

LINAVON LINK

IN THIS ISSUE —

The Five Marks of Mission and Our Statement of Values ... Page 2

View from the Manse ... Page 3
by Rev Dr Liam Fraser

Avonbridge Church ... Page 5
by Sandra Scott

Linlithgow and Avon Valley Parish – the first few months ... Page 6
by Tom Costley, Session Clerk

Torphichen Kirk ... Page 8
by Sarah Young

Sunshine Singalong for Memory ... Page 10
by Norma Costley

St Ninian's Craigmalen ... Page 12
by Elaine Stewart

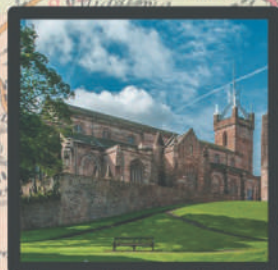
St Michael's, Linlithgow ... Page 13
by Kathryn Young

Puzzle Page ... Page 15
by Maureen Blake

The Communication Group ... Page 16
by Gregor Preston

Dietrich Bonhoeffer ... Page 18
by Rev Dr Rhona Dunphy

Parish Register ... Page 19



ST MICHAEL'S, LINLITHGOW



ST NINIAN'S CRAIGMALEN



TORPICHEN CHURCH



AVONBRIDGE CHURCH

The Journal of Linlithgow and Avon Valley Parish Church
How good and pleasant it is when God's people
live together in unity!
PSALM 133:1
SPRING 2025 Vol 1:1

The Five Marks of Mission

The Church of Scotland has a unique role. Our vision seeks to inspire the people of Scotland and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ through enthusiastic worshipping, witness, nurturing and serving communities, underpinned by the Five Marks of Mission:

Enthusiastic Communities: To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom.

Nurturing Communities: To teach, baptise, and nurture new believers.

Serving Communities: To respond to human need by loving service.

Witnessing Communities: To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation.

Worshipping Communities: To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.



Our Statement of Values

These Values are intended not only for the Elders but for all Members and Adherents of the Parish.

Faithful – Jesus is at the centre of all we do, discuss and seek to achieve.

Listening – by listening to others we can truly respond to their insights and needs.

Honesty – we tell the truth however inconvenient.

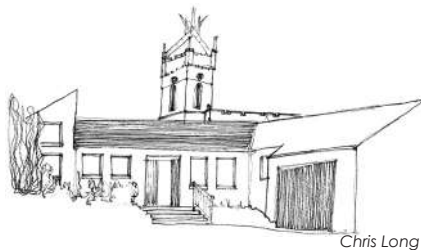
Respect – we will talk to each other, not about each other.

Encouragement – we will acknowledge and support each person's contribution.

Mission – we will focus on our primary mission and not be side-tracked by well-meaning yet trivial issues.

The views expressed within this magazine by the Editor or any contributor do not necessarily express the views of the Ministers or Kirk Session. Editorial comment and articles do not necessarily contain the official views of the Church of Scotland, which can be laid down only by the General Assembly. Any contributions to the magazine can be submitted to the Editor through the Church Office or to the Editor at myralawson144@btinternet.com

View from the Manse



by Rev Dr Liam Fraser



Welcome to the first edition of Linavon Link, the new magazine of the united parish of Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church of Scotland.

Our church came into being on 1st December 2024 through the union of Avonbridge, St Michael's, St Ninian's Craigmalen and Torphichen. While we are one church with one Kirk Session, we hope to maintain worship at all of our existing buildings, witnessing to the Gospel across this part of West Lothian.

It's possible to look at our union as an example of rationalisation, of a Church that has ceased to be relevant and is now struggling for existence. Yet is that right?

In April this year, the Bible Society launched its *Quiet Revival* report, which suggested that God may be doing something new in our country. In 2018, just 4 per cent of 18–24-year-olds in England and Wales said that they attended church at least monthly. The report found, however, that this has now risen to 16 per cent, with young men increasing from 4 per cent to 21 per cent, and young women from 3 to 12 per cent. In addition to this research from England and Wales, the Roman Catholic Church reported ten thousand baptisms in France on Easter Sunday this year, a 45% increase from the previous year, and other countries have also reported increased attendance among the young. Rather than a long slide into oblivion, then, we may be witnessing the beginning of a new phase in the spirituality of Britain and the Western world, a phase marked by the rejection of materialism and a search for the Living God.

So how are we to respond to this new movement of the Spirit? While many things could be suggested, it seems to me that the most important one is this: we must be a Church that is suited to reaching people of *this* generation and not only earlier generations. It has been said of the Western Church that it is sometimes ideally suited to reach a society that no longer exists, and with more young people turning to religion and spirituality, we must ensure that we are reaching this society and this generation and not another. This obviously means changes to how we explain our faith and values to those outwith the Church. Yet it must also include looking at our worship. Can we offer forms of worship that are more intuitive and relevant to young people looking for meaning, connection, and a relationship with God? Or are we going to insist that *our* preferences — and not theirs — are met?



Whatever the future holds for spirituality and the Christian faith in Britain, what is certain is that a joined-up approach, sharing people and resources across the Church, is the only rational position to take. The Kingdom of God is not limited to one worshipping site or one parish, but encompasses the whole people of God, and every part of the Earth. So as we continue to build up our united parish, let's embrace the new opportunities that come from sharing ministry and mission with Christians from across West Lothian, confident in the knowledge that God is moving in our country, and already preparing our neighbours to hear and receive the Gospel.

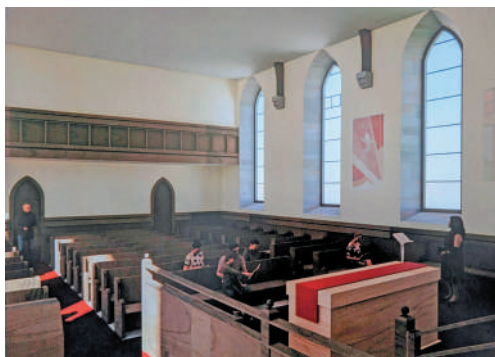
May God bless you, and all whom you love,

Liam

Avonbridge Church

by Sandra Scott

At the start of the year, the local community hall was sadly closed. However, this brought the opportunity for the church to open its doors wide to support and welcome the community of Avonbridge to use the Church Hall resources. The Wednesday Lunch Club now takes place every week from 10am to 1.30pm (all welcome!) with Take Centre Stage Academy Dance School hosting their dance classes in the Hall on a Wednesday.



We continue to progress with our exciting project to transform the church building into a real hub for the community, as well as a warm and welcoming worship centre. We have now appointed a Quantity Surveyor to provide us with costs for the project, so that we can take important steps to make the transformation from dream to reality for all. Watch this space for updates!



Avonbridge Church Contacts:

Address: Standburn Road,
Avonbridge, FK1 2NA

Email address: Heather Stephens:
blairmains57@gmail.com

Facebook page: Avonbridge Church
(https://www.facebook.com/AvonbridgeParishChurch/?locale=en_GB)

Telephone number: N/A

Service details:

Sunday morning service: 10:00am - 10:45am

(except the second Sunday of the month:
Agape Breakfast Service 10:30 - 12:00)

Linlithgow and Avon Valley Parish – the first few months

by Tom Costley, Session Clerk



When I was persuaded to accept the role of Session Clerk of the new Parish, my emotions ranged from being very honoured to have been asked, to sheer panic at the enormous task that lay ahead. Very telling — for every person who congratulated me on my appointment, just as many offered their commiserations! So, what has been the reality and what have we achieved in these first few months?

One important task was to establish financial arrangements for the new Parish. This involved consolidating the bank accounts of the four churches into accounts for the new Parish, with a single charity name and number. This has involved a considerable volume of work and Linda Jamieson, and everyone in the Stewardship & Finance Team deserve our considerable thanks for their efforts in producing a set of consolidated accounts for the period January-December 2024.

The creation of the new Parish required us to make several changes to how the Kirk Session was organised. Where previously all Elders were members of the Session for their individual church, this is no longer the case. The Kirk Session now consists of just under 40 individuals, most of whom are designated as Trustee Elders because they are accountable for the operation and management of the charity. The remaining Elders continue to be involved in the day-to-day running of the Parish and its activities, and a pastoral role with members within their districts.

We have undertaken a review of the various Teams responsible for the wide range of activities in which the Parish is involved. The aim was to make sure that we had the appropriate structure in place to address the strategic aims of the Parish which are the Five Marks of Mission as adopted by the Church of Scotland namely:

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 seek 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.

This review is almost complete, and we will shortly produce a comprehensive list of the various Teams with their main areas of responsibility, along with a list of current members of each Team.

We have also produced a Statement of Values, designed to underpin how we go about our work in the Parish. These are listed below and are intended not only for the Elders but for us all:

1. **Faithful** – Jesus is at the centre of all we do, discuss and seek to achieve.
2. **Listening** – by listening to others we can truly respond to their insights and needs.
3. **Honesty** – we tell the truth however inconvenient.
4. **Respect** – we will talk to each other, not about each other.
5. **Encouragement** – we will acknowledge and support each person's contribution.
6. **Mission** – we will focus on our primary mission and not be side-tracked by well-meaning yet trivial issues.

We recognise that effective communication will be increasingly important as we strive to further develop the Parish as a community of God's people. In addition to the launch of this quarterly magazine, the monthly newsletter also acts as an important channel for relevant information. Work is underway to enhance our online presence with an improved Parish website, linking to each individual church. We are also creating a new logo for the Parish which will be used across all forms of communication, providing a consistent image to all those interested in our work.

Finally, with over 1600 members, Linlithgow and Avon Valley is one of the largest Parishes in the Church of Scotland. The range of activities we can offer is considerable and we would like to be able to offer more opportunities to develop God's work, both for our members but also within our local communities. However, most of these current activities are undertaken and managed by volunteers, but we never have enough volunteers to achieve all our aims. So, to help us continue to play an important role in the life of people living in this corner of West Lothian, I would be delighted to hear from you if you feel you would like to become more involved in the work of the Parish – be that on an occasional or regular basis please phone: **07970 099521**.

Torphichen Kirk

by Sarah Young



Our commitment to being an Eco congregation continues in everything we do. Our linked church in Kenya regularly corresponds with, and prays for us, enthusiastically embracing our Union.

'Praise God Friends.

Magina Church warmly received your donations for the LIGHT Project. This was received with great appreciation and will assist the finishing work in the Church building of which we are now in the phase of installation of windows and door. Magina Church members are so grateful to God for bringing more friends to partner with us in His ministry.

More blessings as we all serve and pray for each other'.

There is strong support for our new member, Oleg and Sunflower Scotland. The regular updates following his frequent trips, are a stark reminder of the human costs of conflict. We help through prayer, practical support and publicity.

Collecting spare wool so others can knit stump socks, baby hats and blankets; making connections across the congregation for donating medical equipment and supplies; praying for all involved and unmet needs to be satisfied; making financial donations supporting local purchases of food and household necessities all to sustain those living in areas close to frontlines. Read more at: <https://sunflowerscotland.co.uk/>



All our activities are underpinned by the regular opportunities to worship, discuss and explore our faith. Sunday services have a freshness, and challenge us as we continue to welcome different leaders each week; including members of our congregation, our united Parish and current and retired ministers. This variety has been embraced. We have had many uplifting and encouraging services at this time of change and international anxieties.



Sunday morning worship is at 11.15am in the church. Alongside this, Sunday evening **Zoom services** at 7pm are attended by individuals from different churches and denominations, including overseas. These provide opportunity for worship beyond our Kirk walls, encourage us to explore our faith in different ways and celebrate our diversity. With thought provoking reflections, supportive but challenging discussions, exposure to a variety of art and music as well as prayerful support, we discover more about each other's talents and needs.

Following significant refurbishment, **St John's Hall** reopened recently, hosting a conference for elders of the new Parish.

Caring for creation through our ongoing sponsorship of Asiatic Lions and Crowned Lemurs at Edinburgh Zoo, supports programmes of research and conservation of endangered species and their habitats, as human actions and Climate change increasingly impact them.

Annual renewal is due in May, any donations towards these are welcomed.

Sunshine Singalong for Memory

by Norma Costley

'When you're smiling, when you're smiling, the whole world smiles with you'

The words of this song are a good introduction to what the Sunshine Singalong for Memory is all about. Now in its ninth year, our aim is to seek to improve the quality of life for people living with memory loss and their carers, within our church family and our local community, through fellowship and music. Research has proven that the singing of favourite songs can stimulate memory and even prompt speech in those who find it harder to communicate. In addition, there is a feel-good factor when singing with others. It is wonderful to see how music brings life, pleasure and, in the words of the song above, smiling faces to those who attend.



The Singalong takes place on the second Thursday of every month from 12 noon until 13.30 in St Michael's Kirk Hall. Around 60 visitors attend, about half of whom are local people who attend independently with a carer. The remainder are clients of Linlithgow Day Care and residents of Linlithgow Care Home. There is a happy, joyful atmosphere where both those with memory loss and their carers can socialise and relax among people with similar challenges, in an environment where they feel very welcome and valued.

We start at 12 noon with a delicious light finger lunch efficiently organised by the ladies from the Fellowship Team. Sandwiches, sausage rolls and lovely home baking, kindly donated by a team of willing bakers from the church, are offered along with tea or coffee. In the summer months, Mannerstons kindly donate tubs of ice cream, always well received. Our volunteers set up the tables, welcome guests as they arrive and serve food, tea and coffee. The colour scheme on the tables is dementia-friendly, red and yellow, which also helps create a bright, welcoming scene in the hall. We are grateful to those who provide the much-admired flower arrangements for the tables; these are given to some of our visitors to take home. Lunch lasts around 40 minutes and is a perfect way for those attending to get to know one another. There is no charge for lunch, but we are grateful for any contributions to the donation baskets on the tables.



Lunch is followed by approximately 50 minutes of quite wonderful singing. There is a theme to the songs each month, which is often reflected in the food and the flowers. Our bank of over 200 songs includes Scottish songs, songs from musicals, films and shows, music hall songs, wartime songs, Beatles and Elvis songs and love songs. We are accompanied by Helen Gait, our wonderful pianist, and the singing is supported by a small group of singers. In addition, we have a wide variety of musical instruments carefully chosen and incorporated into the programme of songs. The instruments bring a great deal of pleasure and a sense of achievement to our visitors as they enthusiastically play them. Words of songs are projected in large print onto a screen, leaving everyone hands-free and able to follow the actions to the 'exercise' songs halfway through the programme, such as a sitting version of 'The Hokey Cokey' and 'One Finger, One Thumb Keep Moving'!

Living with memory loss is a frightening and isolating experience for both those affected and their carers. By opening our doors to the vulnerable in our community and welcoming them warmly, we are showing that as a church we care. We aim to provide a safe place once a month where people living with memory loss and their carers can socialise with others who share similar challenges. Not only are we providing warm fellowship over lunch, but we are also creating a stimulating environment prompting memories and speech through the singing of well-known songs. It is very humbling to hear how much this monthly gathering means to our visitors. Music is one thing dementia cannot destroy, and this can be clearly seen in action at the Sunshine Singalong.



If you feel you would benefit from joining us on the second Thursday of every month or you know of anyone you think might benefit, please pass on our details to him or her or bring them along. You will see a banner advertising the Singalong hanging from the windows of Cross House during the week when the Singalong takes place.

I will leave the final words to our visitors:

'I just love coming here. Everyone is so friendly'. 'This is a happy place'.

'It's the highlight of the month. It cheers me up.' 'Can I come back again tomorrow?'

For further information, please contact me on 07966 454185 or normacostley@hotmail.co.uk

St Ninian's Craigmalen

by Elaine Stewart

At St Ninian's Craigmalen, Sunday morning services are traditional in nature, using mainly hymns from CH4 and Junior Praise, with readings from the Revised English Bible. The services are live streamed via Zoom, recorded and uploaded to Facebook each week. A short reflective service is held on a Wednesday at 1pm, also available on Zoom.



We have a Sunday School (Jesus Factor), Guild, Girls' Brigade Company, and a Gold Award Eco-Group. Church members started a successful community Table Tennis Club which meets in our halls. We also have a small Choir which enhances the singing in Church and a Worship Team who take part in services and, along with others, assist with readings and prayers.

Our faith is the heart of our life, and we try to provide a warm welcome for everyone. We host Easter, Christmas and End of Term services in the Church for Linlithgow and Linlithgow Bridge Primary Schools, and participate in services at Linlithgow Academy, lead monthly services in Linlithgow Care Home and provide in-house Communion to residents at Brae Court Sheltered Housing. Joining with other Churches in Linlithgow, we regularly participate in Holy Week Services, Peace One Day, World Day of Prayer, and the Service for Christian Unity.

We have a modern suite of halls for the use of church and community groups, and we welcome other groups who use our halls regularly or occasionally.

Our Sunday School (Jesus Factor) has for many years raised funds for CHAS (Children's Hospices Across Scotland) and we have supported many other different charities including donations to the Foodbank's Reverse Advent Calendar.

Further details:

Sundays at 11.00am: Morning Worship in Church and on Zoom and Jesus Factor. Formal Communion Services are held on the last Sundays of January, April, June and October. Informal Communion Services are held on the first Sunday in January, Easter Sunday and the last Sunday in August.

Monthly on Sundays at 2.30pm: Linlithgow Care Home Services are held on the second Sunday of each month apart from July; the November service is on the first Sunday of the month.

Mondays: The Guild meet fortnightly in the Church Hall, normally between August and May, at 7.30pm during lighter nights and 1.30pm during winter.

Wednesdays at 1pm: A short reflective service in the Church and on Zoom.

Wednesdays at 6.15pm: The Girls' Brigade meets during term time.



St Michael's, Linlithgow

by Kathryn Young

St Michael's is part of Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church of Scotland, a faith community, worshipping and serving God.

We hold Sunday services, with worship led by the choir, at 10am in the church (available on-line) and a less formal, weekly, all age-service, often led by an Elder, at 9.45am in Springfield School. A contemporary worship service, with praise band, takes place on the first Sunday of the month at 6.30pm in the Kirk Hall.

The Children and Young People's Team across the united parish is working towards a shared strategy for the future. In St Michael's during the 10am service there is Crèche, Sunday Club and Bible Class. YF meets on Sunday evenings. Messy Church happens throughout the year and Holiday Club, run with St John's, in the summer.

There are midweek prayers in the Kirkgate room on Tuesday at 12.00 noon and Wednesday at 12.30pm in the church.

'Time of Stillness' is in the church on Thursday at 2pm.

Small groups for fellowship and growth meet throughout the week, some by Zoom; a new group has recently started in Springfield.

Our 'Faith, Friends and Fizz' women's group meets on the last Thursday of the month at 7.30pm in the Adam Room.

Organisations meeting in Cross House during the week include:
The Guild – alternate Mondays, 7.30pm;
Toddlers – Tuesday and Friday mornings 9.45am;
Jolly Babies – Wednesday 11am;
Seedlings – Thursday 10am;
'Thursday for coffee' 10am;
and Boys' Brigade – Thursday evenings.
Choir practices are 7.30pm on Thursdays in the church.



The pastoral care team provides visitors, home communion, prayer ministry, and bereavement support including post-funeral visits and Positive Pathways group support. Members from across our new united parish expressed interest in becoming involved in pastoral care, and combined team meetings have been held. 'Preparing for Death', dealing with funerals, legal issues and emotional issues, is being planned and will be open to everyone throughout the new parish, including non-members. On the second Thursday of the month the Sunshine Singalong for Memory provides support for those with dementia and their carers. The church building is open daily to visitors (10.30am to 1pm in winter, 10.30am to 4pm in summer) and is used for events, including the magical Festival of Christmas Trees.

A warm welcome is extended to any of the above – more details on the website. Working together throughout the parish, we can build good relationships as we move forward together in faith.

spring is here

See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.
Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come,
The cooing of doves is heard in our land.
Song of Songs 2 v 11-12

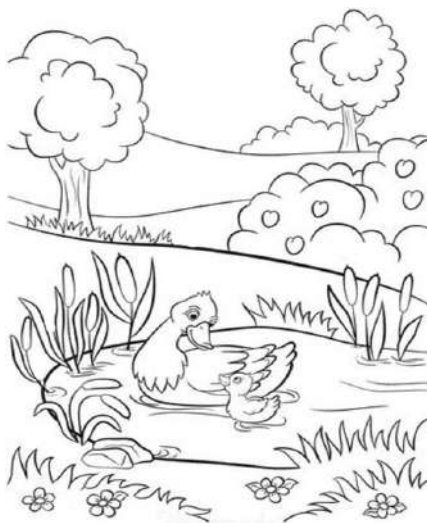
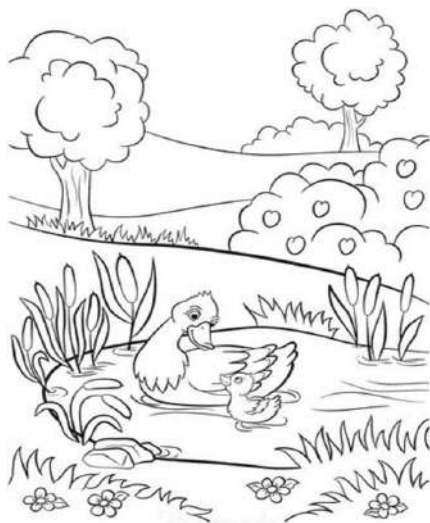
A	S	E	V	A	E	L	W	E	N	M
N	G	D	S	R	E	W	O	H	S	A
W	N	B	N	F	A	R	M	E	R	R
A	I	L	W	I	S	K	C	I	H	C
P	L	O	E	N	W	T	A	O	F	H
S	K	S	U	T	O	S	T	T	L	H
G	C	S	O	S	B	T	K	O	O	A
O	U	O	W	M	N	S	I	H	W	R
R	D	M	A	I	I	E	N	S	E	E
F	S	L	E	E	A	N	S	D	R	S
E	A	S	T	E	R	E	G	G	S	S

Can you find the following signs of spring in the square? Words may run in any direction.

blossom	catkins
chicks	ducklings
Easter eggs	flowers
frogspawn	lamb
March hares	nests
new leaves	rainbow
showers	winds

The left over letters spell out the beginning of a spring-time parable told by Jesus in Luke 8 v 5-8.

Find 10 differences between these two pictures.



The Communication Group: Strengthening Connections Across Our Parish

by Gregor Preston, Convener

The Communication Group was established with a clear vision: to unite the various forms of communication across the four churches within our newly formed Linlithgow and Avon Valley Parish. We aim to create a cohesive, informed, and spiritually connected community, ensuring that every member, no matter their level of involvement, feels included and valued.

Our mission is simple — we want to keep people informed, while also inspiring, encouraging, and strengthening their faith. In today's world, information is abundant but often fragmented. We aim to act as a bridge, bringing clarity, consistency, and connection to church communications. By working collaboratively across all four churches, we strive to foster unity, helping every congregation member to feel like part of a larger family — sharing in faith, worship, and community life.



Our commitment to meaningful and uplifting communication: effective communication is not just about relaying information — it's about building relationships, strengthening faith, and creating a shared sense of purpose. Our goal is to inform, inspire, and engage every member of our Parish, keeping them connected and supported.

We recognise that each person's faith journey is unique, and we want everyone to stay connected in a way that suits them. We are excited about using digital platforms for real-time engagement and providing information on a regular basis through a newsletter direct into your email inbox. We will also continue with more traditional sources like printed magazines where possible.

Through personal engagement, traditional methods, and innovative tools, we aim to strengthen faith, inspire action, and foster deeper connections. Faith is a shared journey and, by improving communications, we can bring our Parish closer together in meaningful ways.

What does this mean for you? Our goal is to deliver clear, reliable, and engaging material, providing practical updates and thought-provoking content to enrich our faith experience. We can achieve this through a regular newsletter, establishing a central source of information about church life. This will include details about upcoming services, special events, community initiatives, and opportunities to get involved. A quarterly magazine is also in the works, designed to be a source of inspiration and reflection for our Parish. We want to create something that our congregation eagerly anticipates — an uplifting publication filled with faith-based articles, messages of encouragement, and thoughtful reflections on our shared spiritual journey.

We also intend to expand and improve other forms of communication, regularly updating church notices, social media updates, and website content. We want to make it easy for everyone to stay connected, informed, and engaged.

Creating a stronger, more connected Parish: a great strength of our Parish is its sense of community and belonging. As our church family continues to grow, we must nurture these connections and ensure that communication plays a central role in bringing people together.

Our hope is that all this will help to: (a) strengthen relationships across our congregations, ensuring everyone feels part of something bigger; (b) encourage greater participation, making it easier for members to learn how to get involved; (c) provide support and guidance, sharing faith-based messages, reflections, and resources; (d) ensure accessibility and inclusivity, offering multiple ways for people to receive information.

A heartfelt Thank You: none of this would be possible without the dedicated individuals who have contributed their time, skills, and enthusiasm to the work of the Communication Group. Their passion for strengthening communication within our Parish has already made a marked difference.

We are also thankful for the continued support of our Session and congregation members. Their participation, encouragement, and feedback are invaluable, helping us refine and improve our communication efforts. Please share your thoughts with us — whether it's suggestions for content, preferred communication methods, or ideas for making our updates even more relevant.

A special thank you also goes to our volunteers, church leaders, and ministry teams, whose dedication ensures that the message of faith continues to reach hearts and minds. Your contributions, whether seen or unseen, play an essential role in making our Parish a welcoming and spiritually enriching place for all.

Looking ahead, staying connected and inspired: as we continue to refine and improve our communication efforts, we invite you to stay engaged, informed, and connected. Whether you read our newsletter, follow updates online, or engage in conversations within your church community, every interaction helps to build a stronger, more vibrant Parish.

At its core, communication is about sharing information while building connections, and ensuring that everyone feels heard, valued, and included. It's about bringing faith to life in innovative ways, ensuring that the message of love, hope, and unity reaches every corner of our Parish.

Together, as one Linlithgow and Avon Valley Parish, we look forward to this journey of faith, fellowship, and connection. Thank you for being part of this community — we are excited to keep you informed and inspired.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

by Rev Dr Rhona Dunphy



The German theologian and pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, has long been one of my 'heroes in the faith'. I studied his writings at university, but his life story gained more significance for me while living in Germany.

Growing up between the wars, the teenage Bonhoeffer, affected by the poverty he saw around him, already felt called to ministry. As a student and young minister, he was involved in the ecumenical movement; and time spent in New York developed his awareness of social and racial injustice. His strong stance against the Nazi regime shaped the last 12 years of his life.

Just two days after the Nazis took power in 1933, Bonhoeffer spoke out on radio against the regime, seeking a limit to the powers of the Führer. In April 1933, he called upon the church to stand against the persecution of Jews. After a spell as pastor to German congregations in London, he became head of the seminary of the Confessing Church, the breakaway Protestant church which refused follow the Nazi line. When the regime closed the seminary, he continued to train student pastors in secret.

When war broke out, under the cover of employment in the Military Intelligence Department, Bonhoeffer continued working for the resistance, until his arrest and imprisonment in April 1943, when he was charged with conspiring to rescue Jews. Following the failed assassination attempt on Hitler on 20th July 1944, his connections to the broader resistance movement were uncovered and he was moved to the Gestapo prison in Berlin.

Among his prison writings is a poem, written the day after the assassination attempt. You can find a translation in CH4, Hymn 393; I give the first verse below:

*We turn to God when we are sorely pressed;
we pray for help, and ask for peace and bread;
we seek release from illness, guilt, and death:
all people do, in faith or unbelief.*

In February 1945, Bonhoeffer was taken to Buchenwald concentration camp and then, as the Allies advanced, to the camp at Flossenbürg. There, on 9th April 1945, just two weeks before the camp was liberated, he was hanged for crimes against the state.

In Bonhoeffer's unfinished book, 'Ethics', published posthumously, he affirms his faith in these words:

*Heaven is torn open above us humans, and the joyful message of God's
salvation in Jesus Christ rings out from heaven to earth as a cry of joy.
I believe; and in believing, I receive Christ; I have everything.*

PARISH REGISTER

BAPTISMS

2024

November

Lois Bruce, Linlithgow
Finlay Heering, Linlithgow

2025

April

Maeve Tighe, Bathgate

May

Neil Argo, Stourbridge

WEDDINGS

2024

November

Rebecca Menzies to Dean McAvoy

December

Fiona McCruden to Innes Chalmers

2025

April

Katherine Rodger to Aaron Speer

Ashley Johnston to Ryan Wilson

May

Katharine Hopkins to Steven Chaffee

NEW MEMBERS

2024

November

Donald Greig and Rachel Greig

Ann Mellon

Ioni Ashford-Oelen and Casper Oelen

Benjamin Rodger

Anne Wilkinson

2025

February

Mr and Mrs Sneddon

April

Pauline Donnelly

David and Shona MacKenzie

Lorraine Stevenson

FUNERALS

2024

October

Marion Mitchell, Banchory
(formerly Linlithgow)

November

June Dickinson, Linlithgow

Mary Johnston, Linlithgow

December

Marion White, Linlithgow

Robert Pryde, Linlithgow

William (Bill) Dick, Linlithgow

2025

January

Eric Sinclair, Linlithgow

Ian Smith, Linlithgow

February

Ella McVie, Linlithgow

Ella Sutherland, Linlithgow

March

Jane (Jean) Binnie, Linlithgow

Fiona Hunter, Linlithgow

April

Anne Duncan, Linlithgow

Mary Shanks, Linlithgow

May

Andrew Grimshaw, Linlithgow Bridge

Margaret Paxton, Linlithgow

Helen McMehen, Linlithgow

Alex Brough, Linlithgow

Alun Owens, Livingston

Andrew (Bryce) Pringle, Linlithgow





Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church of Scotland

Overview, Kirk Session and Team Structure

The Parish teams report into Kirk Session and are divided into two broad categories: *Worship Mission and Outreach* and *Enabling*.

Worship Mission and Outreach

These are the teams that are charged with furthering the 5 Marks of Mission.

Worship Innes Duncan	Fellowship Margaret Johnston	Outreach	Pastoral Care Tom Brown
Discipleship Alison Miller	Children and Young People Tracy Curle	Social Justice Sarah Young	Wellbeing and Training Ashley Johnston

Enabling

The enabling teams manage all the practical but crucial aspects of the parish, managing finances, raising funds, caring for our properties and ensuring that there is infrastructure in place to support our mission.

Finance and Stewardship Linda Jamieson	Fundraising Alan Miller	Property Donald Greig	HR Elma Birrell
Projects Brian Lightbody	Communications Gregor Preston	IT and Data Protection Paul Davidson	Safeguarding Jaqueline Coyle