

THE BRIDGE

SH. CHURCH

The Boring Sea

★
Winter 2024

Edition

Annual Accounts

Our Religious Festivals

Our Missing Community Links

Lenten Readings for 2024

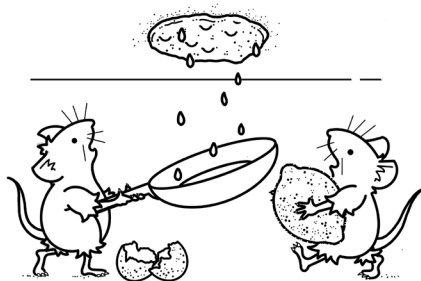
Learning from The Older Generation



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Please note that the next update of the Kirk Register will be in the Easter Edition.





Editorial

We are already into the second month of the New Year 2024, and there is a lot happening in the church both in terms of plans to modernise the sanctuary, the return of Messy Church and the progress of our new outreaches.

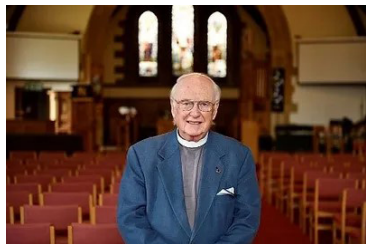
One of the difficulties of editing a church magazine is that you receive little feedback as to whether it is being read or indeed valued. I have tried in the past to include some content in an attempt to provoke debate and response but to date this has been unsuccessful. I would love to see more views expressed than my own but I will be continuing to include some provoking articles and hope that this will stimulate discussion as I believe this makes for a healthy church. I continue also to welcome letters and articles as I see the magazine as a vehicle for promoting communication and interest within the church. I believe it is also valued by those who cannot attend regularly and who want to keep up with current on-goings. The plan for 2024 is to continue with a two monthly publication.

The magazine will continue to report on Kirk Session considerations and decisions and any news from our organisations and outreaches such as The Guild, Men's Group, Book Club. I will also continue to include community news and events as well as Presbytery news of relevance to this area.

It is important that readers help us by making clear if they want any changes made to their delivery arrangements. This can be online, by post or by collection from the magazine rack in the church vestibule. Please note that if you have chosen to take delivery by post this may be slightly later in arriving than those that are available on the rack, but it will come through. The rack issues are intended largely for visitors and one-off usage. If you wish to make any change to the way you receive it, please contact Gregor Elliott on elliottgregor@hotmail.com.

Editor

Message from Our Interim Moderator



Dear friends,

The first Sunday of January is one to remember as Muthill Church was pretty well full for the morning service that day. We celebrated the sacrament of baptism and also had the ordination and admission of three new elders. The baptism of Luca Marshall from Crieff was a celebration in itself, but also for the congregation in

general as the guest list for the baptism was around sixty extra people. I don't think that any of the new elders had quite as large a following as that, but their friends and families certainly added more to the crowd. Roll on more baptisms; we could do with a crowd like that every Sunday! The baptism party included about twenty children, who were catered for in the Bruce Hall. Thanks to those who provided the activities for the youngsters. One of the positives from that particular Sunday was that it showed that we can step up to the mark and provide what we might describe as a "children's ministry" when we need to. Of course we are unlikely to have that number of young people on a regular basis and, if we did, we would need a stronger group of helpers, but it shows what can be done when the need arises. So, what we need now is more children attending! This is something very much on the minds of the Kirk Session just now. Meantime, let's not forget those who do cater for our small number of young people who attend services regularly. Our warm thanks are due to them.

Our new elders are also warmly welcomed. Elaine Wallace is well known in the congregation and has been the guiding hand behind services which have been held from time to time when there was no minister available. Doreen Reid has recently taken over the post of congregational treasurer and Sandy Hutchison, already an ordained elder, has been acting clerk to the Kirk Session for some years and also edits this magazine. The addition of three active people to the Kirk Session will strengthen its work immeasurably.

It is some time since the church at Trinity Gask closed. However, there is still work to be done there. Perhaps the most pressing matter is the

future of the war memorial which takes the form of a brass plate cemented to the inside wall of the church. The Kirk Session has agreed that this should come now to Muthill and steps are being taken to see to its removal and re-installation. There is also a stained glass window at Trinity Gask, which unusually shows Jesus with red hair. However, it looks like the cost of removal and re-installation of that at Muthill would be prohibitive.

I'd like to thank the ministers and lay preachers who have been leading our services since Alex Mitchell has not been well. Let's remember Alex and Liz in our prayers at what is a difficult time for them both. Our supply preachers have been an absolute Godsend. Operating in this way means a certain lack of continuity Sunday by Sunday but, on the other hand, each brings a certain freshness to preaching which is greatly appreciated by us all. I am trying to come about once a month to keep my finger on the pulse of Muthill congregational life. Please know, though, that I am always available for any urgent pastoral matters, so please don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you need to.

Finally, a word about the future. As you know, the Presbytery Plan is that Ardoch (Braco) and Blackford should become one united congregation within the next five years and then link with ourselves. In turn, our two linked congregations would then be able to call a minister and become part of a Parish Grouping alongside Auchterarder and Aberuthven. Our Kirk Session is in contact with Ardoch and Blackford encouraging them to move towards a union as soon as possible, but it looks as if they have some work to do before they are ready to do that. We are not expecting any quick movement on this matter, but they know that we are keen to progress and to get settled.

May the Lord bless and keep you,
(Rev.) Iain F. Paton



A Healthy Church



King Charles' first Christmas broadcast since his coronation was noteworthy because the themes of his message were powerful and unifying. It also gave appropriate place to Jesus and his centrality to Christmas. It is so easy to be seduced by the modern day pressures of commercialism and the glitzy side of the festive season and, therefore, to forget that at the heart of Christmas is the arrival of Jesus, God in human form, leading on to his wonderful teaching and example and to giving God his rightful place in this world.

Jesus' new commandment to his disciples "Just as I have loved you also should love one

another" (John 13.34) and by this everyone will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another" (John 13.35) are powerful words and in essence the role of pastoral care in the church is to try and embody them in the life of the church for both young and old.

Muthill Parish Church has always been a welcoming church and thanks are due to Isabel Barrett and the team behind her who formed the previous church visiting group. Likewise, with elders now no longer required to visit districts and the current absence of an incumbent minister, this potentially could be more difficult time in respect of delivery of pastoral care. It is, therefore, good that our Kirk Session have agreed to review our structure to ensure that care and concern is delivered in the best way that our current resources enable us to do.



New coordinators have been appointed and shortly a new Pastoral Care Team will be constructed from those still willing to help from the former group of visitors and one or two new members. The new team will require PVG clearance because of the church's responsibilities to vulnerable people. The

Church of Scotland does also provide training for difficult areas such as

loss and grief and this is to be further explored.

We wish them in this new role and as one of the latest books on the subject puts it, "Pastoral Care is about making sure that people feel they are known and loved both by God and by their fellow members in the church. A healthy church is a church in which people know they are loved, contact between members is welcome and everyone is valued and feels safe."

The Challenge Provided By A Book Club

Some of us enjoy reading on our own as a pastime, but being a



member of a Book Club makes you think more about what you reading as you have to provide a contribution to a review meeting with fellow readers. We are now into the third meeting of our new Book Club in the church and I must report that it is great fun providing stimulating discussion and a learning experience for all participants as you have to

listen to how other people have found the book, how they have interpreted it and it is amazing how much you can learn.

The latest book has proved a challenge in many ways, but as one consumer, it has opened my mind to the value of poetry, to thinking about how one interprets life and how things don't really change in two thousand years. For me. it has also renewed an interest in learning more about wine and revisiting Italy. If that is not a rich dividend from being a member of a book club I may be missing the purpose. You are always welcome to join this fun group and gain benefits from sharing and learning a love of literature. Simply contact me on 07825544225.

Sandy Hutchison

Celebrating Our Religious Festivals?

Christmas came and went much as usual. Probably for most folk there was the normal rush of activities beforehand. At church, our Christmas services were relatively well attended, but I found myself pondering over a question as to whether, in the Church of Scotland, we think enough about the manner in which we celebrate important religious festivals.



Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas still provide the reason for our main holiday seasons in this country, but with increasing choice of alternative activities, over recent years, celebration of our religious festivals has suffered both

in their preparation and consequent reduced attendance. And yet, these festivals are significant occasions for celebrating our faith. They are also times when more visitors and the wider community do come into church to experience worship.

In Muthill, one example would be our Watchnight service which is usually attended by greater numbers of visitors than our own church family. Another more recent example was a New Year baptismal service where large numbers of friends of the baptismal party filled the church and greatly exceeded the normal congregation.



How great it is to welcome such visitors and to have a full church but do we do enough to make such occasions the experience they could be, when you consider the opportunity they present for conveying the power of the Christian message and engaging with a wider than normal community?

Small congregations, of course, have more limited resources to undertake big preparations, but the question is still worth asking as regular attenders of a small

congregation also get more out of such occasions if they stand out from normal services both in their content and the efforts that are made to make them special. I believe this worked well with the daffodil cross last Easter and the children's participation in Harvest Thanksgiving in the autumn.

Having had the opportunity to experience the celebration of such festivals in different parts of the world I have always been impressed with the different ideas that abound which can add to the impact of the true meaning of each festival.

A Big Thanks To Our Soup Brigade

The soup and sandwich lunches and the warm space provision continue in the Bruce Hall every Wednesday, and encouragingly, numbers of participants are gradually increasing. The latest figures of just under 40 people show the success of this outreach, not forgetting the important support received from Perth and Kinross Council which enables it all to be provided free until the end of March. But the people who should really be praised are the brigade of voluntary helpers who make the soup and sandwiches. There is nothing like homemade soup and certainly MPC Wednesday lunches excel in the high quality of the soup provided. Even the varying choice of soups from Cullin Skink to Carrot and Coriander to the ever popular lentil make a visit a real treat. Of course, there is also great fellowship with much laughter and good conversation. It is also good that it attracts people of all ages.

But the important people to praise are the dedicated band of great soup makers. Well done guys, and as one participant, keep up the good work!

Annual Finances

Because the Editor has a printing date of 29th January and our Session Meeting is not until 13th February, I cannot give you an audited set of accounts for 2023. However, I can give you an idea of where we stand on a day-to-day basis. Our cash in the bank figure at 31st December 2023 was £13,518 compared to a 1st January 2023 sum of £8,102. This looks quite healthy at first glance, but we have not had an electricity bill since July and to that date we paid £6,364 compared to £4,085 for the whole of 2022. We expect our total bill to be in excess of £8,000. Still a reasonable position to be in, until you factor in that we have not had a resident Minister to pay for since March 2022.



We have also spent from our Refurbishment Fund £22,761 on the Church and £11,491 on Manse repairs. This includes insulating the Church ceiling and bringing our electrical wiring up to the required safety standards. It is therefore, very difficult for our worshippers to see where the money has gone but you will definitely see where the next tranche is going to be spent.

Our refurbishment programme is moving onto the next stage and shortly we will be removing the pews, repainting the Sanctuary, carpeting the Sanctuary and installing individual chairs. This will be beneficial in several ways; brightening our Church, making it more flexible in our quest to help our local community and making it more adaptable for our future worship.

I have a list of people who kindly agreed to sponsor chairs, but there is not enough of you!! If you could help by offering to fund these chairs it would be of great assistance. Please contact me on 681362 or speak to me directly and I will add you to the list. Each chair is expected to cost £175.

Willie Bell (Finance Convener)

Bible Parable

The gardener and the Vine



JESUS OFTEN TOLD
STORIES WITH
HIDDEN MEANINGS



ONCE HE TOLD HIS FRIENDS ALL
ABOUT A GARDENER.

THE GARDENER'S JOB WAS
TO CARE FOR THE VINES



HE WOULD LOOK AT EACH
BRANCH CAREFULLY..

... AND IF IT WAS PRODUCING
GOOD FRUIT, HE WOULD CARE
FOR IT AND NOURISH IT.



IF IT WAS PRODUCING BAD
FRUIT...



...OR NO FRUIT AT
ALL...



...THEN THE GARDENER WOULD
CHOP IT OFF, AND BURN IT IN
THE FIRE!!

JESUS WANTED HIS FRIENDS TO SHARE
THE GOOD NEWS - THAT'S LIKE THE
VINE BEARING GOOD FRUIT.



YOU CAN READ THIS SPECIAL PARABLE IN JOHN'S
GOSPEL, CHAPTER 15.

Our Missing Community Links

Each church congregation is blessed with a different structure and in our own case, in Muthill Parish Church, we currently have a predominance of the older generation. That shouldn't make us over worry about the future of our church but, for its overall healthiness, there is a strong argument which says that we must continue to reflect on the nature of our village, remain active in our outreaches, and importantly, explore new ways of spreading the Christian message. We, as Christians, know the blessings, vitality and comfort that comes through faith and being part of a church family. That must be conveyed in ways that today's society wants to accept. Society has changed a lot in recent decades. Opportunities for families and children to indulge in different interests and pastimes have expanded greatly. Influencers such as TV, fashion, sporting heroes, health education awareness and simply more ready cash, to name but a few, have all played their part in developing a culture which promotes self-sufficiency, a desire for entertainment, and a desire for immediate satisfaction.



This has inevitably affected the place of faith and more particularly church attendance in many people's lives. We have all heard questions such as "What does faith give to our lives?" or "Doesn't following a Christian life present too many unnecessary restrictions?" "Where is the fun in life?" That sort of view may be expressed by many but, for we who believe, faith can provide a different lifestyle which gives freedom and purpose to cope with the ups and downs of

life that none of us can escape from. Indeed, bit by bit, without a faith it can lead to a cult of materialism which may be at the root of many of the problems which are the scourge of today such as mental illness, suicide, addiction and problematical relationships. Christianity has a powerful answer for our much beleaguered society which it needs to promote at

every opportunity, but better ways of communicating this message seem to be needed and with it the value of belonging to a church family.



There is much evidence that using traditional approaches create barriers for many of today's youth and also their parents, and particularly the teenage family generation. One example of this is the language we use in church and the associated difficulty of communicating religious concepts in a meaningful way. There is growing

evidence that the evangelical churches are succeeding more with their more exuberant participatory forms of worship. Modern translations and commentaries on the Bible help a lot with understanding many passages, but today's worship, which for some is the first point of contact with church, still is largely imbued by a format and language which are difficult for to follow and participate properly in, even at times for some regular attenders.

It is, therefore, to be hoped that our church leaders continue to constantly reflect and debate on such matters. Understanding and coming to grips with our community and its needs is essential if we are to successfully find new ways of conveying our message. It is through this sort of approach that our worship and on-going education system for adults and youth should be framed. We should not be frightened to discard current ways that do not seem to be working. We must be welcoming and not nervous about the reaction of our current congregation to experimentation and change. There is probably not one of our church family that does not want to see our church full and able to experience the impact of reverent and enthusiastic worship and is prepared to try new ways to achieve this.

Will such thinking lead in turn to a more engaging atmosphere imbuing all our activities and to making it more inter-generational? Thank goodness there is already much thought going on in the church about this. Are we ready to take it to the next stage?

Learning From The Older Generation

In January we restarted our worship services at Wardside House for the Elderly. Covid 19 had brought these to a close like many other things in the church and getting back to them inevitably proved more difficult than expected for much in life has changed from that period. These services which are basically short interludes of prayer, readings and reflection shared with the residents are powerful for many reasons.



They represent, of course, an outreach of our church and it is always a joy to share our faith and love of God with others, but equally importantly they bring us into contact with people whose lives are now severely curtailed by frailty and dependence on others.

Loneliness can be an important side effect of going into a residential home as you are forced into a situation where you are suddenly placed amongst strangers and additionally you are leaving the security and comfort of your own home. You are also at a stage of life where you are naturally not so interested in making new friends. These aspects can be dramatic in themselves but further, you will most probably be confronted with a host of other residents who are not able to communicate normally or simply have become withdrawn through age and life's experience. Contact with the outside world is, therefore, important for a resident's well-being.

To the outsider going into a home it, at first, seems a different closeted world which in itself makes you reflect on the blessings of life you have as an able-bodied person. However, once contact and friendships are developed with residents, this can quickly change as you start to get to know real people and have the chance to learn of their experiences of life. In many cases you will find that they have lived very interesting lives and have considerable wisdom to share. In others, there is simply the joy of experiencing how much pleasure and comfort one is able to give by spending time with someone who is incapacitated and separated from the routines of a more normal life such as the simple joy of being able to experience the weather outside.

One has to remember too that a carer can never provide what a pastor can as their relationship is inevitably bounded by professionalism as well as



being limited by time and conditions.

In addition to the worship that Muthill House Group 2 plans to provide on a monthly basis I also assist alongside another very special lady from the village in playing Scrabble and Dominoes weekly with one or two residents. I hope this is not only good for my own mental agility but we also have the time and opportunity to inject tales of our day to day activities which can result in much fun, reminiscing and just making a resident feel part of our village community. Volunteering in such ways is very much

a two way process with benefits for all involved. It certainly enriches my life and hopefully also that of the residents. If you would like to know more about this and even help in our worship arrangements, please let us know.



Messy Is Back Spreading the Good News

- Who?** The event is for children and their families living in and around Muthill
- When?** Sunday 24th March (easter)
- Where?** Muthill Church Bruce Hall from 4-6 pm
- What?** There will be craft, baking, and scientific, worship with songs and a story and a shared meal activities

Editor: The Rev Michael Burgess continues his series looking at great works of music

‘Glorious the song when God’s the theme’: Hildegard of Bingen

In this series we have looked at the psalms of the Old Testament and the songs of the New Testament, and now we enter the Middle Ages. But it is the Middle Ages through the eyes of a record producer in the last century. In 1980 Ted Perry decided to found a new independent record company, Hyperion.



If that was not financial risk enough, in the following year Hyperion issued a CD of a composer virtually unknown in the 1980s – Hildegard of Bingen. The risk paid off, and Gothic Voices’ recording of the music of this remarkable medieval nun became a best seller. The CD sold in its thousands and received awards from the gramophone industry.

‘A feather on the breath of God’, the title of the CD, is how Hildegard described herself. ‘Listen, there was a king sitting on his throne. Around him stood great and wonderfully beautiful columns ornamented with ivory, bearing the banners of the king with great honour. Then it pleased the king to raise a small feather from the ground and he commanded it to fly. The feather flew, not because of anything in itself, but because the air bore it along. Thus am I a feather on the breath of God.’

Hildegard was born in 1098, the tenth child of noble parents who lived in western Germany. Aged only eight, she was given into the care of Jutta, abbess of a monastery in the Rhineland, near Bingen. There she lived the life of an enclosed nun, her only contact with the world outside via a grille through which food was passed.

After 30 years, Hildegard left that cell and was assigned a scribe, who wrote down her visions and meditations in two volumes. She founded

two monasteries, wrote books on medicine and natural healing and the first morality play, and composed a great range of songs. She corresponded with the great and the good, and as the 'Sybil of the Rhine,' her advice was sought by popes and emperors, by kings and bishops. A truly creative life of prayer and service until her death in 1179.

The starting point for her own compositions was the plainsong of that time. Modern techniques of singing and performing often make plainsong slow and heavy. The secret to bringing plainchant alive is to sing it with relaxed attention. In many ways that is the secret of the life of prayer: that paradox of resting in the Lord while being alert to the promptings of his spirit. Hildegard realised that secret as she brought to her music, as she did to everything, an intensity of emotion and faith, developing the medieval plainchant into melodies that flowed off the page and soared into the skies.

It is all there in the chant 'O ignis spiritus' on the CD – an ecstatic song, praising the life of God's Spirit as breath and spark of flame, as a power within and armour without. As Hildegard contemplates this gift, her music moves and grows, reaching upwards to God's throne of glory in praise and adoration and outwards to those who listen.

Sudoku Puzzle

			5	6	7	1		4
				9	1	2		
1			4			5	8	6
	3				6			9
4	5						6	1
6			9				5	
8	2	3			9			5
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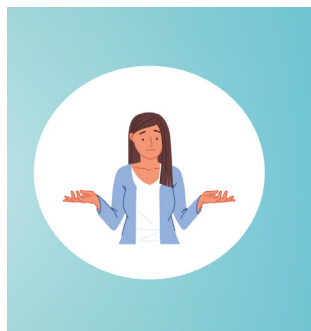
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*Sudoku Solution on page 34

God In The Sciences

This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.

What will March bring? Mental health ideas for uncertain times



We may all have rather mixed feelings as we consider life in February this year. On the one hand, it is lovely to see the onset of Spring, but the wars in Ukraine and Israel-Gaza grind on, as does the cost-of-living crisis. We may need to find new ways to keep going, so here are some suggestions that draw on both science and Christian theology.

Getting outside

Time outdoors in a natural environment is very good for you – and you can't argue with the happy hormones produced by exercise. Attending to the details of nature can also inspire awe, which has been linked to positive mood, and increased life satisfaction. Enjoying Creation can also help us connect with God.

Looking outside

If you are truly stuck indoors, try putting bird feeders outside your window so creation comes to you. This is also an act of kindness (see below)!

Lament and praise

The Psalms are a rich resource to help us express both our grief and our thanks to God. Try reading one or two each day.

Journaling

Keep a journal of thoughts, experiences or practices you have engaged with during the day. Constructing a personal narrative or story is now recognised as a very powerful psychological and spiritual tool for building

resilience. It is also a vital learning tool that we can go back to when tough times return in the future.

Acts of kindness

Helping or encouraging someone else is obviously a good thing to do in itself, but it also has a very positive effect on the giver - spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and even physically. Whichever way you look at it, finding new ways to show kindness to others can be a very effective way to help ourselves feel better too.

Gratitude

Gratitude is another natural drug – in a sense – that can help us feel better. Try keeping a grateful diary, adding a few things each day.

Laugh, sing, make music, dance

All of these activities are deeply rooted in our physical and mental makeup. You may have forgotten how great they feel, especially in times of sadness, but we can learn from children who do them very naturally.

I hope these ideas may help bring us closer to God, each other, and His creation.

Chris and Edith

The Church family was saddened to receive the news that Chris O'Brien had died. Chris was not a member of Muthill Parish Church, but many will know his wife, Edith, who has been an active member and Elder as well as a regular on Sunday mornings at the front of the church, singing with the Singing Group. They used to live in Muthill but over more recent times they have been living in Perth. We send our condolences to Edith and family at this time of loss and thank Edith for arranging for the beautiful floral tributes which adorned the church on Sunday 2nd February.



Lenten Readings For 2024

This year Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, Wednesday 14th February, 2024 and runs for a 40 day period up until Thursday 28th March, followed by Good Friday and Easter. This period in our church calendar, like Advent, is intended to prepare us for the important events coming, namely Good Friday and Easter, when we celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Lent is intended to expose us to the wilderness that Jesus encountered, a place which brings both danger and salvation. It challenges us to be courageous and face up to our vulnerability, to learn lessons about ourselves, who we are and who God calls us to be. Last year, I mentioned Paula Gooder's book, "Let me Go there", which I personally found helpful. To quote from her book, she found that: "one of Lent's key flavours is spaciousness; a spaciousness that summons us to lift our eyes from the humdrum constrictions of everyday existence; that invites us to strip our cluttered existences back to the bare minimum so that we can discern more fully what brings us life; that challenges us to look deep and hard at those things we try to avoid - and from them to learn who we really are". Whilst I will be re-reading this book again this year, here in the Bridge we are including a daily list of readings which have been gleaned from "Celtic Lent: 40 Days of Devotions to Easter" by David Cole. This publication, with its daily devotions, contains a description of our Celtic background, from which the Church of Scotland was influenced in style and expression, as well as contemplations, readings and prayers. It is available through Amazon in paperback and e-format. We are printing here the readings for each devotion.

Please remember the guidance given by expert commentators that for a proper devotion, reading on its own is insufficient. When you read a passage in the Bible, try firstly to understand it in its original context, then ask the question what it does mean to me today. This should then be followed by a concluding prayer.



Remember also that for Celtic Christians, Lent was a serious time for fasting and focus to enable them to approach Easter and a renewed resurrection life.

Ash Wednesday: Genesis 3;8-19
Thursday: Mathew 16;21-27
Friday: 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 :
Saturday: 2 Timothy 2;1-7

Week One

Sunday: Contemplation for first Sunday in Lent for Celtic Christians was on dedication to spiritual disciplines. How might you do more of this in your life?
Monday: Ruth1:6-19
Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 10:3-7
Wednesday: Mathew 19:16-22
Thursday: Samuel 11;14-18;11:26-12.1,12:13-15
Friday: Mark: 4:35-41
Saturday: Colossians 3:1-10

Week Two

Sunday: Contemplation for second Sunday in Lent for Celtic Christians was that they gave up all they knew of what life was about for the sake of God. How might we do this better?
Monday: Numbers 6:1-15,21
Tuesday: Acts 18:18;21:23-26
Wednesday: Genesis 1:14-15
Thursday: Mathew 28:18-20
Friday: Mark 2:23-28
Saturday: How do you view discipline and discipleship? Are they different things, interwoven or the same? How might the concept of them being interwoven or the same change the way you view spiritual discipline such as living by a rule or way of life?

Week Three

Sunday: Contemplation for Third Sunday of Lent is what would it mean to live by a monastic rule or way of life?
Monday: Psalm 78:1-4
Tuesday: Psalm 20
Wednesday: Psalm 121
Thursday: Genesis1:1-27
Friday: Revelation 12:7-12
Saturday: Acts 2:14-17/,37-39

Week Four

- Sunday: Contemplation for fourth Sunday in Lent concerns the words we use in our spiritual acts and services. They are powerful. Contemplate how you use them and think about how you might better use them
- Monday: Ephesians 2:1-10
- Tuesday: Colossians 3:15-17
- Wednesday: Philippians 2:1-13
- Thursday: 2 Corinthians 3:16-18
- Friday: Luke 5:12-13
- Saturday: Psalm 139: 1-18

Week Five

- Sunday: Contemplation for fifth Sunday in Lent is how do you understand the power of the cross and restoration of the divine image in your life? What more can you do to strengthen this belief?
- Monday: Luke 22:7-16
- Tuesday: Mathew 6:12-15
- Wednesday: Luke 22:19
- Thursday: Luke 22:20
- Friday: John 6:51-58
- Saturday: 1 Corinthians: 17-18

Holy Week

- Palm Sunday: Contemplate the coming victory and triumphal entry by reading John 12:12-19
- Monday: Ephesians 6:10-18
- Tuesday: Mark 15:16-23
- Wednesday: John 19:38-42
- Maundy Thursday: Revelation 21:3-7
- Good Friday: Mathew 27:32-55
- Holy Saturday: Romans 8:18-25
- Easter Sunday: Let us celebrate, feast and rejoice at the end of the fast of Lent. Let the new resurrection life begin

A Winter Prayer

God of the ancient of days, God of the days to come
God of this new day

Help me to praise you in this 'bleak midwinter' time.

I would hear you in the music of each raindrop
in the sougning of the wind in the wood
in the setting of the snowflake as it finds its resting place.

I would see in the scudding of the clouds
in the rushing of the waves, in the flight of birds
in the foraging of wintering creatures.

I would feel you in the warmth of a hearth
In the touch of a loving friend, in the laughter of children
And the beauty of a starlight sky.

But when I cannot and your presence is hidden
in the cares of the day, in the fears for the future
in the sounds of war and crying, pain and hatred

Help me to trust that you hear me
that you see me, that you feel what I feel.

For you are the one, with the raindrop
with the wave, with the snowflake
and the wild ones.

You lie down with the children of pain
with all who suffer, with all who weep
with all who grieve

In this bleak 'midwinter time'
you are our hope at the threshold
of this New Year

This moment in eternity Is held in your embrace

We are seen and heard and loved
and somehow all will be well

Amen

Kirk And Community News

Christians Together

The next Gathering for Worship and Praise of our house groups, and indeed, for any member of each Christian congregation in the area, will be held in St Columba's Church, Crieff (on the left past the Lauder Park on the Perth Road). It will take place on Sunday 25th February at 7pm. For those who have not attended one of these events before, it is a wonderful opportunity to join with fellow Christians from other churches in the area. The worship will be led by Chris White with accompanying musicians and, if you enjoy singing Christian songs, it is an event not to be missed as there is usually a full church with great singing.

There are also hot refreshments on arrival in the vestibule There is some parking in the church grounds. Let's continue to ensure that Muthill Parish Church is well represented!

St James Episcopal Church Muthill

Our neighbouring church, St James, continues its regular film nights once a month where a full length film is shown and then discussed with a break for supper. They are held usually on the second Tuesday of the month starting at 7pm. All are welcome. The next one is 5th March.

There is also a discipleship course continuing at St Kessog's, their sister church in Auchterarder. This based on the book "Spiritual Formation" by Henri Nouwen. Copies of this book are available in St James, Muthill.

We are also pleased to note that many of the local St James congregation are regulars at the soup and sandwich lunches and are participating in the volunteer roster. This is great inter-church collaboration.

House Groups

Being a member of a House Group is an important way of developing your faith as it provides a small group, confidential setting in which to explore our understandings together. There are several inter-church house groups in Crieff and in Muthill there is the Bible Class which meets weekly on a Tuesday morning and HG2 which meets fortnightly on a Tuesday evening. As a church we believe that there is great value in being a member of a house group not only for growing your faith but also for the opportunity to be part of a small fellowship group within the church family.

There is a full listing of all house groups available in the leaflet stand in the church entrance lobby. These contain the names of the leaders of each house group and how to contact them. They are open to church members, adherents and also seekers thinking of joining the church. You will be most welcome to join any group or even to test one out and see whether it seems right for you.

Presbytery News

The new Presbytery of Perth which covers a large area from Angus through Perthshire to Stirlingshire, including cities and rural communities, has a total of 150 congregations under its remit. Amongst its many responsibilities, it produced the Presbytery Plan which dictates the future of our church as a worship centre in Muthill and which has also prescribed that we have to work towards a future linked with a union between the Ardoch and Blackford congregations. Once this proposed union and linkage are achieved there will be a part-time ordained minister covering all three congregations.

The Presbytery has an informative website which covers their work and which provides weekly updates on events and decisions taken within the Presbytery. (www.perthpresbytery.org.uk). In each edition of the Bridge we will attempt to highlight Presbytery issues of interest.

*Logos Scotland are organising a Faith in the Public Square Conference in Stirling on 22nd March. It has well known speakers and the programme provides good opportunity to meet fellow Christians interested in interacting with politics, culture, locality and science. Further information from shona@logosscotland.org.

*The annual Forbes Lecture at St Andrews Cathedral Dundee will be given by Eve Poole, MBE and is entitled "Robot Souls". It will explore who we are and what makes us human and what we could become as Artificial Intelligence develops. It will be held on 9th March at 3pm Entrance is free

Kirk And Community News

Mens Group

The Mens Group continues to meet on a Wednesday morning in the north lounge over coffee for an hour and then members can proceed to the soup and sandwich lunch available every Wednesday in the Bruce Hall. The company is currently around a regular 6-8 persons but anyone is welcome and we hope that more men from the village will consider joining us.

This social gathering will continue as the mainstay of the group, but discussion continues on how a practical edge can be added. The idea of a voluntary transport service for residents of the village, aimed primarily at providing transport for health appointments and possibly being expanded beyond that depending on availability and take-up is continuing to be explored with Perth and Kinross Council. Discussions to date are positive and it is hoped that the Council will enable a vehicle to be purchased, insured and maintained with local funding being arranged for running the service. Dougie Mitchell is heading this project which may eventually need a separate charity status.

We are also seeking advice from another church which is more experienced in running an artisan service, which provides practical home support to people in need within the church family and beyond e.g replacing electric bulbs, simple home repairs. Once this advice has been received and the revised pastoral care service is functioning, it is hoped that the Men's group can add this aspect to its make-up.

Book Club

The new Book Club continues to grow and to meet for a review of the chosen book of the month over a cup of tea and cake in the north lounge of the church. There was a brilliant review and discussion of the latest book, "His Bloody Project" with much helpful sharing of interpretation. It is so good to be part of a group who enjoys reading and learning from each other! The next book chosen by the group is "Horace and Me" by Harry Eyres. This will be reviewed on 9th February.

Already eight in number, more members will be welcome.

See article on page 7.

Bi-Centenary Celebration

We are now within two year's off Muthill Parish Church's bi-centenary and we all know that time slips by quickly. It is, therefore, the right time to put our thinking caps on and come up with suggestions as to what ways might be appropriate for celebrating this important historical event. The ultimate decisions will be taken by the Kirk Session, but the more ideas that can be generated early, the better the plans that can be formed and the better the execution! Speak to your Elders about this.

The current members of the Kirk Session are the following (with conveners and key responsibilities listed):

Helen-May Bayne, Session Clerk

Sandy Bayne, Gift-Aid Coordinator

Willie Bell, Finance Convener

Sandy Birnie

Doreen Reid, Treasurer

Davina Brown

Jim Cantlie

Gregor Elliott, Roll Keeper, Safeguarding Elder

Irene Foster, Pastoral Care Coordinator

Graham Donaldson, Property Convener and Presbytery Elder

Sandy Hutchison, Bridge Editor and Pastoral Care Coordinator

Edith O'Brien

Peter McIntosh

Sheena Plummer, Life and Work Coordinator.

James Thomson

Elaine Wallace, Worship and Communications Convener

Kirk And Community News

New Elders Installation



Sunday 7th January saw the ordination of two new elders, Doreen Reid and Elaine Wallace and the admission of another, Sandy Hutchison who had been ordained in 2008. The new elders are already doing a number of functions within the church and will be welcome new members on the Kirk Session. As is traditional in the Church of Scotland, the new elders first took oaths before the congregation, signed the register then received the right hand of fellowship from existing elders of Muthill Parish Church.

Strathearn Arts



All performances are at Strathearn Arts, 2 Comrie Street, Crieff PH7 4AX Box Office for tickets :01764655556
Sunday 11th February at 4pm:
Event Cinema: Klimt and the Kiss
Adults £15, Under 18's and Students £10

Saturday 17th February at 7.30pm:
Comedy: Bruce Fummey – Stories of Scotland
Tickets £15

Thursday 29th February at 7.30pm:
Music: Crieff Folk Club presents Josie Duncan, award winning Folk singer from Lewis



Muthill In Bloom

The Blooming Shed in the Millenium Garden, adjacent to Muthill Parish Church continues to be well stocked with books and games and on Saturdays (sometimes Sundays) the supply of fresh fruit and vegetables is replenished. All bags of fruit and vegetables are individually priced and often there are also great baking items such as sultana scones, pancakes and tray bakes.

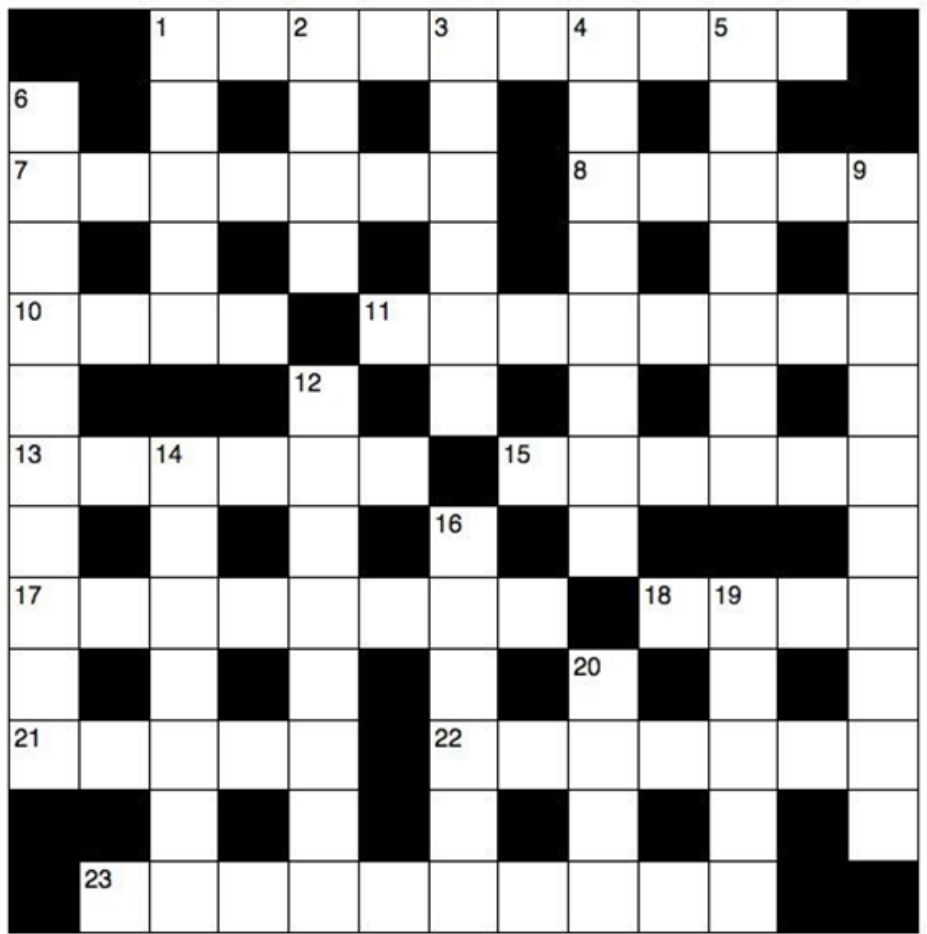


If you haven't visited the shed, make a point of doing so and supporting this much valued village initiative. They also welcome books and games, if they are in good condition and suitable for general village consumption. You can send a message to Susan Crawford who regularly posts updates on Muthill and Bloom in

Facebook on the Muthill in Bloom site there, if you need clarification on any issue. Muthill in Bloom will also be looking for helpers when the growing season again starts in the Spring and for watering helpers in the blooming season over the summer. If you would like to do something in this way to help beautify our village, then please contact Susan.



Crossword



Across

- 1 Success or wealth (Deuteronomy 28:11) (10)
- 7 Forbidden fruit for Nazirites (Numbers 6:3) (7)
- 8 Concede (Job 27:5) (5)
- 10 Look at (Psalm 48:13) (4)
- 11 Much in evidence after weddings (8)
- 13 Condense (Job 36:27) (6)

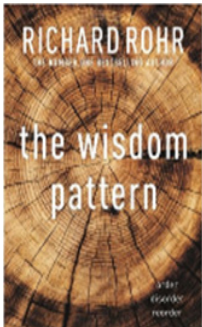
-
- 15 Breakwater (6)
17 Give a tan (anag.) (8)
18 More usually now called Pentecost, — Sunday (4)
21 After living for 365 years, it was said of him that ‘he walked with God’ (Genesis 5:23–24) (5)
22 Trampled (Judges 9:27) (7)
23 For example, Miriam, Deborah (Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4) (10)

Down

- 1 Arrogance (Proverbs 8:13) (5)
2 Roman poet from first century BC (4)
3 So rapt (anag.) (6)
4 Declare again (2 Corinthians 2:8) (8)
5 Paul’s ‘fellow worker’, to whom he sent two epistles (Romans 16:21) (7)
6 God’s foreseeing care and protection (Job 10:12) (10)
9 Traditional form of Roman Catholic Mass (10)
12 ‘The Lord... has given the — of Israel to David and his descendants for ever’ (2 Chronicles 13:5) (8)
14 ‘My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my — ’ (Luke 1:46–47) (7)
16 The central element in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, identified and interpreted by Daniel (Daniel 2:31) (6)
19 ‘On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of — will not overcome it’ (Matthew 16:18) (5)
20 City where Paul was under house arrest for two years (Acts 28:16) (4)

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Book Reviews



The Wisdom Pattern – order, disorder, reorder

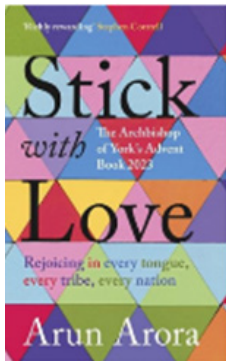
By Richard Rohr, SPCK, £12.99

A universal pattern can be found in all societies and in fact in all of Creation. We see it in the seasons of the year, the stories of Scripture, and even in our own lives.

In *The Wisdom Pattern*, Father Richard Rohr illuminates the way understanding and embracing this pattern can give us hope in difficult times and the courage to push through messiness – and even great chaos – to find a new way of ‘being’ in the world.

Father Rohr offers reflections in *The Wisdom Pattern* that bring together a deep spirituality with Jungian psychology.

They reveal a vision of Christianity that speaks to the heart of 21st century society.

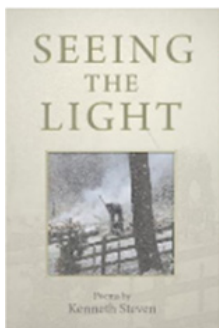


Stick with Love - Rejoicing in Every Tongue, Every Tribe, Every Nation

The Archbishop of York's Advent Book 2023

By Arun Arora, SPCK, £10.99

Martin Luther King famously declared that ‘I have decided to stick with love... Hate is too great a burden to bear’. In these luminous daily readings, Arun Arora helps us consider the biblical picture of the Church as the people of God, drawn from every tribe, every tongue, and every nation. Themes of racial justice, hospitality and welcome are explored alongside the stories of saints from across the globe. Beginning with reflections from Isaiah and Revelation, the meditations lead us on to consider the missionaries, martyrs and mystics who light our Advent way.



Seeing the Light – poems

By Kenneth Steven, Canterbury Press Norwich, £10.99

This new poetry collection from Scottish poet Kenneth Steven captures small moments of revelation or epiphanies, which come unexpectedly as gifts amid the ordinary. An uncleared breakfast table, the sight of someone working outdoors, an old photograph, and the features and sounds of the Scottish landscapes that so inspire his work, all become, in the poet's words, portals to a greater reality:

“the small moments that make up the whole story”.

This is the sudden ‘going through the door’ into the bigger world. Many of them are written in the sonnet form, whose brevity and economy of expression mirror the essence of this book, and whose very form turns from the ordinary to the extraordinary in a moment.

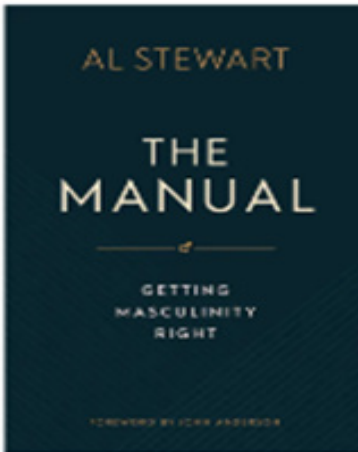


One - Being United to Jesus Changes Everything
By Clive Bowsher, 10Publishing, £8.49

The ‘you will’ sayings of Jesus show how the living God works in believers’ lives, with implications for beauty, worship, obedience, nearness and intimacy, purpose, heaven, freedom, prayer, and love.

Knowing God isn’t a hard problem for us to solve; it’s a dazzling and thrilling reality for us to dive into.

You can know and experience in-one-another love with the Son, a love so close that it exceeds all expectations. He reaches out, befriends, comes close, partners, makes alive, Fathers, and invites: Jesus is “inviting you to jump right in!”



The Manual - getting masculinity right
By Al Stewart, 10Publishing, £11.04

Understanding what it means to be male has never been more confusing. As more male behaviour is called out for being patriarchal or toxic, how does a man navigate these waters? What does healthy masculinity even look like, and what examples are there of good men that can be followed?

This book explores many of the issues that men struggle with: what it means to be a healthy son, workmate, friend, single man, husband and father. It works through much of the current debate on masculinity and finds helpful advice from many experts.

But most importantly, it works through what the Bible has to say about men, and how being a follower of Jesus is central to living a life the

loves and serves others.

Editor's Note

The next edition of the magazine will be our Spring 2024 edition. The magazine will be published on Sunday 14th April, 2024, and so the deadline for submitting articles, intimations, letters etc. will be Friday 30th March, 2024.

Please submit this to macahiph@gmail.com or send to Sandy Hutchison, GreenBrae West, Pitkellony Street, Muthill PH5 2AF.

Please also understand that all articles submitted have to be subject to possible adjustment to suit the balance of the magazine's content and its physical confines. If space does not permit, submissions will be considered for the next edition. All submissions will be acknowledged. It is our Publishing Policy to publish factual clarifications or corrections in the next edition of the magazine.

The views expressed in the magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the Kirk Session. Editorial comment and signed articles do not necessarily contain the official views of the Church of Scotland which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

Sudoku Solution:

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

Useful Contacts

Useful Local Telephone Numbers

NHS 24	111
NHS Emergency	999
Hospitals:	
Crieff Community Hospital	01764653173
Perth Royal Infirmary	01738623311
Ninewells Hospital, Dundee	01382660111
Crieff Medical Centre:	
Blue Practice	01764652283
Red Practice	01764657060
Crieff Pharmacies:	
Boots	01764652310
Davidsons	01764652177
Strathearn	01764654876
Torlum	01764652727
Church Of Scotland:	
Perth Presbytery	01738451177
121 George Street	01312255722
Police:	
Emergency	999
Non-Emergency	101
Action Fraud Scotland	101
Schools:	
Crieff High School	01764657600
Crieff Primary School	01764657888
Morrison's Academy:	
General and Secondary	01764653885
Primary	01764657196
Ardvreck School	01764653112
Veterinary Practice:	
Crieff Vets	01764652086

Crossword Solution:

ACROSS: 1, Prosperity.

7, Raisins. 8, Admit.

10, View. 11, Confetti. 13, Distil. 15, Groyne. 17, Navigate. 18, Whit. 21, Enoch. 22, Trodden. 23, Prophetess.

DOWN: 1, Pride. 2, Ovid. 3, Pastor. 4, Reaffirm. 5, Timothy. 6, Providence. 9, Tridentine. 12, Kingship. 14, Saviour. 16, Statue. 19, Hades. 20, Rome.



There are various definitions of a Mission Statement but in essence a Church Mission Statement is a broad statement, set out in clear and simple terms, which seeks to explain why we exist as a Church and what we hold dear in driving us forward

Muthill Parish Church

aims to be

A place to find peace and welcome

A people growing in Christian faith and love

A presence at the heart and soul of the community

Church Website: www.muthillparishchurch.co.uk

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/muthillchurch>

Email: muthillparish@outlook.com

Magazine Graphics & Cover Photo

Our cover picture theme this month is of a winter view of Muthill Parish Church. Thanks to Raffie for providing the graphics for the magazine and helping in the production.”

Registered Scottish Charity

Muthill Parish Church - SC004984