

Our future together

Selkirk & Ashkirk linked with Ettrick & Yarrow in the Scottish Borders



Selkirk & Ashkirk Parish Church linked with Ettrick & Yarrow Parish Church



Introduction

Following the retirement of our previous minister in 2022, Lothian & Borders Presbytery has given us permission to call a minister on the basis of a reviewable five-year tenure. The charge is based in the Scottish Borders and comprises the recently united Selkirk & Ashkirk Parish Church (S&A) linked since 2021 with Ettrick & Yarrow (E&Y) Parish Church.

Each of the two congregations has its own Kirk Session (with occasional joint meetings). Both Kirk Sessions have voted to depart from the Church's historic and current practice in relation to human sexuality in order for applications to be considered from, amongst others, individuals who are in a same sex civil partnership or marriage.

We hold two worship services every Sunday (one in Selkirk, one in E&Y) and one on Wednesday morning in Selkirk. We also share recordings of our Sunday worship on our YouTube channel ([Ashkirk, Ettrick & Yarrow, Selkirk Churches - YouTube](#).)

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1. Our Vision

We are people of God, followers of Jesus, in Selkirk and the Valleys,

- worshipping God together
- serving our communities
- giving our talents
- growing in faith
- loving our neighbours

and our aim is always to be an open, praying, growing, enthusiastic, supportive Christian community, which

- nurtures members and welcomes newcomers
- offers a range of inspiring worship and teaching
- reaches out with the good news of Jesus Christ
- responds to human need by practical loving service in community and world



2. Our Future Minister



We are one Church family, however our linked parishes are very different: town (Selkirk & Ashkirk) and rural (Ettrick & Yarrow). Our linkage is in its early stages and progressing well. We are positive and excited about the future, and we need a minister who shares this enthusiasm and is flexible enough to value the two parishes' different characteristics while inspiring us to discover together God's vision for ourselves and our communities. You will

help build on our distinctive and combined strengths, as we plan for the future and will lead, guide and support us with loving pastoral care, reflecting our own open and welcoming attitude.

It is important to us that you have a natural interest in people, good interpersonal skills and are able to communicate effectively and with warmth, bringing scriptural truths to life, relevant for today. You will bring flexibility, creativity and humour to help us to develop our intergenerational approach to worship. You will encourage members to develop and use their own gifts in church life, community action, mission and outreach. Your passion and personal faith will be infectious and will bring encouragement to the spiritual life of our communities.

3. Our Congregational Life and Worship

The Selkirk & Ashkirk congregation currently has 303 members and adherents; Ettrick & Yarrow has 131 members and adherents. Both congregations have a reputation for being friendly and welcoming and there is a real buzz during coffee sessions before or after our worship services.



The Sunday service in Selkirk is attended by about 50-60 people and held either in the church sanctuary or in the hall. It is currently led by our locum minister or organised by our team of worship leaders. Once a month this takes the form of café church with a more informal and interactive style appreciated by young and old within the congregation. There is also a weekly shorter service in Selkirk at 11am on Wednesdays attended by around a dozen people and currently led by a rota of volunteers.

In Ettrick & Yarrow Parish, there are currently three church buildings, Kirkhope Church in Ettrickbridge, Ettrick Kirk and Yarrow Kirk. Each Sunday service is held in one of the three (at 11:30am, after the Selkirk service), with an average attendance of around 25. Occasional services are led by our worship leaders.



When there is a fifth Sunday in the month, there is a joint service for both congregations, alternating between Selkirk and Kirkhope. These are always joyful, uplifting events with tremendous singing.

Communion Services are held around six times per year on Sundays (and Wednesdays in Selkirk).

Worship combines modern and traditional. We include contemporary hymns from songwriters such as Stuart Townend and the Gettys. Our music, which is usually led by keyboard, is provided by a rota of musicians, and at Christmas and Easter, Selkirk is led by an enthusiastic choir. A large number of people participate in worship by reading the Bible and leading prayers for others.





We have introduced upgraded sound systems, TVs and screens to display hymns and relevant images which underpin the key points of the worship service.

We support local care home services, along with the other denominations in Selkirk.

Special services include Primary schools' services at Easter and Christmas, a Christingle service, Remembrance Sunday, and for the bereaved, an annual Remembering service.

Like many churches, most of our members are in the upper age bracket, but in Selkirk, there are currently a few young people who come on Sunday mornings. Families are always made welcome, and informal provision is made within the service. A regular teens' group of around eight young people has recently developed into a monthly intergenerational event of around 30-40 people on Friday nights aiming to nurture a wide range of children and families. We listen and learn from each other.



Our Leadership

Selkirk & Ashkirk Kirk Session has 22 members, and is in the process of setting up working groups under the Unitary Constitution. Ettrick & Yarrow Kirk Session has 10 members. The shared Church Administrator staffs the office three mornings a week to give administrative support to the minister and others. The administrator also manages the bookings for the busy Selkirk church hall.

The Session Clerks and some elders are part of a group which has been co-ordinating the linked parishes while we have been without a minister. This informal 'cluster group' initially guided us through the processes of linkage and union, and continues to coordinate the worship schedule to ensure a workable pattern of worship across all our communities.

Our Pastoral Care

We employ a part-time pastoral assistant, covering both parishes, and staying in touch with those in need of pastoral care as well as providing support and assistance to our minister. Most elders also have a district with pastoral oversight. The weekly prayer group, held on Zoom, has a pastoral prayer ministry and prays for all our members by name, as well as engaging in more global issues and following up prayer requests. One of the Selkirk elders is trained to take funerals and currently shares this ministry with the locum minister. In the Ettrick & Yarrow parish, with its extensive area of small villages, remote farms and houses, our churches are part of the Scottish Borders Council Community Resilience System and are deeply embedded within our communities. Care is a vital part of our outreach.

Small Groups

A house group meets fortnightly in members' homes for fellowship, study, discussion and prayer. Lent and Advent study groups attract up to thirty people.

Communication

We send out weekly notices by email, also available to read on our websites, with paper copies as needed. The Hird, our church magazine, is distributed five times a year electronically or in paper form to members and public spaces in the town. We also actively use our websites and post details of church and community activities and forthcoming services on these and our Facebook pages.

Fairtrade Church and Eco-congregation



Environmental and Trade Justice principles are embedded in congregational life, worship and prayers. Selkirk is proud to have achieved the Gold Award from Eco-congregation Scotland



Churches Together in Selkirk and the Valleys

Both congregations work in ecumenical partnership with the other Christian congregations in the town: St. John's Scottish Episcopal Church, Selkirk Baptist Church and Our Lady and St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, through our membership of Churches Together in Selkirk and the Valleys (CTSV). CTSV organises a range of joint activities, in which we take our part, including:



- Annual children's Holiday Club
- Services in the Care Homes
- Fresh Start Borders
- Selkirk Food Bank
- Christian Aid Week
- Joint churches service
- Joint witness around Easter and Christmas (Holy Week Services, Walk of Witness, Easter Day service, Carol Singing, Farmers' Market)

4. Our Communities, Outreach and Mission

Our Parishes are located in the lovely Scottish Borders embracing town, villages and country life.

Selkirk, with a population of around 5,400, is a small friendly rural town, proud of its heritage and traditions (Selkirk Common Riding and crafts associations) with a strong community spirit. It is said to be an ideal place to live, work, bring up a family or retire!

Selkirk has three Primary Schools and a High School of around 430 pupils. Borders College and Heriot Watt School of Textiles and Design are in nearby Galashiels.



Selkirk has a Health Centre, dentist, optician, small supermarket and a range of independent shops, leisure centre, swimming pool and adjacent campsite, tennis courts, golf course and many well supported sports clubs. Selkirk is proud of its Pipe Band and Silver Band, and the rural location means that walking, riding and cycling are popular activities.

Borders General Hospital is about seven miles away and is also near to where the picturesque Borders railway line terminates, giving travel time of approximately one hour to Edinburgh. There is a good bus service connecting Selkirk, other major Borders towns, Edinburgh and Carlisle.

Ashkirk is a small village of about 200 inhabitants. The village facilities include a village hall, a garage, a pub, a golf course, and an equestrian centre. The village hall has been used by the church for social functions and the occasional church service. Christian worship has taken place for nearly a thousand years locally and the church, surrounded by ash trees, is first mentioned in the records of the See of Glasgow in 1140.

Ettrick & Yarrow has a parish population estimated around 600, living in the Ettrick and Yarrow Valleys in small villages and farms set within miles of rolling hills, forests and rivers and a lot of sheep!

Community spirit is strong and is very important, especially in wintertime when the weather can be challenging



Church members are also members of local groups such as Scottish Women's Institute, craft, art, singing and sports groups. Village halls play an active role in our Valleys' life.

Ettrick & Yarrow Valleys have two small primary schools and one nursery; our older children attend Selkirk High School. People are used to travelling distances to reach the amenities in Selkirk and other towns and help is willingly given to those unable to drive.



We proudly continue the tradition of Blanket Preaching which dates from Covenanters' days by holding an annual open-air service up the hill at St Mary's Kirkyard, overlooking St Mary's Loch in the Yarrow Valley. Whatever the weather, our congregations come along with friends and visitors from far and wide. It is always a joyful and inspirational occasion.

Outreach and Mission

Selkirk runs 'Open Door' which is a weekly café. From small beginnings in 2014, the church hall is now bustling every Monday for coffees and a three-course meal, with a salaried café manager and a priceless team of volunteers, from both congregation and community. The aim is to decrease loneliness and social isolation, and we have built up good relationships with the regulars. We have already started planning Holiday at Home (for seniors) for summer 2024 in order to share our Christian faith more explicitly.



A social group for older members and friends, 'CAMEO' (Come And Meet Each Other) meets fortnightly during the winter months to provide company and entertainment.

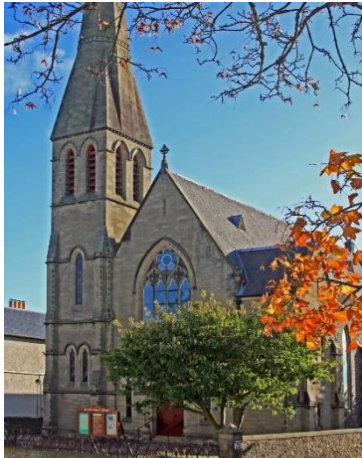
We have regularly enjoyed 'ReachOut' evening meals, giving the opportunity to invite friends and neighbours into the church fellowship to enjoy food together.

We have a longstanding personal interest in mission work with prisoners and ex-offenders in Guatemala through prayer and regular giving.

Among others, special offerings support Christian Aid and Tearfund, whose worship materials have enhanced our services on occasion.

In both congregations, and as followers of Jesus, we live out our faith by example, being actively involved in local organisations and community life, and offering comfort, care and witness to our neighbours and community. This Is Church Without Walls.

5. Our Buildings and Finance



Selkirk Parish Church, located on the main street in Selkirk, dates from 1880 and has seen several building improvements since then. Most recently, we replaced several pews with more comfortable seating, improved the sound system and installed a permanent AV screen.

The church hall sits behind the sanctuary and was extensively refurbished in 2015. We enjoy the bright, well-insulated space for worship as well as social events. The hall is well used through the week by several community groups. We employ a part-time cleaner.

Ashkirk's present church building was completed in 1790. However, the historic building does not have water or sewerage or Wi-Fi. During 2023 we held monthly evening services. The agreed Mission Plan for the Presbytery of Lothian and Borders notes that this building is to be closed and sold in 2024, following the union with Selkirk Parish Church in November 2023.



Ettrick & Yarrow currently has three Church buildings. Yarrow Kirk is in the Yarrow Valley and dates back to 1640. Kirkhope, built in 1841, is in the Ettrick Valley in a central location in the village of Ettrickbridge. Ettrick Kirk is based further up the Ettrick valley in a more rural location and dates back to 1824. All three buildings are typical rural churches, with interesting local historical connections, beautiful in their own right but lacking facilities such as toilets and Wi-Fi.

The agreed Mission Plan for the Presbytery of Lothian and Borders notes that two of the three Ettrick & Yarrow buildings are to be closed and we are in the early stages of carefully considering this and consulting with our communities. We plan to invest in the remaining building to ensure it is fit for our worship and community life into the future.

Building the Future

Following congregational discussion over the last few years, Selkirk & Ashkirk congregation has embarked on an exciting project, “Building the Future”, to redevelop the Selkirk Church building to provide a worship space, halls and rooms which are more welcoming, more flexible, more energy efficient, and more open to the community. The plans envisage:

- a new accessible glass entrance and social space with church office and reception desk at the front of the building
- the church sanctuary moving to first floor level, accessed by stairs or lift, a flexible well-equipped space used for worship by the congregation, and available for community use at other times
- improved kitchen and storage area, and additional multi-purpose rooms on the ground floor for church and community groups.



Currently, the steering group has permission from Presbytery to move forward and is in discussions with the General Trustees, and exploring funding options, while our architect is finalising the plans ready for a planning application in mid-2024.

Manse

The shared manse is a detached villa of modern design built in 1976 and recently refurbished. It is sited in Loanside, Selkirk, a pleasant, quiet cul-de-sac with an open aspect overlooking the town. It is a ten-minute walk from the Parish Church. The property is surrounded by a garden with mature trees and shrubs and a driveway suitable for several vehicles.



The ground floor accommodation consists of an entrance vestibule, hall with access to the large integral garage, study, double bedroom and toilet. On the first floor there is a landing with a lounge, dining room, newly fitted kitchen with appliances, small utility room, family bathroom with shower and two further double bedrooms, one with ensuite shower room. The manse has gas central heating, newly fitted double glazing and enhanced loft insulation justifying the property's EPC Energy Certificate of C rating.



Finance

Both congregations are financially secure and able to meet their financial commitments through members' offerings and occasional fundraising.

6. Our Invitation...

We are blessed to live, work and worship in a stunning part of the country and are excited about the future and what this will bring to you, our congregations and our communities.

We hope we have inspired you to get in touch.

A warm welcome awaits you.

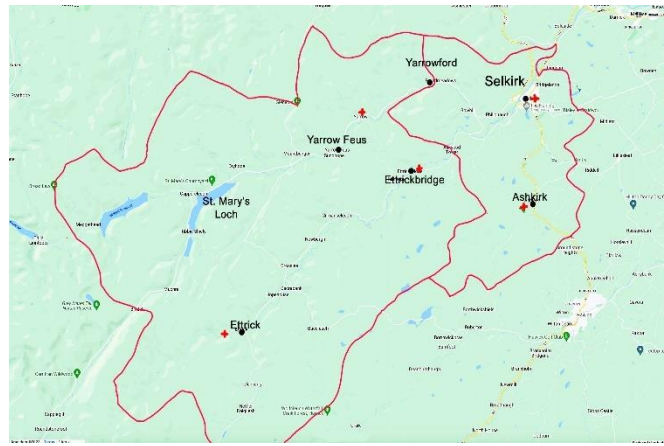
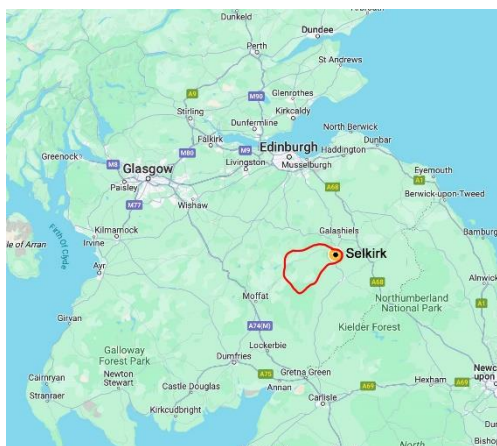
With Very Best Wishes
Selkirk & Ashkirk, Ettrick & Yarrow

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