

THE BRIDGE

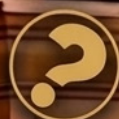
Great Start to
Bicentenary
Celebrations



Stones
God needs us all



Village News
Being part of our community

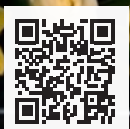


Alpha
Where now?



50 Years of Memories
A personal reflection

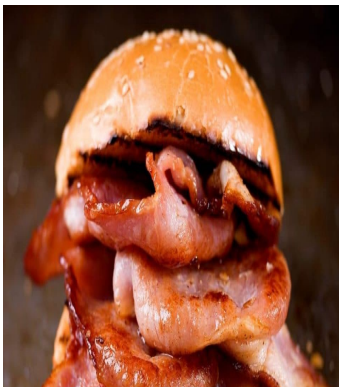
Muthill Parish Church



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Fundraising Breakfast for
Christian Aid
Sunday 10th May
(Communion Sunday)
9.00-10.00am
Further details to follow

7 pm
Bruce Hall
in aid of
Christian
Aid
Come along
for a fun
evening!

Editorial

I have recently started to learn Mah Jong with four other friends from the church including our teacher, Morag Paterson, or as we prefer to call her, Grand Master. Our regular meets are punctuated by Pungs, Chows and Kongs or even varieties of these words after a good glass of wine! One other fascination of this new venture is that even my dog Heather seems keen to learn. Learning new things can at times be a strain or even unsettling but with the right guidance and enthusiasm it starts to be fun and change is no longer frightening.



Whilst my interest in Mah Jong has been developing I was also encouraged by Adrian Davidson to read “Our Iceberg is Melting” by John Kotter as a prelude to some important discussions coming up in our Kirk Session on the need for our church to seriously consider how to attract younger families and children if we are genuinely interested in our future. As many will have perceived there is an imbalance in the composition of our church family which is worrying. Whilst everyone welcomes that our congregation continues to increase, sadly it is not as yet growing with younger families and children, which is so important for creating a lively and progressive church family as well as providing future leaders for our church.

John Kotter is a Harvard Professor and his best-selling book uses a fable story of an Emperor penguin colony facing the destruction of its iceberg home to highlight the dangers that any organisation has, if it does not seriously consider its future and urgently develop effective steps in tackling change. It is a relatively short book with important messages which I personally find convincing. It is, therefore, my hope that many others of our Eldership will also read it as its simple engaging story provides powerful insights into the importance of managing change in any organisation.

The Church, as a national entity, has never been good as an organisation in effecting change probably because History remains such an important focus of its structure and mission. By its nature it also relies substantially on volunteers not employees to run it, which makes it different from business organisations and some of their approaches to change. Further, I am sure that we have all heard the common fallback comment when people are nervous about effecting change that “God will provide” but the danger in this is that it can create complacency. My understanding has always been that as followers of Jesus, God wants us and needs us to be fishers of men, going out and spreading the word enthusiastically and that must be supported by progressive and steady change in our church to ensure that it remains ever relevant and welcoming to all ages.

Interim Moderator's Letter

Dear friends,



One thing you will notice in this issue of The Bridge is frequent reference to the bicentenary of Muthill Parish Church. Two hundred years of continuous service and outreach is not bad going by anyone's standard, but I'd say that the recognition of this milestone at Muthill has been celebrated in a relaxed and happy way. The service at which John Macmillan came from the local Masonic Lodge to speak about all the records that it holds with regard to the laying of the foundation stone in particular was both interesting and informative. Judging by the turnout at that service, it was clear that a large number of church members and others with Muthill connections wanted to hear about this. And then, of course, the following Sunday we were delighted to welcome the Moderator of the General Assembly, The Rt. Rev. Rosemary Frew and her husband, who had found time in what is otherwise a very busy schedule to come and associate with that service. Again, the biggest turnout which we have ever had, for as long as I have served as Interim Moderator. These have been good and interesting events, and we praise God for His blessings on so many forms of outreach which have taken place over the years.

So we now look forward to what is to come. The Kirk Session has recently had another round of talks with Presbytery as to how best the ministry offered by Muthill can fit with the churches and congregations around us. There would appear to be three possibilities. One would be a link with Ardoch and Blackford, which was preferred, another would be linking with Comrie and Crieff, and the third would involve Mid Strathearn, which is a collection of several rural congregations to the east of Crieff. The Kirk Session are keen that our congregation should choose their own minister.

That is, of course, the right of every congregation in The Church of Scotland. Ardoch and Blackford would not be in a position to offer that until their present ministry concludes, and the other two are in various stages of adjustment at the moment, without established ministries. It is therefore proposed that Muthill be placed, for now, under guardianship of the Presbytery, which effectively maintains the status quo for up to three years in the first instance, until the overall position becomes clearer. Very little would therefore change at this time, and the congregation would continue under an Interim Moderator.

A lack of young people is a problem which most churches face in the present age. Muthill is in this position also, although we do have five or six regular attendees in this age group, ably led by Adrian Davidson. Adrian has been providing Christian

education of our young people, largely on his own, for quite some time and he is due our warm thanks for all that he is doing. Gail Clark is about to come on board to offer some assistance, once she has obtained the required clearance. All of our young people are musical, and it is our intention to capitalise on that in the months ahead. This is just one area where help has been required for some time; there are many others in the congregation. Having said that, I want to pay tribute to our high number of members who do come forward and offer their skills where needed. Anything from financial skills to baking skills, from the Bible Study Group to the recent Alpha Course – all show people really putting themselves out to support the work of the congregation. It is truly remarkable how this all just seems to work in Muthill Church- so a very sincere 'thank you' from the interim moderator to all concerned. Christian service is of the highest order and there is plenty evidence of it in Muthill.

With every blessing and good wish,

Iain F. Paton, Interim Moderator.



Sunday Services
Every Sunday
10.30am
Holy
Communion
Sunday 10th May
Preachers listed
on church
website

Bicentenary Celebrations launched

Sunday worship on March 15th and 22nd, 2026, will go down in the annals of our church as memorable events. They marked the 200th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of our church building, and when one thinks that over three generations of Christians have contributed to our present church, this is certainly a milestone worth recording with joy and thanks to God for his enduring blessing and guidance.



March 15th was celebrated with members from the Lodge of St John No.192 Muthill in attendance. Their records from 1826 were illuminating both about the foundation stone and the solemnity of the laying ceremony but

also about the status of our village in 1826. How many of us knew that at that time Muthill was significantly larger with a population of over 2,900 and rising to 3,297 by 1830, much of this increase thought to be due to the building of the church using labourers from afar. It was also interesting to hear the quote from a representative of Auchterarder Presbytery of that time that “few villages, we think, can be compared with



Muthill, as to the beauty of its locality, its cleanliness, and the simple artless manners of its people. All its poor are well supplied, and none of them allowed to beg; whilst on the other hand, none of its inhabitants are so rich as to keep from working. But what strikes the visitor to Muthill most, is the amphitheatre of hills around it; and then its stately church, unequalled, it is said, by any country church in the land.” The foundation stone was laid in March 1826 by the local Masonic Lodge and completed in August 1828 for a total cost of

£6,900 and how many of us knew that at that time the village had three whisky distilleries.

As for the actual ceremony on 14 March 1826, there was a dignified large and solemn procession from the Lodge down Willoughby Street, which

firstly stopped at the interim church (for long in a bad state of repair), where the incumbent minister, Rev. John Russell, delivered a powerful sermon on Exodus 20 v.24, after which the procession proceeded to the new church site where, with prayer, the foundation stone was blessed. There was also lots of symbolism displayed in the procession with items such as a plumb, square and mallet being carried as well as the cornucopia or horn of plenty, the symbol of abundance, wealth and prosperity wishing all three on the future new church.



As for the foundation stone, in a cavity created within it, there is a time capsule, a hermetically sealed bottle and cover containing, various coins of the day (totalling £1:19s:1,3/4d), seven newspapers of the day, an Edinburgh almanac, a parchment scroll with the names of the noblemen and gentlemen heritors of the parish of Muthill. The cavity of the stone itself was sealed as part of the ceremony strongly bonded with iron, run in with lead, using the building tools symbolically carried down to the site in the procession. After the stone had been applied with square, plumb and level it is also recorded that the presiding nobleman and architect then poured wine, corn and oil onto it, finishing with three symbolic knocks of the mallet, whilst thousands in attendance cheered heartily. Indeed, it is further recorded that the village on 14th March, 1826, exhibited a scene of unusual bustle and gaiety, with its inhabitants witnessing the gratifying spectacle.



Whilst our service on 15th March 2026 focused rightly on celebrating the earlier history of our church in Muthill, our worship on Sunday 22nd, was very much an occasion for focusing our gratitude on the present. And so, it included the presentation of long service certificates to five Elders, and we were very honoured to celebrate the occasion with the gracious presence of Rev Rosie Frew, current Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, who led and preached at the service. There was a large congregation present and afterwards everyone participated in a buffet lunch prepared and served by the church family. There was a great buzz and joy about the whole

occasion and Rosie's sermon gave strong encouragement for the task that lies ahead as a Christian church in today's world and how we all have a role to play.

There rightly remains much to achieve as we tackle our 5 year plan with a desire to develop a stronger balanced church family with a meaningful and relevant mission for our times, but we give thanks and take inspiration from the important legacy of those who have preceded us and we look forward confidently to being even stronger as we anticipate further celebrations of the bicentenary of our church as a worshipping community on the present site in 2028.

Stones



We reprint Tom Gordon's meditation on "Stones" which was quoted in Rt. Rev Rosie Frew's memorable sermon on 22nd March, 2026 as part of our bi-centenary celebrations. Rev. Tom Gordon, a retired Parish minister and former Hospice Chaplain was a long standing member of the Iona Community (2017-2023).

STONES

God of this place, there are big stones in these walls, solid, dependable stones, hauled up onto scaffolding by pulleys and ropes, heaved into place by skilled masons, and holding these walls in place, for centuries, for decades, for now, so that we can use this sanctuary for our worship and rest.

God of this place, thank you for these big stones, for their strength and purpose, and for their enduring ability to make this place what it needs to

be.

God of this place, there are little stones in these walls, fitted in, banged into place, to fill the gaps, to bind with other stones to make these walls complete: misshapen stones, all with a space for their shape alone; once discarded stones, discarded no longer; odd stones, yet each one important.

God of this place, thank you for the little stones, for their unobtrusive, necessary part, strengthening these walls for us, making this place what it needs to be.

God of our lives, thank you for the big people, in our churches, in our communities, in our world, carrying responsibilities, carved out for important roles: people we rely on; people who are our role models; people we trust; people who make our lives, our church, our world worthwhile.

God of our lives, help the big people to hang-in-there, because we need them so much, to keep the whole thing going, making our world what it needs to be. And if I'm one of those big stones, help me not to crumble with the weight of it all.

God of our lives, help us remember the little people, those seemingly insignificant, misshapen people, who don't get much recognition: shy people; diffident people; gentle people; low-self-esteem people; not-sure-I'm-really-any-good people. Fit them into your walls, to make the church, our communities, our world what they're meant to be. For without them, churches crumble, communities perish, the walls of our world fall down.

God of our lives, hooray for the little people! Three cheers for the little stones! Thank God they're there.

And if I'm a misshapen, ordinary stone, minding my own business, doing my bit, filling my place in the wall, just being me, thank you for putting me here. Thank you for believing in me and building me into your walls.

Amen

50 Years of Memories

It must have been late 1975 or early 1976 when my wife and I, and our baby daughter had a visit from the Minister at our farm cottage. In those days, this was nothing unusual, but he had a purpose; he wanted me to be an Elder at Muthill Church. While this was a surprise, I said that I would consider it. I suppose that I could see his reasoning – my Dad had just retired from Session after 30 years' service and my father-in-law was an Elder in North Perthshire. So I had some inkling as to what the job was all about. I remember talking to Christine about it and saying that, for the next 50yrs, I was going into something that would have decreasing popularity and would mean a lot of work to keep things going. However, I agreed and so I was ordained beside my school pal, Ian McLaren, on 21st March 1976.

When the two of us joined, we were the very much the junior members of Session, who included Sydney McIntosh, David and James McLaren, Major Gardner, Dr Martin, Laurence Stalker, Alastair Lang (NB. no ladies, they came later) all of whom I looked up to, as I grew from childhood. I thought that we were very lucky to have such leaders in our Church but that thought has been sustained over this period of time with the subsequent members who have been added.

In our early days, Ian and I were tasked with finding people to read the Lesson at Sunday Services. We did alternate months. Sometimes it was easier doing it ourselves than persuading others to take part. That practice still exists today and we're lucky that we have so many accomplished readers that we only get a shot twice a year.

I had been singing in folk clubs in my younger day and so I thought that I would join the Choir to try and help. Joining Helen Stewart, Margaret Shaw, Anne Greig, Jean Comrie, David Laing and John Lyle was an education in itself as I couldn't read music (still can't) under the tutelage of Alastair Lang. I got other jobs too. Property convener stands out as I had to recommend to Session to take down St John's Hall at the West end of the village in 1979. That didn't go down well with my more senior colleagues and we were lucky that the local council put a compulsory demolition order on it. We managed to remove doors and good wood before it disappeared and that is why the Bruce Hall was built with minimum expense. Social convener came and went. Worship convenership arrived in the early 90s and lasted for 20yrs. Ian and I were invited to the Manse in 1995 to be told that the Session Clerk was retiring and a replacement was required. What was unknown to the minister and to the wider community, was that Ian and his wife were leaving the area for business reasons, hence Muggins got landed with the job. That lasted for 16yrs and then I managed to offload it to Helen-May who has done a much better job. Because of my secular career, I was appointed 3yrs

ago, to succeed the wonderful Sandy Birnie as finance convener who had given us tremendous service for over 20yrs. So that brings me up to date to 22nd March 2026 when the “Moderatoress” of the General Assembly came to Muthill to present me and five colleagues with our “gold watches” at our regular Sunday Service. My only regret was that Ian McLaren wasn’t standing beside me. Our refurbished Sanctuary and our worshipping style continues to attract more people on a regular basis. Our Wednesday soup lunch caters for 35-50 people on a weekly basis which shows that there is a “need” there and will be better conducted when our kitchen facilities are extended this year. Thank you for all your assistance!!

Willie Bell



The poster is framed with a decorative border and features illustrations of various plants and fruits. At the top left is a branch with orange berries, and at the top right is a branch with purple berries. The main title is in large green letters. Below it, the date and time are in orange. The location is in green. A note about tools is in green. At the bottom, there are illustrations of a small green plant, a larger green plant, and a raspberry bush. The footer contains the Muthill Village Trust logo and name, and the funding source.

**COMMUNITY
PLANTING MORNING**

**Saturday 25th April
10am**

Coronation Park

PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN TOOLS
ALL WELCOME

 **MUTHILL
VILLAGE TRUST**

Funded by Perth & Kinross
Council's Green Living Fund

Redundant Churches finding new life!

How sad it is that you see so many redundant churches when there are so many other things they can be used for that benefit the whole community. Much as I don't like seeing the



pews being removed from churches I have to admit that it does leave a lovely, large space that can be used for an endless number of other activities. Our church in Muthill is a good example, used by different groups most days of the week, with after school activities for the local kids, a great place for the school plays, a gym class once a week, church meetings, free soup lunches every Wednesday, a once a month film show and discussion. I have even been to an excellent Burn's Supper in the church hall some years ago. In fact, it was during one of the Mens'

Group meetings in the church that the idea of the free, Muthill Community Minibus was dreamt up and brought into reality!

Another church, also with the pews removed, that makes the most of its space is Comrie Parish Church where, since 2012, on the second Wednesday of the month they have a **Sing-a-long** featuring musical performances, community singing and afternoon tea finished off with amazing meringues!!



For the local community, It is a great social get-together, and thoroughly enjoyed by all with about 50 -100 people taking part. On arrival, you are given a large programme with the words of all the songs for that day and they cover everything from *Waltzing Matilda* to the *Northern Lights of Aberdeen*. I have been fortunate enough to drive our minibus over there a couple of times and therefore have

gone into the sing-a-long and a very warm welcome and hospitality are extended to all. They are delighted to have people from near and far and the first time I went I realised there was even one of our 4 legged friends joining us (see picture).

This last time we had a great guitarist leading the singing with the enthusiastic Mairi Philp making an excellent compere. If more congregations took a leaf out of these churches' books it is amazing how many people would start to join in and contribute towards a greater social cohesion and the upkeep of the churches. It is all free and run by volunteers but there is also a donation box and most seem more than happy to contribute. How wonderful if more of these often very beautiful buildings were brought back into life!

Lorna Clarke



Humility

A few years ago, I visited the Smithsonian Museum's Hall of Human Origins. Our guide, the curator of anthropology, was keen to help



Christians understand his research. Whatever you make of the evidence for human evolution, the fact remains that other species a bit like us were around before we came on the scene – or in the case of Neanderthals, at the same time.

Part of the exhibit included lifelike reconstructions of the face and hair of several different hominins, displayed on pillars at the right height for each species. So, I could crouch down to 'meet' *Homo floresiensis* or stand tall to look into the eyes of *Homo heidelbergensis*. Most of these – beings? creatures? – were on other branches of the evolutionary tree to us, and we share a common ancestor much further back. I did, however, feel as if I was meeting my forebears.



As I walked between the statues I asked myself, "Why us?" There's evidence that Neanderthals used symbolism as we do, and also buried their dead. Did they have the potential to evolve to a point where they could do similar things to us? The curator explained how, as the ice ages came and went, human beings moved around but other species appear to have stayed put and suffered the consequences – they just weren't ready yet for that big change. As I took in the

displays about how we began to gather socially around a fire, make music or write, I felt humbled. We managed to adapt, but we could so easily have disappeared with the rest.

In his book *The Message of Creation*, theologian David Wilkinson shares his view that being made in the image of God has nothing to do with our own cleverness or abilities, but instead it is a gift. God created us on purpose (I believe through the long slow process of evolution) and chose to enter into a relationship with us, making us His representatives on earth.

Thankfully I don't have to figure out how to interact with other human-like hominins today. I do, however, have an equal share in humankind's God-given commission to tend and keep creation. Am I ready to go further than ensuring my

own species' survival - not necessarily because we have evolved further than our ice-age ancestors, but because I have one of the 'new hearts' promised in Ezekiel 11:19? Can I work together, in a true spirit of humility, with people from all over the world to ensure the full diversity of life can flourish?

This article 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.

Sudoku

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

Kirk And Community News

Easter



We were very blessed this year with two memorable celebration services to mark Jesus' death and resurrection. On Good Friday there was an intimate and moving evening service ably led as always by Rev. Alex Mitchell. Alex's message was clear and well-illustrated. Another highlight of this service was the beautiful accompaniment rendered to the hymn song "When I survey the wondrous Cross" provided by Willie Bell on guitar and Tommy Stanners on mouth organ.

Then, on Easter Sunday, it was so wonderful to welcome a packed congregation to join in celebrating Christ's rising from the dead. With Easter being the major festival of the church, we were indeed blessed with a beautiful sunny morning despite predictions of very blustery weather from Storm Dave and how nice it feels when you have to put out more and more chairs because of the size of the congregation. One of our more recent traditions is flowering the cross and, once again, a small team of helpers (Rhona, Irene and Fiona) did a great job collecting and adorning the cross with hundreds of daffodils ready to receive individual donations from the congregation during a special interlude in the service. The Rev. Alex also led this service and gave stirring reflections focusing on witnessing and the truthfulness



of the resurrection witnessed by so many people in different ways. Both services in their own ways were truly uplifting and memorable. There is without doubt a feeling of resurgence in the congregation as evidenced by attendance at so many service recently and how nice it was for refreshments after the service to be organised and served by Fiona and Katherine, two very valued newcomers to the church family and not forgetting some delicious homemade flapjacks to accompany the coffee and teas.



company the coffee and teas.

Village Easter Celebrations



Muthill In Bloom excelled this year with the decoration of the Easter Egg trees in Highlandman Park. It was not only good to see the sizeable number of helpers present to assist in placing the eggs on the trees but, even before that, lots of small groups in the village assisted in painting the many eggs to be displayed with vibrant colours.

Then, on Easter Monday, there was the Smigus Dyn-gus fun event also in Highlandman Park when children took part in a traditional Polish water fight which has its Christian origins marking the end of Lent and cleansing people against dirt and disease. Members of the Church was present supporting this children's event providing hot chocolate, teas and coffees.



Social Fellowship

We are pleased to note that the Exercise Class will be resuming sometime next month and there is a new summer rambling group with a varied programme of comfortable walks planned over the months of May to September ranging from a walking tour of historic Muthill and its environs, to a visit to the Bluebell Woods in Kinclaven. Mid summer will see a trip to Comrie with a riverside walk along to Cultybraggan and Loch Leven and in September, walks will include the autumn colours of Lady Mary's Walk and Torlum Hill.

Each walk has been designed as chatty strolls with friends, old and new, and all will include a welcome refreshment at a nearby café. Brochures with more details are available from the Church Welcome desk. The Mens Group is also planning a summer outing to the Japanense Garden in Cowden, Clackmanan-shire and their weekly coffee meets now include indoor bowling, and monthly quizzes. Finally, it is good to see the Book Club increasing again. They met on 10th April for their regular review meeting and the new book is Clear by Carys Davies.

Kirk And Community News

Long Service Awards

As recorded elsewhere in this edition of the magazine Long Service Certificates were presented during the service at which the Moderator was present to various Elders who have given services over many years. As Helen-May, Session Clerk, in introducing the awards said, “these Elders had all gone about their responsibilities, working life permitting, being part of the Kirk Session, visiting their districts and lending a

hand when required often in property matters be it filling the potholes or repairing and erecting the star on the church at Christmas or a myriad of other behind the scene jobs. They had done this duties so quietly and conscientiously without any fanfare or looking for praise. They had served us well and continue to serve the congregation”.



Those honoured were:

James Thomson	: 36 years of service
James Cantlie	: 40 years of service
Peter McIntosh	: 40 years of service
Graham Donaldson	: 40 years of service
Alexander Bayne	: 42 years of service
Willie Bell	: 50 years of service



This year Christian Aid Week runs from 10th _ 16th May. In support of this there will be some fundraising events organised, details to follow!! In the meantime what's the money being raised for this year? 'Where hardship means hunger... urban farmers can grow hope.'

In the crowded and noisy settlements of Nairobi, most parents wake every single day knowing that they must go and earn money, otherwise their children won't eat that evening.

With no formal work opportunities, heartbreakingly low pay, and no social support, it's a precarious and frightening daily struggle that no family should have to face.



The aching hunger is bad enough. The relentless stress is overwhelming. 'When I wake up, I have a lot of worries. Sometimes I don't have food,' says Fridah Moraa, a recently widowed grandmother determined to support her family on what little she earns.

'Now I'm responsible for everything.' With school costs, rent and water to cover, providing food for every meal is a problem that never goes away.

But Fridah's faith in God, and in her own ability to provide, is unwavering. With tools, seeds and specialist training from Christian Aid's partner, Beacon of Hope, Fridah's now making the most of a small space in the city to grow a steady supply of fresh vegetables that she can cook for her family or sell on her market stall.

Reflecting on her new role in life, Fridah says: 'I never thought that a woman could also be a provider.'

With her inner strength, unstoppable resolve, and a little help from Beacon of Hope, Fridah's overcoming poverty to feed the youngest members of her family and protect them from the threat of malnutrition.

Fridah rightly takes pride in all she's achieving: 'When I harvest what I've planted, it makes me happy. Urban farming has changed my life.'

Fiona MacMichael

Kirk And Community News

Muthill Village Trust



Muthill Village Trust have been busy over the last few months. Our Coronation Park planting project kicked off earlier this year with Muthill Primary School planting in a lovely selection of dwarf fruit trees. Our thanks to the children for doing such a great job! We have a community planting morning on Sat 25th April when we'll be planting in a wide variety of fruit bushes. Everyone is welcome to come along from 10am to help. The Muthill Sportive team are also working hard ahead of this year's event which takes place on Sat 29th August. As ever, there are routes to suit all abilities including the popular family ride. You can find out more and book at Entry Central. We're always happy to welcome new volunteers too so, if you're interested in helping to plan the event or supporting on the day with marshalling or catering then please just get in touch on sportive@muthillvillagetrust.org. With the Hub project paused due to a current lack of funding, the team have been working to gather information about other options for improving community facilities in Muthill. The aim is to share these at a community consultation as soon as we can to get a consensus on how best to proceed. We've also been advised that it would be helpful for any future funding if Muthill has a Local Place Plan so this will form part of the consultation event too. The cycle path team have continued to liaise with PKC on plans for the second phase of the path. Recent changes mean PKC will now need to apply for any funding rather than MVT. We all hope that the council will be able to support the long held community ambition to have a safe and accessible route to Crieff. Finally, following feedback and requests at various community events MVT are now working with other village groups on building a website for Muthill. The aim is to have a resource which shares information for residents and visitors alike about all the wonderful things our village has to offer. For regular updates on these projects and access to the village oil club why not consider joining MVT? It's free and easy to join. You can sign up on www.muthillvillagetrust.org and if the online world's not your thing we have paper copies of our membership form on the display board in the small hall in the village hall. Just fill one in and we'll do the rest, you can also choose to receive a paper copy of our newsletter. Thanks for reading and best wishes from all at

MVT. Company



Alpha

Our first Alpha course for many years has now finished and it has been a stimulating project. It was in December that we started showing a series of short films at our Sunday services on growing churches and how Alpha could have a positive effect. They certainly promoted interest and provided us with a starting group of 19 including four hosts. The group proved to be an interesting combination with about half who were seeking to find help from the course in terms of refreshing their faith and the other half were more in the early stages of their journey of faith. As



the course settled down this proved a valuable combination as the older members of the group provided helpful experiential input, whilst the new comers contributed important questioning which promoted meaningful discussion. The video presentations which were the basis of the sessions were well produced, retaining the interest of the group throughout the course and the fellowship created was strong and certainly encouraged by the meals

which started each session. In fact the course as a whole even resulted in a positive response to the idea of a reunion which is being held later in April. Whilst lots of analysis has still to be completed on the value of the course, questionnaire feedback so far received from course members has been very helpful and it is more than likely that Alpha will be refined to our local context and become an on-going part of our education programme, stimulating interest in examining questions of our faith both within the church family and beyond. If we are to grow our church and achieve a healthy church family, this seems a very worthwhile investment.

A Plea for Change at Presbytery



We are reporting here on a significant meeting of Perth Presbytery held in early February where members gave a strong and consistent call to Presbytery to make a fundamental shift in the way it tackles mission planning. Presbytery is the intermediate tier between the central Church of Scotland and its General Assembly and the local congregations which are run by Kirk Sessions. Presbytery is attended by ministers and Presbytery representatives appointed by each Kirk Session and Perth Presbytery currently has over 200 members. Perth Presbytery also covers Angus, Dundee, Perth, Dunkeld, Meigle and Stirling comprising 105 congregations. The central message of the debate was that Presbytery must move away from a focus on buildings, numbers and institutional survival towards a genuinely **mission-centred, spiritually grounded and disciple-focused process**.

Participants widely agreed that the current planning process has often been overly structural and bureaucratic, placing heavy demands on ministers and church volunteers alike, generating frustration, fatigue and demoralisation. Repeated re-organisation has been time consuming with communication and consultation being weak and inadequate resulting in confusion and anxiety especially in rural communities. A feeling was also expressed that there had been pastoral insensitivity in decisions, such as handling unions and linkages.

There is widespread concern about the church's limited engagement

with **young people**, lack of confidence in **outreach and evangelism**, and insufficient focus on **personal discipleship**. Many congregations are perceived as inward-looking, with the church increasingly irrelevant to the lives of most people in contemporary society.

Capacity challenges are significant, including declining ministerial numbers, ageing congregations, and excessive reliance on a small group of overstretched leaders. Financial pressures continue to affect many congregations, though some participants noted that faithful and imaginative mission often releases new energy and resources.

Underlying many concerns is the need for **cultural change**, moving from institutional preservation toward shared leadership, collaboration, trust, and a renewed focus on spiritual vitality. **Catching the Wind of the Spirit** Respondents emphasised that genuine mission cannot be generated primarily through planning structures but must flow from **prayer, spiritual discernment, and openness to the Holy Spirit**. Presbytery is encouraged to reshape its culture and meetings so that Group Feedback mission and discipleship, rather than governance and process, become the dominant focus.

Presbytery also has a key role in **sharing stories of hope, innovation, and learning**, encouraging collaboration between congregations, supporting leadership development, and providing clarity and stability in planning.

Encouraging Creativity and Faithful Risk

There is a strong desire to foster a culture where congregations feel **safe to experiment, take risks, and learn from failure**. Participants believe that stepping beyond traditional church boundaries, engaging more fully with communities, and embracing the “weirdness” of the Gospel can open new opportunities for mission. Nonchurch communities are often more open than expected, and authentic faith, humility, and relational presence remain powerful witnesses.

The Bridge has been canvassing many of the themes of this important meeting of Presbytery for sometime and it is to be hoped that catching the wind of the Spirit will also be experienced in our own Muthill Parish Church where a Five Year Plan has just been completed which will hopefully encourage creativity and faithful risk.

News from St James'

We are delighted to note that it has been announced by the Bishop of



St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane that St Kessog's and St James' Scottish Episcopal Churches are to have a new Priest-in-Charge with the appointment of Revd. Rachel Wright. Rachel is currently serving as Curate at St Mary's Dunblane. It is expected that Rachel will be licensed as Priest-in-Charge in August, date to be confirmed. Rachel has stated on Facebook: "I am delighted to be appointed as Priest-in-Charge of St Kessogs, Auchterarder and St James, Muthill, two warm congregations who I look forward to getting to know more. I am excited to walk with you on the journey of faith and hope that together we can develop the ways in which the

churches are a blessing to the communities of Auchterarder and Muthill. I will be praying for and ask that you also pray for me and my family in the time of transition ahead."

As ecumenical neighbours who have very much enjoyed the joint fellowship we have experienced with Rector Duncan Strathie and his wife at St James', we hope that this will continue under Rachel and her family as there is much we can achieve together as a Christian presence in our village of Muthill.

Whilst announcing this, please note that we have also received an open invitation from St James' Church to attend the 190 years celebration of their building with a very special Evensong on Sunday evening 3rd May when the Bishop will lead the service and the Choir of St Ninians Cathedral, Perth, will be in attendance and singing during the service. It starts at 5.30pm and there will be refreshments afterwards in our Bruce Hall.

General Assembly Of The Church

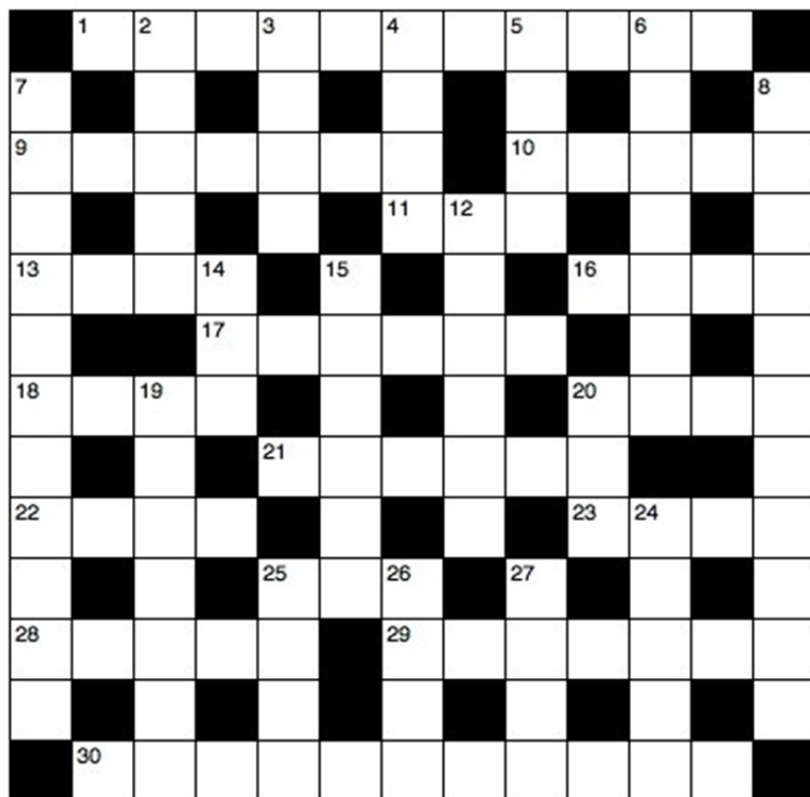


The General Assembly for 2026 will take place between 15-18 May. This is the governing body of our National Church of Scotland and The King has re-appointed Lady Elish Angiolini LT, DBE, KC as Lord High Commissioner. Lady Elish was appointed Solicitor General for Scotland in 2001, the first woman, the first procurator fiscal and the first solicitor to hold the post. She then served as Lord Advocate of Scotland from 2006 until 2011, the most senior law officer in Scotland.

The new Moderator will be Rev Gordon Kennedy. He is 62 years of age and has served as minister of Craiglockhart Parish Church in Edinburgh since 2012.

All sessions can be viewed online through the Church of Scotland website www.churchofscotland.org.uk. They are really worth dipping into when you have time as they show you the high standard of debate in our national church. The Church of Scotland website will also give you what debates take place on what days. There will be a full report on debates and decisions taken in the June edition of the Bridge.

Crossword



Across

- 1 Overpowered (Deuteronomy 11:4) (11)
 9 'The — are mantled with corn' (Psalm 65:13) (7)
 10 'Each man—a sword to his side' (Exodus 32:27) (5)
 11 On the death of Jesus the curtain in the temple was torn from— to bottom (Matthew 27:51) (3)
 13 Stagger (Isaiah 28:7) (4)
 16 'Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought— and doesn't do it, sins'



-
- (James 4:17) (2,2)
17 Stir up or provoke (Acts13:50) (6)
18 Burden (Luke11:46) (4)
20 'As far as the east is from the—, so far has he removed our transgressions from us' (Psalm 103:12) (4)
21 Sign (Luke23:38) (6)
22 'After that, Jesus poured water into a basin and began to—his disciples' feet' (John 13:5) (4)
23 The nature of the seven ears of corn which swallowed up the good ears in Pharaoh's dream (Genesis 41:23) (4)
25 Has (anag.) (3)
28 'This is the account of Shem, Ham and Japheth, —sons' (Genesis 10:1) (5)
29 'I will...make them drunk, so that they...sleep for—and— awake' (Jeremiah 51:39) (4,3)
30 Paul said of him, 'he often refreshes me and is not ashamed of my chains' (2 Timothy 1:16) (11)

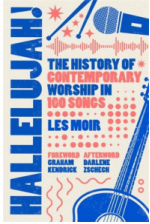
Down

- 2 Worth (Matthew 13:46) (5)
3 'A bruised — He will not break' (Matthew 12:20) (4)
4 'Suddenly a great company of the heavenly — appeared with the angel' (Luke 2:13) (4)
5 Slip (anag.) (4)
6 'Take an awl and push it through his — — into the door, and he will become your servant for life' (Deuteronomy 15:17) (3,4)
7 Bountiful (2 Corinthians 8:2) (11)
8 'Therefore, as we have —, let us do good to all people' (Galatians 6:10) (11)
12 Acquire (2 Timothy 2:10) (6)
14 Container cover (Numbers 19:15) (3)
15 'He...became obedient to death, even death on—!' (Philippians 2:8) (1,5)
19 Refrain (1 Peter2:11) (7)
20 'She began to—his feet with her tears' (Luke 7:38) (3)
24 One who worships Brahma, Vishnu or Shiva (5)
25 'Give to everyone who—you' (Luke6:30) (4)
26 'I lift up my eyes to the hills; where does my—come from?' (Psalm 121:1) (4)
27 One of those whom the Lord said would be taken from Jerusalem and Judah as judgment on them (Isaiah 3:2) (4)

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Book Reviews

New Christian Book Reviews



Hallelujah! – The History of Contemporary Worship in 100 Songs by Les Moir, SPCK, £19.99

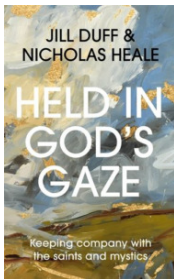
From *How Great Thou Art* to *The Blessing*, *Hallelujah* invites you on a journey through 100 of the world's most beloved worship songs – songs that have shaped church life and personal devotion over the last 50 years.

Inside, you'll find the full lyrics to each song, along with the remarkable stories behind them: how they were written, what inspired them, and why they continue to resonate with worshippers around the world. Whether you're rediscovering old favourites or exploring new ones, this book will deepen your appreciation for the songs that move your soul.

Each song entry also features a QR code, giving you instant access to:

- Classic and contemporary performances on YouTube
- Printable chord charts for every song, perfect for musicians and worship leaders

More than a songbook, *Hallelujah* is a companion for anyone who wants to understand, play, and live the worship they love.



Held in God's Gaze – Keeping Company with the Saints and Mystics by Jill Duff & Nicholas Heale, SPCK, £15.99

Discover the wisdom, prayer, and spiritual insight of saints and mystics across Christian history. This book is an invitation to share the authors' experience of becoming friends in faith with the saints and mystics.

Those who feature reflect the wide sweep of Christian spiritual heritage: several are from the ancient and Celtic background; several reflect medieval spirituality – including women's



spirituality; there are the so-called 'Spanish Mystics', and some from more recent times.

Jill Duff and Nicholas Heale invite readers to share in their experience of friendship with holy figures, from ancient and Celtic saints to medieval mystics, women spiritual leaders, the Spanish Mystics, and modern voices of faith.

Through short, engaging chapters, the authors explore how these saints encountered God through prayer, scripture, and devotion, offering reflections that help readers grow in spiritual maturity. Each chapter concludes with study questions, perfect for individual meditation or group discussion.

Ideal for Christian spirituality enthusiasts, devotional readers, and anyone interested in saints, mysticism, prayer practice, and spiritual growth.



God's Homecoming – The Forgotten Promise of Future Renewal by Tom Wright, SPCK, £24.99

Building on his bestselling *Surprised by Hope*, Tom Wright now offers a comprehensive investigation into what the hope of salvation really means in terms of biblical teaching about the resurrection of the body.

Through a powerful exploration of Paul's letters and the Hebrew prophets, he reveals that biblical hope is not limited to individual salvation, but the renewal and reconciliation of all creation. At the heart of this hope is the promise that the Creator God will return to dwell among His people, filling the whole world with His glorious, healing presence.

Wright's in depth reading of Scripture reframes our understanding of grace, showing that Christianity is not about escaping the world but about God's initiative to restore it. When we stop asking, "How can I get to heaven?" and instead grasp God's desire to come and dwell with us, in us, and through us, we rediscover the true depth of the gospel: a story suffused with love, renewal, and divine purpose.

A profound follow-up to *Surprised by Hope, God's Homecoming* is essential reading for anyone interested in Christian theology, biblical studies, the afterlife, and the hope of resurrection, as well as fans of Tom Wright (NT Wright).



Inspired – Stories of adventure, risk-taking & God's faithfulness By Simon Guillebaud, 10Publishing, £3.99

Inspired brings together the stories of eight very different individuals. Although their lives are unique, they all share the same thing: they are being used by God to share the gospel of hope around the world.

From the jungles of Brazil to the mountains of Cambodia, Simon Guillebaud introduces a series of modern-day missionary stories that will encourage your faith and reassure you that God is still very much at work in the world.

Sudoku Solutions

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

Crossword Solution:

ACROSS:

1, Overwhelmed. 9, Valleys. 10, Strap. 11, Top. 13, Reel. 16, To do. 17, Incite. 18, Load. 20, West. 21, Notice. 22, Wash. 23, Thin. 25, Ash. 28, Noah's. 29, Ever not. 30, Onesiphorus

Down:

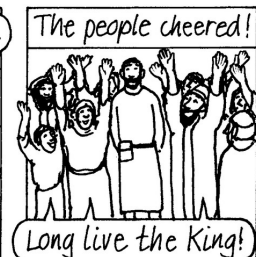
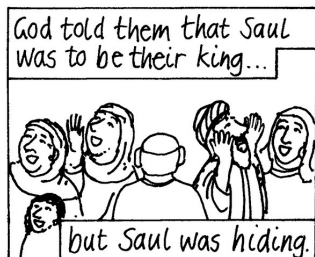
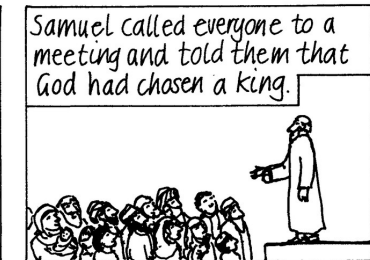
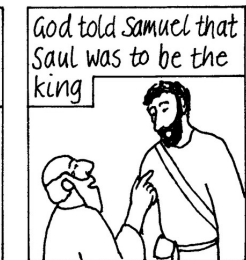
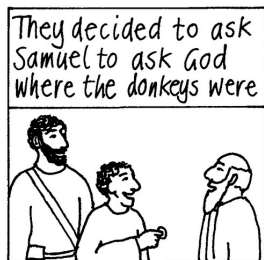
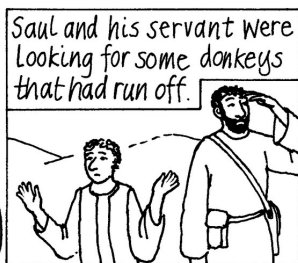
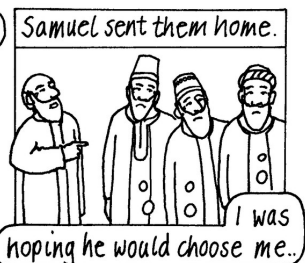
2, Value. 3, Reed. 4, Host. 5, Lisp. 6, Ear lobe. 7, Overflowing. 8, Opportunity. 12, Obtain. 14, Lid. 15, A cross. 19, Abstain. 20, Wet. 24, Hindu. 25, Asks. 26, Help. 27, Hero.

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Samuel 8:1-10:1, 17-24

Samuel had been a good leader of Israel
but he was now old. The leaders of the
twelve tribes came to talk to him...





Our Mission in Muthill Parish Church is to achieve a closer relationship with God and, as an ever welcoming church family, to tell all we meet about the joys and challenges of following Jesus.

Registered Charity
Number
SC004984

Church Contacts:

Address: Station Road, Muthill, Crieff PH5 2AR

Church website: www.muthilparishchurch.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/muthillchurch

Email: muthillparish@yahoo.com

Bridge Submissions: macahiph@gmail.com

Useful Telephone Numbers

Emergencies:

NHS 24	111
Emergency	999
Water	0800 0778 778
Floods	0345 988 1188
Environment	01738 476476

Hospitals:

Crieff Comm.	01764653173
PRI	01738623311
Ninewells	01382660111

Crieff Medical Centre:

Blue Practice	01764652283
Red Practice	01764652456

PKC: 01738 475000

Church of Scotland:

Perth Pres.	07596868064
Central HQ.	01312255722

Police:

Emergency	999
Non-Emergency	101
Action Fraud	101



Our Cover theme for this edition is "A memorable visit"

Thanks to Joseph for the cover photo & Raffle for sourcing the graphics and helping in the production

Our Aim

The Bridge seeks to give updates on church activities and to be thought provoking on issues affecting delivery of our mission

Submission Deadline for Next Edition
Friday 5 June, 2026