

KIRK NEWS

February 2024
No: 840



BLACKHALL
ST. COLUMBA'S
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

To Glorify God.....To Proclaim Christ.....and To Serve Others



February
2024

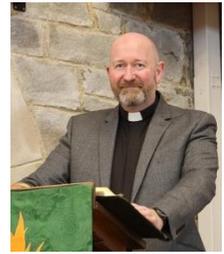
Now these three continue . . .



Of these, the greatest is . . . 1 Cor 13:13

‘Encourage One Another!’

It sometimes seems to me that, in today’s society, we are frequently surrounded by negativity. The international, national and local news cycles always seem to focus on disasters, whether natural or man-made. The proportion of bad news reports we receive is far greater than the proportion of good news reports around many of which are reduced to being a closing segment about a cute animal or a ‘feel good’ story. If we are not careful, this negativity can have an adverse effect on us and our ability to enjoy our lives.



I am reminded of Paul’s first letter to the Thessalonians when he wrote, *‘God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.’* (1 Thessalonians 5:9-11) Paul was writing to the church in Thessalonica, in modern-day Greece and this letter is thought to be among the first of Paul’s letters, probably written by the end of AD 52, which makes it one of the very earliest Christian writings. At the time Paul was in Thessalonica the city was within the Roman Empire. The Book of Acts describes how Paul preached to the local population, winning converts who formed a Christian community.

I’ve spoken before about how easy it is, especially as we get older, to look back and think that things were better in days gone by. I’m convinced that this is not actually the case. For many people things can always seem tougher than ever before but really, they are not. I’m quite sure there would have been people in Thessalonica when Paul was there who would have hankered back to the days of Alexander the Great and thought that things were better then, before the Roman occupation.

What then is the answer to this negativity?

The other day I read a short story on the internet.

A group of frogs was travelling through the woods and two of them fell into a deep pit. When the other frogs saw how deep the pit was, they told the two frogs that they were as good as dead. The two frogs ignored the comments and tried to jump up out of the pit with all their might. The other frogs kept telling them to stop, that they were as good as dead. Finally, one of the frogs took heed to what the other frogs were saying and gave up. He fell down and died. The other frog continued to jump as hard as he could. Once again, the crowd of frogs yelled at him to stop the pain and just die. He jumped even harder and finally made it out. When he got out, the other frogs said, "Did you not hear us?" The frog explained to them that he was deaf. He thought they were encouraging him the entire time.

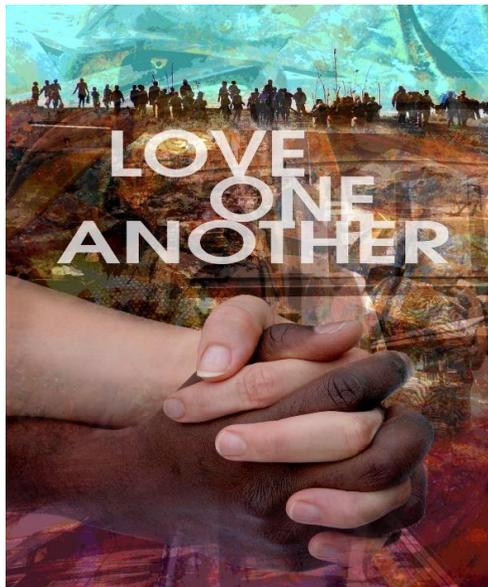
The person posting the story went on to say; *'There is power of life and death in the tongue. An encouraging word to someone who is down can lift them up and help them make it through the day. So be careful of what you say. Speak life to those who cross your path. The power of words... it is sometimes hard to understand that an encouraging word can go such a long way.'* There are two positions we need to consider in this story. The first is the position of the frogs that fell in the hole. They initially seemed to ignore what was being said to them and then one heeded the words he heard. It is not possible, or even desirable, that we become deaf to what is going on around us but that does not mean that we should take on board the negativity that we hear. The second is the position of the frogs that were at the top of the hole. They were very negative. We should always be careful with what we say. None of us knows what another person is going through and our words of negativity might be a tipping point for someone. Words of encouragement are always better.

Paul continued in his letter to the Thessalonians to make *'Final Exhortations, Greetings, and Benediction'*. He wrote: *'But we appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labour among you and have charge of you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we urge you, brothers and sisters, to admonish the idlers, encourage the faint-hearted, help the weak, be patient with all of them. See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always.'*

(1 Thessalonians 5:9-12-16)

God bless all.

Fergus



Remembrance at St Columba's



Our church on **Remembrance Sunday** 12th of November 2023.



The Sanctuary was beautifully adorned with two poppy falls. Each poppy was crafted by members of the Knit and Natter Group. The display was hung from the balcony by members of the Men's Shed.

Our church welcomed members from the Scout and Guiding Associations, as well as a piper and a bugler to our services.

The War Memorial Service conducted on **Remembrance Day**.



The Wreath Laying Ceremony at the War Memorial and the Last Post sounded at the Remembrance Day Ceremony.

Kirk Session Report

The Kirk Session

The Kirk Session met on Tuesdays 14 November 2023 and 9 January 2024.

Bicycle Stand

It was noted that the bicycle stand had been erected outside the entrance to the halls.

Catering Co-ordinator

Elsbeth Williamson intimated her wish to retire from the role of Catering Co-ordinator. Elsbeth was thanked for all her good work.

Correspondence

Letters of thanks were received from:

- Fresh Start for £60 sent as part of the Harvest collection.
- Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) in respect of the £440 October Communion retiring collection.
- The Scottish Poppy Appeal for the £136.78 sent to them.
- Fresh Start and the Scottish Bible Society both acknowledging £514.25 each from the Christmas Retiring Offerings.
- Crossreach thanked the Congregation for our ongoing support throughout 2023.

Evacuation Plan

Our Health & Safety Administrator, Lindsay Duguid presented a new Plan (which can be viewed in the Church Office). The Plan has been shared across the church to interested parties. The Moderator thanked Lindsay for his work with the Plan.

Legacies

Session noted receipt of the following legacies: -

- Estate of the late Mrs Christine Morrison - £10,000.
- Estate of the late Mr Alistair Gunn - £15,000

Minister

The Minister informed Session that he is now enrolled as an officer cadet in the Royal Navy. He will be going on to serve as a Chaplain to the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) and will soon start training. This is evidence of his commitment and the Church of Scotland's to the broader life of the Church in Scotland. Fergus emphasised that he is first and foremost our Parish Minister. Pulpit supply fees while he is attending training or on other RNVR duties will be covered by 121 George Street.

Nativity Trail

Shona Cook reported on our first ever Nativity Trail called "Follow the Star" held across the church on Friday 22 December 2023 adding that it would appear to have been an unmitigated success.

It was the culmination of a tremendous amount of work by many people. A committee was formed back in April and plans took shape which then involved a set building team, a costume department, a catering team and a group organising the crafts.

Every age group was catered for throughout the day. Between 50 and 60 members of the Congregation played a part and/or helped on the day itself.

The advertising campaign had the event featuring at number 10 in the Edinburgh News' top ten things to do in Edinburgh at Christmas. During the day over 300 members of the community came through our doors. There was some tremendous feedback. It seems that people were quite blown away by the sheer scale of the trail itself and by the quality of the "production".

The sum of £245 was collected for Ferryhill Primary School Foodbank.

Retiring Offerings

It was agreed that the retiring offerings for 2024 will be:

February Communion	RNLI, South Queensferry
Easter Services	The Rock Trust
June Communion	Mary's Meals
October Communion	YMCA and React Aid
Christmas Services	The Scottish Bible Society and Fresh Start

Roll

The Kirk Session was pleased to admit to membership: -

By certificate of Transference:

Philip and Irene Black, Succoth Court, Edinburgh.

Shrove Tuesday -13th February 2024



Shrove Tuesday or Pancake Day is the last day before the traditional period of fasting, during the forty days of Lent. But what does Shrove Tuesday have to do with pancakes? Before the Lenten fasting, people traditionally use up ingredients they are not allowed to eat during the next 40 days—especially ingredients that will spoil, like milk, cream and meat.

Lent is meant to allow for a time for reflection.

Church Gatherings



Tuesday Topics out for lunch



Coffee after the service

Kirk Session Report – The Planned Union

The Planned Union

Update on the planned Union with Drylaw Parish Church. The following is the address to the Congregation delivered by the Session Clerk on Sunday 14 January 2024.

As we are into a new year it is only appropriate that the Congregation be updated as to where matters are with the proposed Union of Blackhall St Columba's and Drylaw Parish Church (agreed by both Kirk Sessions in October 2022).

The Congregation will recall that this proposed Union is part of The Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian Presbytery Plan which will see the number of ministry posts reduce from 106 to 65.

We are not alone as this reduction is happening throughout Scotland in what is the biggest structural change across the whole Church in nearly 100 years.

The union would be the coming together of the two congregations to create a new entity. We should all look upon it as a new beginning. It is not the case of one taking over the other - it would be a marriage of equals. A union of the two congregations would bring real benefits as well as challenges and there can be no doubt that both congregations could learn from each other. The combined parish would encompass a sizeable area and one that gives great scope for mission, which is, after all, what this is all about.

As already notified to the Congregation, a Steering Group consisting of six members from each Kirk Session was established to work on the practical issues leading up to the Union. From within the Steering Group a subgroup has been set up to compile a draft Basis of Union.

The Basis of Union

The Basis of Union document.

- It is in ten sections.
- Hopefully it contains nothing contentious.
- The Minister- Drylaw Parish is presently vacant and is served by a Locum. Fergus would go forward as the minister of Drylaw subject to a vote by Drylaw congregation.
- Drylaw manse is on the market.

The Session Clerk at Drylaw and myself have a draft Basis of Union document more or less ready. There was one section that required guidance from Presbytery. The draft document with input from the Presbytery Deployment Committee, after approval by the full Steering Group, will go forward for approval or modification by the Church National Committees at 121 George Street.

If agreed by the National Committees the draft Basis of Union document would become the final document that would go before each Kirk Session for approval.

If all agreed, then it goes before each congregation who would then vote on acceptance. Blackhall St Columba's will only vote for acceptance of the Basis of Union whereas Drylaw will have two votes – one for the acceptance of the Basis of Union and a second vote for the acceptance of Rev Fergus Cook as their minister.

- The congregational votes will be a secret ballot.
- Zoom votes are now allowed to be counted.
- The voting will be witnessed by two members of the Presbytery Deployment Committee.

Assuming all is agreed by both congregations, the final Basis of Union would go before a Presbytery meeting for approval along with a note of the votes cast at each congregational meeting.

Kirk Session Report: The Planned Union continued.

All this is a laborious process. However, as there have now been several unions agreed within the Presbytery bounds, the whole exercise is now becoming more streamlined.

Several unions have already been formalised in Edinburgh, namely: Gorgie Dalry Stenhouse and Palmerston Place and our neighbours, Cramond and Old Kirk Muirhouse, amongst others.

The Timescale

- The Law Department seems to be getting more geared up and Palmerston Place and Gorgie Dalry Stenhouse Union went through quite quickly.
- Cramond and The Old Kirk Muirhouse took months but there is an improvement now. The most contentious issue was the name of the new congregation.

Adherents

This is a term used for people who are not members of any church, or who are members of another congregation but are regular worshippers in the church to which they adhere. I believe we have a few regular attendees who fall into this category. I am reliably informed that an adherent can take part in the congregational vote mentioned earlier. So, anyone who believes themselves to be in this category should speak with me over the next few weeks.

The Congregation will be kept informed as we move forward. I will be around after the Church Services should anyone have any questions on the whole process.

Eddie Thorn
Session Clerk

Church Diary

February 2024

4th	10.30am	Sacrament of Holy Communion
	3pm	Short Service of Communion for those who struggle to attend the 10.30am service.
11th	10.30am	Morning Worship
18th	10.30am	Morning Worship
25th	10.30am	Youth Service

March 2024

1st	2.30pm	Friday afternoon World Day of Prayer service at Cramond Church
3rd	10.30am	Morning Worship
10 th	10.30am	Mothering Sunday. Joint service with Drylaw Church at Blackhall St Columba's
17th	10.30am	Morning Worship
24th	10.30am	Palm Sunday
28th	7.00pm	Maundy Thursday. Joint service with Cluster churches at Drylaw Parish Church.
29th	7.00pm	Good Friday. Evening service
31st	8.00am 10.30am	Early Rise Easter Service. Venue to be confirmed. Easter Sunday (n.b. Clocks Change!)

April 2024

7th	10.30am	Morning Worship
14th	10.30am	Morning Worship
21st	10.30am	Morning Worship
28th	10.30am	Morning Worship

Sunday morning services can be joined on Live Stream at www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk

Nativity Trail - “Follow the Star” - 22nd December 2023



It will surely not have escaped anyone’s notice that we held our first ever Nativity Trail called “Follow the Star” at Blackhall St Columba’s on Friday 22nd December 2023, and it would appear to have been an unmitigated success.

This was the culmination of a tremendous amount of work by many, many people and I would like to take this opportunity to express my personal thanks to all who helped make this event happen. It truly was a team effort.

It all began with an idea I had, inspired by pictures from a trail organised by another church in Glasgow, which then grew and grew. A committee was formed back in April and plans took shape which then involved a set building team, a costume department, a catering team and a group organising the crafts and numerous volunteers who helped with a variety of tasks on the day and beforehand. We also had a group of youngsters plan an Escape Room for the slightly older children. We also had another Escape Room on a double-sided sheet of paper for our more mature visitors to enjoy.

Every age group was catered for throughout the day. I estimate that between 50 and 60 members of the congregation played a part and/or helped on the day itself and perhaps 20 others helped before that - not to mention those who donated props or craft items.

Our advertising campaign had us featuring at number 10 in the Edinburgh News’ “Top 10 things to do in Edinburgh at Christmas”!

Primary 7 from Blackhall Primary attended in the morning and we received very positive feedback from them. There were a further two sessions, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. We welcomed over 300 members of the community through our doors.

Nativity Trail

It was hoped that people would be encouraged to take a moment or two to be reminded of the Good News of Christmas amid all the hurly burly of Advent and to let themselves relax and enjoy what Christmas is really about.

The Nativity Trail, “Follow the Star” was an interactive exploration of the Greatest Story Ever Told using the church sanctuary and all our halls. Our visitors were encouraged to find out the true meaning of Christmas in a novel and exciting way, as they heard the Angel Gabriel’s message and then went on their own journey to follow the star. They discovered the shepherds, King Herod and some wise women on the way. They reached the end of their journey at the stable and found the most wonderful gift we have ever been given.



We also offered a Christmas Nativity Escape Room for the older children who came along and there were lots of Christmas crafts, some seasonal musical entertainment and, of course, plenty of Christmas treats and refreshments.

We have had some tremendous feedback from those who took part via word of mouth, social media and email. It seems that people were quite blown away by the sheer scale of the trail itself and by the quality of the “production”. In addition, we managed to raise £245 from donations, which we intend to give to Ferryhill Primary School to help with their food bank.

Nativity Trail

I am in the process of trying to gather information from the trail and the escape room participants to establish what we could do to improve this event in the future. Some aspects of the event worked better than others. I already have some ideas of how to add to what we did as well. It is hoped that we could make this event an annual occurrence particularly considering its success with the school pupils.

For those who couldn't make it along this time, here are a few photos of the trail. James Burr kindly took some photos on the day and these are available to view on the church website.

Shona Cook



Watch Committee

The WATCH Committee would like to thank everyone who attended and helped with the Christmas Fair. Rev Fergus Cook opened the Christmas Fair with the help of Santa Claus, who managed to fit us into his busy schedule to spend time with us and greet the children.

We were grateful for the help of the Curry Club and associates who set up the stalls and dismantled them also. They had so many chairs to re-arrange around the church buildings!

The Fair had many stalls to browse. You could find books, bric a brac, tombola, bottles, sweets, cakes, toys, puzzles, hampers and crafts, to name a few. Thank you to all the stall holders and hamper team for their hard work. The Hamper team produced a wonderful display of hampers. Thank you also to everyone who generously donated items for the stalls or items to be included in the hampers.

We extend our thanks to the Suzuki Band who entertained us with Christmas music in the Sanctuary. Lastly, we thank the catering team for the excellent teas/refreshments.

The Christmas Fair raised an amazing total of £6,690.42. The proceeds of the Christmas Fair and our other fundraising efforts amounted to £10,000. A cheque was presented to representatives of Hopscotch on Sunday 14th of January 2024. Hopscotch is a Scottish Charity which provides respite breaks for vulnerable and disadvantaged children.

Lynn Bunney, Watch Committee



The WATCH Committee presenting the cheque to Hopscotch representatives.

World Day of Prayer



**World Day of Prayer
Ecumenical Service,
Friday 1st of March 2024**

**Prepared by the WDP
Committee of Palestine
with the theme -
“I beg you.....bear with
one another in love”.
Ephesians 4: 1-3.**

**The service this year will
be held at 2.30pm in
Cramond Church.**

**A warm welcome to all. Refreshments will be served after the service.
Please contact Margaret Brown for more information.**

CrossReach

CrossReach - Social Care Council of the Church of Scotland

A huge thank you to members and friends who purchased CrossReach Christmas Cards during the month of November. From the sales, plus donations, the sum of £622.50 was raised.

Margaret Brown, CrossReach Link

Congregational Changes

New members

We welcome new members admitted by Certificate of Transference

Mr Philip and Mrs Irene Black



Baptisms

January

Aidan McKenzie McGhie baptised on the 7th of January 2024

Deaths

Sadly, the following members have passed away. Our thoughts and prayers are with their family members and friends.

November

4 Mr Peter Jenkinson

December

1 Mr Ian White

5 Mrs Joy Rowe

6 Mrs Elizabeth Farquharson

January

10 Prof Andrew Merrylees

Sheila Mackintosh, Roll Keeper



Outreach Events

Soup n Chat



Soup n Chat
Blackhall St Columba's
Every two weeks from
Friday 2nd February
12noon to 2pm
All Welcome

Knit and Natter

Knit and Natter were asked to knit 200 stars for the Escape Room element of Follow the Star. Our first reaction was "NO WAY! We'll never manage that..." But once we got stuck in, we realised it wasn't impossible after all and we managed with plenty of time to spare.



Escape room chaos: This was the fun and chaos of the last escape room. Once the Escape Room Challenge was completed and the exit unlocked each participant got to choose a star to take home as a reminder of the event.

If you would like to join us at Knit and Natter, we'd be happy to welcome you on Monday evenings in the Sanctuary at 7.30pm. You don't even have to be able to knit.

For further details contact stcknitnatter@gmail.com

OUTREACH EVENTS - JANUARY to APRIL 2024

The Outreach Team has decided to produce a programme of events on a four monthly basis. We hope you will read about what's going on and support as many of the events as you can. By having the dates well in advance, you can pop them in your diaries and keep the dates clear.

As a family of God here in Blackhall, it is not only good but essential to get together regularly to socialise and enjoy a time of fellowship which encourages new friendships and strengthens existing ones.

We cannot truly love one another unless we know each other.

EVENTS:

18th February- "Movies @St. Columba's"

Brave

Please join us in the sanctuary at 3pm for a delightful, animated film with a distinctly Scottish theme. It will be a hit with the whole family. Refreshments will be served. No charge for this event but donations towards the treats will be gratefully received. No ticket required.

23rd March- "Music @ St. Columba's "

The RESOL Quartet

Please join us in the sanctuary at 7pm for the return, by popular request, of this talented quartet. This is a group of young musicians trained at the Scottish Conservatoire. No ticket required but donations for the musicians would be appreciated.

28th April- Murder Mystery High Tea, "Strictly Come Killing"

Murder and mayhem in the large hall from 5.30pm! A cast of characters will play out a deadly drama for us and then, over a delicious meal from Corbie's with cake to follow, we will turn amateur detectives and try to solve the crime. Tickets are £20 each and will be limited for this one and so we will operate a first come, first served basis. Contact Shona Cook on 07981 970054.

A new programme for the next four months will follow later.

Shona Cook

FreshStart Thank you for your generous support during 2023 of donations of household items and food for The Pantry Shop. Thank you also for the December donations of Christmas treats (cakes, biscuits and selection boxes), which went down well with the Pantry Shoppers in the run up to Christmas and sent them out with a smile.

2024 has already seen a rise in demand for home starter packs (household items) and The Pantry Shop has experienced a surge in applications to join. The cost-of-living crisis is not going away any time soon. We do hope you can continue to support Blackhall St Columba's Church in this very worthwhile cause. FreshStart is helping people to have a roof above their heads, to have home essentials and to feed their families with "shopping with dignity."

As the days get lighter and you look to spring clean, you may find you have plates, bowls, bedding, towels or curtains sitting in a cupboard that are never in use. We invite you to donate them by bringing them on a Friday to the church hall between 10 and 11.30am, where our duty volunteer will happily accept them.

The Fresh Start duty volunteer can provide an up-to-date list of items that are needed. You can also look at the FreshStart website for a list of required items. FreshStart also maintains a "wish list" on their Amazon account (search for FreshStart Scotland Wish List). If you want to help when shopping on-line then take a look at the wish list, decide what to order, buy and it will be delivered directly to them. All this from the comfort of your own home!

Again, thank you for your generous support in 2023 and we hope this will continue as we help those in need in our city.

Lilian & Michael Cockburn
FreshStart Co-ordinators
(cockburn_carfrae@yahoo.co.uk)

DON'T SAY YOU WEREN'T THANKED – OR WARNED!

The church is very grateful to all who support it with their giving which allows it to continue its mission. Individuals do not get a personal thank you but that does not make it any less sincere. So, thank YOU.

Most giving can be and is made to us under Gift Aid which is invaluable adding 25% c. (£30,000 presently) to our annual income. If you are not sure of this simple scheme or whether you are already signed up, please just ask me.

Please also check on your bank statements that any donations to the kirk that you instructed by a standing order are actually being made. A church member recently discovered that the bank concerned had stopped monthly gifts over a year ago! It had only been noticed now as banks were thought not to make mistakes and did what they were told. So do check regularly that your bank is following your similar instructions for the correct amount. (You can increase it too if you want!)

So, a hearty thank you to all who can support the church financially which allows it to follow its mission now and into the future. But watch out for bank mistakes!

Sandy Weir

Gift Aid Convenor



PEACE Services

Come and join us every second Wednesday for our mid-week PEACE service in the small hall. PEACE stands for People Enjoying A Christian Encounter. This is a very informal service of worship which lasts about thirty minutes and starts at 12 noon. It is followed by a simple but tasty lunch of soup and home baking during which a time of fellowship can be enjoyed.

We have a variety of people who contribute to our worship and our theme this year is Practical Christianity.

PEACE Service Syllabus January to May 2024

31st January- Elisabeth Spence on Practical Christianity

14th February- Harriet Martin - Open Doors/ Persecuted Christians

28th February- Fiona Beveridge- Street Pastors

13th March- Norah Summers- Practical Christianity- growing up in a manse.

27th March- The Very Rev Martin Fair- Havilah

10th April- Helen Homewood- Practical Christianity

24th April- Speaker from Christian Aid

8th May- Shona Cook- One person can make a difference!

22nd May- Rev Fergus Cook- Communion

If you would like to come along and join us but need a little bit of help with a lift to the church, please be in touch and we can help you sort things out. We would love to see you. Just email Ruth Laidlaw ruthlaidlaw@gmail.com or call her on 07513 967974.

Shona Cook

THE PRAYER CIRCLE

Do you know someone in need of prayer? A friend or relative perhaps who is unwell, grieving or find themselves in a position where they don't know where to turn? Blackhall St Columba's Prayer Circle is a small team of people who will pray frequently for anyone in need of help in complete confidence. We are also happy to accept prayer requests giving thanks for a happy event or asking for God's help with any forthcoming personal endeavour or challenge. Please contact Prayer Circle secretary Betty Watt at lzbthwatt@yahoo.co.uk or Fergus Cook at Fcook@churchofscotland.org.uk or 0131 466 7503. Alternatively, please put your request slip into the locked box on the table in the church vestibule.



Edinburgh Floral Art Club

Edinburgh Floral Art Club meets again after its winter break on Friday 9th of February. We gather in the large hall from 2pm until 4pm.

This month we are looking forward to welcoming Bill Tait, former head gardener at The Royal Botanical Gardens, who is going to whisk us off from wintery Edinburgh to enjoy the colours of spring in the Dutch bulb fields. Following Bill's

talk and slideshow we will enjoy refreshments.

A warm welcome awaits members and friends old and new. Anyone interested in coming along as a visitor is asked to contact – **Suzie Stark (Chair)** on 07888 942561 for more information.

The “Buon Appetito” Club

A Periodic Dining Experience for the ladies!

Whether you are a relatively new member of our church or have been at Blackhall St. Columba's for years, it is always good to gather over delicious food for a time of fellowship with friends old or new and to get to know each other better.

There is a Curry Club within Blackhall St. Columba's for the men amongst us and, therefore, it seems only fair that there should be something for the ladies too. Hence, the “Buon Appetito” Club which meets periodically throughout the year. We mainly enjoy the delicacies of Italy but, occasionally, we may play a wild card and try another culture's cuisine.

Our next outing will be for dinner on **Friday 15th March 2024 at 7.30pm at Mamma Roma, 4-7 Antigua Street, EH1 3NH** (just down from the Playhouse on the other side of the road).

If you are interested in coming along, please contact **Shona Cook by email (shonacook505@gmail.com) or mobile (07981 970054) by 23rd February 2024. No deposit is needed.**

We normally are around twenty in number or it becomes too big a group and so we operate on a first come first served basis. So don't delay. Get in touch and secure your place.

Shona Cook

CURRY CLUB IS TWO DECADES OLD THIS YEAR

This autumn the Blackhall Curry Club will be 20 years old and yes... it is still going strong. From a casual conversation one Sunday between a few guys who were involved in church activities but never came together as a group for fellowship, the idea of the Curry Club was born. The minister of the time, Rev Alex Douglas, was a keen supporter of the club and he attended when Parish work allowed.

Curry Club started with DIY curries served in the church hall projection room. Over the years the meetings have continued but we have moved away from DIY curries in the projection room to visit various Indian restaurants locally or in the city centre. The club has a list of Indian restaurants to go to and we arrange five or six outings a year. It is always a good evening of food, refreshments and friendly company.

It is an informal club in many ways but it is open to any male over 18 years who has a connection with the church (no matter how small) or lives in the Blackhall/Drylaw community. Clearly you need to like curry and appreciate an opportunity to get to know new people.

If you would like to know more, please contact me on blackhallcurry_club@yahoo.co.uk

Michael Cockburn



SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING

Our Christmas Party, held on Thursday 7th December 2023, was a great success and much enjoyed by the happy group of dancers, as seen in the photograph. We even had a visit from Santa Claus with a gift for everyone!

The spring term commenced on Thursday 18th January and will continue until 21st March, our spring fling. We are always delighted to welcome new members, so why not come along to the large hall on a Thursday evening from 7.30 - 9.15 pm. The fee is £16 per term or £4 per night if you cannot manage every Thursday.

Look forward to seeing you.

Margaret Brown

332 5957



Scottish Country Dancers at Blackhall St Columba's

Tuesday Topics

Happy new year to all our members. We've had a most interesting session so far and I hope you will find the next few meetings as good. We will have had our late Xmas lunch at Howies on 16th January by the time you read this. Here is what is to come:

Tuesday Topics Syllabus 2024

30th January - CYBER SECURITY and SCAMMERS. with COLIN CURSITER
from Police Scotland

13th February - ROB DAVIDSON will talk to us about ECO-AGRICULTURE at
Lauriston Community Farm

27th February - MAURICE McILWRICK is coming to tell us all about
Edinburgh's SECRET TUNNELS

12th March - If you have any queries about 'POWER of ATTORNEY' and
WILLS I'm sure that SUSAN MALIN will have the answers.

26th March - ANNE RITCHIE will tell us all about THE CHEYNE GANG

You are welcome to any of our meetings whether you're a member or not. We are always delighted to welcome new faces. Do come along and try us! We meet at 7.30pm in the Small Hall in St Columba's Church, Queensferry Road. If you want more details, please phone -

Lyndy Paton (Secretary) 0131 332 7377

Sheila Mackintosh (Treasurer) 0131 336 1357

Burn's Supper



The Catering Team



The Musicians



John Campbell addresses the company.



The Top Table piped in to the supper.



Burn's Supper

The Blackhall St. Columba's Burn's Supper was held in the large hall on the 27th of January. The evening was expertly presided over by John Campbell.

The evenings' events began with the piping in of the haggis by our piper Robert Miller. Hamish Mair then addressed the haggis and toasted the piper.

The supper began with the Selkirk Grace given by Rev Fergus Cook. A team of caterers provided a menu of scotch broth, haggis, neeps and tatties with whisky gravy and cranachan for dessert.

The Immortal Memory was expertly delivered by our guest speaker Bob Kemp CBE.

The company was then superbly entertained by a trio of musicians – Amy Foster, Phillipa and Malcolm Wood. They provided a programme of traditional and modern favourites for us. The company couldn't help singing along and tapping their toes.

The Toast to the Lassies was given by Hugh Henney and the reply was made by his wife Angie Henney concluding a good evening of Burns tradition at Blackhall St Columba's.

Cameo Club

Cameo Club enjoyed a Christmas Lunch at The Village Hotel, Crewe Toll. This outing was organised by two of our younger volunteers to whom we are thankful. It was a very happy occasion.

We have just had our first meeting of the New Year. Kevin and Shona Russell (one of our Church officers and his wife) provided an excellent programme of music and song. Our second meeting in January will be at Northcare Suites' Bistro, Telford Road. We have been invited there for morning coffee. This will allow us to appreciate the facilities that are on offer there.

Our meeting on the 9th of February 2024 is open to all who are interested. We start at 10.30am in the large church hall, as usual. On this day, the ceilidh group "Quern" will be playing Scottish music between 11am and 12 noon. Cameo Club meetings are fortnightly after that date, all year round. We can provide car lifts and we would like to hear from anyone who has a car and can volunteer. Our member numbers are now at thirty-six so there is always plenty chat to enjoy over a coffee. Help with serving coffee would also be appreciated. Why not come along and listen to some entertainment too?

Margaret Brown 332 5957

Fiona Drinnan 343 6762



Cameo Christmas Lunch

Music at St. Columba's

At the Gift Service we heard from two groups.



The Praise Group perform at the Gift Service



The Junior Singers in song at the Gift Service

The Edinburgh Prison Christmas Gift Collection

Gift Service Donations

Colin O’Flaherty wrote to the congregation to express his thanks for the continuing contribution this congregation has made to his appeal. The gifts donated at the Gift Service on the 3rd of December 2023 were for the children of prisoners. They were delivered to Colin’s team for processing.

Here is his letter to our congregation and to those who have worked hard to make sure these gifts reach the children.

Dearest Friends.

Thank you for your kindness and generosity.

Every child that visited the Visitor’s Centre during the time leading up to Christmas received a gift, whether their parents or guardians requested them or not. This year, three hundred and twenty-eight children from one hundred and twenty-six families had Christmas presents to open on Christmas morning due to your kindness and generosity. Many adults also received presents from the gift collection but again we did not take note of the adults, as our focus was on the children. Every child, where possible, received a toy, an activity gift and book, and of course something nice. More than a thousand gifts were given out.

It is impossible to measure the difference that your kindness and generosity makes to these children. I cannot thank you enough for what you do. I feel proud and privileged to be part of such a special group of people.

The gifts were distributed through five Christmas parties at the Visitor’s Centre of the prison. The Christmas parties were organised by the Visitor’s Centre Staff and the Family Contact Officers. Gifts were also given out directly through the Visitor’s Centre.

The Edinburgh Prison Christmas Gift Collection

My thanks, as always go to Shona and Patrizia and the other staff in the Visitor's Centre for their help in making sure the gifts go to the correct families. My thanks also go to one of my colleagues, Family Contact Officer Rebecca Brown, who when off duty was to be found helping in the visitor's centre. Thanks, should also go to two ex-colleagues Eddie and Innes, they were this year's Santas at the Christmas parties.

My thanks also go to Fiona Cruickshanks, the Governor of Edinburgh Prison, for supporting the gift collection and distribution.

But most of all my thanks go to you for what you do in supporting the Edinburgh Prison Christmas Gift Collection.

Best Wishes

Colin



Gifts donated at Blackhall St Columba's

Music at St. Columba's

Our congregation has been treated to music from a large cast of performers. Here is a reminder.....



Carols with the Choir



St. David's Brass Band

The RESOL String Quartet



The RESOL String Quartet are returning to Blackhall St Columba's on **Saturday 23rd March at 7.00pm.** We first met RESOL when they played with our friend Ning Jia Ng as pianist, and again when they returned as a quartet. They are students from around the world and they all studied at the Scottish Conservatoire in Glasgow. They really enjoy the intimacy of small concerts and the interaction with the audience that such venues facilitate. So, I know they are looking forward to being with us again as part of their Scottish Concert Tour in 2024.

It is a real privilege to have them return to us. Anyone who loves classical, yet approachable, music will appreciate this not to be missed performance.

As usual there are no tickets and the entrance is free of charge however, I am confident the audience will donate generously to support their careers and live music in Scotland.

St Columba's is gaining a bit of a reputation as a first-class concert hall and we can look forward to seeing some new musicians this year.

Donald Cameron LLCM

Director of Music Blackhall St Columba's Church

Sunday Club

Sunday Club News

Sunday Club is for every child who happens to be in church on any Sunday in the year. We have a group of children who come regularly, some children who come every now and then, and we can also be joined by children who have come because they happen to be visiting the area. It matters not – they are all welcome.

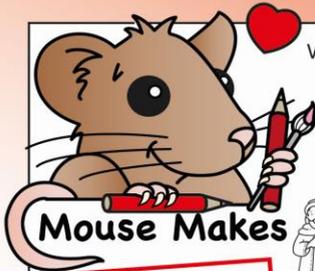
In the weeks before Christmas, the children had been looking at heroes and heroines in the Bible and in the secular world. For example, one week they studied Daniel from the Old Testament then another week they looked at the work of Mountain Rescue. All this stopped, however, as we came into the season of Advent. The children then went into work mode as they made Christmas cards for our elderly / house-bound members and below, you can see a picture of some of their creations.

If you have a child in your family or circle of friends who would like to come along and see what goes on in Sunday Club, just bring them along one Sunday and let them try it out.

Amy Donaldson



Our Christmas Cards



Who were the first couple?
 _____ and _____

Genesis 2:22-25

Who's wife became a pillar of salt because she disobeyed the angel's warning?

_____ Genesis 19:26



Which of Laban's daughters did Jacob love?

_____ Genesis 29:18

Who was Moses' wife?

_____ Exodus 2:21

Who married Boaz to become King David's great-grandmother and a distant relative of Jesus?

_____ Matthew 1:5



FIND THE BIBLE VERSE

Change each letter in this bible verse to the letter **before** it in the alphabet.

XIBU HPE IBT
 KPJOFE UPHFUIFS,
 MFU OPU NBO
 TFQBSBUF.
 NBSL
 UFO WFSTF
 OJOF

CONNECT THE BIBLE COUPLES

ADAM	ELIZABETH
ABRAHAM	MARY
ISAAC	HANNAH
JACOB	PRISCILLA
BOAZ	EVE
ZECHARIAH	RUTH
ELKANAH	REBEKAH
AQUILA	RACHEL
JOSEPH	SARAH

Which couple helped the Apostle Paul in his ministry?

and _____ Romans 16:3

DID YOU KNOW?

King Solomon had **700** wives! They were princesses of royal birth and he loved them all, but his wives caused him to turn away from God
 See 1 Kings 11:1-3

E	E	Z	R	E	E	L	I	Z	A	B	E	T	H	R	ABRAHAM
S	V	Q	S	L	R	Z	J	I	B	O	A	D	A	M	ADAM • AQUILA
R	E	B	E	K	A	H	O	J	R	A	O	Q	N	O	BOAZ • ELKANAH
U	I	S	A	A	C	A	S	A	A	Z	P	R	N	S	ELIZABETH
T	H	A	Q	N	H	Z	E	C	H	A	R	I	A	H	EVE • HANNAH
H	R	U	T	A	E	V	P	O	A	I	E	B	H	I	ISAAC • JACOB
S	A	R	A	H	L	T	H	B	M	A	R	Y	S	D	JOSEPH • MARY
P	R	I	S	C	I	L	L	A	Q	U	I	L	A		PRISCILLA
															RACHEL
															REBEKAH • RUTH
															SARAH
															ZECHARIAH

 <p>BLACKHALL ST. COLUMBA'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND</p>	 <p>@ BStCC_EH</p>
<p>Website</p> <p>https://www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk/</p>	 <p>Blackhall St Columba's Church</p>

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Publication deadlines

For contributions to Blackhall Bulletin:

(bulletin@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk)

March 2024 issue contributions by 31st January 2024

September 2024 issue 29th July 2024

For contributions to Kirk News

(judith.mair@hotmail.co.uk) or to the church office

May 2024 issue contributions by 19th April 2024

August 2024 issue contributions by 19th July 2024

We are happy to take articles on any relevant issue.

Thank you to James Burr our Church Photographer.

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