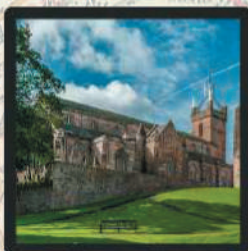


SUMMER 2026

Issue 4

LINAVON

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AVONBRIDGE CHURCH



The Journal of Linlithgow and Avon Valley Parish Church

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. — LUKE 12:27



LINLITHGOW AND
AVON VALLEY
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

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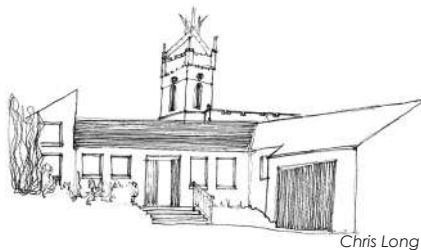
The deadline for the November 2026 issue is 1st October 2026.

Church office contact: info@linavonchurch.org.uk

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View from the Manse



by Rev Dr Liam Fraser



I was recently asked to speak to a men's group at the City Corps of the Salvation Army in Edinburgh. When I'm asked to speak somewhere, it's usually to speak about my research on mission and the state of Christianity in Scotland. While we spoke a little about that, however, it was something far more personal they were interested in: my life. Rather than boring them with the highs and lows of my life and work, I decided instead to think of the Scripture passages that summed up different parts of my experience, rather like a 'Desert Island Bible'. Among the verses I chose were these:

Call to me, and I will answer, and I will show you great and mighty things. (Jeremiah 33: 3)

If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 16: 24-25)

Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. (2 Corinthians 4:16)

Although these are some of the verses that most resonate with me, each person will have his/her own favourites. That's because God's Word speaks to us all in unique ways. There is only one Way, one Truth, and one Life, but the ways that lead to the Way are innumerable. Because unlike other words that may be enjoyable or interesting or arresting, God's Word is *alive*. 'The Word of the Lord is living and active' says the author of Hebrews (Hebrews 4: 12) and through his Word, God seeks us out, speaking into our lives, and making our story part of his story.

What passages of Scripture most resonate with you?

What verses would you choose to sum up where you are in life right now?

If I think of where we are as a Church right now, both locally and nationally, I think of Jesus' words in John 15: 1-2:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit.

Across the country right now the Church is having to make difficult decisions about what ministries to maintain and what buildings to retain. This can be a harrowing and painful experience, especially for local congregations, who are losing worshipping sites that have been active for centuries and in some cases millennia. In situations such as these, it can seem that the Church is intent on killing off faith in a local area rather than fostering it.

Jesus reminds us, however, that when the Father takes something from us, the intent is not to hurt but to heal, to prosper, to bring forth more fruit. Just as many types of plant must be cut back in order to save them or make them blossom or fruit more, so the Church of God must sometimes be pruned to ensure that the Body survives, and can go on bearing fruit. The image is less that of a madman hacking away with an axe and more of a skilled surgeon with a blade, making incisions that will save the life of the patient.



This is a lesson for all of us. Whenever we feel as if we are losing what is most important in life, and question whether God or the Church cares, while the outer parts of us may be taken away, what is eternal is being renewed day by day. While we mourn the loss of what was, what will be has still to come.

Yet only if we hold onto God's Word and allow our story – with all its ups and downs, highs and lows, certainties and uncertainties – to be taken up into God's story. For while the story of our life or of our Church can leave something to be desired, *'no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him'*. (1 Corinthians 2: 9).

May you know the peace, and forgiveness, and great love of God today, and may his Word bear fruit in you.

Liam

Joyful Generosity

by Sarah Young



Thank you to all of you who joined one of the Celebrations of the abundance of varied activities across this Parish which are making a real difference in people's lives, sharing the Good News and bringing joy and hope.

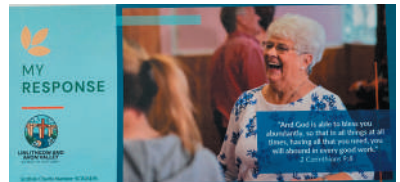
These were joyful events from the welcome and hospitality – much delicious cake was consumed – through the shared stories of personal experiences of generosity and God's love to the ideas and hopes for the future. Fellowship was fostered and, in some cases, new friendships begun. The video showing some of the many activities your support is making possible – from the Wednesday café in Avonbridge, the Jolly Babies in Linlithgow to the Stillness opportunities within the Sanctuary of St Michael's – is

available to view on the websites.

Together we are making a difference in people's lives across the Parish and your support is enabling that.

We heard about the challenges of continuing and developing all the things that we currently do, how these are being seriously considered alongside ways we can reduce unnecessary expenditure while maximizing what we do have. Conversations about where new partnerships might be developed, opportunities to be explored and strengths developed, showed there are plenty of ideas and a desire to be actively involved.

It is your generosity that makes all we do, possible – offering inspiring worship, vibrant community and hope. Whether through maintaining our worship spaces, supporting ministry or reaching out in love, your gift strengthens our shared life and extends God's grace into the world. Reflecting on our individual responses to God's abundant generosity is also very important, and by returning your Response cards this will help contribute to future planning.



Also, the Brochure showing more activities and information is now available at each worship site, and from 7th June, on the websites.

We pray that God will richly bless you and our church, as we prepare to continue our ministry and outreach together.

God's abundant love Joyful Generosity How do we respond?

2nd Linlithgow Boys' Brigade: Celebrations – a lot to be thankful for!

by Lisa Callaghan

The 2nd Linlithgow Boys' Brigade is thrilled to announce that Callum Woolsey, Finlay Duffy and Fraser Honeyford were awarded their King's Badge on Friday 22 May 2026. The young men have been members of 2nd Linlithgow for a combined 35 years!



This is the first time that the Company has awarded the King's Badge since King Charles became Patron in 2024. The King's Badge is the highest award in the Boys' Brigade and takes 2 years to complete. It requires a lot of hard work, dedication and commitment. There are many elements that need to be completed: volunteering with the community; volunteering within the Boys' Brigade or Church; completing a faith element; developing a new skill. And, more importantly, everything must be recorded along the way.

During the time that we have known Callum, Finlay and Fraser, they have grown into mature, young men, and we know that they all have a bright future ahead. Callum and Fraser will be heading off to college and university, and we are thrilled to announce that Finlay has committed to KGVII! This is a two week-long residential course, split over two years. During this time Finlay will learn everything he needs to know, in order to become a fully qualified Leader. We can't wait to welcome him to the team.



As well as our 3 King's Badge Men, we had 5 of our young people receive their President's Badge. This is completed in a year and must be obtained before working towards the King's Badge. The President's Badge gives the boys a taster of what is to come if they choose to work towards their King's Badge. A huge well done goes to Finlay Bothwell, Graeme Cluness, Oscar Lewis, Isaac Schofield and Malachy Watson.

For session 2026/27 we are in desperate need of staff and are looking to recruit Officers and Helpers. If you have some free time each month, please contact us for more information. You can DM us on Facebook or email us at 2linlithgow@boys-brigade.org.uk



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Strategic Planning

by Ken Thomson



Strategic planning is about understanding what we are trying to achieve and finding how we are doing at present. This is achieved by answering the following questions: -

Where are we now?

Where do we want to be?

How do we get there?

Responsibility for Strategic Planning

The Kirk Session, with members from the four legacy churches, has been formed with 38 trustee elders. In line with the Unitary Constitution of the National Church, the Kirk Session is supported by Parish Teams. These are divided into two broad categories (Worship, Mission & Outreach and Enabling). This allows us to focus on our responsibilities as follows: -

Linlithgow & Avon Valley Church - Kirk Session

Worship, Mission and Outreach

Ministry			
Worship	Fellowship	Outreach	Pastoral Care
Discipleship	Children & Young People	Social Justice	

Enabling

Finance & Stewardship	Fundraising	Property Maintenance	Health & Safety	HR
Projects	Comms	IT & Data Protection	Wellbeing & Training	Safeguarding

Strategic Planning

The Kirk Session, with support from the parish teams, has the responsibility to produce a plan to maintain and develop our mission.

Where are we now?

A detailed analysis of what we do as a Church, recently completed, has been approved by the Kirk Session. You can see detailed information of this in the 2025 annual report of the church which accompanies the annual accounts and will be available for our Church Annual General Meeting. The most important factor is that each aspect of our activities has been identified against one of the marks of mission, or it has been noted as to how we are meeting our various responsibilities. This analysis therefore gives us a baseline, an opportunity to judge how we are doing, and identifies strengths and weaknesses, making it easier to develop our way forward.

Where do we want to be?

Worship, Mission and Outreach Teams These teams are charged with furthering the five Marks of Mission which have been agreed by our Church and the Church nationally.

The Five Marks of Mission: the mission of the Church is the mission of Christ

- 1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.*
- 2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers.*
- 3. To respond to human need by loving service.*
- 4. To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.*
- 5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.*

We must also ensure that the five purposes of the church, i.e. worship, service, discipleship, fellowship and evangelism, are developed and are in a healthy balance.

Enabling Teams The Enabling Teams support the work of our mission by managing all practical but crucial aspects of the parish, ie, managing finances, raising funds, caring for our properties and ensuring that there is infrastructure in place to meet legal and other responsibilities.

How do we get there?

A template for improvement objectives has been agreed by the Kirk Session and the Parish Teams are currently preparing draft proposals. These proposals will develop our vision and create a plan. To help with this process, more detailed planning aims have been developed and approved by the Kirk Session. Writing a plan and getting Kirk Session approval does not make it happen!!

Monitoring and Review Once a plan has been agreed, it shouldn't lie on a shelf gathering dust, as it is critical to review how we are getting on. Parish Team leaders report to the Kirk Session on a planned rota basis when progress will be reported. An annual review will also take place which will include updating 'where are we now'. To assist with monitoring, Key Performance Indicators have been agreed by the Kirk Session and these will be collated on an annual basis (calendar year) beginning with 2026. Examples of the indicators are the numbers attending Sunday Morning Worship and the number of baptisms per annum. An annual cycle of review will be developed.

Finally

To continue all that we are already doing, and to achieve our plan, will be challenging and it will require all our members to give generously of their time, talents and money. If you are reading this, this means you!

The Work of 1st Step

by Maria Thorp



1st Step Development Ventures has been operating since 2016; it started as a constituted community group wanting a safe space for people in recovery from addictions to meet. The group had directly experienced a huge gap in opportunities for people in recovery to socialise, learn and volunteer in a safe and trusted space. Positive peer role models and opportunities to mix and contribute to the wellbeing of the wider community have always been central to our objectives.

In October 2018 we became a charity (SCIO). Our main charitable purpose is to provide safe, supportive environments for people affected by addictions and poor mental health. Importantly, we try to create opportunities for people to gain confidence, build diverse supportive relationships, develop skills, learn and build better relationships with the wider community. With this in mind, we created and developed several community-facing projects in Linlithgow and Falkirk.

The 1st Step café is the heart of 1st Step, providing a safe and supported space for many people, and is open to anyone looking for friendship, support or kindness. It is often the 'first step' people take to recovery before 'growing' into our social enterprise opportunities. It's really important that the café is a community hub celebrating the diversity and communities of Linlithgow and West Lothian. The café offers free hot meals and often arts and crafts, as well as celebrating events such as Easter and Christmas by providing hot meals and gifts for children.

The cafe also has a community garden that provides food for the café and encourages people to learn to grow and enjoy the benefits of being outside.

Our Linlithgow Food Revolution project is a valuable partnership at the centre of Linlithgow with St Michael's Church at Cross House. We open on Saturdays and Mondays 10am to 12.30pm and we operate as a community shop, offering food that otherwise would have been wasted but instead is donated to us by businesses. It's often full of lovely food and open to anyone and everyone.



As well as being environmentally conscious, the shop is a real community hub where people get together and make new friends. Why not drop in sometime and see for yourself?

Over the last 8 years we have developed 1st Step Bikes offering bike refurbishment training courses (for people affected by addiction/poor mental health), bike repairs, services and monthly bike sales. The training courses target people at the right point in their recovery to start to learn new skills, develop routines, make wider social connections (important to preventing relapse) and start to rebuild their lives. Social connections, purpose, tackling boredom and stigma and importantly hope, are the key ingredients needed to build recovery capital and recover sustainably.



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1st Step Bikes now operates from the Linlithgow Recycling Centre and Unit 14 at the Howgate Shopping Centre in Falkirk. We regularly offer free Dr Bike check-ups, in partnership with the Linlithgow Development Trust in Linlithgow and with Youth Space at the Bridgend Community Centre. We also offer bike repairs and sales to our local communities of donated bikes, thoroughly refurbished and affordable.

1st Step encourages volunteers from all walks of life. We believe that addiction and mental health struggles affect many people and most families. People need the support of their communities to recover sustainably,

and we value our wide range of volunteers, who are the power behind our work.

If you would like to find out more about 1st Step, would like to donate or buy a bike, get your bike serviced or repaired, or would like to volunteer please email Maria Thorp on firststepdevelopment@gmail.com





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March

James Hall, London
Rory Wilson, Dunfermline

May

Isabella Liddle, Linlithgow

June

Ruairidh Cassells, Larbert
Rory Downes, Manchester



WEDDINGS

March

Megan McLeod to David Brown

May

Margaret Rintoul to Edward Telford



Religious Buildings on Scottish Banknotes

by Iain Harrison

For nearly two centuries Scottish Banknotes have featured a wide variety of subjects including castles and other buildings, bridges, scenery, animals, famous Scots and royalty including King Robert the Bruce, the Queen Mother and the late Queen Elizabeth. But what about Churches and other places of worship, have there been many over the years? The short answer is yes, but in many cases you have to dig deep to find them.

As far back as 1838 two buildings appear on banknotes that had a short life. The Paisley Commercial Bank that only existed from 1838 to 1844 had Paisley Abbey on their £5 note and I believe on their £20 note. The Bank traded successfully and was snapped up by the Western Bank of Scotland in 1844. Sadly it was not a happy ending as the Western Bank crashed in 1857. The Eastern Bank of Scotland which had offices in Dundee and Edinburgh and lasted from 1838 to 1863 featured St Mary's Church and the Steeple Church in Dundee on a set of its notes. However, these notes engraved by James Fenton of Dundee appear not to have been circulated and exist only as proofs and colour trials. Interestingly though this building appearing on the notes was actually two Church of Scotlands in one, with two different congregations. The Dundee part of the Eastern Bank was acquired by The Clydesdale Bank in 1863 whilst the Edinburgh part of the business was sold to the City of Glasgow Bank.



Even earlier than the notes of the two banks in 1838, King's College including King's College Chapel in Aberdeen featured in the North of Scotland's Banknotes from 1836 with Marischal College in Aberdeen and the adjoining Greyfriars Church appearing on notes from 1910. I suspect both churches are there by default, being joined to the Colleges. In 1938 the final series of notes for the Bank once again featured King's College and these were issued up to and including 1949. The North of Scotland Bank was swallowed up by the Clydesdale Bank in 1949 to form The Clydesdale and North of Scotland Bank and a few years later in 1951 Glasgow Cathedral and King's College Chapel Aberdeen featured in some of their banknotes including the £5, £20 and £100 note up until 1962.



Glasgow Cathedral wins top prize because as well as appearing on Clydesdale and North of Scotland Banknotes it also appears on National Bank of Scotland £1 notes from 1927 to 1959. The Bank then joined forces in 1959 with The Commercial Bank of Scotland to form The National

Commercial Bank of Scotland which in turn was swallowed up by The Royal Bank of Scotland in 1969.

The award for the most recent religious building to appear on a Scottish Banknote goes to the General Assembly Building in Edinburgh which appeared on



the reverse of an RBS commemorative £1 note from 12 May 1999. The note was issued to celebrate the reopening of the Scottish Parliament after an absence of nearly 300 years. The General Assembly Building was, of course, used as the parliament as the permanent home in Holyrood was still under construction (and well over budget!) and did not open until October 2004.



Given there were dozens of Scottish banks issuing notes until The 1845 Scottish Banking Act, which tightened the regulations on issuing banknotes and prevented any new banks from issuing their own notes, I may have missed something in my search. After 1845 there were still 19 banks issuing notes and this fell to 10 banks in 1900. As recently as 1949 there were still 8 banks issuing their own notes in Scotland.

LinAvon Youth Programmes

by Steve Chaffee

The Linavon Valley Churches have seen a few changes to our youth work over the past year, and our teams have been working diligently to keep up and even increase our outreach and support to families and schools across the Parish. In what follows I would like to give you all a wee 'in-flight update' as to the work of the Children and Young People's (CYP) Committee and the many offerings that exist for families.

CYP has had regular meetings, keeping us all informed about the various facets of youth work in Avonbridge, Springfield, St Ninian's Craigmaiten, Torphichen, and St Michael's. These include: Creche and Sunday morning provisions like Jesus Factor and Sunday Club/Bible Class; midweek morning provisions like Toddlers, Jolly Babies, and Seedlings; midweek evening provisions like Girls' Brigade, Boys' Brigade, and Youth Fellowship; monthly/annual events like Messy Church, Magnitude, and the (upcoming!) Holiday Club. We outreach and support our many Primary schools in the form of our Christmas Unwrapped and Cracking Easter assemblies; we buy and distribute *Transition to Secondary School* wellness booklets, and – in a first! – I had the pleasure of travelling to Westfield Primary School to help with their Sports Day in June, to showcase and talk about Martial Arts for Wellness.

As the above list demonstrates – CYP has its hands full, running many programmes with our excellent volunteers and volunteer teams. There's simply too much to include every facet, so I thought here I would highlight a few of the biggest wins in 2026 so far (and a few new ideas I hope to get off the ground into 2027!)



Our Christmas Unwrapped and Cracking Easter assemblies saw over 150 pupils from Linlithgow Primary, Linlithgow Bridge, Lowport School, St Joseph's and Springfield Primary Schools all come to St Michael's. They visited several bases over the course of two hours, led by a team of volunteers from St John's, St Michael's, and St Ninian's Craigmaiten. Even more excitingly, we were able to contribute to a bus to bring in 18 pupils from Westfield and Avonbridge Primary Schools! In the weeks and months since, I have had further conversations with our primary schools and hope to get more schools along, or see satellite versions of these assemblies done in those schools.

Our Messy Churches travelled a bit this year between Cross House in St Michael's, Longcroft Hall in St Ninian's Craigmillen, and the Lowport Centre as part of our historic relationship with St John's. We held six Messy Church dates with an average attendance of 20 people at each and told stories of the Big Picture of the Bible – including stories of Creation, Exodus, Nativity, David, Easter, and Pentecost. Our excellent volunteer teams provided delicious food and all sorts of crafts! If you were at St Michael's at Pentecost, you might have seen a new red fabric covering for the Communion table with a large Holy Spirit crest. That crest was a contribution to the service from the Pentecost Messy Church – held just the day before! In the coming year, we hope to trial another Messy Church or two in Avonbridge or Torphichen.



By the time you read this, I will be just returning from Magnitude and putting final details together for our huge interchurch Holiday Club. Magnitude is an enormous once-a-year outing for teens to go camping on Lendrick Muir's grounds for a week full of incredible worship in the Big Tent. On offer are an enormous quantity of sports tournaments, meals provided by the Church of Scotland Village, and gorgeous sunshine (usually!) This year I have a small group of teens coming and will myself be helping on the Church of Scotland Village team. Last year, the Village saw some 300+ teens and youth workers come through for meals and fellowship through the week.

Following on from Magnitude will be our Superhero Themed Holiday Club! We anticipate around 40 P1-P7 children will be attending, to hear all about how Jesus helps us to become Everyday Superheroes. It's always a fantastic way to wrap up the summer and prepare for the return of the school year.

Unfortunately, I don't have space to tell you about the ministries we undertake weekly, save that they are also full! Toddlers regularly welcomes 140+ people into Cross House per week, and the Brigades have about 50 young people across their combined numbers. Oh – one last thing! In recognition of the enormous amount of expertise, time, and love that our volunteers give to these ministries, one of my major aspirations for 2026-27 is to begin a bi-annual Thanksgiving Luncheon for youth programme volunteers across the Parish. More on that to come!

Thank you so, so much for your support in prayer, kind words, and your smiling faces during Sunday services.



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Prayer Room: Room for Prayer

by Simon Curran on behalf of the Discipleship Team

Easter can often feel like a flurry of activity — holidays, family gatherings, chocolate eggs, and hot cross buns. Good Friday holds the solemn remembrance of Jesus' death and the horror of human sin. Easter Sunday brings the joy of resurrection and the good news that violence and hatred will not have the final word.

But Easter Saturday sits quietly in between – a day suspended between sadness and celebration, between grief and joy. It is a quieter pause amidst the busyness, which made it an appropriate time for Linlithgow and Avon Valley churches to host a Prayer Room. In this context, a Prayer Room is simply a space to come together in God's presence, to seek His face, and to bring before Him our prayers — both personal and political, intimate and international.



Our Easter Saturday Prayer Room was held at St Ninian's Craigmalen and offered a variety of creative, interactive prayer stations designed to help people pray and bring to God their thanks, praise, and concerns. Throughout the day, a steady stream of visitors welcomed this oasis of calm and the opportunity to worship, to bring to God their own needs, and to pray for others.

We hope to host another Prayer Room in the future but, until then, there are plenty of other opportunities to gather in prayer, and we'd love you to join with us:

Monday: Online at 8:30pm (contact connect@linavonchurch.org.uk)

Tuesday and Friday: 12 noon in the Prayer Room (located at the east end of the servery in the Kirk Hall area. It has a door onto the Kirkgate, as well as a door from the servery – both are usually open when prayer is happening).

Wednesday: 12:30pm in the Queen's Aisle Prayer Chapel at St Michael's

Not forgetting the telephone prayer chain on 01506 822603 or 07890 010 243.

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Linlithgow and Avon Valley Parish Church

Environmental Policy



by Sarah Young

'The Earth is the Lord's and everything in it' Psalm 24:1

God spoke: 'Let us make human beings in our image,
make them reflecting our nature

So they can be responsible for the fish in the sea,
the birds in the air, the cattle,
And, yes, Earth itself,

and every animal that moves on the face of Earth.' Genesis 1:26

'Love your neighbour as yourself' Luke 10:27

Aims: As a Church we aim to care for all God gives us, in all that we do, always considering our neighbours. Therefore, we will always consider the ethical nature and environmental impact of all purchasing whether for goods or services. We aim to ensure that everything we buy has a positive impact on the world and our neighbours – locally, nationally and internationally.

We will promote environmental awareness amongst our congregations, groups and people who use our church buildings; in worship, in communications and through practical actions where possible.

Our policy is to:

Use **locally** sourced products and services wherever possible and promote biodiversity in our grounds.

Use **Fairtrade** products where practical and encourage use of Fairtrade products.

Minimise waste where possible by: reducing and refusing; reusing; recycling and using recycled products where practical; using products that cause least environmental damage.

Aim for our Church's **money** to be invested in a way that has a positive impact on our neighbours.

Mitigate against Climate change by measuring, monitoring and reducing our Carbon footprint. Minimise energy and water use and buy from ethical suppliers, to cause minimum damage to the environment.

The Earth, our home, is in crisis and Social Justice and Human Rights are intertwined with urgent environmental issues. The challenges can seem daunting, but many answers already exist - the biggest trees grow from small seeds. We do not stand separate from the planet; every positive action we take contributes to the nurture of seeds of environmental change.

The Kirk Session approved adoption of this Eco Policy, to guide our choices as a church. If we continue adopting these actions in our own lives, as far as practicably possible, it will make a significant difference, and all life will not only be sustained but also flourish.

Sunflower Scotland

Part 2

by Oleg Dmitriev



Sunflower Scotland (www.sunflower-scotland.co.uk) is a registered charity, delivering aid to Ukraine's frontline areas. We speak with doctors and patients in hospitals, to find out exactly what they need. We began helping Ukraine when war began in 2022. Things have changed now, with drones and missiles daily destroying homes and causing terrible injuries, and we work to help doctors save those injured and wounded.

In 2022, crowds fleeing to west Ukraine needed warm clothes and food; now, we need medical supplies. We must deliver essentials, right to the hospital asking for it. If medical supplies go to a Ukraine warehouse, they may lie there unused, as hospitals don't have money to sort and transport them across country.

We don't need clothing and bedding as before; now we need clothes only for wounded soldiers in hospitals. Every few months we collect for a specific hospital. For example, in November 2025 we collected 120 sets of clothes for a hospital in northwest Kharkiv, and in January 2026 we prepared 50 sets for a hospital in Kharkiv's northeast.

To reach remote, dangerous areas, we use 4x4 vehicles and vans and then donate them to Ukraine. Why not simply contract a logistical company to deliver aid for us? Because we are getting aid to frontline areas where no transport company would deliver. We don't use local volunteers there, because we think it's immoral to send people to risk their lives, when we sit cosy in Edinburgh. Most Ukrainian volunteers are neither trained nor equipped, while ours are experienced first responders, wearing bulletproof clothing in danger zones.

Sunflower has a handbook for our frontline volunteers, covering health and safety, safe driving, alcohol and drugs, working with disabled children, etc, all based on our own experience. We train team members, and information is also available to download from our website. Most other groups aiding Ukraine are informal and don't offer any procedures or guidance. But we think that the charity is responsible for its employees and volunteers. True, they willingly volunteered to take the risk of helping in the war zone, but we must offer training and support.

Sunflower supports eleven hospitals in cities in the frontline: 4 in Kharkiv, 2 in Sumy, 1 each in Shakhtarske, Kryvyi Rih (Novopillya) and Kherson. Both innocent civilians and Ukrainian soldiers receive dreadful wounds from kamikaze drones, gliding

bombs and ballistic missiles. We are currently collecting first aid ambulance items: defibrillators; wheelchairs (heavy duty); crutches; adult nappies; catheters; bandages, absorption sheets; stoma and drainage kits; syringes, needles; laryngoscopes; patient gowns or men's 100% cotton T-shirts; power banks and mobile batteries. All items must be in-date (Ukraine government refuses out-of-date donations).

Sunflower works directly with medics from brigades including 43rd, 154th, 129th, 46th, 34th. We deliver medical aid to evacuation teams and field hospitals, to ensure that no Ukrainian men should die without medical help. We provide first aid items used by the NHS ambulance service, eg: resuscitation masks, bandages, breathing tubes, tourniquets and Israeli bandages for critical bleeding.

Evacuation vehicles and ambulances:

Vehicles save lives. We use ambulances for medical evacuation, and 4x4 cars to transport the wounded through fields and dirt roads. Imagine several men carrying a wounded comrade. They will probably be attacked by the enemy's FPV drones in minutes; a 4x4 vehicle may be a life saver. We make sure the vehicles reach exactly where needed, delivering them directly to the front. We don't help units sitting in safer areas, as our vehicles might end up on the black market.



Supporting rehabilitation centres: While defending their country, 390,000 Ukrainian defenders have suffered terrible wounds, including loss of limbs. Russia uses gliding bombs, white phosphorus, drones and anti-personnel mines, with no distinction between soldiers, women and children. The total number of war injuries is much greater than the official number. Sunflower supports Way to Health, an experienced rehabilitation centre in Dnipro, East Ukraine. Since 2022 they rehabilitated over 1,500 women and men who have sustained war trauma - burns, shrapnel and bullet wounds, loss of limbs, etc. We provide funding for rehabilitation, grants for medical equipment and exercise machines for physiotherapy.

Our journey continues: Sunflower Scotland started as a small charity. Our turnover in 2022 reached only £25,000. In 2025, we raised £180,000, showing trust by our donors and supporters, and an indication that we are doing something right. We continue to grow and evolve, reconsidering our projects and looking for better ways to support those who struggle.

Please support us if you can. We appreciate every penny and pound donated to the people suffering in frontline Ukraine.

*<https://sunflowerscotland.co.uk> and 00447775463476
Sunflower Scotland SCIO. Registered Charity no. SC052092
Registered address: 5 South Charlotte Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4AN, UK*

Linlithgow and the Battle of Linlithgow Bridge

by Bruce Jamieson

The Battle of Linlithgow Bridge took place 500 years ago and St Michael's Church played an important role in the events surrounding that conflict. The young King who was at the centre of the encounter was born in Linlithgow Palace on 10th April, 1510 and christened, James, the next day in St Michael's Church. In the presence of his father, James IV and his mother, Margaret Tudor, he was baptised into the Roman Catholic faith – his mother, sister of King Henry VIII of England, solemnly promising to bring up the child in the Catholic tradition.



**Medieval St Michael's depicted
by David Waldie**

After the ceremony, the young Prince James received the title Duke of Rothesay – since 1398 the designation given to the heir apparent – the title presently held by Prince William.

Just 17 months later, the babe in arms was proclaimed King of Scots in the Chapel Royal at Stirling Castle – a place of safety, further from England than Linlithgow which was expected to be imminently attacked

by an invading English army; the town wall duly strengthened against the English forces.

The new king's father had ignored the warning given to him in St Michael's by a ghostly herald who had strongly advised the monarch not to wage war against his wife's brother. The result was the colossal defeat for the Scots at Flodden – and the death of James IV.

The child-king's mother, Margaret, was proclaimed Regent, empowered to act for her son, as long as she did not remarry. That position did not last long. Just eleven months after the death of her husband, Margaret married Archibald Douglas, 6th Earl of Angus and, for the next 12 years, control of the young monarch was hotly disputed – resulting in the Battle of Linlithgow Bridge fought on September 4th, 1526. The full story will be dramatically recounted later this year in St Michael's on September 4th and 5th. (See the poster on page 27 for information re tickets.)



**Linlithgow encircled by its
'Flodden' wall.**



Around 3000 Scots died in the combat which was fought alongside the River Avon. Many of the wounded were treated at the nearby Manuel House of Cistercian Nuns who were aided in their ghastly task by members of the Knights of St John who arrived from their Headquarters in Torphichen Preceptory.

The night of the battle, while the victors made merry down on the Peel, King James slipped into St Michael's to pray for those who had died in the conflict and especially for his kinsman, John Stewart, Earl of Lennox. Lennox had actually survived the battle but was later murdered by James Hamilton of Finnart. Amongst the 16-year-old monarch's prayers was a plea made for 'guidance in dark places' to St Ninian whose chapel stood at Linlithgow's West Port.

The battle being won by Angus, it was not until 1528 that King James V saw Linlithgow again. Escaping from his virtual imprisonment in Tantallon Castle, he met up with his mother in St Michael's and they prayed together before the High Altar of the church.

A brief reconciliation with England followed and, in recognition of the young Scottish monarch's relationship with his uncle, King Henry VIII awarded James the Order of the Garter which was displayed on the Kirkgate entry – an architectural addition commissioned by James himself. It stands there still, at the top of the Kirkgate, bearing also the Orders of the Thistle; the Golden Fleece and St Michael.



The Orders of Chivalry on the Kirkgate Arch.

King James V's reign corresponds, of course, with the beginnings of the Protestant Reformation: the martyrdom of local Reformer Patrick Hamilton; the later burning at the stake of George Wishart and the eventual attack on St Michael's by 'The Lords of the Congregation' which caused the destruction of numerous external statues and all Roman Catholic imagery, both inside and outside the church.



A mid-19th-century photograph showing a mutilated St Michael and empty niches.

Fishers of Men

by Rev Thom Riddell



In Mark's gospel, we read how Jesus called his first disciples. Jesus is walking beside the Sea of Galilee, where he sees two fishermen, Simon and Andrew, casting a net into the lake, and invites them to follow him. Further on, he sees James and John preparing their nets and offers them the same invitation. In each case, the brothers leave their nets and follow Jesus.

Note that all four men left everything behind 'at once', presumably with no second thoughts. Had they seen Jesus before? Maybe they had heard him preaching and had already felt attracted by what he was saying.

Perhaps the most important thing is that Jesus calls the disciples exactly where they are – at work, performing their daily tasks. He didn't wait to see them in the synagogue to decide if they were worthy enough to join him. He wasn't interested in their past. He didn't look for character references.

So what about you and me? Do we think we need special qualifications before we can be Jesus' disciples? Many years' attendance at church, and reading our Bible every day? Jesus might be glad that we do these things, but he is more interested who we are, with all our strengths and weaknesses. When he calls us, all he needs is a positive 'Yes' in response. Jesus knew the potential of his disciples. They were slow to learn, sometimes quarrelsome and prone to letting him down. But Jesus knew what they would become, as he knows about us.

I am writing this piece on Ascension Day which we mark, not as a moment of departure, but as a widening of the church's mission. Jesus does not leave us behind, rather he sends us forward to embody love, carry peace, and witness with our lives. The Ascension is the Church's commissioning, not the end of the story. The first disciples left their nets and former lives behind for the biggest adventure of their lives. Now, it's our turn to go, to serve, and to rise.

Prayer

Lord God, you call us to share in your mission to all the world. You have given us the gospel of Jesus and want us to share its message. We pray you will strengthen us to serve you in the places where we live and work, that our deeds and actions may show that we are your people, encouraging them to follow in the way of Jesus. In his name we pray. AMEN

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KING JAMES V and the BATTLE of LINLITHGOW BRIDGE

BATTLE
COLLINSWOOD BRIDGE 1526

In **September 1526**, an attempt was made to rescue the **14-year-old King James V** from the clutches of the **Earl of Angus**. An army in support of the **King's mother, Margaret**, led by the **Earl of Lennox**, met the opposing forces along the **River Avon at Linlithgow Bridge**. The result was a victory for Angus - and a death toll of 3,000 Scottish soldiers.

From **7.00pm on September 4th & 5th**, these historic events will be dramatically portrayed in **St Michael's, Kirkgate** in a multi-media presentation featuring over 160 large-scale, specially-created images, live narration, recorded voices and sound effects, and live music from the **Linlithgow String Orchestra**.

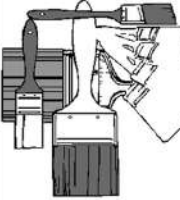
The event is masterminded by local historian **Bruce Jamieson**, who has written and presented several highly-acclaimed productions in **St Michael's** - a building which played an integral part in the build-up to the battle, and its aftermath.



TICKETS: Adults £15 - Under 15s £12 - available from Far From The Madding Crowd and at battle500.org.uk/whats-on

All proceeds go to the Battle500 Project and St Michael's at Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church





Johnny Alves

Painter & Decorator

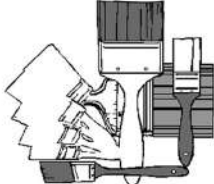
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