

THE BRIDGE



Life's Big Questions
Traitor Or Faithful
Kirk And Community News



Muthill Parish Church
CHRISTMAS EDITION 2025



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Kirk Roll

Deaths: We were saddened to record the deaths of our members, Sally Coutts and David McAinsh Brown

Baptisms: River Wolf Campbell-Calliva 4/5/25
Jackie Townsley on 28/9/25

New members: Our congregation continues to grow and we are very pleased to welcome the following new members:

Peter and Isabel Clark
Fiona MacMichael
John Soutar

Editorial



So often we dwell on the things that seem impossible rather than on the things that are possible. So often we are depressed by what remains to be done and forget to be thankful for all that has been done.

- Marian Wright Edelman

This edition of our magazine is published during Advent - the church season of preparing and waiting for Christmas, the arrival of Jesus, then onto the beginning of a new year. Life's challenges continue to

be part of this season but I find the truth in the above quote so well crafted by Marian Wright Edelman. There is much darkness in today's world and those who bring light and joy through service to others, deserve to be acknowledged and thanked at this time of year. We don't know what a new year will bring but we do know what has been good about times past and what has contributed to the well-being of our community.

Looking back over this year 2025, we have much to be thankful for in Muthill. We all have different memories, but for me, some of the highlights, which certainly made me proud of our little village included Muthill in Bloom's changing seasonal displays around the village and their amazing Blooming Shed with all its goodies, the growth of our Community Bus service, the success of our village fundraising events and Open Days, all of which so well bring the village socially together. Then, there was spectating the Young Farmers Tractor Drive-Through, as well as remembering our past fallen heroes when the community came together for remembrance at the War Memorial.

The village too gained some impressive accolades this past year, particularly by the staff teams at the Coorie Inn and Wardside House for the Elderly - in both cases, for excellence in their hospitality and service. Then there were also a record number of entries for the Village Trust's Muthill Sportive, and most recently, the work done by the Community Events Team in organising the Village Christmas celebrations and seasonal lights which continue to brighten our main streets. Back in the summer, there was the annual

gala and it is right to recognise the sterling work done by the team who have spearheaded this event for many years with their commitment and dedication. Finally, there is the increasingly popular Wednesday soup and sandwich lunch event at the Parish Church, all adding to the social side of village life.

Special mention too must be made of the organisations which quietly but consistently serve our village such as the Primary School, the Churches, the Community Council, the Kiddy and Toddlers Clubs, Busy Bees, the Scouts, the Bowling and Golf Clubs, the Monday Club, the Ladies Club, and the people we all rely on, week in week out, such as those who work in our few shops and service outlets, not forgetting those who collect our rubbish, tend to our trees and hedges, deliver the mail and those who repair our essential services.

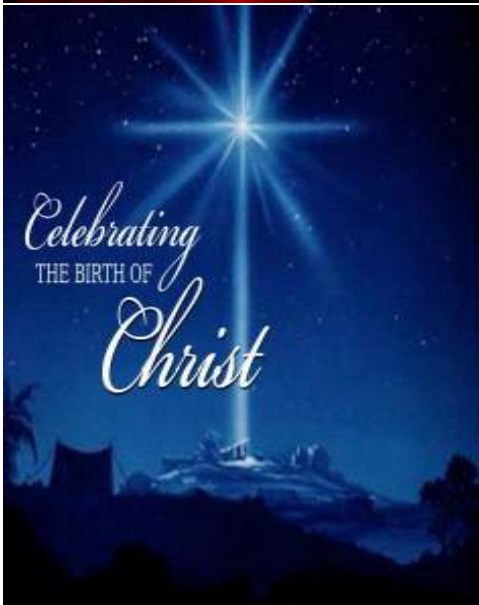
It is amazing how large the list is and, apologies, if any have not been specifically mentioned. My primary intention is not to highlight individual services but to acknowledge with gratitude the overall scale of service and dedication that adds so much to community life in Muthill. And finally, one cannot forget the numerous acts of unseen kindness that happen, day in and day out, through thoughtful neighbourliness. There are so many individual kind acts happening under the radar, and I, for one, thank God for the joy that such acts bring and for the relief they provide in preventing loneliness and isolation.

So, as we celebrate the arrival of another festive season and look forward to a new year, let us not forget what Marian Wright Edelman said, namely to be thankful for what has been done and let us also continue to strengthen our sense of community and care for one another in the year ahead.

I wish every reader of The Bridge a meaningful and happy Christmas and may 2026 bring much needed peace in our society and the wider world.

END

Our Christmas Services



CHRISTMAS EVE

Our Watchnight Service will be held in the Church, starting at 11.30pm.

It will be led by our Interim Moderator,
Rev. Iain Paton.

Before the start, all attending are invited to enjoy a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie in the Bruce Hall from 11.00pm.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Our service on Christmas Day will be a family service.

It will be held in the morning at 10.30am.

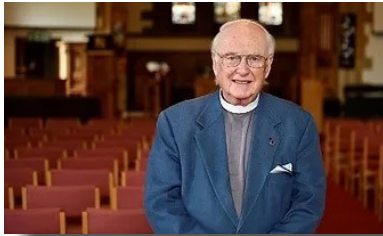
It will be led by
Rev. Alex Mitchell



Message from Our Interim Moderator

Dear Friends,

In all probability, you will be reading this pastoral letter at the beginning of December. If so, then you are in the Christian season of Advent. Advent marks the four Sundays before Christmas and is the start of what is referred to as the 'Christian Year'. Various seasons, such as Epiphany, Lent, Easter,



Pentecost, Trinity mark off other seasons, and these guide preachers and others leading church services on the themes which should form the basis of their worship services. Some denominations follow these seasons very closely and have set scripture readings for services each Sunday which reflect the theme. In The Church of Scotland, we don't

restrict our preachers in any way, but many ministers (including me) do pay attention to the Christian seasons and try to reflect these in services. From time to time, I do follow the set readings, which can lead me to preach on subjects which I might otherwise have avoided! However, that's personal; there are no such restrictions placed on the other excellent preachers who have been such a help to us in this time of vacancy.

Advent is derived from a Latin root which means 'coming' or 'arrival' and the season was developed in the Western Church away back in the sixth century as a preparation for the festival of the Nativity. Our advent lasts for four Sundays; originally it was six. The Coming of Christ is celebrated at Advent from three different perspectives. There is (a) the physical nativity at Bethlehem; (b) the reception of Christ into the heart of the believer; and (c) the second coming of Christ at the end of the age. So, there is plenty for us to think about.

Advent, of course, leads us to Christmas, when the main theme is obvious. This year, in Muthill Parish Church, we shall be holding a traditional Watchnight Service at 11.30pm on Christmas Eve, (mince pies and mulled wine from 11pm onwards), and then a short Family Service on Christmas morning at 10.30 am. Please do come and give these services support by your presence at them.

On the vacancy front, there is little to report. The Kirk Session had a meeting in mid-August with Rev. Derek Peat from Perth Presbytery. This discussed several options for Muthill in the future and Mr. Peat took our suggestions away for further consideration. However, since then, as you will know, a vacancy has occurred at Crieff Parish Church, which means that planning for the future of the whole area will need to be looked at again. Meantime, we sit and wait until we are approached. Fortunately, due to excellent preachers to whom we are very grateful, our Sunday services are well lead and well attended. God be praised!

With every blessing and good wish,

(Rev.) Iain F. Paton, Interim Moderator.



Letter To the Editor

Dear Editor,

Memorial Service

I am writing to thank the Pastoral Care Team for such a lovely memorable and meaningful Memorial Service on 2nd November. I found it emotionally very comforting and the lovely tea and fellowship was so good too.

They say “time” heals but I am finding it a very slow process and so really appreciate the care shown to me by you all.

Thank you all

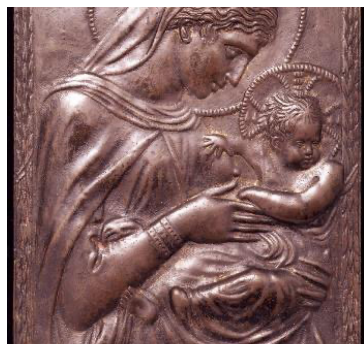
KK

God in the Arts

Editor: The Revd Michael Burgess completes his survey of sacred art that can be found in various museums...you can see the image by googling the title of the painting and the artist.

'He gave us eyes to see them': Madonna and Child from Donatello's workshop

Each month during this year we have visited art galleries and museums that are often overlooked by the tourist trail, but which contain treasures that can inspire and deepen our Christian faith. Our final visit in this series is to a gracious, elegant Georgian villa rejoicing in the odd name of the Ranger's House. It is outside the western wall of Greenwich Park in London and is home to the Wernher collection of art.



Julius Wernher was a diamond magnate who died in 1912, and in his lifetime, he amassed an amazing array of 700 works that make up this collection. There are paintings by Joshua Reynolds and Romney, Renaissance jewellery, and a marble

statue by Bergonzoli, 'The Love of Angels.'

But this month we focus on another love – the love of a mother and child by the workshop of Donatello. When I was a student I visited Florence for the first time, and I can always remember the impact of entering the Bargello and being greeted by the sculptures of Donatello. It was a special moment of revelation to be able to look around and wonder at the glorious works of this sculptor filling the second floor of the castle.

By contrast the Madonna and Child in the Ranger's House is a miniature, a bronze plaque just 4 inches square. Our Lady is depicted in classical profile with flowing robes and wavy hair, but the mood is one of tenderness as she cradles the Christ-Child. She holds His left hand in hers, while He looks down at something that has caught His attention. Perhaps it is a noise at the stable door or the sound of an animal in the Bethlehem night. Perhaps it is St Joseph getting everything ready for the Holy Family to leave. We don't know, but it is another special moment of revelation caught in this little plaque. It may not be by Donatello himself, but we sense the master overseeing the creation of this work.

At Christmas we ponder the mystery of infinity caught in a little space, the cradle

at Bethlehem, just as the mystery of love, maternal and divine, is caught in the little space of this plaque. Margaret Rizza's carol, 'Jesus is our joy' captures the mood of wonder, joy and hope as we open the stable door to see the love of a mother and her new-born baby expressed here and at the heart of the Christmas gospel:

'Lovely in your littleness,
longing for our lowliness,
searching for our meekness.....
Held in Mary's tenderness,
tiny hands are raised to bless,
touching us with God's caress.
Joy then in God's graciousness,
peace comes with gentleness,
filling hearts with gladness.'



The Alpha Course
Muthill Parish Church
starts on
Thursday 15th January 2026
Register
by completing an application form
to secure a place

God in the Sciences

This series is written by Dr Ruth M. Bancewicz, Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge.

The Incarnation: fearfully and wonderfully made

My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:15-16



You began life as a single cell. For a few hours you were a miniscule but highly complex blob of jelly, until it began to divide: two cells, four, eight, sixteen, a ball, a hollow ball, and then something more recognisably like a living organism. You were still tiny, but developing a nervous

system, a head, a body, arms and legs.

Until recently I hadn't thought much about Jesus being an embryo. Somehow, I find that thought even more shocking than His birth. How could God, who made the universe, have become something so completely and utterly vulnerable? Maybe in the past, when the development of a child happened in 'secret', it was possible just to let that part of the Christmas story go untold.

Today, when we see images of a developing child, or even embryos outside the womb, it is harder to ignore the process of Jesus developing into a baby. The incarnation meant that God's Son went through all the stages in the diagram in my developmental biology textbook: 'zygote', 'morula', 'blastocyst', implantation, and so on.

Jesus was there in the beginning, and all life owes its existence to Him. But instead of remaining aloof, He chose to become one of us. The Son of God shared the same kind of DNA as every other organism on the planet. He knows what it feels like to have a body, to feel hungry and thirsty, pain and pleasure, dark and light.

In Psalm 139, the writer is meditating on God's intimate knowledge of him, which began when he was an embryo. There is nothing God doesn't know about him, and even darkness cannot obscure him from God's sight. The incarnation means that God's intimacy with us now extends even further. He became one of us, lived alongside us, and shared our very fragile material nature.

The transcendent God is also immanent, longing for us to relate to Him as Father. He became as fragile as we are so He could rescue us from the messes we so often find ourselves in. With His help, we can remember what it means to be fearfully and wonderfully made.



It's Willie's idea of fund raising for the kitchen project!



We don't sing, Mister - but we got carols on our phone!



Do you think this is one of the new celebrity visiting preachers?



Oh no!
Has no one got a light?

Life's Big Questions?

As a nation we may be prone to complain about the state of our country, yet we are for the most part fortunate that we live in a country which is

relatively stable, prosperous, free from war and natural disasters. We are also for the most part blessed with plenty of opportunities for work and play and our communities by and large have a good sense of cohesion and neighbourliness. This is how I personally start to try to understand and rationalise the lukewarm interest that many people today seem to have in faith and in institutions such as the Church. We are living in a time when freedom of choice, making money, spending time on personal interests, are the normal way of filling one's life whilst the demands of developing a faith and searching its whole

mystery seem unnecessary and too much work for many – and to some, it's just pie in the sky! Life's big questions are so often overlooked until something goes wrong - maybe a serious health problem, losing a job, financial worries or relationship loss, even death of someone close. Or have we ever considered if we want to leave a positive legacy to our world?

For those of us who have found faith, most of us will claim that it brings a different dimension and meaning to life. Christians will also claim that having a faith brings an inner peace and purpose to our lives. We have a code for living, which provides both joy and challenges and which works in providing a rewarding life experience. Like anything worthwhile in life, it requires commitment but this in turn creates the desire to develop a closer relationship with God through prayer, and through that, many of life's challenges are given answers. Many will argue that it also is good for developing a balanced approach to life.

So, what if you are curious about faith and finding purpose to one's life? Then, there is an excellent way of exploring the Christian faith through Alpha. This a course with a difference! It has a social side to it in that you meet new people, relax and get to know each other over evening meals. There are video presentations and open discussion on the basics of the



Muthill Parish Church

Christian faith. This is done during a couple of hours, one evening a week, for a number of weeks with one very special away day, and importantly the whole experience is always on a take it or leave it basis.

It has been tried and tested by over 2.5 million people across the globe and has proved amazingly successful in opening minds to faith and a new way of living. Churches seeking to engage positively with their communities, and to clarify what they stand for and have to offer, have tried and tested this approach and report significant success. If this could be of interest to you, we in Muthill Parish Church will be running such an Alpha course starting on January 15th 2026.

Everyone is welcome no matter their background or the status of faith. It is also an opportunity to gain greater clarity on your faith, if you are already associated with a church family or even a committed Christian. Why not join us and see where it leads in your life! Details on how to apply can be found on the church website or from the Welcome desk in the church where you will find invitations to join. It is also free and commences on 15 January 2026 but you must register by completing an application form.

END



Traitor or Faithful?

I wonder if you are fan or not of what are called reality shows?

Some of my friends think they are a waste of time but I find myself tuning in firstly to explore what they might be like and often I then become hooked because of the interaction of the personalities involved. I guess I love studying society and the way we communicate and deal with each other and how honest we are with each other!

The latest, the BBC's *The Traitors*, is undoubtedly a show packed with strategy, suspense and dramatic moments. Set in a beautiful Scottish location, the show takes place in the stunning Ardrross Castle which adds an air of grandeur and mystery to the intense gameplay. As the contestants navigate alliances and betrayals they use intriguing language that reflects the high stakes of the game. What makes the show very British is the fascinating contrast between its premise- centred on strategy, backstabbing and lying and the contestants attempt to remain polite at the same time. One of our visiting preachers, also an addict like me, probably rightly questioned the impact of the basic moral compass of the show. I accept that it does treat issues like murder, betrayal and lying lightly for purely entertainment value. Whether

this is right or wrong morally in the context of a game is probably overlooked by the average viewer who focuses largely on the intrigue of the show and the excitement that it provides. I too was fascinated by the question that participants were asked – “Would you like to be a traitor or a faithful?” and the underlying question this raises on how do I tackle the whole issue of honesty and how important is honesty in life?

I remain an avid supporter of the Traitors and also admit to finding it interesting to dip into other shows like I'm a Celebrity, Big Brother, Goggle box, Race Across the World. All are very different in composition, but



they do have in common that they give an honest open insight into how today's society is interacting and the values that it holds. It is obvious from watching any of these shows that we are living in a society which has a moral compass which is changing. It is clear that we are now a much more liberal pluralistic society. Whether any change is going in the right direction is one of the challenges that Christians have to wrestle with by living in today's society. We know from our teachings that we have truth on our side and this makes it important to have our voice heard on all issues of morality. I often feel that many of the ills that society increasingly faces are caused by movement in that moral compass. I wonder if you agree or not?

Sudoku

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

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Kirk And Community News

Another Accolade for Wardside House



In the last edition of our magazine, it was a pleasure to mention one or two accolades that the village had been receiving. Wardside House was amongst those, being recognised as the best care home in Perthshire. Now we are pleased to report that this has been exceeded with their latest merit award as first in the League table for Scotland, based on the ratings of the Care Inspectorate. In achieving this top award, the Home was praised for the “warmth, kindness and compassion” of the staff. It was also rated excellent for well-being, leadership and for staff and support and very good for its setting. Well done, your village is also proud of this achievement!

Primary School Christmas Concert 2025

Our church building will again be welcoming the Primary School for their Christmas concerts, which this year will be held on Tuesday 9th (matinee 1:30pm) and Thursday 11th (evening performance 6:30pm)

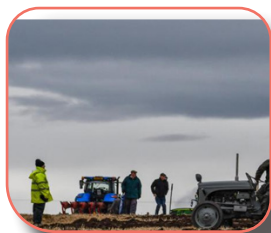


Muthill's Christmas Celebrations



Sincere congratulations go to all involved in organising the Community Event celebration on Saturday 22nd November to celebrate the start of the village Christmas season. Not only was the afternoon Craft Fair well attended with many Christmas wreaths being made, but also the lighting of the Christmas lights in the late afternoon was greeted with good weather, a splendid performance of the children's choir with the seasonal mulled wine and mince pies generously provided by the staff of the Coorie Inn. This year's Christmas tree at the Toll with over 3,000 lights adorning it and our street lights brightening up the whole way through the village are a joy to behold! I am also told that the Family Ceilidh in the evening provided a great deal of fun and certainly the photos seem to show that. Well done to everyone involved and thank you for a great start to 2025 festive season.

Scottish Ploughing Championships Begin with Kirk Blessing



A special service giving thanks for the food that we eat and the people and technology used to harvest it was recently held in Inverkeilor Church in Angus, to mark the start of a major competition, the 61st Scottish Ploughing Championships.

The Scottish Ploughing Championships have been held annually since 1963 in a different part of the country, and traditionally begin with a 'Blessing of the Plough' service at a church as close to the competition venue as possible.

For the competition's return to Angus for the first time since 2009, with the contest taking place at Arbikie near Lunan, the nearby Inverkeilor Church hosted the service, with the unusual sight of a plough being installed in front of the communion table for the occasion.

The Scottish Ploughing Championship regularly attracts between 90 and 130 competitors each year in categories including vintage, classic and modern tractors, as well as the use of the traditional heavy horses. With 130 entrants, this year's competition at Arbikie was one of the largest championships of recent years.

Kirk And Community News

Soup and Sandwich Lunches Warm Space



We are officially a Warm Space in the village every Wednesday between 11 and 2pm offering coffee from 11am followed by Soup and sandwich lunch at 12.30. This is for everyone in the village and surrounding area and we are very grateful to Perth and Kinross Council for funding to cover our costs and enabling us to offer this with no charge until the end of March.

Soup Lunches

Our soup and sandwich lunches continue to be popular with numbers ranging for 35 - 50 attending! We are so grateful to our volunteers who make soup and serve each week, without whom we wouldn't be able to offer the soup lunches! If you, or you know of someone who could help even on an occasional basis, please let me know. Helping entails coming about 11am to make up the filled rolls and then serving and tidying up afterwards. We are usually finished by about 1.45pm Helen-May (07974646872)

Praise Gathering

We were sorry to have to cancel the planned praise gathering in our Church on 30th November. The plans for our Praise Gathering with Chris White and friends will be moved to early in 2026. We are hoping that this will enable us to judge whether this might become a more regular event. Details of the rescheduling will be broadcast at Sunday services and on the church website when finalised.

Exercise Class



Our exercise class continues to meet at 2.15pm for ¾ hour of exercise every Tuesday under Kirsty Balligall, Strathearn Coordinator for Live Active Wellbeing who conducts similar sessions at the Campus in Crieff. These sessions are aimed particularly at strengthening muscles and mobility. Chairs are provided for any who wish to undertake the exercises seated.

We now have a steady membership but are always keen to welcome newcomers, both men and women. We will be having a Christmas break starting again on Tuesday 6th January 2026. So, if you are planning a healthier and fitter 2026, think about joining the team. There is a weekly fee of £4. This includes warm refreshments, biscuits and chat afterwards. Entry to the class is by the north rear entrance door.

Exercise can be fun!

Book Club



It has been another great year for our wee book club which has read a considerable number of interesting and diverse books ranging from "Wifedom" by Anna Funder to "Small things like these" by Claire Keegan and from "Caledonian Road" by Andrew O'Hagan to "Borders" by Kapka Kassanova. We meet 4-6 weekly depending on the size of the book for a review meeting over tea and cake, Discussion is also lively and receiving others' interpretation helps one to understand each book to a much greater degree. We meet on a Friday afternoon for our review meeting at 3pm in the North Lounge and books are chosen in turn by members of the Club. We always love to welcome new members as reading is so stimulating and relaxing.



Kirk And Community News

Church Website

We are pleased to report that our Church Website has been freshened up and now provides full details of church news, our Sunday services, our church's history our current mission activities and who's who amongst the church leadership.

It also includes links to view our worship services and copies of the Bridge stretching back over the past year.

Our grateful thanks are due especially to Raffie Bakar for the updated graphics and layout.

Our Mission Statement

Thank you to those who have submitted ideas for refreshing our mission statement. The submissions will be considered and any changes will be approved by the Kirk Session at its first meeting of 2026. There is still time to submit your ideas as you now have until the end of December.

Burtenshaw Trust

The Kirk Session has approved that the Christmas disbursement for 2025 from the Burtenshaw Trust to people on the church list will be £50 per person, there being some 70 persons on the list.

Bi-centenary



As many will know, next year, 2026, marks the bi-centenary of the laying of the church's foundation stone. To celebrate this, there will be a special service of worship in March when we will welcome the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. There will be further celebrations in 2028 when we will celebrate the opening of the church for worship. Willie Bell has been appointed by the Kirk Session to lead a Steering Group in preparation of suitable festivities.

Upgrading of Kitchen and Toilets

We are pleased to report that we have now received building control approval from Perth and Kinross Council to increase the size of our church kitchen, to provide a new storage facility and to re-jig our toilet provision to provide the church with three new toilets including a disabled toilet. Under Church of Scotland regulations this project has now to be considered and approved by Presbytery as its cost is likely to be somewhere between £50-100k. The Kirk Session has also approved that once this project is complete the church outer and inner lobbies will be repainted with improvements to lighting to make our entrance brighter and more welcoming.

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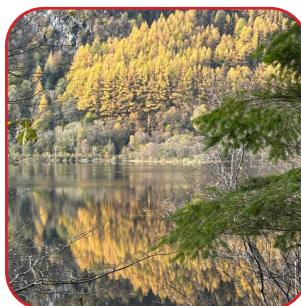
Film Nights with St James

Our concluding session of Film Nights with St James Episcopal Church for 2025 will be held on Monday 8th December starting at 7pm. These film nights have become an established diary dates for a good number of people at both the Parish Church and St James. They have been ably led by Duncan Strathie, Rector, and have introduced their audiences to fascinating, unusual and at times arty feature films which have provoked great discussion. With Duncan retiring in January, we will have to consider how this fixture can be continued and developed, as it is a great way of bringing our two congregations together. Discussions will be held during December with a view to continuing this joint project and it is hoped that a new session will start early in 2026.

We wish Duncan and Katrina a very happy retirement in their chosen retirement home of St Madoes, and look forward to receiving reports from them on their world trip starting in February 2026.



Lady Mary's Walk in Autumn by Lorna Clarke



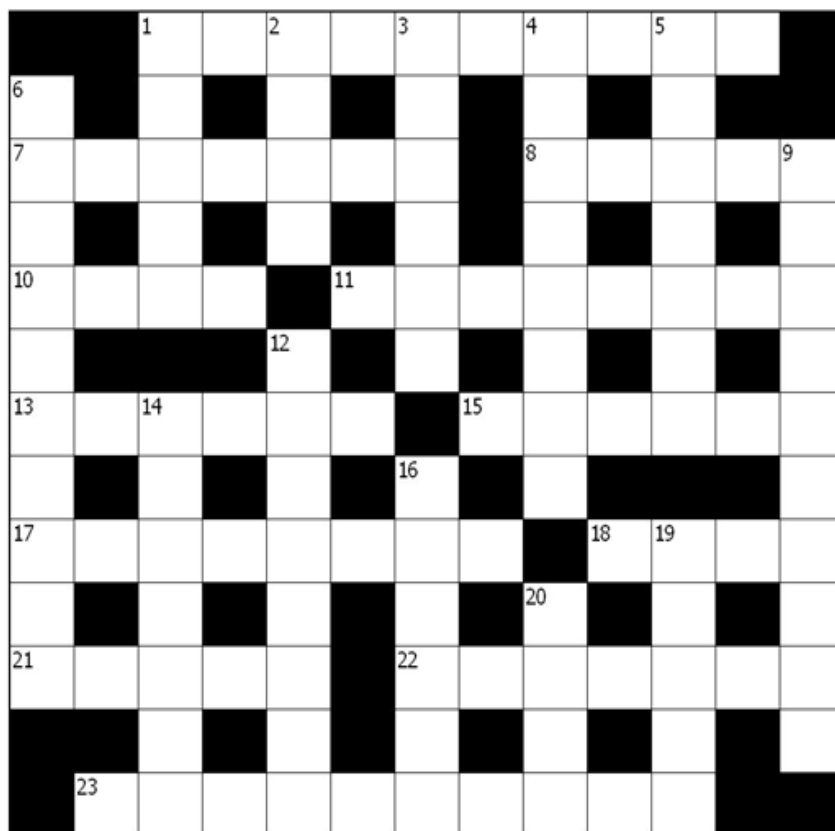
News From Ardoch And Blackford



We send congratulations to our neighbouring united charge of Ardoch and Blackford who are nearing the first anniversary of their union. Here are some of the interesting events that have been taking place there or are planned for 2026:

- The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland visited in the autumn and presented long service certificates to 7 members of the Ardoch Guild at Blackford Church
- The Kirk Session in the early part of 2026 will be working closely together with its Finance team and the united congregation on embracing the *Bearing Fruit* Stewardship campaign of the Church of Scotland
- The Church's Makaton journey continues to be very successful. There are 1.5 million people in the UK who experience communication difficulties in their lives, ranging from autism to stroke and Makaton is used to make the Christian faith accessible through Makaton signs and symbols. A "Know and Grow" course on Makaton was held at Blackford Church and is planned to be repeated with increasing interest from other churches.
- The Hot Choc Youth Group will be leading the all-age Christmas Service on Christmas Day in Ardoch Church
- The Kirk Session has adopted a Bible Use Policy aimed at building the confidence and knowledge of those who read the Word at services and in encouraging and facilitating the following of scripture readings by the congregation both in-person and online.

Crossword



Across

- 1 Provisional meeting place of God and the Jews (Exodus 25:9) (10)
 7 David's third son, killed when his head got caught in a tree during a battle with his father (2 Samuel 18:14,15) (7)
 8 They ruled much of the west coast of South America in the 15th and early 16th centuries (5)
 10 Small deer of European and Asian extraction (4)

-
- 11 Seized control of (Numbers 21:25) (8)
13 Terror (Luke 24:5) (6)
15 First World War heroine shot by the Germans in Brussels, Nurse Edith (6)
17 Stormy (8)
18 A bitter variety of this, together with lamb and unleavened bread, was the Passover menu for anyone unclean (Numbers 9:11) (4)
21 Arson (anag.) (5)
22 How John Newton described God's grace in his well-known hymn (7)
23 Habitation (Isaiah 27:10) (10)

Down

- 1 and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8) (5)
2 The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as ... as a lion (Proverbs 28:1) (4)
3 One of the exiles, a descendant of Parosh, who married a foreign woman (Ezra 10:25) (6)
4 He escaped from Nob when Saul killed the rest of his family and joined David (1 Samuel 22:19,20) (8)
5 City and lake in Central Switzerland (7)
6 Offer your bodies as living , holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1) (10)
9 Pouches carried by horses (Genesis 49:14) (10)
12 One who accepts government by God (8)
14 Aromatic substance commonly used in Jewish ritual (Exodus 30:1) (7)
16 He asked Jesus, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38) (6)
19 Are (Romans 13:1) (5)
20 You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will ... his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21) (4)

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Book Reviews



O Come Emmanuel – Reflections on the Advent Antiphons (chants)

By David Hoyle, Esther Prior, and Philip North, CHP, £8.99

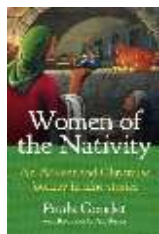
This beautifully illustrated, full-colour daily Advent companion explores the ancient biblical names and images for the coming Messiah familiar to most people from the hymn, 'O come, O come Emmanuel'.

Well-known writers offer 24 reflections, one for each weekday of the four weeks of Advent. There are reflections on the seven antiphons: O Wisdom, O Adonai, O Root of Jesse, O Key of David, O Morning Star, O King of the Nations, O Emmanuel. Lastly, there are three reflections on the Magnificat – Mary's Song – which the antiphons have been heard alongside since at least the eighth century.

Each day includes the text of the antiphon from Common Worship, a Scripture reading exploring its biblical roots, paintings of the antiphon as a focus for meditation, a reflection, a challenge to ponder and an Advent prayer.

The volume also includes an introduction explaining the rich history of the antiphons, recommendations for further resources including musical settings as well as suggestions for how to use the antiphons in local worship and study groups.

Contributors include Jane Williams, Chris Russell, Esther Prior, Philip North, Muthuraj Swamy, Tanya Marlow, David Hoyle and Lucy Winket.



Women of the Nativity – an Advent and Christmas Journey in Nine Stories

By Paula Gooder, CHP, £9.89

Following on from her bestselling *Women of Holy Week*, Paula Gooder uses her extensive biblical expertise and storytelling skills to recreate the events of the nativity,

from the promise of a future people to Sarah, to the presentation in the temple and the encounter with Anna, the prophet.

The story is told from the perspective of nine women in all including Mary, Elizabeth, Rachel, and others whom scripture records or tradition has imagined, such as the innkeeper's wife. As we hear the familiar stories afresh through their words, the wonder of the incarnation and its consequences for good and for ill, come to vivid life in a new way.

Each story is accompanied by a painting by the priest-artist, Ally Barrett. This will be widely welcomed by all who love Paula's writing and respect her biblical expertise as well as those looking for fresh inspiration for seasonal services from Advent to Candlemas.



All You Want for Christmas

By David Platt, 10Publishing, £9.99

At our deepest level, we all have needs we long to be met and desires we want to be fulfilled. Jesus came and meets our deepest need. This new giftable Christmas book, *All You Want for Christmas* (hardback) explains four simple reasons why He came: to be with you; to die instead of you; to show you how to live; to be your servant; to be

your God.



Are you ready for Christmas?

By Roger Carswell, 10Publishing, £3.99

Christmas is a hectic time of year: cooking big meals, buying and wrapping the presents, sending the cards, and wondering if we've forgotten something. All these preparations help to make Christmas such a special time of year, but before the very first Christmas it was God who was getting the world ready to meet His Son.

This book tells the story of God's Christmas plan, and explains how He can help us to be ready for Him today. You'll discover how the baby whom God sent that first Christmas is still His message of hope, joy, and peace to us today.

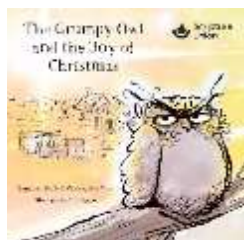


The Four Emotions of Christmas

By Bob Lepine, 10Publishing, £3.99

We expect Christmas to be a season filled with happiness and love. And yet so often, what we want to be a nice, relaxing family day turns into 24 hours of stress and disappointment. Our loneliness and sadness are amplified because of how out of sync they are with what the season has promised. Shouldn't there be something better than this? This book is designed to be given out

widely, and contains a clear gospel message.



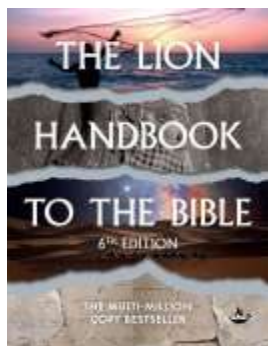
The Grumpy Owl and the Joy of Christmas

By Jonathan Maltz and Christopher Poch, CHP, £5.49

Here is a beautifully illustrated children's nativity story told from the unusual angle of a grumpy owl who lived in a little old empty barn in Bethlehem.

When a man, a woman and their donkey burst into

his barn, making a lot of noise, the grumpy owl decides to fly away to somewhere quiet where he can be grumpy in peace. But can he find such a place, or will he return to his barn in time for a big, not-at-all grumpy, surprise?



The Lion Handbook to the Bible – 6th edition

By Pat Alexander, £24.99

Revised and expanded edition of the three-million-copy bestselling book about the Bible: what it is, who wrote it, and how to read, understand and enjoy it.

With over three million copies sold and translations into more than 30 languages, the Lion Handbook to the Bible has earned an

unrivalled reputation as the most readable, reliable, and richly illustrated companion to Scripture.

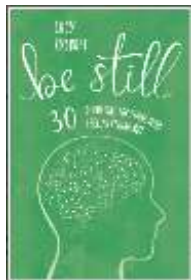


Continuously in print since 1973, it remains the essential guide for anyone eager to deepen their understanding of the Bible's message, history, and relevance today.

- * Over 100 maps, charts, and timelines, helping you trace the people, places, and empires that shaped biblical history.

- * A fascinating overview of how the Bible came to us, plus a comprehensive Rapid Fact Finder with concise information, references, and Bible verses.

Covering everything from the design of the Jerusalem temple, the worship and witness of the early church, to the everyday lives of biblical figures and the larger story of God's work in history, this handbook illuminates the Bible with clarity, depth, and beauty. Accessible, authoritative, and visually stunning, the Lion Handbook to the Bible remains the indispensable companion for every Bible reader.



Be Still: 30 devotions for those who feel anything but
By Lucy Rycroft, BRF, £8.99

Stillness is an alien concept in today's busy world. Communication, entertainment, work and relationships seem accessible to us 24–7, and it can feel impossible to change the pace. So this book is a series of reflections on the concept of being still. Made up of 30 Bible moments, it ranges from Moses leading the Israelites

through the Red Sea, to the raw emotions of the Psalms, to Jesus calming the storm. The book's aim is to help Christians living in the crazed busyness of the 21st century to discover what 'being still' looks like for us today.

END

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
Luke chapter 2 verses 8 to 20

Shepherds were paid to look after the flocks out on the hillside. Uneducated and rough, they were usually avoided, or overlooked.



Editor's Note

Please 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:

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

Crossword Solution:

ACROSS:

1, Tabernacle. 7, Absalom. 8, Incas. 10, Roes. 11, Captured. 13, Fright. 15, Cavell. 17, Cyclonic. 18, Herb. 21, Sonar. 22, Amazing. 23, Settlement.

Down:

1, Taste. 2, Bold. 3, Ramiah. 4, Abiathar. 5, Lucerne. 6, Sacrifices. 9, Saddlebags. 12, Theocrat. 14, Incense. 16, Pilate. 19, Exist. 20, Save.



Our Church Mission is to be a place of peace and welcome; a people growing in Christian faith and love and a presence at the heart and soul of the community.

Registered Charity
Number
SC004984

Church Contacts:

Address: Station Road, Muthill, Crieff PH5 2AR

Church website: www.muthillparishchurch.co.uk

Facebook: www.facebook.com/muthillchurch

Email: muthillparish@yahoo.com

Bridge Editor: 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 01764657060

PKC: 01738 475000

Church of Scotland:

Perth Pres. 01738451177

Central Off. 01312255722

Police:

Emergency 999

Non-Emergency 101

Action Fraud 101



Cover Photo and Graphics

Our cover photo for this edition is "The lighting of the Christmas tree in Muthill"

Thanks to Raffie for sourcing graphics for the magazine and helping in the production .

**Submission deadline for The Bridge next
edition Friday 6 February, 2026**