

THE BRIDGE

**The Season Of Lent
Calling All Prayer Warriors
Interim Moderator's Letter
Whither Our Education Programme**



FEBRUARY - MARCH 2025

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Kirk Roll

Our church membership has increased again to 198, and we are delighted to welcome Norman & Helen Leach and Kay Kennedy. We hope that they will feel an integral part of our church family.

At the same time, it is with great sadness that we record the death of Mrs Lisa Roberts who passed away on 6th January, 2025. Our thoughts and prayers are with the Roberts family.

Editorial

Welcome to The Bridge and its first edition in 2025! It is a time for looking ahead and being positive about another productive year in our church.



2024 had many highlights such as the modernisation of our sanctuary and the vestry, the welcoming back of Alex Mitchell and Ewen Gilchrist after their major health incidents had taken them away from preaching for quite a period and other additions to the church building including the dedication of memorials to the former Trinity Gask and Kinkell Church, several of whose members are now an important part of our congregation. It also saw further expansion of our village soup

and sandwich lunches, the inauguration of joint film nights with St James and not forgetting the launch of the Muthill Community Transport Group which was founded from within the Mens Group.

2025 will no doubt have its own highlights. It is important that we continue our enthusiasm for expansion of our church family, deepening its unity and commitment to our faith and that we use every opportunity for interaction with our village community. Many potential areas for such work have been mooted in past editions of the church magazine and it is to be hoped that the Kirk Session will give leadership in ways that resonate well with the church family and give it inspiration.

It is also to be hoped that The Bridge will be able to make a contribution to our church thinking and will be seen as a vehicle for comment and engagement with wider contributions and a wider audience.

With very good wish for the year ahead!

Editor

Message From Interim Moderator

Dear friends,

The congregation has been without a full time or part time minister for quite some time now and so it seems right that the interim moderator should sketch out where we are.

As we know, The Church of Scotland has been facing a wholesale reorganisation to try to make it a more effective church equipped for mission in the present century. The Presbytery structure has been realigned and whereas there used to be around 45 presbyteries, there are now only nine in mainland Scotland. This means that each one is much larger than previously. The Rev. John Ferguson, who is Clerk to the Presbytery of Perth sketched this out when we welcomed him here to conduct worship at the beginning of December last year. We are in the expanded Presbytery of Perth, which extends from now from Stirling and..... in the south and west, to Blair Atholl and Montrose in the north and east. There are around 150 'charges' contained within it. A 'charge' is either one or a number of congregations looked after, usually, by one minister. In other words, it's a pretty large and well populated area. Those of us who were part of the previous and much smaller Presbytery of Perth have been placed in groups. Our group contains the congregations of Aberuthven, Auchterarder, Blackford, Ardoch (Braco) and ourselves at Muthill. The eventual aim is that this area will be looked after by 1.5 ministries, of which one will be for Auchterarder. The intention is that the small congregation at Aberuthven will possibly become a mission outreach of Auchterarder, the congregation at Auchterarder will remain as at present. Muthill will link in with Ardoch and Blackford. Until the end of last year, Ardoch and Blackford congregations were linked, which means that they were separate congregations, each with their own building and organisations, but both under one minister. This is much the same as existed with us when Trinity Gask Church was active. As from the beginning of 2025, the Presbytery united Ardoch and Blackford into one congregation, overseen by a single Kirk Session. This, clearly, involves quite an adjustment on the part of all of the office bearers and members, especially so when they have been instructed to close one of their church buildings by the end of 2027. This will be a very hard decision for them to take. A church is just a building, but in most cases it is invested with hundreds of family associations, baptisms, weddings and funerals to name the obvious three. Added to this is the need for the congregation to change their manse as the present one is deemed unsuitable for a variety of reasons. This will be particularly hard as there are not many houses in their area which meet

Church of Scotland requirements.

So where does all of that leave us in Muthill? Our Kirk Session have advised Perth Presbytery that, given the present state of the Church nationally, we are quite prepared to fall in with the plan that we link in with the newly united congregation of Ardoch and Blackford, but given the problems which they face, as outlined above, we wish to remain on our own until all of the above problems are solved first. We wish a future linkage to be a success and feel that this is less likely to be the case if the link takes place while Ardoch and Blackford are busy trying to meet these other requirements. A group of our elders are currently in discussion with the Presbytery on these matters. Ours is a strong and happy congregation and, under God's guidance, it is our intention to remain so, and contribute what we have into a new relationship when it comes. Can I therefore ask you to keep this situation in your prayers at this time, and to pray that a new and vibrant relationship will emerge in the course of time?

In closing let me stress that here are no plans to close Muthill Church. It will remain an active unit within the Presbytery of Perth, linked in the course of time with Ardoch and Blackford under one minister, serving on a part time basis. The timing of the linkage will largely be determined by how long it takes for Ardoch and Blackford to deal with the matters referred to above, which is to be by the end of 2027. Until that time comes, we remain as we are, under the care of an interim moderator and with a number of preachers leading our weekly services. May the Lord bless you and keep you,

Iain F. Paton
Interim Moderator

Church Dates to Note for your Diary

Our weekly Sunday services commence at 10.30am

Lent

Starts on 15 March

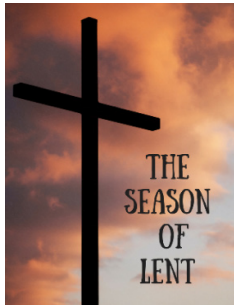
Good Friday

Friday 18th April at 7:00pm

Easter Sunday

Sunday 20th April

The Season Of Lent



My next-door neighbour and best friend proudly showed off the ash mark on the centre of his brow, marking Ash Wednesday. Back in those days I thought that Lent was something only Roman Catholics celebrated. I knew Shrove Tuesday was about eating pancakes but was unaware of the disciplines which might accompany the 40 days of Lent. I later learned that even that tradition may have come from a Jewish background of getting rid of yeast from the house before Passover. So Lent is a time to pause and reflect before the awe-inspiring events of the Easter weekend. Like clearing yeast out of homes, yeast (leaven) is likened in the Bible to sin in our lives. A small amount working its way all through our lives! The focus of the 40 days is on spiritual growth and connection with God.

Fasting has always been associated with this period of reflection, giving up chocolate or other luxury foods, giving up or limiting frivolous activities. In Roman Catholic families it was about giving up meat apart from eating fish on a Friday. I would never dictate to people if and what they should give up for Lent because that would seem to me to defeat the key purpose of spiritually marking the season.

The most rewarding periods of Lent that I remember were when churches got together and ran Lent study groups. People from a wide range of different denominations shared prepared study and discussion materials in small groups. Each group was deliberately made up from different church traditions. At its peak over 100 people signed up for the 4-week course. These groups had a huge benefit in bringing Christians together and led onto other joint activities.

Lent starts on the **5th March** this year and however you mark it may it be a time of deeper appreciation of what Jesus our Saviour has done for us and the great blessings that are ours through faith in him.

Alex Mitchell

Calling All Prayer Warriors

The Bible encourages people to pray in all situations, without ceasing, and without giving up. Some Bible verses that mention prayer include:

**Matthew 6:9: "This, then, is how you should pray: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name'"*

**Romans 12:12: "Be faithful in prayer"*

**1 John 5:14: "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us"*

**Philippians 4:6 - Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.*

**Mark 11:24 - Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.*

Along with individual time of prayer and reflection, many churches have prayer groups which meet regularly to pray, others have online groups which broadcast weekly reflections and prayers prepared by members of the congregation on their church website. We know of another well attended "Upper Room" prayer area where people can go to spend quiet periods of reflection and prayer. This one is supported once a week and at specific times of year for longer prayer times.

It has been suggested that we also consider a prayer calendar in our church magazine along with our current offering of prayer time after Sunday morning services and we already have a prayer tree sited in the chancel. All of these ventures need people with a heart for prayer to champion the ongoing commitment to develop all of our prayer lives.

There is clear evidence that churches who have embarked seriously on such ministries have found that they play a significant role in supporting the church family and beyond.

At Muthill Parish Church, we certainly have available space and the willingness for such a development. We have an "Upper room" and a comfortable, refurbished vestry. We invite discussion on this subject as we already have a small band of prayer warriors willing to serve and seeking others. Why not contact **Lorraine Speirs** to note your interest and with any suggestions to include in a meeting planned for February.



Whither Our Education Programme?

Few would disagree that the essence of a vibrant church depends on its education programme as much as on its worship services, fellowship and organisational activities. The Christian faith has many challenges for anyone to be a believer and, for anyone to grow in faith, there must be effective continuing education.



Those who are members of House Groups will know this well as these more intimate settings provide one of the few structured opportunities to explore one's faith in greater depth through the company of other believers. However the majority of church attenders do not become members of such groups and therefore the normal way of progressing any learning about the Christian faith is through attending Sunday worship and here begins the dilemma.

Traditional worship services, rightly or wrongly, are not designed for greater exploration of faith issues as they do not provide the means of questioning and discussion. So how do we solve this problem of developing the faith of our church family and equally importantly introducing new seekers to what we believe, and particularly the young?

It is also fair to say that there is a danger in not trying to resolve this dilemma and that is, if a church family does not see Christian education as a key priority of mission, the church's overall mission will start to suffer and it will become more of a club for members only with all the consequences of becoming inward looking.

This assessment, however fair, is not so easy to solve. Traditional Sunday School is increasingly not attracting the support of today's younger families. There is much competition for people's free time, and there is much questioning in social media and other public forums of the need for having any belief at all. Yet the church continues to remain a significant

force in most communities but it does need to seriously review its Christian teaching methods to meet the changing culture of community. Whilst some churches have tried newer forms of educational outreach such as Messy Church and Alpha, this has often been with varying degrees of success. There is also a further factor which impacts on the overall position and that is, with many churches having increasingly older congregations, there is less inclination to come forward to help in youth education as many older people feel that their talents are not attuned to the needs of today's younger generation.

In Muthill Parish Church, we are currently without an incumbent minister and are having difficulty in building the relationship with families in our community which is an essential precursor for any successful Christian education programme. There has been much wrestling with the issue by those interested in youth work, but should this not be the subject of wider congregational involvement and for our all our leaders, as it effects the future of our church. We now have a modernised church sanctuary with plans to further upgrade more of our facilities but these actions alone will not produce the missional church we need. Whilst we are succeeding in some areas of our engagement with the community the question remains how are we to break through to younger families in our community without determined effort to develop an engaging Christian education programme of which they want to be part!

Christians Together



The next Christians Together gathering is on Sunday 23rd February at 7 pm in St. Columba's Episcopal Church in Crieff.

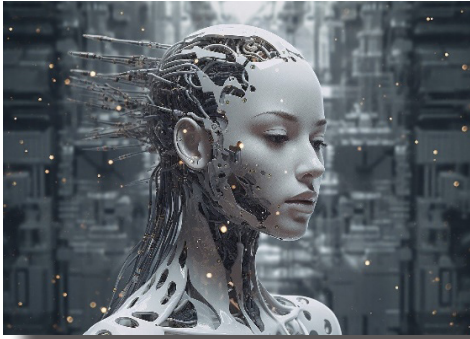
It is a time of worship and fellowship led by Chris White. Tea and coffee is served before the service from 6.45 pm.

Ai And God - Very Different Co-Pilots

This short article is re-produced by kind permission of Bunny Slack from St Andrews where Focus is a community magazine.

I thought I would try to get ahead and write my Focus article* in good time this week, writes Bunny Slack, so I switched on the computer and clicked on Word, but before I had typed a single letter this message appeared at the top of the page:

“Describe what you’d like to write including notes or an outline and Co-pilot can generate a draft to help you get started.”



I nearly fell off my chair. Whatever was Co-pilot and how had she, he or it managed to invade my typing space? Luckily, I seem to have managed to banish it and there is no Ai wonder writing this, just me, sharing my thoughts with any of you who wish to read my column.

Mind you, whoever directs this Co-pilot thing has given me a most thought-provoking topic for today’s article.

In the real world, the co-pilot of an aeroplane helps the captain to operate the aircraft and maintain navigation. He or she assists the captain to fly the plane safely and on the right course, taking direction from the captain and working in the cockpit. The Ai Co-pilot is different, using stored information to generate material which you can use in your letters and articles.

I don’t think this is the kind of help I need, but the idea of something like Co-pilot struck a chord. It is a good picture of the part God plays in our lives. God as co-pilot does not operate the plane himself but is there beside the person who is flying it, keeping a careful eye on what is happening and

advising, suggesting and even taking control when something goes badly wrong. The pilots, that is each one of us, have their hands on the controls and are free to operate them as they wish, but God as co-pilot is right beside each one of them, offering help and wise advice and sharing in the pilot's journey through life. Is that how you see God?

Just like the co-pilot, when we have not heeded God's warnings and got ourselves into trouble, God is still there beside us sharing the fear and the problems and helping us to get the plane back on course or to land it safely. Even if you have never done it before, why not spend a few minutes looking over your life and see whether you recognise this picture of how God works with each of us. Aeroplanes and co-pilots didn't exist when the gospels were written but God's loving care for each of us was just the same then as it is now. God is a real person and not a chat bot or an interactive computer programme.



Moderator's Appeal for Malawi

We would like to thank all those who bought things from the craft stalls we set up before Christmas. As a result of your generosity I have been able to send a cheque for £120 to the 'Moderator's Challenge', providing lights which allow students to study after dark, in Malawi. It is such a good cause and you have all helped so much.

We aim to have a similar event in late October this year so anyone interested should let us know.

Thank you so much,

Alison, Sue and Sheena

Planting Your Spring Garden

For the garden of your daily
living

Plant three rows of peas

- *Peace of mind
- *Peace of heart
- *Peace of soul

Plant four rows of squash

- *Squash gossip
- *Squash indifference
- *Squash grumbling
- *Squash selfishness



Plant four rows of lettuce

- *lettuce be faithful
- *lettuce be kind
- *lettuce be patient
- *lettuce really love one another

No garden is complete without turnips

- *turnip for meetings
- *turnip for service
- *turnip to help one another

To conclude our garden we must have Thyme

- *thyme for each other
- *thyme for family
- *thyme for friends

Water freely with Patience and cultivate with love

God in the Sciences

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



The Love of Wisdom of Natural Things

Some time ago a scientist was invited to speak at the Dewsbury Women's Institute. He spoke about his research on polymers, hoping that the women of this Yorkshire mill town would connect with his desire to develop new fibres.

One person in particular, a woman called Betty who had worked in a mill since the age of 15, listened as if her life depended on it, and peppered him with questions afterwards. She had always been interested in how things work, but until that day had not found anyone to answer her questions. Whenever she had asked about the processes that they were using in the mill, she was just told to get on with her job.

From the outside, science can seem a closed specialty, hemmed in by intimidating jargon. When McLeish described science as 'the love of wisdom of natural things', however, he realised he was opening a door. He was moved to see that Betty was not the only person who shed a tear when her questions were finally taken seriously, confirming that her enquiring mind was indeed probing in the right direction – only 50 years too late.

Hearing about people like Betty reminds me that science is a very natural activity for anyone to be involved in. McLeish is convinced that there is a future in 'science therapy'. In his book *Faith and Wisdom in Science*, where this story appears, he asks the question "If a reintroduction to the activity of representing both inner and outer worlds in paint, music and drama can help to heal minds, what hope might there be for a participation in a gentle and contemplative science in restoring a broken or misunderstood relationship with the physical world?"

This story inspired me to run a number of hands-on science activities with adult audiences in churches. I have extracted DNA from strawberries with a midweek group for older people, organised hands-on exhibits to liven up lecture or discussion events, and even had groups extracting DNA from their own cheek cells.

Every time I lead activities like these, I find that grown-ups are grateful for the opportunity to have a go at science themselves. I love helping church-based groups, in particular, to reconnect with science and celebrate what they find. Science is not just for children and professionals – it is for everyone to enjoy and explore the world God made.

God in the Arts

'My First Sermon' by John Everett Millais



There is a story of two men talking about their new vicar. One says to the other, "This new one's not a patch on the old vicar. With the old one preaching I was asleep in five minutes. With the new one it takes all of ten." Some churches in times past employed 'sluggard-walkers' who had long rods and walked down the aisles, ready to wake up the faithful if they had nodded off during the sermon.

Sluggard-walkers are not needed for this month's painting, *My First Sermon* by John Everett Millais. It hangs in the Guildhall Art Gallery in London, which houses the art collection of our capital city. The Gallery is built on the site of an amphitheatre and was only completed in 1999, having replaced a building that was destroyed

in the blitz of 1941. It has over 4000 works, many of them from the Victorian and Pre-Raphaelite period. Among them is this painting by Millais which depicts Effie, his 5-year-old daughter sitting in Kingston Church. She is dressed properly and sensibly for the occasion with feathered hat, muff and a cloak of vivid red. Her mother's prayer book and gloves are by her side. Effie is listening with great concentration.

When the painting was exhibited in 1863, it was a great success. In the following year Millais produced *My Second Sermon* – a very different occasion, for Effie has now fallen asleep with her hat by her side. Millais was often criticised for his sentimental portraits of children as in *Cherry Ripe* and *Bubbles*. But in 1864 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Charles Longley, praised this second painting for reminding us of 'the evil of lengthy sermons and drowsy discourses.'

As we look at Effie alert one Sunday, asleep the next, we can smile. But we might also ask how we respond to the Word that comes to us through the medium of words in the weekly sermon. The preacher has the daunting task of using this everyday coinage of words to draw us into that mysterious, life-giving realm of the Word, Jesus. The words spoken must make a straight path for the Lord to reach each human heart.

The two paintings of Millais depict the reality and fragility of this endeavour. Sometimes our attention is engaged; at others, drowsiness closes our eyes and even our hearts to the good news of salvation. On occasions the sermon sows seeds, which can bear fruit. At other times, all kinds of factors mitigate against the sermon's success. Let us pray that as listener or as preacher, we may be aware of the dynamic power of the Word, which, as Karl Rahner wrote, calls us 'out of the little house of our homely, close-hugged truths into the strangeness of the mystery of God that is our real home.'

Rev. Michael Burgess

The illustration "My first sermon" by John Everett Millais is published thanks to Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

A Big Thanks

As is noted under Kirk Session news, Liz Mitchell has given up her role as Chair of the Youth Education Committee. We want to thank Liz most sincerely for the excellent work and time that she has devoted to youth work in the church. Many of the church family will have experienced her engaging family services in the past. Such work involves a lot of personal time and effort and we have appreciated this so much. Thank you Liz.

SUDOKU

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	3			2		7		

*Solution on page 34

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The Powerful Message Of Holocaust Remembrance

If, like me, you watched the moving TV transmissions of the 80 year commemoration at the former concentration camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and the later memorial event held in the Guildhall, London, I doubt if you were not touched deeply by the recollections and speeches made. They were immensely powerful in describing the sickening and obscene events that took place and all had clear messages for the future of our world. As survivors and senior people from the international Jewish communities, one after the other, described the horrors of the events of that atrocious episode in world history, one saw so clearly the importance of not only remembering a historical event, but of being aware of its nature and educating about it from the heart.



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST

As one Rabbi expressed, there is a danger in teaching history alone as it focuses solely on facts and happenings whilst memory deals with awareness and experience. He went on to say that there needs to be a change in western culture which elevates the significance of memory as it is that factor which designs and truly influences our future. I immediately drew parallels with Ewen Gilchrist's powerful sermon on 26th January, in which he reminded us that there was no Bible in Jesus' time and yet there was dramatic growth of the Church which happened through the warmth and credibility of factual accounts and experiences transmitted from the heart by believers and that is how Christianity grew. It is only later we had the benefit of the compilation of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. How we remember and convey our experience of life is, therefore, important for the future of our society and we must always be aware of the danger if we teach history soullessly with only facts. Remembrance, if made meaningful, is an important power in developing the future of our society. Today, we are all aware that there continues to be much hatred, prejudice and evil in our world and in our own country, with social media and politics playing a significant part in creating this worrying element. Sadly there have also been many further genocides since World War 2 and a recent Times survey tells us that 50% of young folk between 13-27 years support strong political leadership even dictatorship. This can only be effectively counteracted by

humane-thinking people with experience and sound awareness speaking out and taking a clear stand so that it is noted and respected. This message is true for Christians and indeed for all faiths. We have a responsibility to be as effective disciples as possible and not merely by-standers. You will not be surprised to learn that the whole day moved me so much that I was determined to light a candle in my window that night.

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

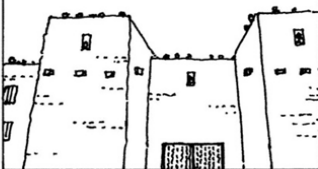
It can be read in the Bible in
Joshua chapter 6 verses 1-27

Joshua led the Israelites across the river Jordan. They camped near the town of Jericho and prepared to fight.

The people in Jericho
locked the town gates.



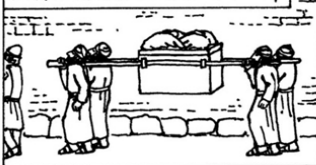
They thought they were safe.



God told Joshua
what to do.



On the first day, the priests
carried the sacred chest,



they blew trumpets,
and walked round
Jericho once.



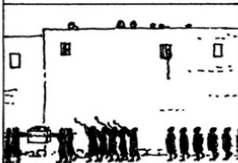
The army followed
not saying a word.



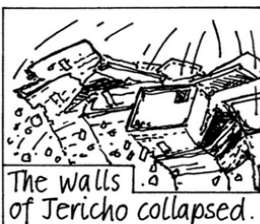
They did this
for 6 days.



On the 7th day they
walked round 7 times.

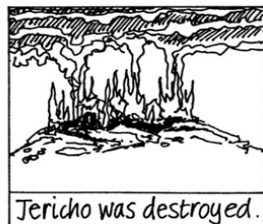


The army gave a victory shout!



The walls
of Jericho collapsed.

The army rushed into
the town and
captured it.



Jericho was destroyed.

Kirk And Community News

Church Online Services In 2024



The statistics for the online screening of our worship services in 2024 are now available and have revealed some interesting results:

Number of Videos Uploaded	41
Total Number of Views	1424
Average View per Week	35
Maximum Views	68
Minimum Views	17

These annual stats can be compared with the number of views since refurbishment of the sanctuary:

Number of Videos Uploaded	28
Total Number of Views	921
Average Views per Week	33

We were only able to screen 7 services live and this was halted because of poor quality in transmission. For these, there were 205 views recorded.

With these results it is clearly worthwhile uploading videos of our services to the internet though the viewing results may be misleading as they record all views, even if the viewer only stays online for a short time. Since relocating the AV system following upgrading of the sanctuary we have been unable to use the internet for live transmission and no solution to this has yet been found. The SIM contract will therefore be discontinued pending further discussion and investigation.

Memorial Service

Our first Memorial Service for those who had suffered bereavement recently and those who wanted to remember lost loved ones at Christmas was held on Sunday 15th December. It was organised by the Pastoral Care Team with Rev Iain Paton and Rev Alex Mitchell presiding and included an act of remembrance as well as pertinent readings and a couple of duets. For our first attempt at this special service there was a good attendance and the worship was followed by serving of afternoon tea also in the sanctuary. Thanks are due to all who helped with this special event. We are also encouraged by the warm feedback received.

Seniors Christmas Lunch



This year's Christmas lunch for seniors in the village was held in the Village Hall on 12th December. Congratulations go to all who helped make this event possible including entertainment from Kay and Craig, and those who provided the food. A special thanks is due to Grace for her sale of pumpkins which raised £420 and to the Gala funds for meeting the remainder of the costs. It is hoped that arrangements next year will be able to attract a fuller attendance.

Burns Night Celebrations

It was good to see local celebrations for Burns Night taking place in the village. The Commercial Hotel had a very successful packed event celebrating the



Bard which raised £220 towards the upkeep of the village defibrillators and included our well known Lorna Clark as speaker.

Then, further up the street in the Village Hall we have a nice photo of the Monday Club tucking into haggis, neeps and tatties! Maybe a couple of days late but it does look good!



And opposite is the table that welcomed the Editor who attended a private Burns supper at a friends house.

A guid toast to Rabbie for engendering a deserved growing tradition both here in Scotland and around the world!

Kirk And Community News

New Housing Development



In case you missed it, the application for the new housing development behind Willoughby Street in Muthill was posted late last year on the Perth and Kinross planning portal with a deadline to support or object of 6th December. It includes initial assessment of traffic, flood risk etc

Film Nights With St James

Since the last edition of the church magazine we have had two further film nights with St James. Due to the Primary School using the Parish Church for rehearsals of their Christmas show the December film night was back again in St James. The film shown there was **Simon Birch**. It told the story of a boy who was different, a misfit but completely lacking in malevolence but with a mischievous tendency. Although only 12 years of age he has insights and wisdom well beyond his years and a faith in God which is unshakeable. He is convinced that he is God's special instrument and as a consequence he speaks out and challenges the little less afraid to be ourselves. A stimulating and challenging story which led to a great discussion afterwards over some lovely seasonal refreshments.

The January film was **Inside Out**, a highly creative animated film which explores the idea that personified emotions compete within our heads for control of our feelings. The main emotions are fear, disgust, sadness, joy and anger with joy being the main emotion. It is a film which makes you think a lot about your own behaviour and emotions, and the better we understand ourselves the better we can understand and thereby accept others. If you haven't seen, It is well worth searching out and it will certainly make you think! We were also told that there is now an **Inside Out 2**.

Our next film night is on Monday 10th February, will be back in sanctuary of Muthill Parish Church starting at 7pm. It would be great to see more come along for the film, eats and discussion and to get to know some more of our friends in St James. Further details of the film nights are available to take away from the Church Welcome Desk.

Community Hub-Latest Update

The following update was published by the Village Trust on the Muthill Past and Present webpage in mid December. The planning application for the Community Hub has now been submitted. The design was tweaked slightly following the last community consultation event as we wanted to include as many requests as possible for the Hub whilst still keeping the cost for building at a realistic level. Attached are some of the images showing the floor plans design for the building and the site in Coronation Park. In summary, the Hub has a foyer/museum area, a café/shop, a large hall and a small hall which can be divided into two differently sized rooms, one of which can act as an overflow for the café. Outside there will be a parking area with EV charging, recycling station, five aside football pitch/community greenspace, garden area, nature trail and upgraded play park. Further details can be obtained from the Village Trust website. <https://www.muthillvillagetrust.org/>



Crieff Community Foodbank

A huge thank you to all those who so generously support the Crieff Foodbank by donating items in the box in the foyer.

A review of 2024 shows that over the year there were 490 visits to collect a 'food parcel' from the base in the King's Centre in Crieff.

A 'parcel': usually two or three shopping bags, consists of a selection of tinned and dry goods sufficient to feed the person or family nutritiously for at least 3 - 4 days.

The donations from our church allow us to give a more varied selection of items which is particularly helpful to those who, because of their circumstances, are regular recipients of a parcel.

Over the past year there were 80 people who came to the foodbank. Of those, the biggest number were single, followed by families and then couples. Some people come only once, when a crisis had caused them to have no means of purchasing food; others are unable to provide for themselves or their family due to low wages, benefit problems or high heating and utility bills.

There are always two volunteers at each of the 3 sessions each week and the foodbank users often express to them their real appreciation for the service that is provided.

So thank you Muthill Parish Church for your faithful contributions.

Vivian Donaldson

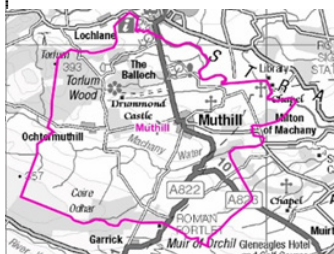
Kirk And Community News

Muthill Community Council

Firstly, we wish everyone a safe, healthy and happy year ahead!

Do you know much about what Muthill Community Council does?

Our community council serves as a local statutory body representing the interests and concerns of the community of Muthill.



We serve the whole area shown below within the pink border. We look after far more than just what we see within the village limits.

We are 1 of 59 Community Council areas of Perth & Kinross Council.

MCC is part of the Strathallan Ward (along side villages such as: Braco, Blackford, Auchterarder, Dunning, Aberuthven)

We are all elected volunteers committed to working for the good of our community.

We have three elected PKC Councillors who attend our meetings and help us to escalate and facilitate solutions to issues and concerns within the council.

At any time of the year, new members can join the community council by being co-opted.

We have nominated office bearers which are agreed each year.

For 2025, our Office Bearers and Community Council Members are;

- Chair: Stephen Coulter
- Treasurer: Sandy Black
- Secretary: Katy Cepok
- Mairi McDonald
- Donald Hood
- Davie Woods
- Marjory Davidson

The typical roles and responsibilities we take on are:

Engaging with Residents: We gather views of our community, often through meetings and consultations. This helps ensure that decisions reflect the needs and wishes of the local population

Managing Local Projects: Community councils often oversee local projects, such

as road safety, improvements to parks and other public spaces and championing the wellbeing of our community such as maintaining and managing defibrillators, warm space funding etc

Advocating for the Community: We represent our community's interests to higher levels of government and various organisations, ensuring that local issues and concerns are heard and addressed

Planning and Development: We have a role in local planning, providing input on development proposals and ensuring that new projects benefit the community

Addressing Local Issues: We tackle various local issues, from environmental concerns to social issues, seeking solutions that benefit the community

We look forward to seeing you soon and in the meantime, should you need to contact us, you can do so by:

- Joining us at one of our monthly public meetings, held every third Tuesday of the month, at Muthill Village Hall (other than the months of July and December)
- We have a Facebook page with a messaging facility (we also post our monthly minutes here too)

<https://www.facebook.com/Muthill-community-council/>

- Our email address is mtccnews@gmail.com

Katy Cepok

MPC Book Club

We are pleased to report that our wee book club continues to grow with two new members. It met on 8th January for its review meeting of the book ***A Gentleman in Moscow*** by Amor Towles. There was, as always, lively discussion and sharing of some of the many passages of this engaging book, which, by the way, is now serialised on Amazon Prime. The Group was unanimous in finding the book and the writing a great read, which told a wonderful fairy tale story as well as giving an insight into life in Russia under the Bolsheviks. The group is now about to study ***Red Dust Road*** by Jackie Kay, one of Scotland's most celebrated living authors and will review their impressions on Friday 21st February. Newcomers are always welcome to come along and join us. For further details on our meetings, contact **Sandy Hutchison on 07825544225**.

Kirk And Community News

Church Of Scotland News

A minister based in Jerusalem is embarking on a tour of churches to “amplify” the voices of people directly affected by the Israel-Gaza war.



Rev Dr Stewart Gillan is taking part in speaking and preaching engagements throughout February and early March to share the life and work of St Andrew's Church in Jerusalem and Tiberias Church.

Operating as one congregation, members work closely with ecumenical and interfaith partners to advocate for peace and justice in the Middle East.

In laying bare the harsh reality of life in the troubled region, the minister is seeking to encourage people in Scotland to speak out against all violations of the “sanctity of life” and advocate for human rights of all to be upheld.

He will share how the Church and its partners have worked together to support people caught up in the conflict and advocate for the cessation of hostilities, the release of hostages and prisoners and to maintain the essential flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza and other areas blighted by conflict.

The minister of St Andrew's Church, also known as the Scots Memorial Church, will outline how local people feel about the fragile ceasefire agreement and their hopes and aspirations for the future.

Christian Aid and The Friends of St Andrew's Jerusalem & Tiberias invite you to meet **Rev Dr Stewart Gillan**, the Minister of St Andrew's Jerusalem on Thursday **13th February at 2.00pm in St Matthew's Church, Perth.**

Stewart's talk will be followed by refreshments and an opportunity for informal discussion. Admission is free. Donations to Christian Aid Middle East Crisis Appeal will be appreciated.

The event will be live-streamed. Any other information from secretary@friendsofstandrews.com.

Moderator's Challenge

The Moderator's Challenge, which was launched in December and will fund solar-powered lights for pupils in Malawi, has so far raised over £15,000. The campaign will enable children to do their homework and advance their schooling with the aid of small solar lights they can borrow from their school.

Perth Presbytery News

Being an Intergenerational Church

We are pleased to announce that we have rescheduled this course which was recently postponed, and it will now be held on Saturday 22nd March 2025 at St. Matthew's Church, Perth.

This course was requested by the training team as many of us lack younger members in our congregation, some have Messy Church but then nothing to follow on from this, others have few members involved in church life under 50. This one-day course headed up by Susi Farrant from 121, could help your congregation to think of ideas to become an Intergenerational Church.

For more information or to register your interest please contact Alex Rae at fourraes@btinternet.com

Presbytery Plan

The consolidated Presbytery Plan is now available on the website below:
<https://www.perthpresbytery.org>

Kirk And Community News

Muthill Kirk Session

The Kirk Session has met twice since the last edition of The Bridge was published. The first was in January when the implications of the consolidation of Perth Presbytery Plan were considered. The Interim Moderator's pastoral letter, earlier in this edition, provides details of the Plan as it effects Muthill.

Its second meeting was on 4th February. At this meeting there were reviews and feedback on the recent Christmas arrangements, including review of the worship services, and the community gifts from the church including disbursements from the Burtenshaw Bequest. Other key issues discussed were:

- An open meeting was held at the end of January with those in the church interested in youth work. This followed the resignation of Liz Mitchell as Chair of the Youth Education Committee. (We will miss you Liz and many thanks for all your excellent work). The Kirk Session was, however, pleased to hear that the January meeting had been constructive with many ideas coming forward to make our worship more appealing to youth, and to give a more modern welcoming image to younger people entering the church. The ideas have been given general support from the Kirk Session and over the next few months further endeavour will be made to see how things are progressing and whether we can make a greater breakthrough in our relationship with families.
- The Kirk Session also considered plans for the creation of a larger kitchen and more toilet facilities which would impact on the Bruce Hall. The Kirk Session will further study the details of the plans prepared over the next month with a view to making a decision in March.
- The Kirk Session was also pleased to see upgrading of the heating system in the North Lounge, new lighting and railing at the north entrance and replacement of a defective heater in the Bruce Hall. A handrail for use in the chancel rail to ease access between the main floor area and the chancel section is shortly to be installed.
- The Kirk Session decided that it will work towards holding a special service in March 2026 to celebrate the bi-centenary of the laying of the foundation stone of Muthill Parish Church. The actual opening of the church for worship

was some two years later and consideration will be given nearer that anniversary time to the possibility of some appropriate celebration.

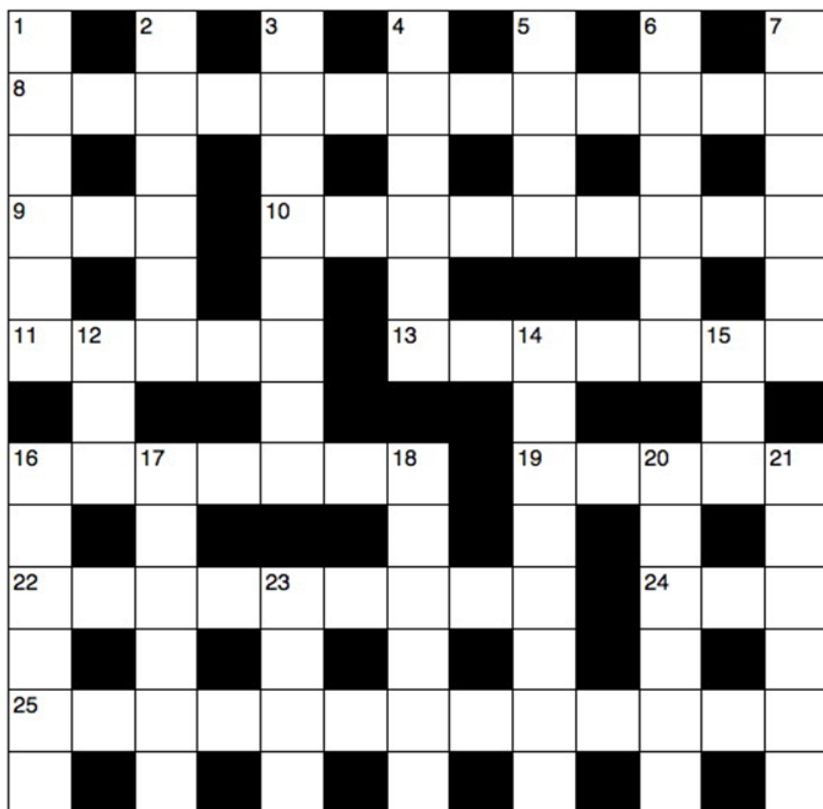
- The Kirk Session gave its approval for the planning and organisation of an away study day for Elders and members of the congregation sometime in the Spring 2025. The purpose of this event will be to review our church's progress in mission and to try and establish priorities in our outreach work. A small team of Elders with others from the congregation will be formed to take this forward in the hope that it will attract a strong attendance and achieve meaningful results.

Two developments to note in the church sanctuary

There is now a welcome desk to the rear of the sanctuary where you can pick up spare copies of The Bridge church magazine, and an assortment of literature with details about activities in the church. It is also a place to sign up for our flower ministry, the after-church refreshment service and helping with the weekly soup and sandwich lunches. Please visit it! You will often find take-away details and information of events and happenings publicised through the AV system.

And for our younger families, please note that there is now a children's table and childrens' chairs and a few table activities for any who wish to use it during church services. For slightly older children they will be warmly welcomed in the break-out session organised in the Bruce Hall during the sermon part of the Sunday service. Work continues on possible intergenerational services to replace the former family services.

Crossword



Across

8 Interrogated (Acts 12:19) (5-8)

9 'Burn it in a wood fire on the — heap' (Leviticus 4:12) (3)

10 Tobit, Judith, Baruch and the books of Esdras and the Maccabees are part of it (9)

11 Science fiction (abbrev.) (3-2)

13 Clay pit (anag.) (7)



16 Went to (John 4:46) (7)
19 'Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to — your bodies as living sacrifices' (Romans 12:1) (5)
22 David's plea to God concerning those referred to in 14 Down: 'On — — let them escape' (Psalm 56:7) (2,7)
24 Royal Automobile Club (1,1,1) 25 How the book of Ezekiel refers to God more than 200 times (Ezekiel 2:4) (9,4)

Down

1 Seas (Proverbs 8:24) (6)
2 One of the sons of Eli the priest, killed in battle by the Philistines (1 Samuel 4:11) (6)
3 Specialist in the study of the Muslim religion (8)
4 'Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but — him as if he were your father' (1 Timothy 5:1) (6)
5 One of Esau's grandsons (Genesis 36:11) (4)
6 Taking a chance (colloq.) (2,4)
7 God's instructions to the Israelites concerning grain offerings: ' — salt to — your offerings' (Leviticus 2:13) (3,3)
12 Confederation of British Industry (1,1,1)
14 'All day long they twist my words; they are always — to harm me' (Psalm 56:5) (8)
15 The crowd's reaction to Jesus bringing back to life a widow's son in Nain (Luke 7:16) (3)
16 Disappear (Psalm 104:35) (6)
17 How Jeremiah was likely to die if he wasn't rescued from the cistern where he was imprisoned (Jeremiah 38:9) (6)
18 What the prophets do to a wall, with whitewash (Ezekiel 13:10, RSV) (4,2)
20 Made by a plough (Job 39:10) (6)
21 Noah was relieved when the flood waters continued to — (Genesis 8:5) (6)
23 Jesus gave the Twelve the power and authority to do this to diseases (Luke 9:1) (4)

****Crosswords reproduced by kind permission of BRF and John Capon, originally published in Three Down, Nine Across, by John Capon (£6.99 BRF)**

*Solution on page 31

Book Reviews



Making the Most of Your Church Wedding

By Ally Barrett, SPCK, £5.99

From author and vicar, Ally Barrett, *Making the Most of Your Church Wedding* is a short, attractive, full-colour guide to the Anglican wedding service aimed at couples planning a church wedding but it is helpful for people of any denomination. This church wedding handbook is an essential title for anyone planning a church wedding, from couples to clergy. It uses the words and the actions of the

marriage service to enable couples to explore the big questions of life, relationships, commitment, God, family and more. Ideal for use in Christian wedding planning, this visual and informative book contains questions and activities to help you achieve the perfect church wedding and its lead up.

From information and guidance on choosing readings, making The Vows and the Blessing of the marriage, this helpful guide will help couples plan and prepare for their church wedding.

Surviving Separation and Divorce - Dealing with Divorce Day-to-day

By Ruth Clements, SPCK, £10.99

A no-nonsense, compassionate guide to surviving separation and divorce. "How am I supposed to keep going when all I want to do is hide? How does separation work? What are the ins-and-outs and complexities of divorce? Am I going to get through this?"

Ruth Clements guides the reader, with compassion and practical advice, on how to survive the maelstrom. Showing that there is always hope and giving tips on how to deal with the practicalities of separation and divorce, Clements has written a guide that is warm, entertaining and practical. This book will show you that there is a way through and it will be your companion on the journey.

Prayer Book of Days - With Saints Through the Ages

By Gregory Cameron, Canterbury Press, £12.99

Popular author and illustrator Gregory Cameron offers 31 daily prayers from the treasury of Christian spirituality through the centuries.

The prayers included are from some giants of the faith – Augustine, Patrick, Benedict, Julian of Norwich, Francis of Assisi, Clare – and also lesser known figures right up to recent times. Each daily section includes an original icon-style illustration, a prayer, the story that lies behind it and a reflection on its significance in history and for faith today.

Waking the Women - Faith, Menopause, and the Meaning of Midlife

By Jayne Manfredi, Canterbury Press, £10.39

Women over the age of 40 are by far the biggest and the most active demographic in most churches. But while a huge proportion of any given congregation will likely have experienced menopause, it still remains largely unacknowledged, unspoken and unaddressed. It is almost entirely taboo as a topic of conversation in churches.

Writing with refreshing frankness, popular blogger and broadcaster Jayne Manfredi uses biblical reflection, prophetic storytelling and prayer to journey with those experiencing “the dreaded m word”. Facing the menopause head-on, and by turns hilarious and moving, *Waking the Women* offers a challenge to destigmatize women’s experiences by opening up the conversation around midlife and ageing in the church.

100 Ways to Get Your Church Noticed (3rd edition)

By Neil Pugmire, CHP, £18.99

This practical guide by a media professional has helped countless churches to raise their profile in their local communities and more widely. It is packed with simple, clear advice and ideas for generating publicity for your church and its mission, this revised third edition engages with the rise in online worship in the wake of the pandemic, and includes many low-cost, effective ideas for churches feeling financial pressures.

Written in clear and jargon-free language, it offers advice on: · Developing an effective communications strategy · Deciding the messages you want to convey · Creating or updating your website · Making the most of print, social media and online channels of communication · Putting your building to work, inside and out · Giving your publications a makeover · Liaising with the media and more. Illustrated throughout with examples that have worked successfully, this makes communication expertise readily accessible for churches in all contexts. Further support is available on the companion website, www.getyourchurchnoticed.com

Marriage - 6 Gospel Commitments Every Couple Needs to Make

By Paul Tripp, 10Publishing, £17.15

When two people say “I do,” they begin the journey of a lifetime—and they expect that journey to be perfect. Expectations of the perfect marriage are sure to fade away in the struggles of everyday life, but many are shocked when their marriage morphs into something they didn’t intend it to be. A long-term, gospel-centred marriage needs to be grounded in something sturdier than romance.

In this rebranded edition of *What Did You Expect?*, popular author and pastor Paul David Tripp encourages couples to make six commitments to one another; commitments such as practicing forgiveness, appreciating differences, and actively working toward a relationship that is built on trust. Through each chapter, Tripp encourages readers to be motivated by grace as they strive to make Jesus Christ the centre of their marriages.

Something Needs To Change – a Call to Make Your Life Count in a World of Urgent Need

By David Platt, 10Publishing, £8.99

New York Times best-selling author David Platt takes readers on a heart wrenching, soul-searching journey through impoverished villages in the Himalayan mountains, and with riveting passion and surprising vulnerability, dares readers to make a difference in a world of urgent need, starting right where they live.

Easter Inside Out - the story as if you were there

By David Kitchen, BRF, £12.99

Step into the Easter story... Acclaimed storyteller David Kitchen reimagines the Easter narrative through a varied cast of characters, from Mary Magdalene to Caiaphas. If you want to understand who might have been where and doing what as the Easter story unfolds, this book gives you answers. It also lets you sense what it could have been like to be one of those involved in the twists and turns of one of the most extraordinary stories in the whole of history.

The Poetry of Pilgrimage: Reflections on Celtic Pilgrimage sites in Ireland and Britain

By Michael Mitton, BRF, £12.99

Drawing from his experience of co-leading pilgrimages in Britain and Ireland, Michael Mitton captures the essence of 23 significant pilgrimage sites for anyone from experienced pilgrims to armchair pilgrims. Each chapter outlines the story of the Celtic saint who founded the site, together with information about the location, a poem inspired by the author's experience of that place, a reflective question, a suggested Bible reading and a photo of the site.

Editor's Note

The next edition of the magazine will be in April 2025. The magazine will be available in Church on Easter Sunday, **20th April with postal and email editions being sent out around that date** The deadline for submitting articles, intimations, letters etc. to the Editor will be Friday **11th April 2025** (Email: macahiph@gmail.com).

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

The views expressed in the magazine are often personal and not necessarily those of the Editor, the Kirk Session or the official view of the Church of Scotland which can be laid down only by the General Assembly.

Sudoku Solution:

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

Useful Contacts

Useful Local Telephone Numbers

NHS 24	111
NHS Emergency	999
Hospitals:	
Crieff Community Hospital	01764653173
Perth Royal Infirmary	01738623311
Ninewells Hospital, Dundee	01382660111
Crieff Medical Centre:	
Blue Practice	01764652283
Red Practice	01764657060
Crieff Pharmacies:	
Boots	01764652310
Davidsons	01764652177
Strathearn	01764654876
Torlum	01764652727
Police:	
Emergency	999
Non-Emergency	101
Action Fraud Scotland	101
Schools:	
Muthill Primary School	01764661466
Crieff High School	01764657600
Crieff Primary School	01764657888
Morrison's Academy:	
General and Secondary	01764653885
Primary	01764657196
Ardvreck School	01764653112
Veterinary Practice:	
Crieff Vets	01764652086
Broadley Vets	01786824400
Struthers & Scott Vets	01786841304
Tower Vet Centre	01738583083

Crossword Solution:

ACROSS:

8, Cross-examined.

9, Ash. 10, Apocrypha. 11, Sci-fi. 13, Typical. 16, Visited. 19, Offer. 22, No account. 24, RAC. 25, Sovereign Lord.

DOWN :

1, Oceans. 2, Hophni. 3, Islamist. 4, Exhort. 5, Omar. 6, On spec. 7, Add all. 12, CBI. 14, Plotting. 15, Awe. 16, Vanish. 17, Starve. 18, Daub it. 20, Furrow. 21, Recede. 23, Cure.



Mission Statement

Muthill Parish Church
aims to be
A place to find peace and welcome
A people growing in Christian faith and love
A presence at the heart and soul of the community

Church Website

www.muthillparishchurch.co.uk

Facebook

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

Email

muthillparish@yahoo.com

Magazine Graphics & Cover Photo

Our cover picture theme is ***Early Appearance of Spring***. Thanks to Raffie for sourcing the graphics for the magazine and helping in the production.”.

Registered Scottish Charity

Muthill Parish Church - SC004984