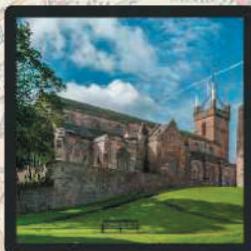
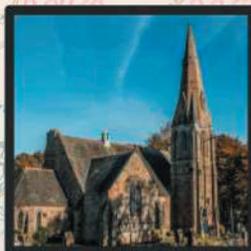


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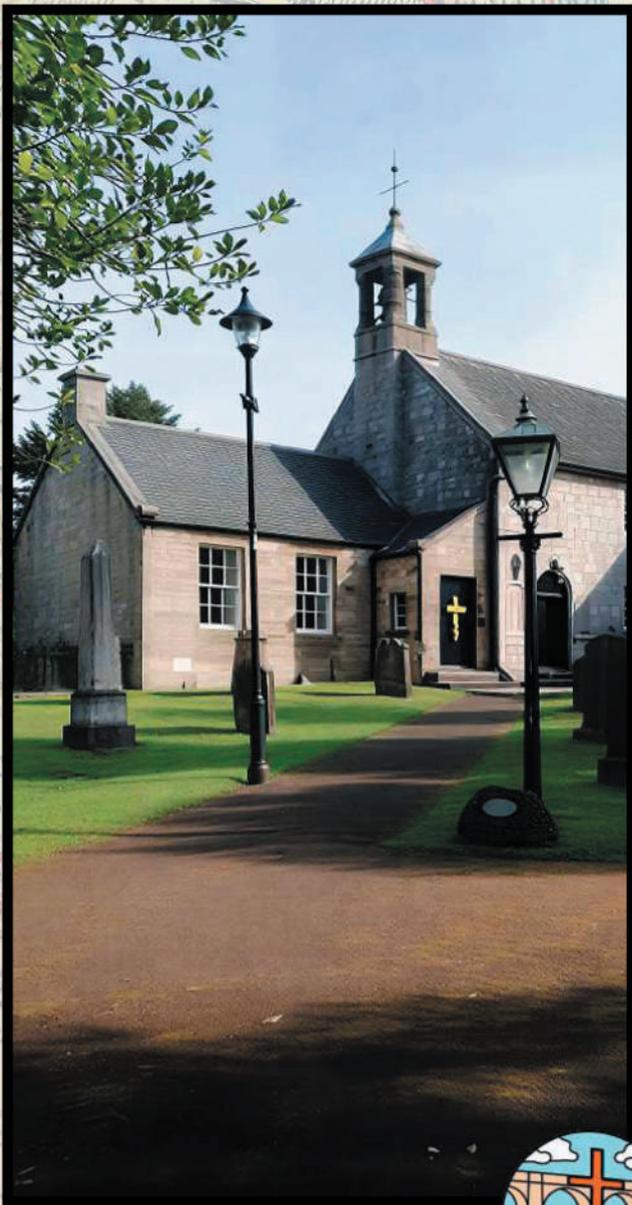
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AVONBRIDGE CHURCH



The Journal of Linlithgow and Avon Valley Parish Church

The household of God, which is the church of the living God,  
the pillar and ground of the truth. — 1 TIMOTHY 3:15

LINLITHGOW AND  
AVON VALLEY  
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

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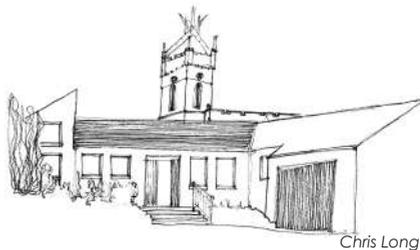
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# View from the Manse



by Rev Dr Liam Fraser



Is your glass half-full or half-empty? Do you rejoice in what you have or worry about how little?

Of course, the glass is both half-full and half-empty, but that does not mean they are equal. For if you focus on how little you have, you become anxious and depressed. Further, you will tend to hoard what you have, rather than using it. Yet if you focus on what you do have, you will give thanks and be more willing to share it.

You may wonder how this relates to the Church. Well, we are facing a deficit, and mounting costs for building repairs. Our income will not cover our expenditure, and our Kirk Session may have to

make difficult decisions. So, do we focus on what we have, or what we don't have?

In 2 Corinthians 9: 6-8, St Paul writes:

*'The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God can provide you with blessings in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.'*

Christians believe that God created us for joy, freedom, and love, and that he became incarnate in Jesus Christ, and lived, suffered, died, rose and ascended for our salvation. We believe that God loves all of us, has forgiven us, and that we will live forever in God. Blessing upon blessing, gift upon gift!

Paul reflects on this bountiful generosity in this passage. God has given us so many gifts, both material and spiritual. Some have more, some have less, but the Church as a whole has ample to meet both its own needs and those of its neighbours. That is why the blessings God has given to the Church don't remain there, but overflow to the wider world. Because God has blessed us in countless material and spiritual ways, we can bless others, feeding them physically, emotionally and spiritually across our worshipping sites.

Through our ministry and mission we feed the hungry, comfort the bereaved, teach the young, and befriend the aged. We worship God and share the Good News of Jesus Christ. We bless this region because we ourselves have been blessed – our cup runneth over!

Yet Paul also writes in the passage above that *'the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully'*. As I write to you in my study, I can see daffodils outside: a burst of colour and vibrancy on a dark day. These flowers only grow, however, because they were put there years ago by Ian and Lorna Paterson, who bought bulbs and planted them. Likewise, Paul is saying to us that while God has given our Church more than it needs, we must consider his gifts and use them in the right way.



If we view our deficit and building woes with a scarcity mindset, we will – like those with the half-empty glass – hoard what we have, stopping projects that benefit the wider community. Yet Paul reminds us that, rather like my daffodils, we cannot see growth unless we sow liberally. So, rather than looking at what we don't have, and abandoning our service and outreach to our neighbours, we must instead think differently. We must give thanks for the great abundance that God has given us and be willing to share it with the Church and community.

We all have different outlooks, based on what God has given us. For some it will mean giving time. For others it will mean sharing talents, while for others it will mean sharing a little more of our wealth. Yet for all of us, it means thanking God for the love, forgiveness, and eternal life he has given us in Christ, and for what he will indeed provide. Note that I write 'thanks' rather than 'prayer' that God will provide. For while we should indeed pray to God for our needs, and pray for how to use our resources, we should not pray like those who doubt whether God will provide. Instead, as those who have been called to worship and minister and serve in this place, we give thanks and pray, knowing that our Lord will always provide.

For while those who think the glass is half-empty are as correct as those who think it is half-full, only the latter will receive a blessing. For if we approach deficits and bills with a scarcity mindset we will sow sparingly, and will therefore reap sparingly, at a time when we and our neighbours need a rich harvest. Yet, if we give thanks for all that God has given and believe that he has met – and will meet – our deepest needs, we will realise how much we can share, and we will meet our own needs, and those of our neighbours. For God can provide us with every blessing in abundance, so that by having enough of everything, we may share abundantly in every good work of God. So let us thank God for his wonderful gifts and share them with others.

May God bless you and all those you love.



**You are warmly invited by all of Linlithgow's Churches to attend this year's Holy Week Services, commencing Sunday 29 March 2026.**

<b>Palm Sunday</b>	7.00pm	Join us for a community performance of Handel's Messiah at St Michael's CoS. Free entry. Duration approx 1 hour.
<b>Monday</b>	7.00pm	St Peter's Episcopal Evensong
<b>Tuesday</b>	7.30pm	St John's at Low Port Centre
<b>Wednesday</b>	7.00pm	St Michael's RC <i>Stations of the Cross</i>
<b>Thursday</b>	7.00 pm	St Michael's RC <i>Mass of the Last Supper with Procession to the Altar of Repose and Compline at 9pm</i>
	7.00pm	St Peter's & St Columba's Episcopal at St Columba's Bathgate <i>Maundy Thursday Eucharist and Stripping of the Altar</i>
	7.30pm	St Ninian's Craigmailen CoS <i>Joint Maundy Thursday Communion</i>
<b>Good Friday</b>	10.00am	St Michael's RC <i>Morning Prayer</i>
	11.30am	Walk of Witness <i>from Low Port Centre to the Cross</i>
	11.45am	At the Cross <i>A public affirmation &amp; reflection</i>
	12.15pm	St Peter's Episcopal <i>Stations of the Cross</i>
	3.00pm	St Michael's RC <i>Celebration of the Lord's Passion</i>
	7.30pm	St Michael's CoS <i>Tenebrae Service</i>
<b>Saturday</b>	10.00am	St Michael's RC <i>Morning Prayer and Blessing of Gifts</i>
	7.30pm	St Peter's Episcopal <i>Easter Vigil &amp; First Easter Communion</i>
	7.30pm	St Michael's RC <i>The Easter Vigil</i>
<b>Easter Day</b>	9.00am	Open Air All-Age Service on Cockleroi. <i>Christ is risen!</i>
	Morning	Easter Day Services in all of our Churches

# Choosing a New Minister

*by Ken Mackenzie*

'One more step along the world I go  
One more step along the world I go  
From the old things to the new  
Keep me travelling along with you.'

The words of this worship song have been going around in my head recently as I feel it describes our journey today as a Parish; from the old, 4 charges, to the new, Linlithgow and Avon Valley. We have taken the first steps and people have worked, and continue to work, very hard to make us one. This has gone very smoothly, and we all appear to be working well together.

We have now come to another step to help us work and develop as a parish and fulfil our call to mission and service, and that is to find a minister to join our team ministry. Part of the basis of Union was that we were assigned to have two full-time Ministers of Word and Sacrament (FTMWS) and two Ordained Local Ministers (OLM). We have Liam and Thom in place, but we have vacancies and, as an OLM is appointed by Presbytery, it is our job to find a FTMWS. This is where we are now. So, what happens?

All the initial work is down to Presbytery and the Vacancy Procedure Committee. Their job is to appoint a Vacancy Advisory Panel, an Interim Moderator, to consider and approve The Permission to call and advise Presbytery accordingly.

The appointment of an interim Moderator may seem a bit strange as we have ministers in place. However, our current vacancy is for a person to join a Team Ministry. This is treated as an individual vacancy, and the Interim Moderator is appointed solely for this vacancy. This Moderator will oversee any meetings of the Kirk Session or Congregation that are relevant to our vacancy. This includes the meeting of Session to decide to depart from the usual procedures of the Church of Scotland, and to agree to accept applications from people in same sex relationships. The Moderator also calls the Congregational meeting to choose the Nominating Committee.

Presbytery always appoints a Vacancy Advisory Panel to advise and support the congregation looking for a new minister. This Panel usually meets with the Kirk Session before things really kick off, to introduce themselves and advise everyone of the procedure. Once the Nominating Committee is chosen, they meet with them and advise about the whole process. This panel normally consists of three people - usually a minister, a member of Presbytery and, as in our case, an experienced Elder.



What is a Nominating Committee? Some of us will be old enough to remember them being called Vacancy Committees but that's progress! It is a group of parishioners appointed at a Congregational meeting to search for a new FTMWS. Only members or adherents on the Electoral roll can be nominated and seconded to stand for election. The number on the nominating committee is defined by Presbytery up to a maximum of 13. We are 13 and I am delighted to say that there is a good representation from across the Parish. The

Interim Moderator and Advisory Panel meet with the Nominating Committee to discuss the way ahead, and the Interim Moderator will preside over the first meeting of the Nominating Committee. At this time, a Convenor and Clerk are chosen and, in our case, a Vice-Convenor and Assistant Clerk.

The main task ahead of the group is to search for and find a person they can recommend as sole nominee to be elected as a new minister. However, before that happens several things must be done. Firstly, an advert must be drafted and approved. Together with the Parish Profile, this is distributed online via all websites and social media platforms across the Parish, and on the Central Vacancy site of The Church of Scotland. The Committee will decide the best way to assess the candidates so they can come to their decision by meeting, interviewing and listening to applicants. All this is carried out in strict confidence and cannot be discussed outside the committee.

Members of the Nominating Committee are aware of the trust placed in them by the Parish in this task. They also realise that looking for someone to join a Team Ministry is a relatively new process, which brings added pressure. As recommended in the Guidelines for Nominating Committees produced by the Church of Scotland, we are undertaking this prayerfully and are seeking God's guidance.

We ask for your patience and prayers.



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# What's New in GB?

by Morag Gent



Since August the girls in the 1st Linlithgow Girls' Brigade company have been working on a Focus called 'Healthy Lifestyles'. For the Focus we have various elements that need to be met. For the Spiritual element we learned about Harvest and how it is celebrated, we also looked at the Christmas story and how reading the Bible can help us with our spiritual health. For physical we have played a number of different games. The girls love to play 'Soup' and various forms of tig.

For the educational element we looked at the tools used by the farmers to reap the harvest, what foods contribute to a healthy lifestyle and those foods/drinks that are bad for our health.

As has become a tradition for us, a small number of our company took part in the Remembrance Parade. Our Captain, Andrea, laid the wreath and our Brigadier, Ruth, carried our company colour in the parade and through St Michael's Church to the very front. My daughter and I watched the service and, apart from the heavy rain on the way back to our church halls, we all enjoyed the parade. We especially enjoyed getting soup and pies/sausage rolls for lunch and a chance to warm up before we went home.

We spent a few weeks in the run up to Christmas planning and creating decorations to be used on our tree at the Festival of Christmas Trees in December. This was such an amazing occasion to be part of and came under service to others. It was also a fantastic opportunity to raise our profile in Linlithgow and recruit more girls. The girls made the decorations and then a few of us set up the tree the night before the festival started. I had the privilege of attending the event and showing my daughter (one of our Explorers) our tree which took pride of place in front of the pulpit. You can see a photo of our tree.

In early December we enjoyed our Christmas party. There was a good mix of games and Christmas music. We played traditional games



like musical chairs and musical statues, and our Captain showed us a few more modern games like drawing a picture on a paper plate while the plate is on our head. Much trickier than it looks! Rosanne who helps us each week put on a fantastic spread of yummy food and drink. Here are a few photos from this.



Looking forward to this year we are aiming to have our Dedication Service early in the session. We hope as many girls as possible will be able to attend that and watch our leaders take their vows in front of our church. We are planning on doing some recruiting, as our numbers are down and it would be great to have the hall full of girls again. We are looking over the next few weeks at neurodivergence and mental health and how this can affect the people around us. We also hope to do an outing with the girls when the weather is better.

Our company love doing crafting, so we have got a few crafting projects up our sleeves. We are also considering our options for fundraising this year and whether we should have another coffee afternoon. The one last year was a huge success and generated a lot of income for the company, but these things take a lot of organising. Watch this space! We will be spending the last few weeks after the Easter Holiday preparing and rehearsing for our Annual Display which this year will take place on Wednesday 20 May. This is the end of our session and the start of busy summer holidays for the girls and a time for rest and relaxation for our leaders.



The team currently consists of Andrea Smith as Captain, Morag Sparkes as Officer and Rosanne Knutt as a Leader. Anyone interested in helping in our company should contact Andrea (details below). We are always on the lookout for more girls, and anyone interested should come along on a Wednesday night during term time or contact Andrea in advance for more information on 07572 686 588 or our email address: 1stlinlithgowgb@gmail.com

# Our Finances – Together We Can Achieve More

by Linda Jamieson

The Finance Team is made up of 10 skilled volunteers who all give generously of their time and talent to manage our day-to-day finances. The work required of the Finance Team is considerable. We are fortunate to have an excellent Treasurer in Allan Scott and a conscientious Bookkeeper recording and tracking activity in our accounting software in Ian Fowell. The Finance Team meets on a monthly basis to review and discuss our spending and consider if our income is keeping pace with expenditure.



St Michael's was already a large Church of Scotland operation, and when we add in financial management of Avonbridge, St Ninian's Craigmalen and Torphichen, the result is a Parish with thousands of transactions being processed each year. We rely on accounting software to help us track activity and produce appropriate financial information to keep the Trustees informed. The Trustees are the people in overall control and management of the charity, and they form the Kirk Session. They are responsible for our governance and strategy, and making sure we are well run. The role of the Finance Team is to help the Trustees understand their responsibilities and provide them with sufficient information to allow them to make knowledgeable decisions. Financial information is shared with the Trustees on a monthly basis, when they have the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on the information provided.

The Finance Team also leads on the annual budget process, where the various teams across the parish consider the activity they are planning for the year ahead. Team Leaders submit their requirements for review by the Finance Team, and thereafter the final budget is considered and approved by Kirk Session. Balancing the books is a tricky task and a lot of effort goes in to ensuring we deliver what we can with the funds we have available.

The cost to maintain a parish with 4 churches, 4 church halls, 2 manses and 2 flats, some of which are listed buildings, is significant. Unfortunately, our costs are increasing. As you can probably imagine, the energy costs for our buildings are considerable and when we consider the total cost for energy in 2025

exceeded £45,000, with costs for insurance exceeding £30,000. In addition to these costs, our Giving to Grow (the contribution we make to the national church) is our largest expense and for this year it is £251,000. If we add salaries and our office and management costs (includes audit and professional fees), we are looking at another £100,000 of expenditure. This means we have expenditure in excess of £426,000 to meet before we have met the cost of property maintenance or delivered opportunities for our children and young people or worship, to name a few.

Following the Union at the end of 2024, a number of property issues were identified, resulting in unexpected expenditure to meet essential repairs. Expenditure to maintain our buildings will continue to increase in 2026.

This may be a good time for us all to review our regular giving to help us meet these increased costs. With the immense support from our volunteers and donors, we continue to provide a diverse range of activities to demonstrate that, with God's help, we can deliver on our promises to work on his behalf.

We are currently working on our 2025 year-end figures with a full audit being carried out in March. There will be an opportunity for the congregation to hear about the audited annual accounts at a meeting to be arranged in early summer. It is important that we all work together for the future prosperity of Linlithgow and Avon Valley Church of Scotland. In a world where conflict and loneliness are common, the idea of unity holds great significance spiritually and practically.

Lots of people doing a little can make an enormous difference.

The Finance team would welcome additional support from volunteers with financial/management skills to join their team. This is not an onerous commitment, but it is important in helping to ensure the church looks after everyone's money properly. If you have some spare time and have financial experience, please contact Linda at [LJamieson58@aol.com](mailto:LJamieson58@aol.com) to find out how you can help.

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



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# PARISH REGISTER



## NEW MEMBERS

### By Profession of Faith

Alexander Douglas  
Christine Hodges  
Andrew Keane  
Ann Rae

### By Resolution of Kirk Session

Krisztina Erika Halona  
Lesley McLean

## BAPTISMS

### November

Lochlan McDonald, Linlithgow

### January

Blair Richardson, Linlithgow  
George Siddell, Livingston  
Edward Siddell, Livingston

### November

David Dixon, Linlithgow  
Marion Cowan, Livingston  
Neil Millar, Linlithgow

### December

Pauline Feldwick, Polmont  
Barry Mullholland, Linlithgow  
Agnes Marshall, Linlithgow  
Mary (Mae) Allan, Linlithgow  
Jean Telfer, Linlithgow  
Campbell Taylor, Linlithgow

## 2026

### January

Agnes Cowan, East Calder  
Wilma Edgar, Linlithgow  
Maureen Dick, Linlithgow  
Kath White, Linlithgow  
Jean Fish, Linlithgow



## NEW TRUSTEE ELDER

Jill Allatt

## FUNERALS



### February

John Grindlay, Linlithgow  
Dorothy Morgan-Evans, Torphichen  
Norman Middleton, Linlithgow  
June Innes, Linlithgow  
Joan Curle, Linlithgow  
Christine Cockburn, Linlithgow  
Monica Proctor, Linlithgow  
Betty Scobie, Linlithgow



# Sunflower Scotland

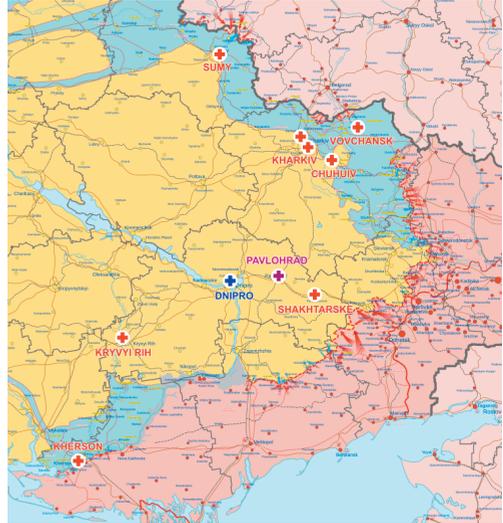
## Part 1

by Oleg Dmitriev

Sunflower Scotland is a registered Scottish charity that helps frontline Ukraine, by delivering aid directly to frontline areas, right into the hands of those who need it. We speak with doctors in hospitals, and with ordinary people who are suffering in Ukraine. We know exactly what they need. Please visit our website at [sunflowerscotland.co.uk](http://sunflowerscotland.co.uk)

Here are our lines of work:

- We're helping eleven hospitals in frontline Ukraine, including ones in Kharkiv, Sumy and Kherson (Project: Saving Lives at the Front Line).
- We go to a Rehabilitation Centre for victims of war (Project: Rehabilitation of Heroes).
- We help over 200 orphans and 45 disabled children with Down's syndrome (Project: Helping Down's Syndrome Children and Orphans).



### The crisis is changing

Sunflower Scotland has been helping Ukraine since the very beginning of the war in 2022. In 2026, the war isn't what it was four years ago. It has completely different challenges, and people are affected in a totally different way. As a result, they need different types of relief aid to help them.

Drones and missiles are destroying homes and causing terrible injuries. They reach all of Ukraine, but frontline areas are hit every day with high intensity. First and foremost, we need to help doctors in frontline areas to treat the injured and the wounded and thus save lives.



In 2022, when crowds of refugees were fleeing to west Ukraine, they needed warm clothes and food. But now the war has changed, and we have a different humanitarian crisis.

Most of all we need medical supplies: this is the absolute priority. We speak with frontline doctors, and we learn what they need. Their requests will change month after month.

We must keep on top of that and deliver only what's needed, right to the hospital that's asking for it. If a UK charity sends medical supplies to a random warehouse in Ukraine, it may remain unused. It costs a lot of money to sort piles of medical supplies and to transport them across the country. Hospitals simply don't have the spare funds for that.

Clothing and bedding are not required in such huge quantities as before. Now we need clothes only for the wounded soldiers in hospitals. Every few months we do targeted collections of clothes 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 another hospital in Kharkiv's northeast.



### **How do we get supplies to Ukraine?**



We use 4x4 vehicles and vans to bring aid to remote and dangerous areas. After that we donate them to Ukraine.

**Why do we need vehicles?** Why can't we simply contract a logistical company to deliver aid for us? It's because we are getting aid to where it's most needed, which is close to the front. No logistical company will send its lorries there. It's simply impossible to find a commercial operator;

we have to go ourselves to make sure our aid gets to those who need it.

### **Why don't we use local Ukrainian volunteers to deliver aid to danger areas?**

Because we think it's immoral to send people to risk their lives, when we sit in an office in Edinburgh and watch how they die.

Our members of staff doing frontline deliveries are trained first responders, and they are very experienced. They use drone detectors, wear bulletproof vests and helmets, and they are better prepared to navigate the danger zone. Most Ukrainian volunteers aren't trained or equipped. They are just regular people without any training.

Thank you for reading this article. You will be able to read more about our work in the next issue of LinAvon Link.

<https://sunflowerscotland.co.uk/>

Sunflower Scotland SCIO. Registered Charity no. SC052092

Registered address: 5 South Charlotte Street, Edinburgh, EH2 4AN, UK

# Torphichen Kirkyard

by Bruce Jamieson



I know the 18th-century kirk in the village of Torphichen very well. My Aunt and Uncle lived in the village for many decades and Auntie Bessie was a regular at church – singing, with a beautiful alto voice, in the choir. The last time I was in the building was for her funeral – conducted by an old friend, the late Rev Ian Walker.

I was always fascinated by the kirk and its unassuming interior with its a laird's loft, box

pews and a central, canopied pulpit. Equally fascinating is its kirkyard in which are some fascinating 18th-century headstones, many covered in Christian symbolism, all carved in stone and exhibiting some remarkable folk art.

This headstone shown here was placed over the grave of Henry Brioch who died in 1770. It features a serpent coiled over crossed bones. Does the snake-like creature come out of the account of the Temptation of Eve, as in the Genesis story, showing that humankind is flawed, and often tempted – but that, at death, all is forgiven? Perhaps it is designed to represent the eternal struggle against sin. At the top of the grave marker, is a pair of winged souls – shown with just one wing apiece – in the interests of symmetry! Above them are two crumbling leg bones and two mouldering jawbones – reminders of Genesis 3.19; 'for unto dust you shall return'. Between them is a carving of an



hourglass depicting the fact that, for the deceased, time has run out. Grinning down at all this imagery is a leering face. Is it a skull or a soul or a reminder perhaps that life on earth is short?

On the next headstone, commemorating husband and wife 'KB and MR', the stonemason has made the meaning of the serpent even closer to the Garden of Eden narrative by carving an apple in the creature's mouth! The two Resurrection figures are waving cheerfully, as they have done since 1783, and, on the side of the grave-stone, beneath the ubiquitous crossed bones and hourglass, is a disgruntled gravedigger, leaning on his spade.



The next stone has always intrigued me with its carving of two tall flowers on either side of an inscribed panel which declares that this is the last resting place of William Calder and his wife Mary Reid. They lived at Woodside Farm, just outside Torphichen, until their deaths in the 1760s.



I love the hairdos surrounding their primitively carved faces. But what do the plants stand for – perhaps the transience of life on earth? In another kirkyard near Forfar, I once came across this epitaph which seems to explain the significance of carved flowers on gravestones:



*'Man, what art thou? Naught but a flower  
That in the morning grows  
But fades ere Noon and is cut down,  
Before the evening close.'*

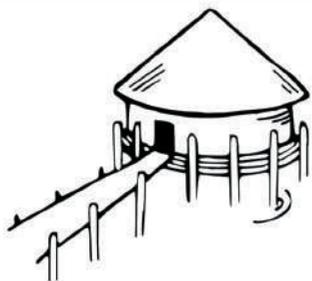
This next memorial is also a bit of a puzzle. It obviously shows a Jewish candelabra – a seven-candle menorah first mentioned in the Book of Exodus (25:31–40), according to which the design of the lamp was revealed to Moses by God on Mount Sinai. The candlestick was to be forged out of a single piece of gold and was to have six branches, with the candle holder atop the central shaft somewhat elevated to signify the Sabbath. The menorah's seven branches represented the five visible planets, plus the sun and the moon, and its rounded branches suggested their trajectories across

the heavens. On either side are pillars, perhaps representative of the Temple of Jerusalem. However, it is carved on the grave marker of Henrietta Bryce which is not a Hebrew or a Biblical name but a much later female form of the name Henry. So why the Jewish imagery? Perhaps it's just a Biblical reference to Jesus being the 'Light of the World' – with the plant like shape of the 'branches' denoting the 'Tree of Life'.

There is one final stone to visit before we leave the kirkyard. This is usually referred to as a sanctuary stone, associated with the 12th-century Knights of St John who offered refuge in their nearby Preceptory. However, it is now generally accepted that it is actually a much earlier Bronze Age menhir into which a later cross was carved.

There are many more interesting items to see at Torphichen – do go and explore for yourself.





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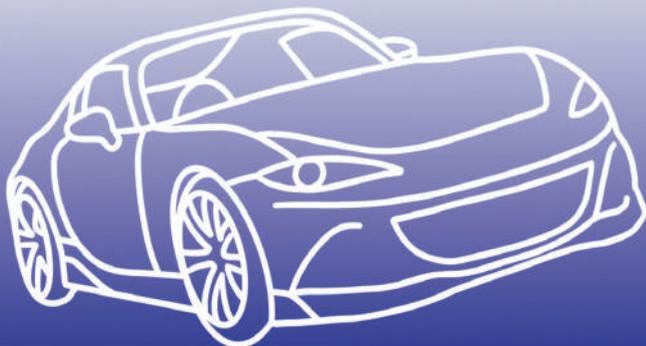
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# Boys' Brigade

by Lisa Callaghan



March 2026 will mark my 12th year of volunteering with 2nd Linlithgow Boys' Brigade. Although at times it can be hard work, it is also extremely rewarding. Watching boys join us at the age of 4 or 5 and working their way up and achieving their Queen's Badge/King's Badge is a very proud moment! Volunteering can have a positive impact on your health and wellbeing, give you a sense of purpose, offer the opportunity to develop new skills, and can make a huge impact on others.

In 2025, Boys Brigade celebrated its 142nd birthday. Sir William Alexander Smith founded the company in Glasgow on the 4th October 1883, and now his vision has continued to impact millions of lives, all over the world. The Boys' Brigade has over 11,500 dedicated volunteers, who pride themselves on the fact that our young people have the opportunity to learn, grow and discover in a safe and welcoming environment. All staff go through the safeguarding process, and receive training before they can get started, so the boys are always in very safe hands.



Unfortunately, 2nd Linlithgow Boys' Brigade has seen a decline in numbers over the last few years. Linlithgow now offers our young people so many different opportunities – this may be part of the reason; there is just too much to choose from!

Despite the Boys' Brigade being a worldwide organisation, there are a lot of people out there who are not aware that we are still in operation. We are always looking for new members and always looking for different ways to try and get our name

'out there'.

That being said, the boys that we currently have are keeping us very busy. We have 3 boys working towards their King's Badge (the highest award in the Boys' Brigade), and 5 boys working towards their President's Badge (the second highest award in the Boys' Brigade).



We run 2 sessions over the course of a Thursday evening at Cross House. We have boys aged 4-18 years old, and therefore we offer a varied programme to suit everyone. Our programme has 6 activity areas which we use across all age groups. This provides consistency for all the boys as they move through the Organisation. The 6 activity areas are: Get active, Get adventurous, Get creative, Get into the Bible, Get involved, and Get learning.



A blue recruitment poster for 'THE BOYS BRIGADE'. At the top, it says 'THE BOYS BRIGADE' with a logo. Below that, a white speech bubble contains the text 'JOIN THE ADVENTURE TODAY! FOR BOYS 4 - 18 YEARS'. At the bottom, there are four red boxes labeled 'ANCHORS 4 - 6 Years', 'Juniors 7 - 11 Years', 'Company 11 - 14 Years', and 'Seniors 14 - 18 Years'. A blue box at the bottom says 'WE MEET AT CROSS HOUSE BRATHOLLY, SHARPS'.

As well as looking for new boys to join, we are always looking for volunteers. Even if you only have a couple of hours free each month, we would love to hear from you.

Two of our Officers are standing down at the end of this year's session. We thank

them both for all the time they have given to our Boys' Brigade – they will both be missed. As a result, we are looking to recruit new helpers. Our Organisation could not run without volunteers; without them, we could not continue to provide our services in the community.

If you have any ideas to help with recruitment, or you know of anyone looking for a volunteering opportunity, you can reach us at [2linlithgow@boys-brigade.org.uk](mailto:2linlithgow@boys-brigade.org.uk), or you can find us on Facebook and Instagram.

We would love to hear from you!

An advertisement for 'Johnny Alves, Painter &amp; Decorator'. The name 'Johnny Alves' is written in a large, black, cursive font. Below it, 'Painter &amp; Decorator' is written in a smaller, black, cursive font, followed by 'Interior &amp; Exterior' in a smaller, black, cursive font. To the right of the text is a drawing of a paintbrush. Below the text, it says 'FREE ESTIMATES' in bold, black, sans-serif font. Underneath that, 'Call 01506 845982' and 'Mobile: 07533 510414' are written in bold, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom left, it says 'Linlithgow based business' in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. At the bottom right, there is a drawing of a paintbrush and a palette.

*by Rev Thom Riddell*

At the beginning of his ministry, Jesus declared that the time of God's kingdom had come, and that he had come to bring good news to the poor and disadvantaged people of the world. The theme of reaching out to the most vulnerable in society runs like a golden thread throughout his teaching. Those who seek to follow Jesus have the same priority to care for those who need help. The Church of Scotland offers such care through its Social Care Council, trading as CrossReach. As you may know, I served as Convener of the Council and chair of the CrossReach Board from 2020-24.



The name CrossReach was chosen to convey the desire to reach out to people who need support across Scotland, while making clear that faith is the motivation for their work. They offer 'Care you can put your faith in'.

CrossReach offers loving care to people of all ages needing a helping hand, supporting them to live life to the full whatever their circumstances. They have been at the forefront of high-quality social care for over 155 years. CrossReach is unique in the voluntary sector, because of its geographical spread and diversity of its services. It employs over 1700 staff members and mobilises over 400 volunteers.

Adult Services provide support for those recovering from addiction or seeking to return to normal life after release from prison. They have residential and day support services for those with learning disabilities, and befriending support for those who have been homeless as they move on to their own homes in the community.

Older People Services operate several Care Homes and Day Centres, many of them specialising in dementia care. They also run Heart for Art groups which enable those suffering from dementia to express themselves and provide support for those who are caring for them.

Children and Families Services offer residential care and education for children and young people who are unable to live within their family setting for a period of time. They also offer support to children and families affected by drug and alcohol use, and those visiting family members in prison.



Each week, CrossReach spends almost £1million on providing loving care through its services across Scotland. The main source of income comes from Local Authorities for services provided on their behalf. The next biggest source are those people who can afford to pay for their care and support. CrossReach is the Church of Scotland Charity, but less than 2% of their funds come from the Church of Scotland.

Times are hard with pressures on our churches, our services and people all over Scotland. That's why, more than ever, we need your help to keep our services running which are often the last hope for our vulnerable.

In looking forward, CrossReach is also being realistic about their need for the financial support of individual donors, as well as prayers and the volunteer support many churches give.

By setting up a regular gift to CrossReach, no matter how much or how often, you could help us to save and change even more lives. That also makes you a part of the amazing CrossReach family. You can do so by visiting the CrossReach website at <https://www.crossreach.org.uk/>

Whatever else you do, you can partner with CrossReach by praying. Prayer is the foundation, the bedrock that underpins everything they do. While amazing staff can make a lot of difference to the people who come to CrossReach for support, prayer is what produces the wonderful results in the breakthroughs often needed. Prayer sustains the staff physically, mentally and spiritually.

## **Prayer**

Loving God, we give thanks for the work of CrossReach across our land.

We pray for the work of the Directors, and the support team at Charis House. May they know the Spirit's wisdom and guidance, as they plan operations and strategy; thankful that in administration they still ensure a focus on care and compassion.

We give thanks and pray for the staff and volunteers who provide care in different settings:

those who care for the elderly;

those who work alongside those with alcohol or drug dependency problems;

those who seek to support people with mental health difficulties;

those who strive to ensure that children and young people in their care are loved, safe and respected, and able to realise their full potential;

those who support prisoners and their families.

We pray for all those in CrossReach who serve through supporting people to achieve the highest quality of life which they can achieve at any given time.

All this we ask in the name of Jesus, the Servant King, Amen.



# Yesterday Revisited



by Iain Harrison

**Background to 1946:** Following the end of the Second World War, rationing was still in place in the UK, but it was a time of hope and moving forward after nearly six years of war. The Bank of England moved to its new location at Threadneedle Street, London, where it remains. Nearer home Hoover opened a plant in Cambuslang and at William Denny's in Dumbarton the first ever roll-on roll-off ferry in the UK was launched. Sporting fixtures returned to normal and in Glasgow a crowd of 139,648 watched Scotland beat England 1 - 0 at Hampden.



*Hampden Park, Scotland v England*

*April 1946*



What was happening though in our Churches, and, in this issue, what was happening at St Ninian's Craigmyle 80 years ago?

**Session Clerk Changes:** It was intimated in the January 1946 meeting that the Session Clerk, Mr A P Simpson also called Colonel Simpson, would be living in Glasgow for a few months and a Mr Macdonald was appointed to act as Session Clerk in his absence.

Consideration was given to dates of Communion services. These were originally agreed for the last Sunday in January, April, June and October, but that a date may be altered for an occasion calling for special consideration. It was agreed, in the absence of the Session Clerk and the illness of the temporary Session Clerk, to postpone the January Communion Service to Sunday 10 February. This change of date had no effect on numbers as it was minuted that the Service had been well attended.

A further update on the subject of the Session Clerk came in the June minutes, when Mr A P Simpson notified his intention to resign the post of Session Clerk at some time in 1947 convenient to the Kirk Session.

**Church Organist:** In the February minutes the Kirk Session heard that a letter of resignation had been received from Miss Douglas, the Church Organist.

A letter of thanks for her services was passed, and it was agreed to advertise for an Organist, with the hope that a suitable local person would be available. The Moderator reported at the April meeting that two applications had been received and that he had interviewed both applicants; he recommended that Mr David Cairns be appointed as from 1 May 1946 at a salary of £40 per annum.

**Evening Services:** It was agreed at the June meeting that the evening services, which had been re-introduced in November 1945, would be suspended during the holiday months of July and August.

**Deacons Wanted:** In what was to be a year of change for personnel at the Church, the Moderator stated that more deacons were required and asked for the views of the Kirk Session. After discussion, it was decided to ask the congregation to nominate six Deacons at a meeting to be held on Wednesday 9 October, and the Session Clerk was instructed accordingly. At the special meeting on 9 October called for the purpose of nominating members for the role of Deacon, the Moderator called for at least six nominations. By chance, six nominations came from the members and the Moderator then asked for any further nominations. With no others forthcoming he declared the six members nominated would go forward for election.

Interestingly, the Moderator intimated that the Kirk Session would sit in the Vestry at 11.00am on Sunday 3 November to hear objections to any of the Deacons-elect. Only ordination of those against whom no objections had been made would be inducted at the forenoon service that day. Thankfully no objections were forthcoming and all six were ordained shortly thereafter.

**Deaths of Former Ministers:** Sadly during the year the Kirk Session was advised that two former ministers had passed away. At the January meeting the Moderator referred to the sudden death of the Rev John L Morgan, a former minister of the Church. Mr Macdonald, the acting Session Clerk, was instructed to write to Mrs Morgan with an expression of sympathy; Mrs Morgan had sent a letter of thanks. At the July meeting the Moderator advised of the death of the Rev Robert Prenter and again a letter was sent to Mrs Prenter and her family expressing sincere sympathy and regret.

**Ordination of Elder:** The Church seems to have been well organised and well off for Elders as the only ordination appears to have taken place at the service on 6 October when Mr Andrew Glen was ordained. This had been postponed from October 1945 due to Mr Glen being absent on military service. As all the necessary procedures had previously been carried through, the Moderator thereupon ordained Mr Glen to the office of Eldership and declared him ordained and admitted to office in the congregation.

# Seen, Loved and Welcomed

by Rev Ali Pandian



I write this from Tunisia, seemingly a million miles away from wintry Scotland. What a privilege to be able to travel freely to a country far away from home, and to be welcomed.

This morning I went for a swim in the hotel pool and ended up being part of an aquafit class. I have attended aquafit classes before but this was different. All the others appeared to be Tunisian Muslim women, clad in swimwear that ensured their legs, arms and heads were not showing. I was clearly an 'outsider'

with my pink/blue skin, blonde hair and Tog24 swimsuit. Although (to my shame) I could not speak their language, I was invited into the group through gestures and smiles. After some warm-up exercises, we linked arms and took turns to float while others held our weight. We stood in a line, 'massaging' the shoulders of the person in front. The gestured instructions at times brought laughter and at times silent concentration. We worked together through touch and eye contact and teamwork, ensuring each had an opportunity to exercise and also to be supported to rest.

How incredible it was that, as an 'outsider' among strangers, I had been gifted with such an intimate encounter. This reminded me of the instructions given by God to Moses in Leviticus 19, as guidance for God's people as how they should live.

<sup>33</sup> *'If an outsider dwells with you in your land, you should do him no wrong. <sup>34</sup> The outsider dwelling among you shall be to you as the native-born among you. You should love him as yourself – for you dwelled as outsiders in the land of Egypt. I am ADONAI your God.'*

In stark contrast, I think with shame of recent anti-refugee protests happening outside UK hotels housing those seeking refuge. These 'outsiders', many brought here for their safety, would look out from their temporary home to see the opposite to welcome, the opposite to love and connection.

The CEO of the Scottish Refugee Council, Sabir Zazai, responded to these protests, listing steps we can take to challenge, but with compassion. 'Safety is not built on exclusion. It is built on connection. And the more we see each other... the safer we all become.'

As Christians we have a duty to stand alongside the lost and the least. How might we connect with those refugees in a way that makes them feel seen, loved and welcomed?

# Big Quiz Night November 2025

by Simon Curran

A Kirk Hall full of people took part in Tear Fund's Big Quiz Night, raising valuable funds for communities in some of the poorest parts of the world and showing how churches can make a positive difference in leading community transformation.

Those who feared it might be too taxing – too much like University Challenge or Only Connect – soon had their worries allayed by several multiple-choice options and rounds such as 'Cheese' and 'Abba or Austen?' (though the latter proved more challenging than it sounds!)

The competition remained tense to the end, with only a few points separating all of the teams, but finally The Fantastic Four emerged victorious. The truth is, though, that everyone was a winner: a great time was had by all, new friendships were made, and we all learned more about Tear Fund's work and how we can be part of the answer to extreme global poverty.

At the time of writing, nearly £400 has been raised by quiz-goers in Linlithgow, contributing to the sum of over £78,000 raised by the 700 churches UK-wide that took part.

The Big Quiz Night is an annual event run by Tear Fund, and we hope to repeat it next year. So watch out for future announcements and bring your friends and family, old and young, to enjoy a night of poverty-beating fun.

## Kirk Session Contacts

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