

# THE BULLETIN

THE MAGAZINE OF  
CORSTORPHINE CRAIGSBANK  
PARISH CHURCH

Where **Life** is celebrated, **Love** is affirmed, and **Grief** and **Joy** are shared



Craigsbank Church Centre  
East Craigs Church Centre  
[www.craigsbankchurch.org.uk](http://www.craigsbankchurch.org.uk)

**Late Summer  
2021**

# A NOTE IN THE TIMES OF A **PANDEMIC**

We are now edging back to normality after this period of pandemic. Theatres are reopening, restaurants are lifting restrictions, but masks remain and home working is still very much encouraged.

In Church life, we have made a much longed-for return to in-person services but are continuing too with our popular online services until confidence in gatherings returns. At the time of printing, the in-person services are starting at 10.30 am and a degree of social distancing is still in place. The services are currently running week about at Craigsbank and East Craigs Centre. Please keep an eye on the website and Westoverland newsletters for more information as guidance is updated.

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## Looking ahead, some dates for your diary

- Harvest Service (date to be confirmed so keep an eye on the website)
- Eco Service (17 Oct)
- Forest Church Service, Cammo Estate (31 Oct)
- Cop26 service (7 Nov)
- Remembrance Sunday (14 Nov)
- Church of Scotland Giving Sunday (date to be confirmed).



# MINISTER'S LETTER

What an eventfully hot and sunny summer we are having!



Frequent, lovely, long sun-drenched days ideal for sunbathing on the beach or long swims in the tidal pools. The smell of the fires for barbeques (or where I am from 'braais') have been filling the air almost every weekend.

That would all be good news if we lived closer to the equator, like in Spain or Sydney, but not quite at the 56 degree latitude that we find ourselves on here in Edinburgh. Here in old Reekie, the joke goes, summer used to be only a couple of hours long on one afternoon in July. Except, the climate here in Scotland, and seemingly all around the globe, has changed significantly and seemingly for the worse with all the ensuing extreme weather the world has seen: from floods in Germany and China to continent scarring wildfires in Russia and the USA.

Thank God for the urgency that is driving leaders from many countries and corporations around the world to gather in Glasgow in November to put their heads together to see how best we as humanity can try to repair the ecological damage that is driving the climate breakdown. And not only should we thank God, but we should also plead with God for wisdom and drive to actually do what needs done to save our planet's biospheres.

Hence the focus of this season's Late Summer Bulletin that considers articles and opinions from congregation members around the ecology and how we as Christians can and do engage responsibly with creation. From personal stories of saving bees in your back garden to a call to engage with the goings on around COP26, and many thoughts on the spectrum in between.

A special thanks to all who contributed articles and photographs, and to Gemma, Jan and Caleb for compiling and producing the Bulletin.

Happy reading,

Rev Alan Childs, email: [ACHilds@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ACHilds@churchofscotland.org.uk)

**TOGETHER  
FOR OUR  
PLANET**



# SAVING A SOUL, A SLAVE AND A SEA URCHIN

I love how the Church through the ages has often (though not always) answered a call to serve the well-being of humanity. For all her shortcomings, the Bride of Christ has had her moments of real beauty and grace.

Unfortunately, those shortcomings were real, and really sad and their legacies need to be taken more seriously. Failings of the universal Church through the ages include the Spanish Inquisition, witch hunts in Scotland, blessing imperialistic colonialization by Britain, Spain and the USA, forcibly removing children from unwed mothers in Ireland, assisting in the deculturalisation of first nation peoples in Africa, Australia and in Canada, and, looking away when many a regent acted in evil ways.

This article, though, focuses not on her shortcomings, but on the joy and life that follow when the Church does live up to our high calling as the Beloved of God. The moments of inspired service have included stopping Roman society from throwing away unwanted children by initiating large scale adoptive practices through surrogate parents, the eventual stopping of the widespread practice of child sacrifices in various 'pagan' cultures, the eventual establishing of hospital orders where previously there was little care for the sick, actively developing the printing press in Europe to disseminate knowledge of the Gospel, driving literacy and education amongst the whole Scottish population during the Reformation, providing social welfare care during Victorian era Britain, and assisting in developing human rights acknowledgement in many countries.

So there is much to be grateful for when the Church answers the call to serve the real needs of its particular age. Often what the Church responds to in a pioneering way later becomes part of government provision, such as education of children, care for the sick and dying in hospitals and even university tertiary education.



Would schools and hospitals and universities and bills of human rights have existed without the involvement of the Church and her members? Probably, but it would likely have taken longer to become a reality, and it might not have been as well developed or as wide spread as it is today had the Church and her members not engaged with the cries of the world.

Earlier this week I heard a heart-felt cry from one of my children in the words ‘It’s too late to save the planet; whatever we do now, we have already ruined the planet for all’.

In those words of hopelessness I heard not-only the cry of generations to come, but also the cry of billions of people worldwide today. A cry that is amplified with each ensuing extreme weather phenomenon from droughts to floods, millions of hectares of forests ablaze, billions of ocean organisms choking on human chemical waste and so many species of fauna and flora becoming extinct every year, never to recover. All because of humanity’s abuse of the planet that had been entrusted to us all.

If I were not a believer in the saving, restoring and enlivening work of God through Jesus Christ’s rule and the power of the Spirit of God – I would have had no reply to the cry of ecological globicide.

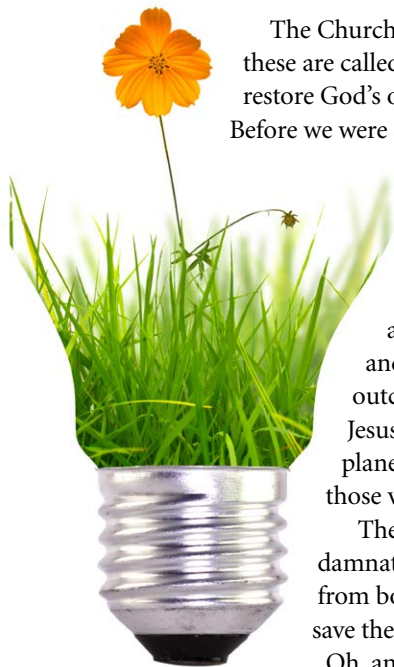
For we as a collective species are indeed killing off most of our host planet. The science is clear. The weather breakdown confirms it. The increasingly desperate population refugee migrations highlight it. Even the ridiculous, self-centred (space) flights of fancy of billionaires like Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos allegedly wanting to re-establish representatives of humanity on another (as yet undetected) viable planet imply that we are beyond the point of saving our own host planet.

But the Church is not a parasite and we humans are not gods.

Reading Colossians 1 the apostle Paul says ‘The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for in him all things were created... and in him all things hold together... and through him is reconciled to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.’

According to these words of Paul of Tharsis the death of Jesus in Jerusalem on the cross was not only to save our souls but rather to save all of creation by restoring the originally intended shalom (well-being) to everyone and everything. How exactly this plays out is part of the mystery that the Church has been privileged to be part of during her more caring, inspired moments. Moments where the church helped to bring shalom, wholeness, back to the weak and the broken, the unseen and the abused, the desperate and the lonely, the uneducated and the disenfranchised, the poor and the powerless.

I believe it is just such a moment of inspiration and care that the Church is called to by the very cry of creation. Creation is crying out to be released from the pain and bondage that has been brought about by humanity’s greed and self-centredness.



The Church, Christians, followers of Jesus Christ – however these are called – have to step up to answer the cry of creation to restore God’s originally intended wholeness and wellbeing to it. Before we were sent to disciple the nations we were called to care for creation. Before the Spirit gave us the ability to speak to every nation at Pentecost, we were given the privilege of acknowledging every animal in the Garden.

If we believe in Jesus Christ’s ability to save and heal and restore individuals and societies and families and therefore work towards those very outcomes, then surely we can and should believe in Jesus Christ’s ability to save and heal and restore our planet’s ecology and we should therefore work towards those very outcomes.

The Church has passionately strived to save souls from damnation. The Church has actively strived to save slaves from bondage. The Church should now actively strive to save the ecology from destruction.

Oh, and by the way, the Church is not an organisation, it is made up of those who follow Jesus Christ.

If you are one of those, what are you doing to actively save the planet?

Rev Alan Childs, email: [ACHilds@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ACHilds@churchofscotland.org.uk)

## SCOTTISH CHURCHES COP26 PLEDGE:

### Divestment and the Just and Green Recovery from Covid 19

We wish to demonstrate our support for urgent action in response to the climate crisis and to support a just and green recovery from Covid-19 as Scotland prepares to host the UN climate talks, COP26 (1-12 November 2021).

Following the recommendation made at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland our Kirk Session have been asked to recommend that each member consider signing this Pledge. Through our Group’s association with Eco Congregation Scotland it is recommended that this Pledge be taken out to our own church members so that each and every one of us has the opportunity to sign.

Details of the document can be found the Eco Congregation Scotland website [www.ecocongregationscotland.org](http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org) and you can sign it there too.

Our Group hope that this plea will be taken up and that folks will continue to show support in caring for our world through taking actions to counteract the many facets of climate change.

Throughout the period of the Covid pandemic our Group have enlisted help from others within the church and community and have endeavoured to keep our activities going and we are grateful to those who have come to our aid. The Group members participated in the first Forest Church on 30 May and another organised for 29 August in Cammo Nature Reserve which will be followed by another visit from the Rev David Coleman, Chaplain to Eco Congregation Scotland on 17 October.

Eco Group, Anne Currie, email: [anneicurrie@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:anneicurrie@yahoo.co.uk)

## CRAIGSBANK ECO GROUP UPDATES



The Eco Group has been very busy in the past few months and has lots of projects and campaigns planned. We have been active both in and around the Craigsbank/East Craigs area and in national campaigns.

### Tree Planting in East Craigs

The Eco Group is still very much involved in caring for the apple trees which were planted earlier in the year at Craigievaar and Fauldburn Parks. We have enlisted help from Edinburgh City Council Parks Dept., the local community, through our tree sponsors, neighbours and passers-by, and East Craigs Primary School (P4), all of whom have embraced the project with enthusiasm. Keeping the trees well watered has been essential to promote growth, along with trimming around the roots to keep down the competition (i.e. grass and weeds). This has resulted in the trees growing healthily, some even producing fruit in this their first year of growth. We spent two full days in late May/early June, with the staff and children of P4 East Craigs Primary School, who not only learnt about and



watered the trees, but also planted seeds in the wildflower bed at Fauldburn Park, and plants in the circular flower bed. It can be safely said that we all had a fun time, and much was achieved. Three fruit trees have been planted at the school with the proposal that three more will be planted later this year (yet to be confirmed). We are very grateful to P4 staff and children for all their hard work and enthusiasm. It was appreciated by all involved, and the fruits of their efforts are now being enjoyed by the community at large. We are currently in the process of applying for grant funding to acquire twenty more assorted fruit trees for the East Craigs area, and have been advised that spring flowering bulbs have been ordered on our behalf by the Council for autumn planting. The Parks, especially Fauldburn with its flower and wild flower beds, and both with fruiting apple trees, are looking especially lovely at present, however, when the autumn comes we will be looking for help in managing these beds, planting bulbs and digging to clear weeds. We are delighted to get all the help we can muster, however much of this involves muscle power. We extend an appeal to all able bodied 'diggers', and any hands interested in participating in our work to be in touch with Anne Currie (Eco Group) on: [anneicurrie@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:anneicurrie@yahoo.co.uk)

## Forest Church

Our first Forest Church took place on 30 May and another has been organised for 29 August in Cammo Nature Reserve. For those of you wondering what Forest Church is, it is a time of worship outside in nature focused on appreciating God's creation. The first Forest Church service in Cammo was led by Rev. Peter Wood (former locum minister to the congregation) who has been developing the Forest Church initiative throughout Scotland. For more information about Forest Church services contact Alan Childs.



## Visit from Rev. David Coleman

The Eco group are looking forward to welcoming back Rev David Coleman, Eco Congregations Chaplain who will visit on 17 October.

Eco Group, Anne Currie, email: [anneicurrie@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:anneicurrie@yahoo.co.uk)



# THE RIGHTS OF THE RIVER

A sign of a civilized liberal society is that the rights of the most vulnerable are normally safeguarded by law. Should abuse of minors happen, or the exploitation of a minority group, or the neglect of babies, then law enforcement and the justice system would put a stop to this wrong and protect the rights of the powerless. The fact that someone has the ability to negatively impact another does not mean they have the right to do so, quite the contrary. A constitution and law would typically protect the rights of vulnerable people.

However, it is not individuals alone who have rights that are protected against abuse. Corporations and governments, co-operative collectives and civil organisations, these all have seen their rights being identified, clarified, entrenched and protected in (especially) western societies. The goal of which is to protect the wellbeing of these entities against abuse by other entities that have more power. The fact that a legal entity has the ability to negatively impact another does not mean they it has the right to do so, quite the contrary. A constitution and laws protect the rights of vulnerable legal entities.

These rights of people and legal entities are generally agreed to by the societies they are based in, because people and these legal entities are valued and deemed as worthy of protecting.

Why then are we not protecting the elements that make up our ecosystems against abuse? I mean, really protect to the same level of protection we afford people and corporations? We will move heaven and earth to ensure the rights of a vulnerable group in society are not violated. We will fight to the last Pound or Dollar in our wallets to employ the lawyers and financiers and media to protect our corporations. But we will not exert ourself to nearly the same extent to protect the quality of the rivers running through our cities, or the sea lapping on our shores, or

the trees that had been standing long before our great, great, great grandparents settled where we now live.

There is an often quoted North American (likely Canadian) native saying that has long been raising a clarion warning: ‘When the last tree is cut, the last fish is caught, and the last river is polluted; when to breathe the air is sickening, you will realize, too late, that wealth is not in bank accounts and that you can’t eat money.’

The time has not only come but has almost already passed, that we should award, acknowledge and earnestly protect the rights of the elements that make up our ecosystems. Only once we as society acknowledge, understand and subscribe collectively and via our constitution to the rights of all our vulnerable, ecological, constituent components will it start to be protected to the level that it should be.

Why should a man have more rights than a valley? Why should a school have more rights than an ancient woodland? Why should the police arrest a vandal setting fire to a store but not arrest the directors of a company that flytips its old oil into a storm water drain – which ends in the nearest river anyway? Why should we have a well-funded police force actively protecting societies against drug cartels when we do not have an even poorly-funded law enforcement agency actively protecting our waterfronts against pollution from countless pieces of personal hygiene that unabatedly keep being dumped into the Firth of Forth and wash up on the beaches?

Obviously, the rights of people and legal entities are worth protecting. Especially vulnerable ones. We already do it, legislate for it and pay for it.

Can we now please also acknowledge, establish, legislate and pay for the protection of the ecology we were tasked to protect by God, right from the very start?

Rev Alan Childs, email:

[ACHilds@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:ACHilds@churchofscotland.org.uk)





# ACKNOWLEDGING THE PRECIOUSNESS OF LIFE... AND MUSIC

My inquisitive nephew recently asked me how many hymns there are, and I genuinely didn't have clue. I couldn't even hazard a guess, so I decided to investigate his question further and guess what? It's an impossible question with no definite answer and apparently some scholarly estimates vary by millions. It made me wonder what the early hymn writers like Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley would make of the vast number of hymns that we have today, and it reminded me of something that I had learned on the Alpha course, which Craigsbank hosted in the Spring.

Now to be honest, I learned lots of things, but most notably that I don't read the Bible as much as I probably should, and that regular usage is one of the best ways to defend oneself from the evils of the world. That made sense, so I've made a personal challenge to try and up my Bible time. But it made me wonder, would there be a similar level of benefit in singing the infinite number of worship songs, psalms and hymns that we have at our disposal?

I reckon there could be some merit in the adopted phrase, 'A hymn a day keeps the doctor away'. Wishful thinking perhaps, but I think we do probably go to our favourite musical connections with God at difficult and uncertain times in life, particularly when we are unwell or need some Godly assurance.

I recently received an email from a friend who had returned home from a stay in hospital. She was writing to let me know that she was on the mend and looking forward to catching up as soon as she was fully recovered. Her email continued that she had woken early on this Sunday morning, still functioning on hospital time and

at 5.30am she had started to listen to some of the hymn tracks that our Singers at Craigsbank had made over the period of lockdown. She finished her note by saying that the hymns sounded so lovely as the sun was streaming in on her. It made her feel glad to be alive.

I wrote back and I shared with her that, all too often, I too find myself awake at 5.30am. But I'm usually up at that time thanks to the clockwork rumblings of my cocker spaniel's stomach and arguably the loudest magpie in the United Kingdom – both of whom regularly contribute to my fatigued appearance by running a highly efficient summer long programme of sleep deprivation techniques. On a more serious note though, I do appreciate the tranquillity of dawn and I find it to be one of those precious moments when you can really feel close to God. I wanted to share that with her, because I could very much relate to the experience that she was describing to me.

I began to imagine just how relieving the experience of waking up at home in familiar surroundings must have been. Coupled with the rising sun streaming through her window and listening to the Singers' hymn tunes, I'm sure that moment produced almost sublime feelings of gladness to be alive. What a wonderful realisation and acceptance of the existence of how precious our time in this form actually is. Would her experience have been the same without the Singers' hymns? I don't know. But where music is present in our life, especially in the form of our most favourite and cherished hymns, these musical scriptures will certainly enhance our natural human emotions and provide us with a great sense of comfort, which in turn highlights for us just how precious life is.

Our gratitude for life has been injected into music of every style and every genre by countless composers, lyricists and musicians. We can see that simply by looking at the sheer number of hymns in which Christian people, over two millennia, have found joy and wholeness in writing and sharing.

In 1779, Charles Wesley prefaced a collection of his own hymns by saying that their purpose was to raise and quicken the spirit of devotion, to confirm a person's faith, to enliven one's hope, stirring and increasing one's love to God and man. His legacy sings on today.



Sometimes, I find myself in awe of what the Craigsbank Singers have achieved over this past year. It is easy to forget their extraordinary efforts when you listen to the simplicity of an individual track, but each and every track that they created was a song of hope, in a time when hope was the order of the day, and we all noted the preciousness of life.

As we slowly and cautiously begin to emerge from the pandemic our virtual singing will soon return to singing together. Over the past 18 months the singers have recorded over 100 hymn tracks, which, unbeknownst to them continue to provide great comfort, joy and gladness in ways they could never have expected.

The next time you find yourself awake at dawn – woken by bird, dog or other natural causes – why not YouTube yourself some of the Singers' hymns and sing along?

Sing to the Lord a Joyful song and enjoy the last of the summer days.

John Patterson, Craigsbank Musician, email: jrgp2011@yahoo.co.uk

## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### Daring and Dynamic Adventures for Young Folk

Every Sunday afternoon throughout the school summer holidays members of our Young Family Ministry Team (YFMT) have run a club for children aged 8–12 years old and their accompanying adult.

Much planning and preparation went in to

organising these afternoons as well as a great deal of prayer from those directly involved and the many other people who supported the club in different ways.

Through a wide variety of activities, our participants (and helpers) learned new skills and explored many themes including friendship, archaeology, planning ahead and managing risks.

We made keychains (keyrings to those of us over 25!) by creating knots in paracord and friendship bracelets from wool. We folded origami paper into cranes and made and floated paper boats. Some folk learned how to play cricket and chess while some brushed up on their previous skills. We



explored the Cammo Estate and found out how people used to live – did you know there was a heated wall in the kitchen garden to enable the growing of fruits from warmer climates or that the tower actually had a windmill on top to pump water from the spring to the main house? We looked at fossils and discussed how and when they were made. We walked to Cramond Island and came back for a BBQ on the beach where we feasted on Boerewors which is a type of South African, spiral shaped sausage. I can't remember the literal translation of the name but 'delicious' is close enough! All this and we still have a treasure hunt to complete before our annual church family BBQ at East Craig's Church Centre.



It has been wonderful to get to know the young people and their family members who have come along but it has been just as wonderful to get to know each other better and discover some of the less well-known talents that exist within the members of our church family. If you have a passion for anything that this age-group could participate in and feel you could share it, please let one of the YFMT know as we would love to continue our Daring and Dynamic Adventures on Sunday afternoons in the future.

The YFMT would like to thank everyone who prayed, baked, volunteered or supported us in any way. The club wouldn't have been the same without your input.

## Eco Warriors Holiday Club

# ECO WARRIORS



During the first week of August the Young Family Ministry Team (YFMT) ran a holiday club from 10am until 12:30pm each day for children aged 3–7 years and their adult. We all became Eco Warriors for the week as we learned about God's wonderful planet and how we humans can treat it better and take care of it for the future. We explored a different aspect of the

theme each day and there were lots of different activities, songs, games and crafts for our Eco Warriors and their helpers.

- Monday was the day we learned about seas, oceans and water pollution with Ros. We found out how rubbish and pollution can cause problems for sea creatures and plants and discovered ways to help clean our seas and protect our waterways.
- On Tuesday we planted seeds with Alison and discovered what we need to grow our own food.
- Wednesday was all about the air. We made windmills to capture wind power with Paul and enjoyed running around to make them work. We found out that fire needs oxygen just like we do and that you can put a fire out by stopping it getting enough air.
- Thursday was about survival. We learned an Eco Warriors chant with John, went on a 'Bear Hunt', and created bird food gateaux (they should have been bird food cakes but ended up huge!). We found out what animals and humans need to survive and learned about Fairtrade food and how it helps communities all over the world support themselves and each other.
- On Friday Alan helped us discover the role of zoos in the protection of endangered animals and explained that God asked Noah and his family to protect animals and all living creatures a long time ago in the times of the Old Testament. We created our own little boats to save our pairs of animals and floated them in our sea.
- Scott made an obstacle course all about recycling for us to complete and we finished with some songs.
- Our club snacks changed every day and we tried lots of different things to eat, we even tried seaweed!

The YFMT would like to thank everyone who came along to participate or help. We hope you had as much fun as we did. Maybe next year we will have Eco Warriors 2 or maybe we'll choose something entirely different to learn about.

Young Family Ministry Team, email: [ros.morrison1@gmail.com](mailto:ros.morrison1@gmail.com)





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# REFLECTIONS ON GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2021

## ‘No pain no gain’

The General Assembly is the supreme decision-making Court of the Church of Scotland. What did I know about it? Very little other than people congregate from all over Scotland and further afield, in Edinburgh, for a week each year meeting up with old friends and making new. Many debates take place over long hours where decisions about new ideas (some controversial), systems, laws etc are agreed/not agreed – some of which see the requirement for further work or time, resulting often in minimal change. People often do not like to rock the boat and so it would seem we continue with ‘the same old’.

Craigsbank Church was asked to nominate an Elder commissioner for the General Assembly 2021. After a short discussion at a Kirk Session meeting I found myself to be that Elder commissioner. The nomination form was completed and sent off and I waited and wondered what lay ahead. Last year was the first time that the General Assembly could not be held face-to-face since 1689 which highlights the significance of the cancellation due to the pandemic.

In 2021 the General Assembly was to host only a small number of people in the Assembly Hall in Edinburgh, identified as ‘the top table’. The Moderator, Principal Clerk, conveners reporting on that day along with a support person, and the tech

team facilitating the live stream and technology were the only people within the Assembly Hall. The vast majority of the 750+ participants – Commissioners, Overseas and Ecumenical Delegates, and Youth reps were at home and on Zoom. We may not have had the opportunity to meet and chat in person but the benefits of online General Assembly – I feel – outweigh the deficits: as no travel was required we helped the climate; with no accommodation, subsistence or travel cost claims it would help to be financially viable; and no hard copies of the Blue book (containing all the reports, deliverances and other information) were printed and distributed to participants thereby saving many trees.

My heart sank as technology and understanding the language used in this court are not my strengths but thankfully all Commissioners were invited for online training which guided us through the technology and the meaning of the phrases used. Now all I had to do was read 25 reports, watch 25x10 minute speeches by committee convenors, familiarise myself with all the content to enable me to be suitably informed and able to make informed votes on key decisions which will affect the future of the Kirk. No pressure there!!!!

Very Rev Dr Martin Fair, the outgoing Moderator, gave an impassioned speech on ‘We have work to do’ in the light of the inequalities and suffering that we see around us. This phrase was referred to throughout the sessions. Dr Fair, throughout his year, has been a pastor to the pastors, and supported the life of the Church in many ways. He is recognised as having been the ideal Moderator for this strange year of a Pandemic. His outgoing words were **the church needs to act now to refresh, revitalise and reform and deal with an overdependence on buildings** using the toolkit ‘Well equipped places in the right spaces’.

The Assembly installed a new Moderator, the Rt Hon Lord Wallace of Tankerness QC. Jim Wallace is an elder (only the second elder ever to become the Moderator) and former Deputy First Minister in the Scottish Executive. In his schedule he will be visiting Edinburgh Presbytery in October of this year.

The Lord High Commissioner this year was Prince William, The Duke of



Jim Wallace



Prince William

Cambridge and Earl of Strathearn. His Royal Highness spent a week touring Scotland with his wife reporting back at the close of the General Assembly.

Rev Marjory McPherson, Presbytery Clerk, competently summed up the main themes of the General Assembly as:



Marjory McPherson

*The Pandemic is never far from our thoughts and the Social Care Council report reminded us of the tremendous care and sacrifice offered by CrossReach Staff in these extraordinary circumstances. The inequalities thrown up and exacerbated by the Pandemic were also highlighted by the Faith Impact Forum report which also gave much attention to the climate emergency that we face and the ways in which we might engage with the lead up to COP26 in Glasgow this November. Disinvestment in fossil fuels remains a subject of debate but has nevertheless taken a step forward this year.*

*Much of the time of this online General Assembly has however been taken up with the report and supplementary report of the Faith Nurture Forum and the report of the Assembly Trustees. Agreement is now in place to aim towards 600 ministries posts plus 60 vacancies by 2025. The new Mission Plan Act has been agreed, and with guidance on its implementation due out towards the end of June, all Presbyteries are expected to begin work on new Plans from the end of June. Plans are all to be in place and agreed by the end of December 2022. As of 1 June all current Presbytery Plans are suspended, though some vacancy processes may be able to continue. Also agreed was an allocation of ministries posts to all Presbyteries. Edinburgh will see a reduction from the 2011 figure of 78.2 to 48.5.*

*All of this clearly means a time of change and upheaval, a reshaping of the ways in which we are church as we seek to operate in a more financially constrained environment and in a future that sees a large proportion of ministers of Word and Sacrament enter retirement. Yet there has also been stated time and again this week a commitment to ecumenical working and sharing the task of ministering to all parts of Scotland alongside our sister denominations. In this task we were much encouraged by the statements of our Ecumenical Delegates and there is clearly a real willingness to find ways to work and serve together. Also of encouragement was the commitment by the Faith Nurture Forum to offer new training modules from January 2022 that will be accessible to individuals and groups within congregations, to offer learning and training opportunities and ways for the whole people of God to better share in ministry.*

One significant change for our Presbytery is that from 1 January 2022 we will be part of the new Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian as our Overture to the Assembly was received and an Act uniting our two Presbyteries was agreed on Saturday. Work continues apace to work out the shape and life of the new Presbytery and we are grateful to the joint Steering group for all their work on our behalf.

After many years of discussing civil partnerships and same-sex marriage the Assembly took a step towards permitting ministers and deacons who wish to be so authorised to conduct same-sex marriages. This is subject to the Barrier Act procedure and will be discussed by the Presbytery towards the end of 2021.

Presbytery and Kirk Sessions will this year reflect upon the Report of the Special Commission on the Effectiveness of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government and there is also a plan for a larger-scale conference to help us all across the Church attend to the points raised in the report.

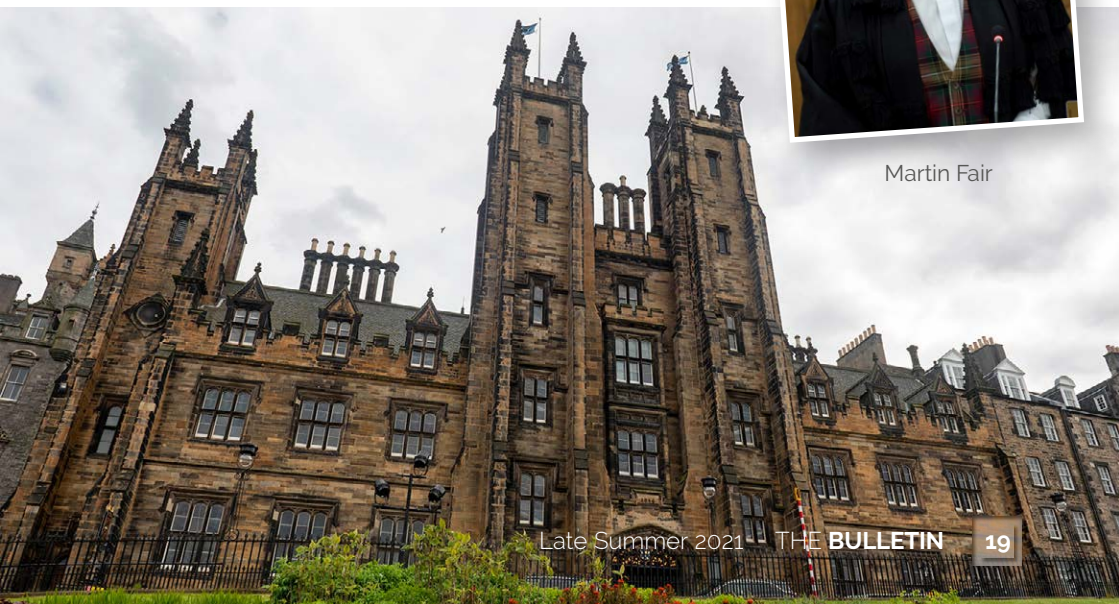
The General Assembly was drawn to a close on Thursday 27th May after much balanced debate and voting. Rev Dr John Chalmers inspired us all with the 'There is a need to get real and share ministry where it is needed. Proper planning has been neglected, we have got ourselves into this situation as we ignored the signs for too long so we all need to be honest of where we are and acknowledge to move forward'. As we all prepared to switch off our computers the words of Very Rev Dr Martin Fair rang in our ears '**We have work to do.**'

It was a privilege to have participated and voted in the General Assembly 2021 but only if we all wake up to tough challenges and decisions that lie ahead. We are all in this together and we can and must make a difference.

Carol Turnbull (General Assembly Commissioner 2021)



Martin Fair





## THE JOY OF SPRING

The joy and surprise of receiving a Church Gift, experiencing church care while reaching out during the challenges of the pandemic, was the legacy of the Church Christmas Gift. New Year came and went and we found ourselves back in lockdown with the pandemic again controlling our lives. And so, during a Zoom meeting in January, the Kirk Session agreed we should plan for a Church Easter Gift (as circumstances were not going to change soon). The remit was to undertake to share the gift not only with church members but also people within our community. Due to the constraints imposed by the pandemic we did not feel able to take a gift to people unknown to those delivering. Elders and District Visitors were asked to consider if they had people/families living within their street or who they knew in the locality that had found the last year a struggle and with whom we could share a gift.

Liz Brash, Jackie Rankine, Ann Brough and I volunteered as the planning team. Unfortunately Ann had to withdraw at an early stage due to her commitment as a Practice Nurse and Covid Vaccinator. The planning team met regularly on Zoom to discuss ideas and formulate a plan of action. When was the gift to be delivered? The Kirk Session after deliberation had considered the week before Easter as suitable. As a team this did not sit comfortably with us as our minister in his February Westoverland newsletter had asked us all:

'to consider fasting for the period of Lent from something that you have found yourself very dependent on, but which might not necessarily be wholesome for you or the world at large. These could, for example, be giving up chocolates ...'

Many of us, including myself, became dependant on a treat of a cake or chocolate during the lockdowns to give us a boost. Lent is often a good time to break cravings. How Christian would we be then if, nearing the end of lent and when willpower is wearing thin, you get a knock on your door and a cheery person presents you with a box of homemade sweet treats wishing you blessings from Craigsbank Church!! Bang goes the good intentions. And so the team took to the next Kirk Session meeting the idea to call it a Church Spring Gift and deliver it the week after Easter.

Keeping the spring theme, an envelope accompanied the box of baking which contained a lovely postcard from the Church with an uplifting message of 'Brighter days ahead' beside a picture of vibrant yellow chrysanthemums. Complimenting this was a floral bookmark with the message 'God loves you' and a small decorated packet of Scottish Wildflower Seeds to encourage the bees, butterflies and other insects when in flower.

The names of those to receive a gift were gathered – 110 Church members, 11 community households, 3 families with links to Corstorphine Hub Foodbank. Under different circumstances we would have wished for many more recipients within our local community but this will have to wait for another project and better times.

Volunteers were approached to pledge baking, others to help receive the baking pack and hand out to those delivering and deliverers. It was a HUGE team effort with 32 bakers, 6 helpers and 23 deliverers all sharing their gifts and talents with each person's contribution vital to the smooth running of the project. Due to the generosity of those pledging baking it was apparent there would be sufficient baking to ensure all volunteers received a thank you as most had also volunteered at Christmas. 143 cake boxes were packed with one packet of tablet/fudge and 7 sweet treats in each which if you do the



- 'What a lovely surprise to receive 'Spring Blessings' from Craigsbank Church.

- Considering all the problems which the Church has had to face up to in the strange year that has just passed, we appreciate that you devoted your time and energy to remembering old folks like us who have been pretty well stuck at home – apart from visits to the health centre for our Covid jabs and routine visits to the dentist!

'Our 'thank you' is sincere and heartfelt. The presentation was lovely and the variety of the homebaking was delicious. What a lot of effort must have gone into the organisation of the gifts, the production of such a wide range of tempting cakes etc., the packing of the boxes and finally their delivery.'

'I would like to say a big thank you for my lovely box of goodies, so thoughtful of everyone taking part. I know it does not happen without a lot of hard work and your time. I also loved all the added bits of seeds, bookmark and card. The thought behind all the kindness means such a lot at these difficult times. I just long to be back at church again, meeting up with all our friends.'

'The vaccination programme has been a remarkable success story but one wonders how we will all fare as restrictions are eased – we fear that we are not 'out of the woods' yet and a return to anything like normality is some way off. Still, Craigsbank Church is making impressive strides in its efforts to deal with the restrictions and to achieve as much as it can as long as they exist. Well done!'

sums is a staggering 1160 individual pieces of home baking!!! Tables in the sanctuary at Craigsbank Church were piled high with boxes of donated baking which was then transformed into piles of filled cake boxes.

The project amazingly was self-funding due to the kindness of generous financial donations. After all expenses were paid the project was even able to give the church a small monetary donation.

All the volunteers should be proud of their efforts and the pleasure offered to so many – confirmed through the many thank you emails, phone calls and cards received. Carol Turnbull (on behalf of Jackie Rankine, Liz Brash the Spring Gift planning team)



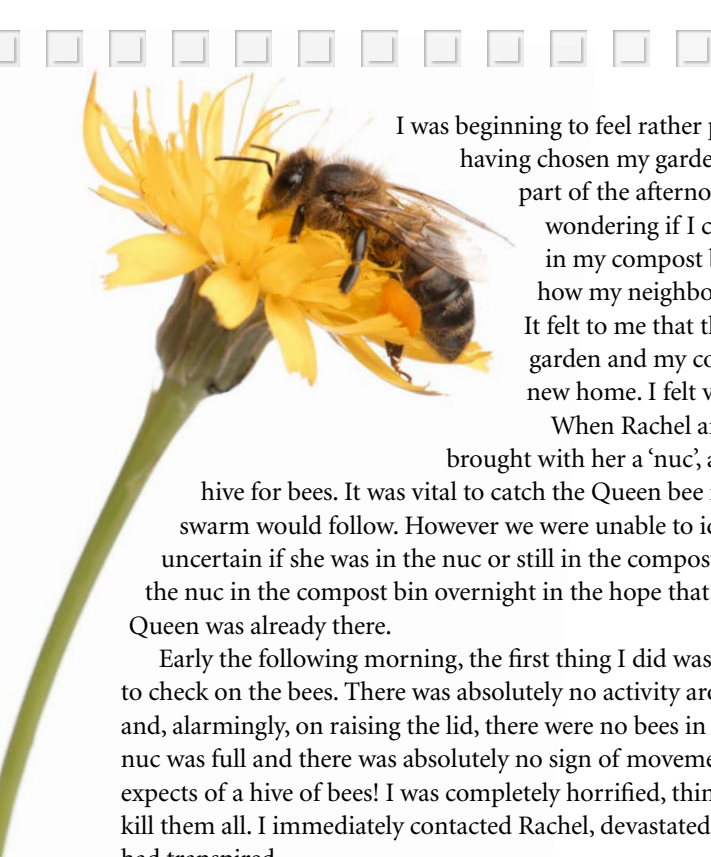


## MIDSUMMER MIRACLE

On Midsummer morning I stepped out into the back garden to dispose of some kitchen waste in the compost bin. On lifting the lid, much to my surprise, I was accosted by 10 – 15 bees which drifted out from inside. Swarms of fruit flies are commonplace, but not honey bees. Having delivered the waste to the bin, rather bemusedly, I replaced the compost bin lid and took the dog out for a walk. We were out all morning, it being a beautiful day, sunny and hot. On approaching the back garden to collect in the washing I immediately became aware of a vibrant hum. On opening the door the hum was insistent, deep and intense and the garden was full of hundreds of buzzing honey bees. It was exhilarating standing in the middle of all these tiny creatures all intent on descent to my compost bin which was swarming with them as they landed and found their way in through the air vents below the lid. I decided it might not be advisable to take in the washing at that present moment, so went back indoors firmly closing it behind me.

Safely indoors I phoned my beekeeper friend Rachel who promised to come round later to collect the swarm. It did not take the swarm long to fill the bin, so I pulled up a chair in the garden with a cool drink and soaked in the experience. Bees dancing instructions to each other and tumbling in and flying out of the vents.





I was beginning to feel rather proprietorial, the bees having chosen my garden after all. I spent the best part of the afternoon watching them and wondering if I could possibly keep them in my compost bin. I was uncertain as to how my neighbours would take to the idea! It felt to me that the bees had chosen my garden and my compost bin to make their new home. I felt very privileged.

When Rachel arrived that evening, she brought with her a 'nuc', a kind of travelling box/hive for bees. It was vital to catch the Queen bee in the nuc so that the swarm would follow. However we were unable to identify the Queen, so were uncertain if she was in the nuc or still in the compost bin! We decided to leave the nuc in the compost bin overnight in the hope that the bees would fill it if the Queen was already there.

Early the following morning, the first thing I did was run out into the garden to check on the bees. There was absolutely no activity around the compost bin, and, alarmingly, on raising the lid, there were no bees in the compost bin, but the nuc was full and there was absolutely no sign of movement at all. Not what one expects of a hive of bees! I was completely horrified, thinking we had managed to kill them all. I immediately contacted Rachel, devastated at the realisation of what had transpired.

I took the dog out for a walk. On arriving home at lunchtime, imagine my relief on finding bees flitting in and out of the compost bin quite contentedly. They were not dead but had only been asleep. I never for a moment imagined that a whole colony of bees could be completely still as they had been in the early morning when I had approached, fast asleep. I was greatly relieved and thrilled to find them happily going about their business.

When Rachel arrived again that evening, when foraging was over for the day, they were all silent and still in the nuc. Gently Rachel laid a 'super' over the nuc, filled with sugar and water for the bees to feed on whilst in transportation, and applied the lid securely. They would have to stay in the nuc for at least three days, or they would fly back to where they came from – the compost bin! My bees have now been ensconced in their new hive in Cammo.

You too can visit them there, where there are several hives in the north east corner of the walled garden. I am sure they will be content in their new home where I can keep an eye on them and look forward to honey in the autumn. I felt very blessed by my visitation with the bees on midsummer's day, a Midsummer Miracle.

Esther Davidson

# ELDERS

If you look in the dictionary for the definition of elder the definitions given are:

- a person who is older or higher in rank than oneself
- an elderly person
- an influential member of a tribe or community, often a chief or ruler
- a presbyter (which means elder in a Presbyterian church)

Church of Scotland elders need not be old or high in rank but they are influential members of our church community. Elders are the local councillors of the Kirk, but they are also much more. An elder is a person who is known and trusted by the congregation they serve. At present, elders are ordained for life at a special service and become part of the Kirk Session. The Kirk Session is made up of church leaders and is the committee that runs individual churches. We take it for granted that women can be elders too but only men could be elders before 1966. Some of you may remember one of our elders, Barbara McIntosh, who was one of the first women elders in the Church of Scotland.

Each parish is divided into districts and elders are expected to visit or keep in touch with the members of the congregation who stay in that district. Some of our elders have received long service awards which are only given to those who have been elders for more than 30 years.

There are fewer elders now, as there are fewer members of the congregation, and the distribution of elders and districts has become unequal. Sometimes a District will have a District Visitor and not an elder. Some elders have too few people to visit and some have too many. The districts and those allocated to them are in the process of being reviewed so you may get someone different coming to visit you or phone you in the near future. Whoever it is, I am sure they will be made welcome.

Elaine Thomson, Session Clerk



# YOUTH ORGANISATIONS

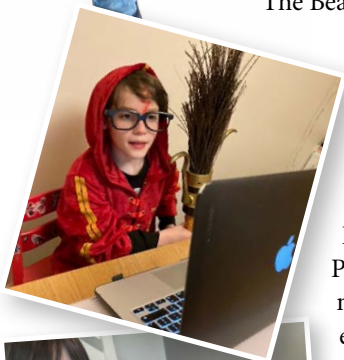
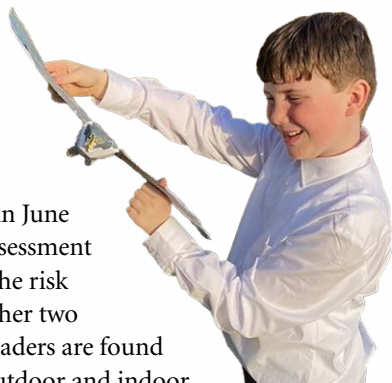
## 26th Craigalmond (Craigsbank) Scout Group

The majority of Scouting at Craigsbank continued to take place remotely in the Spring. The Scout Section took part in one outdoor face-to-face event in June after their outdoor Covid risk assessment was prepared and approved. The risk assessment approval for the other two sections cannot be done until leaders are found who are willing to plan and run outdoor and indoor activities for Beavers and Cubs.

The Beavers and Cubs have operated a joint programme of at-home activities with the opportunity to attend a short 30 minute session on zoom on a Friday evening, though given their age virtual meetings have not been well attended. My thanks go to District for allowing these to take place as I needed another adult to join me on these sessions. The Beavers and Cubs have taken part in the District Virtual Camp, South of Scotland Golden Eagle Project, World Book Day, baked a cake in a mug over zoom, made a bug house and bird bath out of recycled material, enjoyed a virtual tour of Sighthill Fire Station and worked towards many badges including Fire Safety, Book Reader, Environmental Conservation, Gardener, Global Issues, Communicator and Naturalist. Despite Covid restrictions curtailing active face-to-face Scouting, several of the older Cubs hope to be able to complete their Silver Chief Scout Award before joining Scouts later this year.

The Scout Section Leader team of Scott Bell and Graham

Watt have remained active with the Scouts taking part in a weekly one hour zoom meeting during which they covered map-reading, preparation for outdoor activities, creating a balanced meal, making a pizza over zoom and a weekend virtual camp in June. During the virtual Scout Camp in





June they took part in tent inspection, keep fit, cooking, lamppost orienteering around the Craigmound area, campfire and a face-to-face hike in the Pentlands.

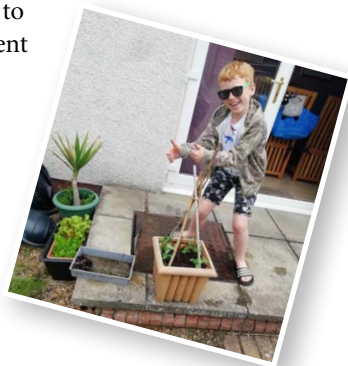
A return to active face-to-face Scouting for the two younger sections is going to be very difficult to achieve until new leaders can be found. Neither Section has

leaders able and willing to commit to planning and running the group. Parent

help and part-time help is available but

without leaders the viability of running face-to-face meetings is looking very difficult to achieve. I would urge you all to consider whether you or someone you know would be willing to assist the Group by becoming a leader at the 26th. Full training would be provided following the Scout Adult Training Programme. Please contact me if anyone is able to assist the Group by becoming a volunteer or if you wish further information.

Susan Ross, Group Scout Leader, email: [26th@craigalmond.org.uk](mailto:26th@craigalmond.org.uk) or tel: 0131 317 8804



## CRAIGSBANK RAMBLERS

We are happy to say that our group has started up again

Our first walk was a super walk through Aberlady Nature Reserve and on to Archerfield. The weather and scenery were beautiful as you can see.

The next walk was on the Fife Coastal Path from Dalgety Bay to Aberlady. Again we had a super time with lovely varied scenery and a lot of friendly chat. We do a variety of walks in the countryside with woods, rivers, coast and farmland.

We are planning our next walk and would be delighted for you to join us. If you do fancy joining us sometime please let us know your email address so we can include you in our group emails.

It would be great if you would like to join us on as many or as few walks as you fancy.

Christine Laurie, tel: 07972835217 or email: [christian.laurie1@gmail.com](mailto:christian.laurie1@gmail.com)

Penny Greig, tel: 07541032462 or email: [peegee@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:peegee@blueyonder.co.uk)



# The colour green – by Rich Mullins

And the moon is a sliver of silver like a shaving that fell  
on the floor of a Carpenter's shop  
And every house must have it's builder and I awoke in  
the house of God  
Where the windows are mornings and evenings  
Stretched from the sun across the sky north to south  
And on my way to early meeting I heard the rocks crying out:  
'Be praised for all Your tenderness by these works of Your hands  
Suns that rise and rains that fall to bless and bring to life Your land  
Look down upon this winter wheat and be glad that You have made  
Blue for the sky and the colour green that fills these fields with praise'



And the wrens have returned and they're nesting  
In the hollow of that oak where his heart once had been  
And he lifts up his arms in a blessing for being born again  
And the streams are all swollen with winter  
Winter unfrozen and free to run away now  
And I'm amazed when I remember Who it was that built this house  
And with the rocks I cry out:  
'Be praised for all Your tenderness by these works of Your hands'

# Creation Calls – by Brian Doerksen

I have felt the wind blow,  
Whispering your name  
I have seen your tears fall,  
When I watch the rain.  
How could I say there is no God?  
When all around creation calls!!  
A singing bird, a mighty tree,  
The vast expanse of open sea  
Gazing at a bird in flight,  
Soaring through the air.  
Lying down beneath the stars,

I feel your presence there.  
I love to stand at ocean shore  
And feel the thundering breakers roar,  
To walk through golden fields of grain  
Beneath endless blue horizon's frame.  
Listening to a river run,  
Watering the Earth.  
Fragrance of a rose in bloom,  
A newborn's cry at birth.  
With endless bloom horizons fray  
I believe just like a child





## Musings of a Church Admin

# WHAT **IS** CHURCH?

Something I (and probably many of us) have been thinking about a lot lately is ‘what is church?’. These past few months may have disrupted our normal understanding of what church is/what church looks like. Before Lockdown church for most of us took the form of going to worship in either the East Craigs or Craigsbank building or in my case, Colinton’s church building down by the river. Then Lockdown happened and we weren’t able to meet together for worship in our church buildings on a Sunday morning. Many of us started watching services on YouTube, on TV or listening to them on the radio. Some of us may have found other ways to worship God.

During the summer months I have spent quite a lot of time doing long distance walks with friends. During these walks I have had many deep conversations about faith, reflecting on whether that is church. I think it is. To me church is intentional time spent with God with others. One type of long-distance walk which I definitely think of as church is a pilgrimage walk. There are many in Scotland and throughout the world. Just after I started here at Craigsbank I did the Columba Experience pilgrimage walk in Argyll from Tarbert to Lismore. I have since been involved in planning this year’s walk and I will be away walking the route again with others at the end of August.

As things have started to open up I have been reflecting on how my understanding of church has changed. I have become more open to a broader definition of what worship is and where it takes place. Some of us may now be happy watching services on YouTube and feel that is church. Others may have experienced Forest Church and feel like that is where we feel happiest worshipping God. Some may have been going along to the in-person services at one or both centres and prefer the familiarity of the old ways, worshipping God in the building where you have worshipped for years. For me it's a mix – I have been going along to in person services at Colinton, watching services online and worshipping God when out on walks with friends. To me, all are church.

Gemma King

## FRESH START

Fresh Start are back collecting items for their starter packs for homeless folks going into their first accommodation. After many years Jim Douglas is stepping down as the Co-ordinator and Julie Wilkinson will take over. Any items that cannot be brought to the services can be collected by phoning Julie on 539 0542.



### Care for the Bees

If you see a tired Bee on the ground or one awakening from sleep and a bit dozy, mix a teaspoon of water with a few grains of sugar and lay it in front of the Bee. Hopefully, this may restore its energy.

Liz Brash

# SUPPORT SERVICES

**Cruse Bereavement Care** provides support after the death of someone close including face-to-face, telephone, group support, as well as bereavement support for children.

**Phone: 0845 600 2227 (Scotland)**

**ChildLine** is a free, 24-hour confidential helpline for children and young people who need to talk.

**Phone: 0800 1111**

**Macmillan Cancer Support** provides medical, practical, emotional and financial support to cancer patients, their carers, friends and family.

**Phone: 0808 808 0000**

**Carers UK** provides support and information to those who look after an older, disabled or seriously ill family member or friend.

**Phone: 0808 808 7777**  
**(weekdays 10am-4pm)**

**Citizens Advice Service** provides information on benefits, employment and housing and help on debt, credit and legal issues.

**Phone: 0131 510 5510**

**Alzheimer Scotland** provides information, advice and personalised support services across Scotland.

**Phone: 0808 808 3000 (24 hours)**

**Samaritans** is available for anyone struggling to cope and provide a safe place to talk 24 hours a day.

**Phone: 116 123**

**SAMH** (Scottish Association for Mental Health) can provide general mental health information and signpost you to your local services.

**Phone: 0141 530 1000 (Mon-Fri 9 – 5)**

**Scotland's Domestic Abuse and Forced Marriage Helpline** offers telephone information and support to anyone affected by domestic abuse or forced marriage.

**Phone: Lines open 24/7 0800 027 1234**

**Care and Repair Edinburgh** is an independent charity and is part of the Age Scotland family. They are part of the Age Scotland Independent Living services designed to help people live independently for as long as they want and are able. They offer a range of practical services to help people repair, improve or adapt their homes so that they may remain in their own homes in comfort and independence for as long as possible. They can be contacted either by emailing

**reception@cre.scot**  
**phoning 337 1111**



# CHURCH INFORMATION

Your District Elder or District Visitor

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Minister

Rev Alan Childs

Tel: 0131 466 5196

Email: [achilds@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:achilds@churchofscotland.org.uk)

## Session Clerk

Elaine Thompson

[sessionclerk@craigsbankchurch.org.uk](mailto:sessionclerk@craigsbankchurch.org.uk)

## Church Administrator

Gemma King

Tel: 0131 334 6365

Email: [administrator@craigsbankchurch.org.uk](mailto:administrator@craigsbankchurch.org.uk)

Office Hours: Monday and Friday 9 am-12 noon

## Pastoral Care Team Correspondence

Carol Turnbull

Email: [carol.turnbull3@btinternet.com](mailto:carol.turnbull3@btinternet.com)



For more information visit our website

**[www.craigsbankchurch.org.uk](http://www.craigsbankchurch.org.uk)**

Many thanks to all who have contributed articles and photographs for this issue.

Craigsbank is a parish of the Church of Scotland  
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