Knowles'.

Friday, July 30th 1847 was a beautiful day for sailing – warm and sunny but with a brisk wind blowing across Linlithgow Loch. John Knowles had just finished work for the day and left his accountant's desk in the Commercial Bank, latterly the Royal Bank of Scotland.



A 19th-century view. The tower of the Commercial Bank is in the centre.

The twenty-five-year-old was looking forward to an evening's yachting and, as arranged, at the lochside he met his crewman, William Howison – an older man, a magistrate of the burgh and one-time shipmaster.

The 'Edinburgh Evening Courant' describes what happened next:

'About half past seven, a squall upset the frail bark while bearing up the channel between the promontory under St Michael's and a small, wooded islet. The boat sunk at the stern and settled on the bottom of the loch.'



Only the mast was visible above the water and Mr Howison clung grimly to it until another boat picked him up. Unfortunately, no such rescue awaited John Knowles. At first, onlookers thought he might survive as his hat was seen protruding above the waves. A number of boats rushed to the spot but it took half an hour to find the body – and by then all hope of his survival was lost.

The community was much shocked by the event, especially as the father of the deceased was the Rev William Knowles, the minister of the town's Congregational Church. As the 'Courant' put it:

'the deepest sympathy has been shown towards his worthy parents and the other afflicted members of the family (John had 5 living siblings) who have suddenly been bereft of one who gave the promise of increased usefulness and advancement in this world, had it pleased the all-wise Disposer of Events to spare his life.'

John was buried in the family plot in St Michael's Churchyard where he was joined just two years later by his father who died aged 65. His mother, from the local Duncan family, died at the age of 84 in 1871. Just one headstone in St Michael's graveyard – and just one story. Just think of how many others are waiting to be unearthed.

Bruce Jamieson is continuing his fully illustrated, local history Zoom Presentations from September through to December.

For more information email Bruce at: bruceajamieson@yahoo.com

TRUSTING

by Rev Thom Riddell



As I write this endpiece, we are in the run-up to a General Election, and political leaders are making lots of promises. They have a plan to sort out all the problems people are facing in their lives. The question is, can we trust them to deliver? Past experience would tend to make us doubt that they will. Trust has to be earned, and is easily lost.

I wonder how often we use the expression 'I trust you' when we speak to someone, without expressing the hidden meaning behind it. What we are really saying is, 'I am counting on you to do what I want, or to fulfil my expectations,' or, 'I trust you to get this job done on time,' or, 'I trust that you will pay back what you owe.' Naturally we do the same thing when we talk to God. 'I trust you not to let my plane crash,' or, 'I trust you to heal my friend.'

Some time ago, someone I loved was facing a difficult situation. I prayed and tried to trust God to fix it. It seemed like the right thing to do. But then that quiet voice in my head said, 'Trusting God doesn't mean laying out your expectations, and then believing that God will do what you want. It means laying down your expectations and trusting God, leaving the outcome in his hands.'

This was a humbling, and slightly scary, thought. It was also strangely comforting. After all, God knows the future and he loves us and wants the best for us. In Psalm 143 we read, 'Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I entrust my life.' It doesn't say, 'Give me what I want, because I trust you.' David was asking God to teach him the way and help him to follow. He entrusted his life to God. If David could truly trust God, surely we can too.

Prayer: Lord God, we thank you that we can put our trust in your promise that you will never leave us or forsake us. As you love us with an everlasting love, and offer us life eternal, help us to trust you in all things, and increase our faith in you, that we may reveal your presence in our lives. AMEN

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