

THE BRIDGE

ADVENT
2023
EDITION

HAPPY CHRISTMAS
EVERYONE



Kirk And Community News
Living Memories Project
Men's Group Launch
Community Enterprise Shines





Contents

Editorial.....	Page 03
Message From Our Interim Moderator.....	Page 04 & 05
Book Club Has Novel Launching.....	Page 06
Bible Parable.....	Page 07
Our Beautiful Border Country.....	Page 08 & 09
Crieff Community Foodbank.....	Page 10
God And The Arts.....	Page 11
God In The Sciences.....	Page 12 & 13
Living Memories Project.....	Page 14
The Guild.....	Page 15
Community Enterprise Shines.....	Page 16 & 17
Christmas Services.....	Page 18
Christians Together Dates for your Diary.....	Page 19
Kirk And Community News.....	Page 20 - 27
Crossword Grid And Questions.....	Page 28 & 29
New Book Reviews.....	Page 30 - 33
Editor’s Note.....	Page 34
Voluntary Car Service Support Form.....	Page 34
Useful Telephone Contacts.....	Page 35
Crossword Solution	Page 35
Mission Statement.....	Page 36



Kirk Register

Muthill Parish Church

There were no marriages, deaths or baptisms to report during the current period. The Kirk Roll has increased to 190 and we welcome William Gray, Jean Dawson, Alex Dawson, Jean Ann Scott-Miller and Lisa Roberts.



Editorial

Welcome to this edition of The Bridge, the bi-monthly magazine of Muthill Parish Church.

We are delivering this edition not only to our church family but to the whole village of Muthill as we want you to know what is going on in the Parish Church. We have a regular presence in social media but our magazine seeks to provide a fuller picture on current happenings and viewpoints.

As a reader you should know that you will always receive a warm welcome not only at any of our worship services which take place normally at 10.00am each Sunday. You are also welcome to any of our other activities. We now have two new ones, a Book Club and Mens Group. which are open to anyone in the village and every Wednesday we have soup and sandwich lunches in our Bruce Hall at 12.30pm. Anyone from the village is welcome and thanks to support from Perth and Kinross Council the lunches are free until next March. The Mens Group meets at 11.00am also on Wednesdays. It is primarily a social gathering over coffee but also with an aim of giving assistance to the village in simple practical ways. It meets that day so you can choose to go on to lunch afterward if you want. Coffee is also available for ladies that day before the lunch.

This edition of our magazine celebrates the season of Advent which for Christians is a time of celebrating Christ's birth and preparing and re-dedicating ourselves to work for his second coming. It is a time of Joy and Hope when we give our gratitude for the good things in our lives, and for the blessings of his guidance and example, which we find makes for peace and hope in the way we lead our lives.

Although we are a small community as a church family we have the village at our heart and want to contribute collaboratively its vision and cohesion.

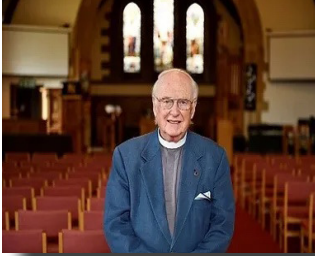
I hope you will enjoy reading this edition and you are welcome to be kept further in touch.

Editor

Message From Our Interim Moderator

Dear friends,

Welcome to the Christmas edition of The Bridge. This is another edition which is packed full of useful information. It is also the first one since the closure of the Trinity Gask Church and it has been a great joy that some of the former members there have joined the congregation and are attending the services at Muthill. We also need to record that, since the last issue, we have changed the time of the morning service. I get the impression that most of our members are happy to be at church for 10am.



World problems seem to get no less these days.

The situation in Gaza seems to have replaced Ukraine in the news bulletins, at least for the present, but there is no doubt that both need our prayers. My wife, Marjorie, and I are particularly concerned about the Israel/ Hamas situation because in the late 1990s I was the Church of Scotland minister in Jerusalem. We still have many friends there, and we have both been in one of the Gaza hospitals that have been on the news recently, with such distressing pictures coming from it. Here is a prayer written recently by an acquaintance of mine concerning the situation in Gaza. Her name is The Rev. Alison Askew.

"Lord have mercy.

I saw the newborn Jesus today, not in the warmth and safety of a stable lent by a kindly innkeeper, but wrapped in a blanket, exposed to the elements on a roadside in Gaza,

I saw Joseph, the holy father today, unable to care for his wife and her child, unable to offer them food or protection from the bombs that relentlessly fly overhead when they are so far from home.

I saw countless Rachels weeping for their innocent, helpless children for they are no more. Bombed, starved, dying for want of urgent medical care.

I saw thousands of frightened people today far from home, ordered to move by those in authority not for a census, but so that their homes, their livelihoods can be levelled to the ground and their hopes erased.

I saw thousands of rampaging soldiers today seeking vengeance on innocents. Children, women and elderly killed in their thousands. I saw

them accompanying and supporting violent settlers breaking into the homes of unarmed civilians in the West Bank, murdering the defenceless in their homes simply because they were Palestinians.

I saw Mary, Mother of God, today, cradling the bloodied, battered body of her son, blown apart by an air-strike.

I saw His friends unable to give Him a burial. The hospitals have run out of shrouds, and funeral processions are seen as legitimate targets.

No loaves or fishes anymore; no water into wine. No bread, no water, no medicine, no hope.

Where is the good news for the poor, the freedom for the oppressed?

I heard the voice of Cain today. He spoke on behalf of the world community.

'Am I my brother's keeper?'

But quietly, almost inaudibly, I heard another voice.

'Blessed are the sorrowful; they shall find consolation.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail; they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the peace makers; they shall be called God's children.

Whatever you did for one of my brothers here, you did for me.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has never overcome it.

Amen."

Whilst writing this letter, I should like to pay tribute to the ministers and trained readers who have been giving us such a help with leading the services. I refer to Ian Roy, Rev. Rev. Ewen Gilchrist, Dr, Andrew Barton, Dr. Stuart McChlery, Stephen Miller and, of course our own Helen-May Bayne. I, for one, would have had great difficulty in sustaining the worship of the congregation without them.

And so we are now into the season of Advent. Christmas and New Year beckon and will be here soon enough. And we look forward. On the first Sunday of 2024 we shall be ordaining and admitting three new elders to the Kirk Session. – Sandy Hutchison, Elaine Wallace and Doreen Reid. A sign of growth and looking forward? Of course it is!

May the Lord bless and keep you,

(Rev.) Iain F. Paton
Interim Moderator.



Book Club Has Novel Launching

The Book Club has started and will meet for its first review meeting of the launching book, **The Lost Bookshop** by Evie Woods, on Friday 8th December at 3pm in the North Lounge over tea. However, Monday 30th October at 10.30am was the original date set for the first gathering of readers but it was not quite the launching that was planned.

I duly drove down to the church to open up the North Lounge and was very encouraged when I encountered a gathering of maybe 6-8 people mustering in the approach to the church. Having publicised the club to people in the village who had been part of a former book club, I was not surprised that there were faces I did not recognise, and as I drove past them I was encouraged as I thought I had spotted someone from St James Church whom I knew. I smiled and waved to them to follow my car. I duly parked at the north side of the church and opened up the doors into the North lounge. The group followed the car and on opening the door I waved back to them to follow me in and I would set out sufficient chairs. Having quickly sorted the chairs, I then ushered the group in and sat them down. I introduced myself and welcomed them to the first review meeting of the new Book Club and you can imagine my astonishment when I found out that they were not book-reading villagers but rather a group of Italian tourists from a place I had not heard of, called Lucca, who were interested in seeing the interior of the church.

Sadly no one from the village had turned up for the launch meeting but fortunately any disappointment or embarrassment was removed by the novel experience, smiling faces and Italian charm!

Since this happening, the Club has found at least 5 committed members and several more have already read the first book which is a real page turner!

The Club will give a warm welcome to adults of any age in the village who enjoy and are willing to share their views on the books which are selected. The primary purpose is to have fun and share how we have found and interpreted each book selected. It is not aimed at becoming an elite intellectual group but rather a social gathering with a focus on learning from each other and celebrating the joy of reading.

Books will be chosen on a monthly basis by the whole group with each member in turn being offered the opportunity to propose one. The reading

time will be disciplined to one month and then we will meet for our review get-together, which will normally be the first Friday afternoon of the month. If you would like more information, please contact Sandy Hutchison (07825544225).

The Big Bash!



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS





ONE STORY WAS ABOUT A RICH MAN WHO DECIDED TO HAVE A PARTY

HE SENT OUT LOTS OF INVITATIONS



OH! NO!!

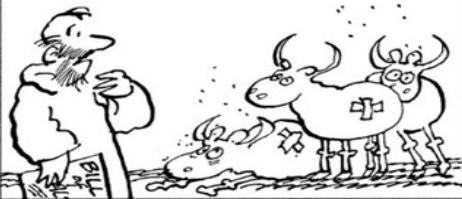


BUT PEOPLE STARTED MAKING EXCUSES

ONE MAN SAID HE HAD BOUGHT A FIELD, BUT NEEDED TO MEASURE IT



ANOTHER MAN SAID HE NEEDED TO TEST DRIVE THE OXEN HE HAS JUST PAID FOR





ANOTHER MAN SAID HE HAD JUST GOT MARRIED - AND HIS WIFE WOULDN'T LET HIM OUT!

SO THE RICH MAN INVITED ALL THE POOR AND NEEDY INSTEAD.





THE PARABLE MEANS WE SHOULDN'T MAKE EXCUSES FOR NOT FOLLOWING JESUS.

Our Beautiful Border Country

I have written before about the significance and value of time away from one's usual routine. This time I am writing after a short autumn sojourn in the Border country.

Having a much loved dog, finding somewhere that suits us is not always easy. Then there are our own requirements in terms of accommodation and access to interests that make a holiday special. In the event, we were very successful in finding a beautiful eco-friendly cottage near Langholm, Dumfries and Galloway, which had everything and more in terms of comfort for us, as well as a beautiful expansive enclosed garden for the dog and all set beside a river and surrounded



by Border hills resplendent in their autumn colours. Arriving at a scene like this in bright autumn sunshine with the cool autumn air making your perception keenly aware of the peace and tranquillity of the setting has a profound impact on you and, over the week to follow, this feeling only deepened along with one of thankfulness that we live in such a fine country.



There were, of course, plans to do a host of things in the time at our disposal but in the end only a fraction was accomplished, but that didn't matter as refreshment was there in abundance and that is what makes a break in your normal routine so valuable. The joy of waking up in the morning and looking out on sheep and pheasants in the adjoining fields and with views out to an old humped bridge and a fine historic church standing majestically beyond were more than sufficient to give me a great uplift. It was also so good to see our dog enjoying exploring new smells and charging round the grassy garden chasing birds. On the second evening, we even





had the unexpected pleasure and spectacle of a village bonfire and a firework display taking place on Guy Fawkes Night a short distance away in a field opposite the cottage all of which we enjoyed relaxing in front of a log fire and behind picture windows with double glazing.

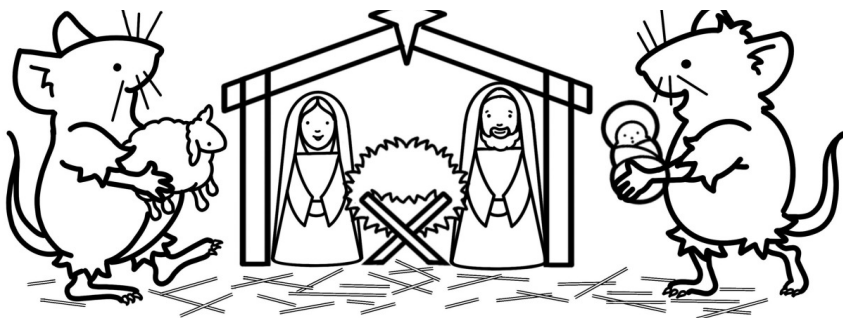
However, in case you get the impression that we didn't move from the cottage, that would be wrong as in addition to some lovely moor and woodland walks nearby, we visited many surrounding places of interest including



Gretna, the Solway Firth coastline, Kirkcudbright, Dumfries, Lockerbie, Annan, Hawick and and on our return journey Lilliesleaf and Ashkirk. In addition, of course, what holiday would be complete without some fine meals out and in this connection local hotel served great food .

The lasting impression, however, must be that of the stunning Border countryside with its rich autumn hues of red, brown and yellow, the fascination of nature displayed by the multitude of sheep, pheasants and other wildfowl which were so plentiful on the road as well as in the fields. There is no doubt that such experiences are great for the soul. It is so right to thank God for His amazing creation and all on our doorstep!

Sandy Hutchison





Crieff Community Foodbank

Crieff Foodbank continues to operate from its base in the King's Centre, next to the Crieff Cottage Hospital. It was originally started by two ladies from Crieff Baptist church and operated out of the Logos Centre on the High Street. It is manned by volunteers from most of the churches in Crieff and others who support the Christian ethos of Matthew 25. v 35 : "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat" on Monday and Friday mornings and Wednesday afternoons.



Demand for the Crieff Foodbank's service does not always reflect national trends. Increased demand for foodbanks has recently been widely reported in the national press. Crieff Foodbank was busier than ever in September and October but quieter this November. Thanks to the generosity of people in Strathearn, the foodbank, however, is well placed to meet the demand for food parcels whether it increases or decreases month by month.

Muthill Parish Church is one of its regular donors, with the variety of goods most needed ably highlighted each month by Joe on the screen on Sundays. The harvest festival also provided a large donation.

In 2023 Muthill Church donated 386.5 kg of food. In 'old' terms that's between a quarter and half a ton of provisions!

Well done, Muthill!

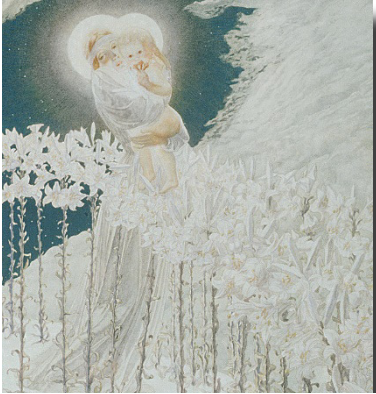
Vivian Donaldson





God And The Arts

Michael Burgess continues his look at great works of art. The image of The Virgin of the Lilies can be found at https://www.wikigallery.org/wiki/painting_143485/Carlos-Schwabe/The-Virgin-of-the-Lilies



During the past few editions of the magazine with the help of Michael Burgess we have been exploring how art can celebrate the wonder of this world. This month with our Lady and Jesus we stand above the world: high on the clouds with a glorious path of tall, elegant lilies that lead like a stairway to the earth beneath. This is 'The Virgin of the Lilies' by Carlos Schwabe. He was born in Germany and then lived in Switzerland and France, painting this canvas in 1899 when he was 33 years old.

It is like a scene caught when we look out of the window in an aeroplane. We can see the earth beneath and spot hills and valleys, roads and settlements, and a river weaving its way through the countryside. Mary and Jesus are haloed in a lunar-like radiance. The lilies are symbols of purity and obedience, the qualities that will take them to that scene at Bethlehem which we give thanks for at Christmas. The heavenly light shining out in the painting brings hope and joy to the world below, transforming lives with the wonder of the Saviour's birth.

Jesus holds three nails in his hand as a sign that His life will be tempered by rejection, suffering and death. But the lilies growing tall and straight in the skies are signs of new life and resurrection. The light come down to earth at Christmas can never be extinguished. That light and love are expressed in this vivid, moving painting of Carlos Schwabe as they are caught up in the carol of Christina Rossetti we sing at this time:

Love shall be our token, Love be yours and love be mine,
Love to God and all men, Love for plea and gift and sign.

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.



Jesus' welcoming committee included Eastern scholars who learned about His birth through their study of astrology. I can't help thinking that the arrival of these people at Bethlehem is a link between a very early form of science (albeit mixed in with their own form of religion) and Christian faith. What better way to discover God than to

explore the world and follow the evidence wherever it leads? But what exactly was the star of Bethlehem? Scientists have investigated this question over the centuries, coming up with a variety of answers.

First, there is the idea of a supernova: the massively bright explosion caused by a dying star. On rare occasions a supernova can be seen from Earth with the naked eye, remaining visible for several months. We now know that Herod the Great died around 4BC, so the actual date of Jesus' birth must be a little earlier. The supernovae that might match this timing were one in the Andromeda galaxy between March 8BC and September 7BC, and another in the constellation of Capricorn in the Spring of 5BC.

Next, comes a planetary conjunction. The alignment most commonly associated with the star of Bethlehem was between Jupiter and Saturn in the constellation of Pisces in 7BC, but not everyone is sure whether this would be extraordinary enough to be the 'star' mentioned in the Bible.

Finally, the bright astronomical object that drew the Magi could have been a comet. This idea came from Sir Colin Humphreys, Professor of Materials Science at Cambridge University, and Oxford astronomer WG Waddington, who found that a comet was recorded by Chinese astronomers between

March and May, 5BC. Humphreys then speculated that the 'no room at the inn' scenario came about because Jesus was born during Passover, and the Magi visited Jesus in May or June.

People interpret the biblical account of Jesus' birth in all sorts of ways, but there's very little argument from serious historians that Jesus of Nazareth actually existed. Whatever the true explanation for the 'star of Bethlehem' may be, there's plenty of evidence that an astronomical event could have happened at the time of His birth.

I think it makes perfect sense that if God was going to enter His own creation and take on the form of one of His own creatures, it should be marked by a very significant physical event!

Thoughts to Ponder Over As You Get Older

You realise that a £300 watch and a £30 watch both tell the same time

A Prada wallet and one from the local market both hold the same amount of currency

A £500,000 house and £100,000 one both hold the same amount of loneliness

A Ford can drive you as far as a Bentley

True happiness is not found in materialistic things. It comes from the love and laughter found with each other.

So Stay humble, the holes dug for us in the ground are all the same size.



Living Memories Project

A small group from the village has started working on recording Living Memories about Muthill so that there is some form of written record which can be available to future generations. Muthill has gone through some fascinating changes in its lifetime ranging from complete destruction by fire in Jacobite times and, over the last seven decades alone, it has seen the coming and going of umpteen shops in various locations, several pubs, even laundry greens and the image of drovers watering and resting their flocks overnight near the Dog's Head well at Highlandman Park whilst they sought drink in nearby hostelrys in Pitkellony and Willoughby. History truly comes alive when one starts to record changes in the image of the village. Many of us know this and have enjoyed the old photographs posted regularly on the Facebook's *Muthill Past and Present* page and the responding comments that so often accompany them.

The group in composition is not surprisingly in the older age bracket but has a tremendous lot of life in it especially when there are differences of opinion on recollections. There is certainly a lot of laughter and fun! We are still in the early stages of compilation and are interested in hearing accounts from anyone who might be interested in contributing. The group is not intended to be exclusive and meets monthly at present. You can also contact us to give us your experience and recollection of things in a separate private meeting. We already have a list of people with whom we will want to speak, whose memories go back over many years. We are currently looking at memories of changes in the use of buildings but hope in time to extend that also to how the ways of life have also changed over the years. Your memory and experiences could be helpful and if so we would love to hear from you.

You can contact Sandy Hutchison on 07825544225 who is acting as scribe for further information.



The Guild Continuing Programme 2023-2024

The **Guild Christmas Party** will be held on Wednesday 13th December at 2.30pm in the St Andrews Hall, Crieff.

There will be a **Blythswood Update** on Wednesday 10th January at 2.30pm in the St Andrews Hall, Crieff.

Rev. Craig Dobney, Minister of Comrie Parish Church, will address the meeting on Wednesday 24th January at 2.30pm in the St Andrews Hall, Crieff.

Finally, on Wednesday 14th February, Graeme Simpson will talk on the Guild Project, **Chocolate Heaven** on Wednesday 14th February at 2.30pm in the Bruce Hall, Muthill Parish Church.

Chocolate Heaven is a small chocolate kitchen on a beautiful island in South East Asia, where Paul and Sarah, their children and their wider team,



demonstrate the love of God to an unreached people group. Chocolate Heaven is providing employment for chocolate makers, fair prices for local growers, producing and selling delicious chocolate in all lots of exciting flavours, and sharing God's good news with their employees and the wider community whenever they have the opportunity to do so.

Everyone is welcome at Guild meetings and further details about The Guild can be obtained from Helen-May Bayne (07974646872).



Community Enterprise Shines

A recent visit to the Eskdalemuir Community Hub in Dumfries and Galloway has inspired me to pen a few words on the value of such places and its possible relevance to our village of Muthill. Eskdalemuir is admittedly different from Muthill both in its location and its composition. It is firstly relatively remote from the nearest towns of Langholm and Lockerbie both being some miles distant and only connected in many stretches by narrow secondary roads. The community too is smaller and more dispersed being only 200-300 residents. It has no retail facility that we could discover and the church and former school are both closed. Despite such lack of normal community facilities, village cohesion seems to be thriving and all due to the creation of a community hub in the former old school building.

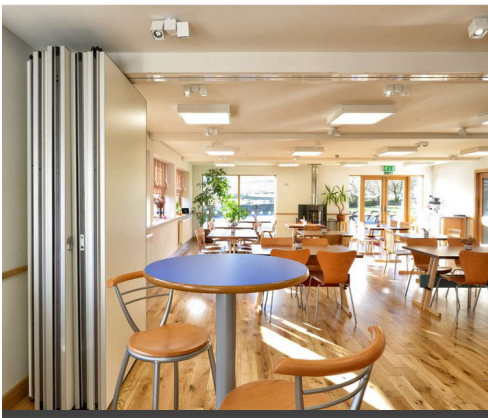


The Old School Hub, as it is quaintly called, provides a first class café with about ten tables, a focal point of a wondrously large glass-sided log burner, a pool table, craft shop, an art gallery, a manned reception area and toilets. There is also an outside electric charging point and outside seating tables in the old playground to the rear. Parking is provided for about ten vehicles on the opposite side of the road.

As if these facilities were not enough, what really impresses you is the amount of use to which the premises are made. Various clubs meet there and regular community events are held but it is the café which provides the welcoming atmosphere and the focal point for the village. We were told that most villagers pop in for coffee or a meal several times a week and whilst we were there it was busy with several owners and their dogs relaxing on the comfortable couches next to the log fire. It also seemed to form a safe space for meeting up with children after school. We were also told that in the evening a bar service is available.

What convinces me of the value of such a facility is what it does for village cohesion and certainly, from the diners to whom we spoke, there was clear enthusiasm for the project. It does receive an annual grant from Dumfries and Galloway Council and with the counter income they are able to employ a couple of cooks and a waitress to provide the meals. For a small café it had a surprisingly extensive menu and excellent quality of food. It was also well used by passers-by and had regular visiting clientele from the surrounding towns.

This all made me think how important it is for the plans that have been launched by the Muthill Community Forum for a Hub in Muthill. The Parish



Church's soup and sandwich Wednesday lunches are already galvanising enthusiasm for further village cohesion and this should be consolidated in every way possible whilst planning proceeds for a new Hub to replace the village hall.

Indeed, I was reminded of a former church with which I was associated, which like Muthill Parish Church started a simple one day a week coffee and

lunch service and within a period of one year, through determination and strong community support, this expanded to a Monday to Friday service staffed on a volunteer basis. It now has an employed manager but continues to be staffed entirely by volunteers, a large percentage of whom come from the wider community and who are attracted by the idea of giving service to the community. It is also now making money and has been re-equipped.

Similar seeds are being experienced in Muthill and running further with such an idea could be a powerful interim measure to strengthen and expand until a new physical Community Hub is realised.

Sandy Hutchison



Christmas Services at Muthill Parish Church

December 17th : Family Oriented Service with Iain Paton and Gordon Roy at 10.00am

December 24th : Christmas Eve Morning Service with Ian Roy at 10.00am
Watchnight Service at 11.30pm with Gordon Roy
Mulled wine and mince pies from 11pm onwards

December 31st : Hogmanay, Final Service of 2023 with Ian Roy at 10.00 am



The Bridge

If you would like to receive a regular copy of The Bridge which is published 6 times in the year, please let us know by contacting Sandy Hutchison on 07825544225. You can receive it by email or in hard copy



Christians Together Dates for your Diary



The twice yearly meetings of Christians Together in Crieff continue to meet with great success and we are pleased to announce two further meetings over the coming months. The first will be a Lessons and Carol Service which will be held on **Sunday 17th December at 7pm in the St. Andrew Hall, Crieff.**

The next regular Praise Gathering will be held In St Columba's Church in February 2024 and will be led by Chris White.

"At this Christmas when
Christ comes, will He find a
warm heart?"

Mark the season of Advent
by loving and serving the
others with God's own love
and concern."

Mother Teresa, Love: A Fruit Always in Season





Renovation of Church Sanctuary

Following recommendations from the Vision Committee and more recently from a sub- committee set up by the Kirk Session to review the idea of appointing a family worker, the Kirk Session, at its last meeting on 14th November, agreed in principle to renovate the church sanctuary by removing the pews and replacing them with appropriate comfortable chairs, repairing the flooring and covering it with carpeting and painting the under gallery walls and woodwork to provide a more modern feel. The estimated cost for this major project is under £25,000 which is Presbytery’s limit for giving approval to such works. A submission is therefore being made to Presbytery to have this work undertaken whilst taking appropriate consultations with 121 George Street and Historic Scotland.

As well as making the sanctuary more flexible and comfortable for multi-purpose usage, it is hoped that the plans will provide a more modern welcoming church facility. Consideration continues to be given by the Vision Committee to expanding the kitchen off the Bruce Hall, improving the toilet facilities and bringing the audio visual equipment down from the gallery.

Sacrament of Communion

The Kirk Session is asking for feedback from the congregation on whether it is now time to return to using the traditional silverware at communion services rather than what has been used for the last few years, namely individual provision of the elements collected on entry to the church sanctuary as required under Covid guidance.

A decision will then be taken by the Kirk Session at its next meeting early in the New Year. Communicants are asked to consider what they would prefer and let Helen-May, Session Clerk know during the December-January period.

Church Finances

The Kirk Session heard that the church finances continue to be in a reasonable state with some £22,500 having being paid since January 2023 for various works undertaken including the installation of new ceiling insulation to help with increased heating costs. The Burtenshaw Trust will be giving £50 to each recipient in this year's Christmas gift disbursement.

Property

The Kirk Session has approved the provision of a handrail for the left staircase following an incident involving a member of the AV team. It was also pleased to note the work on the installation of ceiling insulation has been completed. Attention is currently being given to the grounds which are considered tired looking and work will proceed on repairing the potholes and floodlighting, removal of a fallen tree and uncollected fencing to the rear of the church building. Further investigation is also being given to the renovation of the church entrance gates which are in need of attention.

Pastoral Care

The Kirk Session was pleased to note that pastoral care arrangements are to be re-organised under the joint leadership of Irene Foster and Sandy Hutchison. This is likely to require a number of the congregation being willing to undertake visitation when required and further details of the plans will be announced in the newyear. In the meantime, the new leaders would be interested to know of members who currently visit on a regular basis and from any members who would be willing to be involved in this importance service of giving pastoral support when needed. Rev. Iain Paton, as Interim, Moderator, has also indicated that he is willing to undertake visits where requested.

Kirk And Community News

Grant from Perth and Kinross Council

The Church is pleased to inform the village that it has received a grant from Perth and Kinross Council to be designated as a Warm Space. This will enable us to keep the Bruce Hall open on **every Wednesday including throughout the Christmas period from 11am-2pm** for service of coffee and soup and sandwich lunch **at no charge**. This grant will also cover the cost of heating until March 2024. We are very grateful to the Council for awarding this grant. A warm welcome awaits anyone who wants to come along and enjoy good chat and great home-made soup!

Mens Group, Muthill Men

The Mens Group, Muthill Men, which now meets over coffee at 11am every Wednesday in the North Lounge has got off to a good start with 5-10 persons attending. At this stage its meetings are foundationary and largely social in character, but already they are exploring plans to pioneer a hospital voluntary car service for Muthill village and are seeking support from local agencies including the Community Council to take this plan further with Perth and Kinross Council. It would, therefore, be appreciated if people interested in this idea would express their support by completing the support form inserted in the magazine and by giving their views publically on local media sites.



The Group is also exploring plans, once it grows in number, to undertake very simple household repair tasks and services for those in the village who may be in need, particularly those who may be housebound, or frail. Beyond these initial plans the Group will develop according to its composition, talents and interests. It remains open to all village men who would like to be part of an expanding socially-minded group interested in developing community cohesion and service.

Sunday After Service Refreshments

If you would like to help with arrangements for our Sunday services and get to know more people in the congregation a good way of doing this is to offer to help with coffee and tea at the end of the morning service. We are always needing volunteers and there is a roster usually available on the serving table. There are no unexpected complications in preparing which is usually done shortly before the 10.00am service begins and ideally two people cover the duty. Carolyn Carmichael is in charge and will be happy to show any newcomer the routine involved.

Life and Work



Life and Work is the official award-winning monthly magazine of the Church of Scotland and is a great way of keeping in touch with what is happening in the wider church both across Scotland and beyond. It contains articles on faith, the activities of the church, the views of people in the church and generally is valuable in providing ideas and contacts for our own church in Muthill. In the current edition there are articles on Reaching out at Christmas, Why campaigning for those living with HIV and Aids matters, A View from the Pulpit and a reflection from the Moderator on listening for the Spirit during Advent. There are also letters to the Editor, prayers, book reviews, crosswords

and plenty of interesting adverts.

Print Subscriptions for 12 months currently cost £42 with a three month trial offer of £9 or if you want to save by using digital a 6 months subscription cost £11.99 with 12 months for £20.99. Single issues online are charged as £1.99 and print copies at £3.50 (including personal delivery). If you prefer to receive your copies through Muthill Parish Church then please make contact with Sheena Plummer. For receipt through the church the new year starts in January and so subscriptions should be made this month.

Kirk And Community News

Proposed Linkage

We have not reported for some time on the proposed linkage of Muthill, Ardoch and Blackford churches under the new Perth Presbytery Plan. The Kirk Session at Muthill has already agreed in principle to this linkage which will provide a part time minister, but Ardoch and Blackford churches are still in the process of consulting with Presbytery on their proposed union and the closure of one church. They have difficult decisions to make and we have them in our prayers. There is the likelihood of a meeting of representatives of all three churches to discuss the planned linkage in early 2024.



Wardside

We continue to build up our contact with Wardside House after losing regular contact through the Covid period.



The Singing Group visited in October to provide a Singalong and we were pleased that over 75% of residents were able to attend. This included a programme of popular Scottish songs and some war time favourites accompanied on the church clavinova. It was well received with many of the residents joining in the singing and

even some great banter between residents and our group leader Elizabeth Boyd. Elaine Wallace and Willie Bell also gave solo renditions of two well-known songs which raised a smile amongst the audience. Arrangements are now in hand for the Singing Group to return for a carol singing visit on Sunday 10th December at 2.15pm.

We are also pleased to announce that monthly worship services will resume in January 2024 when we will alternate with St James Episcopal Church providing a fortnightly input of worship for those residents able and wanting to participate. The worship will be provided largely by Muthill House Group 2, our organist and any others interested from the congregation. The first worship visit will be Sunday 14th January at 2.30pm (Muster at 2.15pm). Otherwise, the church continues to be represented at twice weekly Scrabble and domino competitions.

The Guild - Trip To Malawi Talk



It is now sometime since the Guild's Autumn Opening Meeting, but it is worth recounting as the combined Guilds of Muthill and Crieff were pleased to welcome as their speaker, Helen Eckford, past National Convener of the Guild for 2022-2023 who came along to talk about her trip to Malawi.

Helen is a teacher from Port Glasgow.

In a relaxed and informative presentation with lots of sample items which she had brought back from her trip, Helen told her audience firstly of the difficult journey to Malawi via Frankfurt and Addis Ababa from which she arrived one day late without any luggage.



Most of her trip was spent in the northern part of the country and in particular with the Livingstonia Synod, one of three synods which are part of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian. The CCAP, as it is known, is the

largest Protestant Church in the country with some 600,000 membership. Helen said that she was particularly keen to follow up on links with Scotland and this, she was able to do with linked Guilds of Ayr and Dunbartonshire. She also attended a tree planting related to self-sustainability, a Hospital and a sugar plantation all sponsored by Guilds.

Guilds in Malawi are different from those in Scotland in that they have Bible study as an integral part of their meetings and all had projects dedicated to raising money which went into community projects within Malawi. Examples of this included making dishwasher and soap bars and tie dying. One Guild was building a community house and another had an HIV project and were teaching clients on healthy cooking. Women and Men have separate Guilds and there are also Youth Guilds. Helen attended a conference whilst there and one or two church services all of which were vibrant, crowded and with great singing and dancing. She was particularly impressed with the amount of ceremonial compared with churches in Scotland.

It was in her words a wonderful experience and her last event before handing over the Guild Convenership to her successor.



Kirk And Community News

Village Christmas Fair

This year's Christmas Village Fair, held over two days in the village hall on 25th and 26th November by all accounts was a great success. All the available stalls were taken up with a waiting list and there were goodly attendances on both days. The Santa's post office was a big hit with young folk and the team who had created it did an amazing job. It was a magical sight. This year we also had the attraction of the switch on of Christmas illuminations down Drummond Street and into Willoughby Street as far as the War Memorial. There was a great attendance of village folk for the switching on and the plans for next year are to extend the illuminations to the end of the Stirling Road exit of the village.

This event also enabled our Church to combine with St James to provide a free coffee and bake service sited in St James Church and it is good to report that there was a steady stream of visitors from the fair using this services on both days. And many of the visitors were delighted to see the interior of St James Church.

It was also good to combine with our neighbouring church for such an event and thanks are due to the ladies of our congregation who contributed tray bakes, which as usual proved very popular and delicious. We are hoping to combine further in joint events and new ideas for one or two concerts are being explored following the great success of last year's mid-summer concert. Well done Corrina and the organisers !

Muthill Community Council

Having attended my first session of Muthill Community Council. I was impressed with the work and efforts of our representatives. Community Councils are often criticised for achieving little, but we have in Muthill a body of local folk who are genuinely trying to do a lot of good for our village. It was good to see show they took on board contributions from the general public attending. Let's not forget too that their support and encouragement has achieved the festive lights which are brightening our streets this Christmas. Well done to Stephen Coutler and his team for their continued efforts. And, by the way, they are seeking two further members.

Great Evening at Comrie Parish Church

Crieff Choral Group and Pitlochry & District Choral Society excelled in a memorable presentation of Handel's Messiah on 26 November in Comrie Parish Church. A sold out audience packed the beautiful church building, so suited for concerts of this kind, and the performance from beginning to end was impressive. The combined choirs were great in producing a wonderfully resonant



and consistent sound with parts beautifully defined and balanced and their sensitive tempering of volume to the different parts of the oratorio was notable, aided so beautifully by the building's great acoustics. The orchestra under the direction of Christoph Wutscher was equally impressive giving a great accompaniment and I loved the renditions



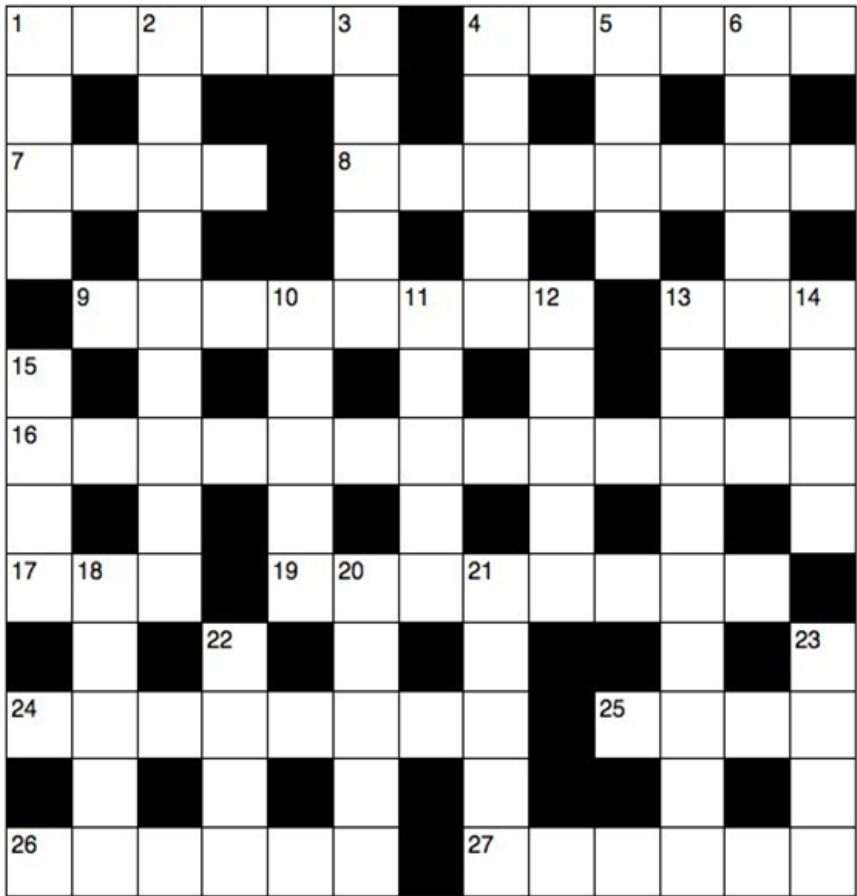
of all soloists (Colleen Nicholl, Ulrike Wutscher, David Douglas and Phil Gault) which were clear and memorable. Not surprisingly, the performance was greeted by several minutes of deserving standing ovation at the end of the evening. It was truly a very special evening for several members of the Muthill Parish Church performing in the choir and for a greater number in the audience. It is so good to

be able to experience such fine musical performances close-by in the West Perthshire countryside!

The Crieff Choral Group's next concert will be on 23rd March, 2024, a date which deserves to be put in many people's diaries for next year. They are also having a Come and Sing evening in the Strathearn Arts on 11th December at 7.30pm.



Crossword



Across

- 1 Rely (Psalm 62:7) (6)
- 4 'He stretches out the heavens like a — , and spreads them out like a tent to live in' (Isaiah 40:22) (6)
- 7 What the dove carried the olive leaf in, when it returned to Noah's ark (Genesis 8:11) (4)
- 8 Annoy (1 Samuel 1:6) (8)

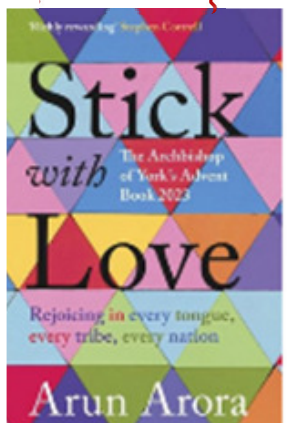


-
- 9 Judah's last king, who ended his days as a blind prisoner in Babylon (Jeremiah 52:11) (8)
13 'They all — and were satisfied' (Luke 9:17) (3)
16 Eliphaz the Temanite was one; so was Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite (Job 2:11; 16:2) (4,9W)
17 National Association of Evangelicals (of the USA) (1,1,1)
19 Popular song for New Year's Eve, Auld — — (4,4)
24 Able dock (anag.) (8)
25 The number of stones David chose for his confrontation with Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40) (4)
26 Elgar's best-known 'Variations' (6)
27 Soak (Isaiah 16:9) (6)

Down

- 11 Money owing (Deuteronomy 15:3) (4)
2 Conciliatory (Titus 3:2) (9)
3 'Do this, whenever you — it, in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians 11:25) (5)
4 A group assisting in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church (5)
5 One of the gifts Joseph's brothers took with them on their second journey to Egypt (Genesis 43:11) (4)
6 'Reach out your hand and — — into my side. Stop doubting and believe' (John 20:27) (3,2)
10 Be outstandingly good (2 Corinthians 8:7) (5)
11 'What — — that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?' (Psalm 8:4) (2,3)
12 Horse's feet (Judges 5:22) (5)
13 Notice (Deuteronomy 17:4) (9)
14 Comes between 2 Chronicles and Nehemiah (4)
15 One of Israel's northern towns conquered by Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 15:20) (4)
18 Narnia's Lion (5)
20 One of the two rivers in which Naaman would have preferred to wash (2 Kings 5:12) (5)
21 Avarice—one of the evils that come from inside people (Mark 7:22) (5)
22 Knight Grand Cross of St Michael and St George (1,1,1,1)
23 Jacob's first wife (Genesis 29:23) (4)23 What Jesus shed in 5 Down (4)

Book Reviews



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

The Archbishop of York's Advent Book 2023

By Arun Arora, SPCK, £10.99

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



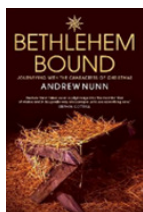
Finding Hope Under Bethlehem Skies - 25 Daily Reflections from the Book of Ruth

By Robin Ham, 10Publishing, £4.99

We're all familiar with the Christmas story, but do you know the 'story behind the story'?

Tucked away in the Bible, hundreds of years before Mary, Joseph and the birth of Jesus, is the story of a girl called Ruth. It's a story that rings true to our world — a story of sadness and tears, even of death, but also a story of where hope can be found in the darkest places. A story that points us forward to the promise of a king.

This book takes the reader on an Advent journey through 25 daily reflections. Each day has a short devotion, a suggested prayer, and links to a response song. Come along to Bethlehem, and discover the hope that shines brightly, even on the darkest of nights.



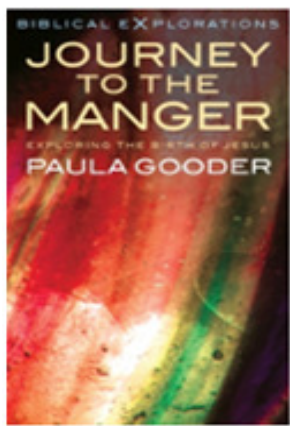
Bethlehem Bound - Journeying with the Characters of Christmas

By Andrew Nunn, Canterbury Press, £12.99

It was not only Mary and Joseph who journeyed to Bethlehem — all the characters and creatures we meet in the nativity stories found their way to the manger, summoned by stars, angels or political circumstance.

Each time we celebrate Christmas, we travel there too, and open ourselves to the season; beginning with the great Advent antiphons that herald the feast, and ending with the Presentation in the Temple. Each day this book travels with a different character from Scripture and the Christian tradition – Jesse, Anna, Gabriel, the donkey, the innkeeper and his wife, the shepherds, the martyrs we commemorate at Christmas and many more.

The journey had its challenges for the original characters, but at its end was a wondrous gift from God - God's own self in a baby laid in a manger. *Bethlehem Bound* invites us to embrace that gift afresh.



**Journey to the Manger - Exploring the Birth of Jesus
By Paula Gooder, Canterbury Press, £12.99**

Journey to the Manger explores the New Testament's various accounts of the birth of Jesus: their origins in Old Testament prophecies, the genealogies, the angelic announcements, the journeys and arrivals, and the aftermath of Jesus' birth for the powerful and the poor alike.

Although many biblical scholars have puzzled over historical details in the accounts, Paula Gooder argues that in doing this, they risk missing the point. Engaging seriously with biblical and historical criticism, she uncovers key similarities running through the Gospel writers' accounts and focuses on their shared understanding of the significant events they describe.

Her detailed exploration of the texts is a goldmine for preaching and teaching, and it will breathe new life into the familiar Christmas stories heard year after year in churches, carol services and nativity plays. Devotional reflections and discussion questions also make this ideal for personal and group study. All in all, an accessible and informed study of the best loved texts in Scripture.



**Sharing the Christmas Story
By Sally Welch, BRF, £8.99**

In this year's BRF Advent book Sally Welch explores two questions: What is the Christmas story really about, and how do we share it? Through each week of Advent, a different aspect of the Christmas story is examined: light, promise, mystery, love, peace, and hope.

Within each week, the days are focused on the ways in which

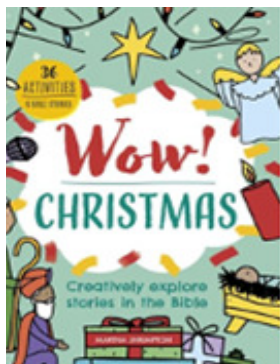
the Christmas story is shared: prophecies, journeys, new life, signs, poems, stories and conversations. Each day offers a Bible passage, followed by a reflection and prayer activity. Suggestions for group study and group study questions are also included.



The Christmas Swallow

By Ben Harris, SPCK, £9.99

A classic retelling of the Christmas story from a bird's eye viewpoint. This picture book has a well-written narrative that uses repetitive phrases to engage young readers, introducing biblical truths about the birth of Jesus, as rescuer and born from God. The excitement of the shepherds and the heart-warming visit of the wise men are brought to life with vibrantly coloured illustrations by Estelle Corke. Ideal for sharing with young children aged 3+ years during the Christmas season.



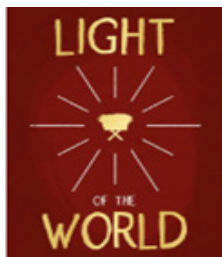
Wow! Christmas – creatively explore stories in the Bible

By Martha Shrimpton, SPCK, £10.99

Here is a well designed, colourful, and creative Christmas activity book for children.

The book explores six aspects about the birth of Jesus, including Jesus as the light of the world, ordinary yet extraordinary shepherds, the journey of the wise men, the giving of gifts, the excitement and anticipation waiting for Christmas, and why Christmas is something to celebrate. Each story is explored through offering innovative activities including engaging prayer, craft and create, acting the scene, time for reflection, ideas

for discussion, and creative praise.



Light of the World - Short, evangelistic giveaway

By Jonathan Griffiths, 10Publishing, £3.99

Many people are seeking for meaning or peace or hope. This Christmas, some may wonder where Jesus Christ—the figure at the heart of Christmas—fits amongst it all. The traditional image of a baby in a manger is a tender one, but we miss out on the significance of Jesus if we reduce Him to just one small part of the festivities.

This 'giveaway' considers the events of the first Christmas, and how they can bring us the light and life we all search for. It explains the profound impact that Jesus' story can have on our lives.



The Night Before Christmas - A nativity spin on the classic poem

By Oliver Lancaster, 10Publishing, £6.99

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the stable

every creature was stirring. This ain't a fable!

No stockings were hung, no chimney in sight,

but one thing's for sure - The Lord came that night!

Children will love this rollicking retelling of the Christmas story, based on the classic festive poem.

They will join in the chaos and the wonder of the very first 'night before Christmas' - when everything was far from silent and still!



...is like springtime in nature,
when everything is renewed and so is fresh and healthy.
Advent is also meant to do this to us-to refresh us and make us healthy,
to be able to receive Christ in whatever form he may come to us."

– Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

www.schmalen.com

Editor's Note

The next edition of the magazine will be our Winter edition. The magazine will be published on Sunday 11th February, and so the deadline for submitting articles, intimations, letters etc. will be Monday 29th January. Please submit this to macahiph@gmail.com or send to Editor, Green Brae West, Pitkellony Street, Muthill PH5 2AF.

Please also understand that all articles submitted have to be subject to possible adjustment to suit the balance of the magazine's content and its physical confines. If space does not permit, submissions will be considered for the next edition. All submissions will be acknowledged.

It is our Publishing Policy to publish factual clarifications or corrections in the next edition of the magazine.

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

Voluntary Car Service Support Form

The inserted loose form for the voluntary car service for health and other appointments is for return to the special receptacles placed in the Parish Church vestibule or in the Sweeney's petrol station shop, whichever is more convenient. The receptacles will remain in place until the New Year.

We want to use the returned forms as a further means of support for the project which is being pursued in anticipated future discussions with Perth and Kinross Council. Thanks are due to Muthill Community Council which has already given its support.

Useful Contacts

Useful Local Telephone Numbers

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

Crossword Solution:

ACROSS::

1, Depend. 4, Canopy. 7, Beak. 8, Irritate. 9, Zedekiah. 13, Ate. 16, Job's comforter. 17, NAE. 19, Lang Syne. 24, Blockade. 25, Five. 26, Enigma. 27, Drench.

DOWN: 1, Debt. 2, Peaceable. 3, Drink. 4, Curia. 5, Nuts. 6, Put it. 10, Excel. 11, Is man. 12, Hoofs. 13, Attention. 14, Ezra. 15, Ijon. 18, Aslan. 20, Abana. 21, Greed. 22, GCMG. 23, Leah.



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

Muthill Parish Church

aims to be

A place to find peace and welcome

A people growing in Christian faith and love

A presence at the heart and soul of the community

Church Website: www.muthillparishchurch.co.uk

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

Email: muthillparish@outlook.com

Magazine Graphics & Cover Photo

Our cover picture theme this month is about preparing for Christmas, its joy and hope. Thanks to Raffie for providing the graphics for the magazine and helping in the production.”.

Registered Scottish Charity

Muthill Parish Church - SC004984