

CROSSWIND

The Journal of St Michael's Parish Church

Feb 2024

Vol 26:4



*Don't you know that you yourselves
are God's temple and that God's Spirit
dwells in your midst?*

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Communion

Sunday, 25th February
10am in the Kirk*
and
3pm in the Kirk Hall

***livestreamed on St Michael's web-
site and Facebook**
Available to view later on YouTube

Weekly Services

10am in the Kirk*
and
9.45am (during term time)
in Springfield Primary School

***livestreamed on St Michael's
website and Facebook**
Available to view later on YouTube

*Cover: courtesy of Stephen Blake
The original architect's model for the
Crown of Thorns, 1963*

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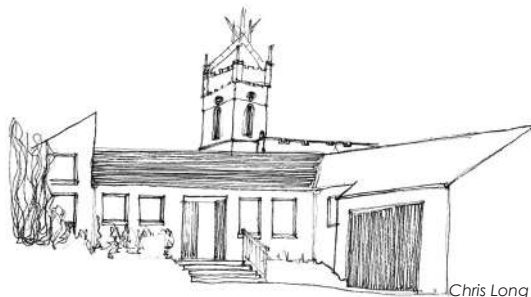
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The deadline for the May 2024 issue is 1st April 2024.

VIEW FROM THE MANSE



by Rev Dr Liam Fraser

Across the country at present, churches are closing. Despite their best efforts, people are witnessing the death of their religious heritage, seemingly exacerbated at times by the decisions of the National Church.

Yet some churches *are* growing. They are often different from the ones we grew up with. They tend to be more conservative, with praise bands rather than organs. Yet they are places filled with life and with hope.

In the Book of Jeremiah – one of the bleakest books of the Bible – we encounter this amazing verse:

For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for good and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

This is why we are not content to see the Church decay and fall apart, because we are people of *hope*. That hope lent its name to our Hope Explored course which began in January. Dozens of people met to discover more about the hope, peace and purpose found in Christ, with some continuing on to baptism and membership. We thank God for each one of them.

Because we at St Michael's are not content to manage decline, but to do all we can – by God's grace – to reach the unreached and share the love of God with them. While this is hard – harder than at any time in the past 1500 years – the loss of Scotland's Christian heritage can, paradoxically, be an asset. That is because many of our neighbours have no knowledge whatsoever of the Gospel. They weren't raised in the faith and have no Christian friends. They did not go to Sunday School, and never experienced worship at school.

For that reason, when people who have spent their lives trying to earn a sense of self-worth through worldly success; when those who have been given so much freedom that they don't know what they're for; and when those who have suffered or done terrible things learn for the first time that they are loved and forgiven totally in Christ, and called to serve him in small and great ways, it can be completely transformative for them.





They move from being lone individuals adrift in an indifferent world to becoming sons and daughters of God, part of an ancient community of faith, surrounded by prayer and care. More than anything, however, they discover the mystery and majesty of God, who fills and orders all things, bringing good from bad, and light from darkness.

May that same God bless you and all whom you love in 2024, that you might have a future with hope.

UPDATE ON THE EVENING SERVICE

In Isaiah 43:19 we read:

*I am about to do a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
For I will make a way in the wilderness
and rivers in the desert.*

In a time of closing churches and dwindling services, it's been a delight to start our new Evening Service. This has been running – almost! – monthly since April, and is an opportunity to worship with contemporary music and more interaction than traditional services. In addition to a worship band, there is also usually an activity following teaching, for example writing down thoughts or prayer requests. While we've generally met in the Kirk Hall, for October's service we moved to the Sanctuary of St Michael's for prayer stations and music by candlelight.

The plan for 2024 is to trial weekly services. This is because we want to provide a weekly – as opposed to monthly – home for those who favour contemporary worship. Monthly is OK, but it's hard to commit to a community that only meets every four or five weeks! Yet moving to weekly also tests our capacity, and allows us to see if we can manage with our existing resources or whether we need more support.

If you're interested to see the service in action, check our Facebook page for dates and timings and come along. There are also different roles available – music, technology, hospitality etc – if you could spare an hour every few weeks.

Because God is doing a new thing with the Evening Service, and for that we are glad!

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER 2024

SERVICE WRITTEN BY PALESTINIAN WOMEN

'I beg you, bear with one another in love'

by Jaqueline Coyle

This year the World Day of Prayer's motto 'Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action' was decided by those who attended the World Day of Prayer International Meeting in Foz do Iguaçu, Brazil. The women from all denominations made the theme for this year's service.

The programme was written by a group of ecumenical Christian Palestinian women in response to the passage from Ephesians 4:1-7.



'I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace' Ephesians 4:1-3 (NRSV)

The women call us to bear with each other in love, despite all difficulties and oppression. They reflected collectively on this theme from the context of the suffering as Palestinian Christian women. They hope to inspire other women around the world to bear with one another in love during troubled times.

This year's service shares stories of three Palestinian Christian women, who witness to the power of bearing together in love. Their stories illuminate the experiences of Palestinian women from three different generations. The symbol of an olive tree is used throughout the worship service. This represents the three generations through the trunk, branches, and leaves of the olive tree.

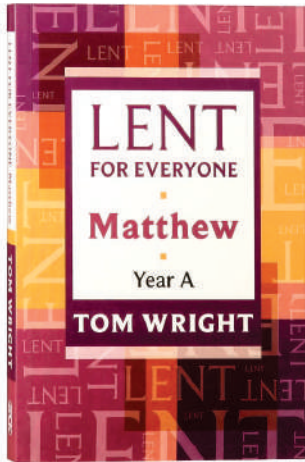
Also, and not surprisingly, the Palestinian Christian women who wrote this worship service have invited the world to pray for peace, justice and freedom of religion and freedom of movement. Their prayers specifically call us to pray with women, refugees, persons experiencing homelessness, and all who are sick, dying and grieving. They also call us to confess to our collective role in causing the climate crisis, and to commit to repairing what we have destroyed. Finally, they call us, the global church, to be united in treating all with justice and love.

This year it's even more poignant with the terrible atrocities happening in the Gaza Strip. All our prayers are hugely necessary to help stop the suffering of all women and children involved, regardless of who they are.

This year's service is being held on Friday, 1st March at 7pm in St Michael's RC Church.

LENT STUDIES FOR 2024

by Paul Davidson



This year, Lent begins on Wednesday 14th February. And once again here at St Michael's there is the opportunity to spend time in personal Bible reading, reflection and prayer by following studies on one of the Gospels. It is four years since we first did this, which means we are back to studying the Gospel of Matthew, as we did in 2020. We will be using the book 'Lent for everyone' by Tom Wright as our guide.

What is Lent? In contemporary culture, many people will think of it as a time to give something up and may use it almost as a detox. Christians see Lent as the period of 40 days which leads up to Easter. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, it is a time of reflection and preparation before the celebrations of Easter. By observing the 40 days of Lent, we

replicate Jesus Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days. It is marked by fasting, both from food and festivities.

By taking time to study Matthew's Gospel during Lent, in some ways we are 'giving up' some of our time. In doing so we use that time in a positive way, to build up our knowledge of the life of Jesus, and to bring us closer into relationship with Him. And in Matthew chapters 5 to 7 we have the Sermon on the Mount, which for me is one of the most complete descriptions of how to live as a Christian as can be found anywhere in the Bible.

When I first introduced the idea of using 'Lent for everyone' back at the start of 2020, little did any of us know what Lent 2020 was going to look like, and just how different it was going to be from anything we had gone through before. For me, having the daily reading in Matthew followed by the meditations from Tom Wright was a ray of sunshine in an otherwise dark time. I'm really hoping that 2024 is not like 2020 in that respect, but no matter what is going on around us, it is good to remember that God is in control and that he has a plan for us. What better way to do that than to spend the time leading up to Easter in reading the story of Jesus' life through the lens of one of the Gospels?

I do hope you will be inspired to read the Gospel of Matthew this Lent. As William Barclay said of it:

'When we turn to Matthew, we turn to the book which may well be called the most important single document of the Christian faith, for in it we have the fullest and the most systematic account of the life and the teachings of Jesus'.

I'm sure many of you will still have copies of Lent for Everyone (Matthew) that you received in 2020. If you don't have a copy, and would like one, please email me at paul.n.davidson@blueyonder.co.uk and I will make sure you receive one.

If, however, you would prefer to simply read the passages yourselves, outlined below are the readings for each day throughout Lent.

February

Ash Wednesday	Matt 1-2
Thurs 15th	Matt 3
Fri 16th	Matt 4: 1-20
Sat 17th	Matt 4: 21-41
Sun 18th	Psalm 32
Mon 19th	Matt 5
Tues 20th	Matt 6
Wed 21st	Matt 7
Thurs 22nd	Matt 8
Fri 23rd	Matt 9
Sat 24th	Matt 17: 1-9
Sun 25th	Psalm 121
Mon 26th	Matt 10: 1-15
Tues 27th	Matt 10: 16-42
Wed 28th	Matt 11
Thurs 29th	Matt 12: 1-21

March

Friday 1st	Matt 12: 22-50
Saturday 2nd	Matt 13
Sunday 3rd	Psalm 95
Monday 4th	Matt 14
Tuesday 5th	Matt 15: 1-20
Wednesday 6th	Matt 15: 21-38
Thursday 7th	Matt 16
Friday 8th	Matt 17
Saturday 9th	Matt 18
Sunday 10th	Psalm 23
Monday 11th	Matt 19
Tuesday 12th	Matt 20
Wednesday 13th	Matt 21: 1-22
Thursday 14th	Matt 21: 23-46



March continued

Friday 15th	Matt 22
Saturday 16th	Matt 23
Sunday 17th	Psalm 130
Monday 18th	Matt 24: 1-35
Tuesday 19th	Matt 24: 36-56
Wednesday 20th	Matt 25: 1-30
Thursday 21st	Matt 25: 31-46
Friday 22nd	Matt 26: 1-13
Saturday 23rd	Matt 26: 14-27:66
Palm Sunday	Psalm 31: 9-16
Monday 25th	Matt 26: 14-35
Tuesday 26th	Matt 26: 36-56
Wednesday 27th	Matt 26: 57-75
Thursday 28th	Matt 27: 1-32
Good Friday	Matt 27: 33-56
Saturday 30th	Matt 27: 57-66
Easter Day	Matt 28: 1-10

April

Monday 1st	Matt 28: 11-15
Tuesday 2nd	Matt 28: 16-20
Wednesday 3rd	Matt 2: 1-12
Thursday 4th	Matt 6: 25-34
Friday 5th	Matt 13: 1-23
Saturday 6th	Matt 22: 34-40

WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

by Steve Chaffee



I have always been interested in what are called 'liminal spaces' – the spaces between spaces. Door frames, the connector between train cabins, even stairs, after a manner of speaking. Similarly, *liminal times* – taking time between jobs, or what presently comes to mind: the time between Christmas and New Year! When all has been accomplished, the staging put away from Nativity Sunday, the stable safely stored away, the costumes boxed up and returned to the loft. I am allowed (encouraged, even!) to look back at the year behind, and forward to the year ahead. This sense of being between two

states of liminal spaces and places, meet up for me in St Michael's.

I look back over a year at St Michael's as the youth programmes have continued their crucial work – and even expanded it! COVID has had and has a long tail – but I can remember feeling a difference in the air almost around the summer of 2023 with the Holiday Club. Briony and I had our feet planted and plans in good standing. We had a few more children than in 2022, and even more helpers (and teenaged helpers at that!)

And then, into the fullness of back to school, with the return to Sunday Club, Bible Class, and Youth Fellowship (the latter having bumped up to weekly, whereas before it was meeting every other week). The Seedlings team and I met up to plan out our term, and I worked with Fiona about how best to support her incredible work organising Toddlers on Tuesday and Fridays, and Jolly Babies on Wednesdays.

The Sunday Club team and I began planning out our term, and with help from the Children and Young People's Committee, we began the process of incorporating more and more Godly Play material and curriculum into the regular rotation for Sunday Club (more on this in time!) It will take a lot of effort, but I firmly believe it will be for the long-term benefit of St Michael's internally, but also externally as we build out our Godly Play library of stories and storytellers. These then can be loaned to other churches across West Lothian as they launch fresh expressions of church like Messy Church or Muddy Church.



I sat with the Youth Fellowship leaders, and we planned out a course of meetings between ourselves and the parents of our teens, all in preparation and for fullest transparency for the nights at YF where we spoke and thought about the range of positions that exist within the Church of Scotland about sex and sexuality (gulp!) It was an incredible string of meetings to have with the leaders, the parents, myself and Liam, and finally the teens themselves! (Slight spoiler: the teens have retained their hold on the Golden Spatula from Parents vs YF Night 2023!)



Briony from St John's and I work together across the year. When we aren't thinking about the Holiday Club, we are organising for Messy Church and for our two huge schools' events, Christmas Unwrapped and Cracking Easter! Messy Church met over six times over the course of 2023 – and we were fortunate to be able to begin serving full meals again! (My thanks again to Sheila, Ian, and Alison for their diligence in the kitchen – the baked potatoes went down a treat!). Even more exciting, we are seeing ever more cross-over and through traffic of families to Messy Church from Toddlers, Seedlings, and

Jolly Babies. This speaks to me of success in our efforts to 'Widen the circle' and 'Connect the dots', as Liam is fond of saying!

Finally, Cracking Easter and Christmas Unwrapped! These events are two of our largest forms of outreach and support to our local schools (aside from the 200+ Christingle Bags we make each December). At both Cracking Easter and Christmas Unwrapped, we were blessed to welcome in about two hundred Primary school children at each event. In both, our teams provide excellent RME lessons about the elements of the Christmas and Easter stories, as well as introducing children to the physical space of St Michael's, with all the liminality that it can introduce! I am pleased to be able to say here too that Briony and I are sitting down in 2024 to revise and update the material, collecting the learnings we have from running the event and refreshing it for the years to come.

If I can leave you with one final image, it is this: while St Michael's can look like a solid, perhaps imposing, silent space from the outside, to step into the Kirk (in every way you can imagine!) reveals a congregation that is on the move, engaged in the *missio dei* to study and learn anew the Good News through service to our neighbours, our community, and those children in our care.

J Molloy piano tuning

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A HEADS UP ON 2023 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

by Linda Jamieson

As I write this finance update in the first week of the new year, we are still finalising the 2023 year-end figures. However, early indications are our general income is substantially increased at approximately £445,000. This uplift can be attributed to the receipt of legacies exceeding £100,000 and a small increase in regular giving. When we add restricted income of around £230,000, mainly due to donations and grant funding in connection with the Crown of Thorns project, our overall income is approximately £675,000. When we include overall expenditure of £610,000, we expect an overall surplus for the year of around £65,000. It is worth mentioning that we had previously budgeted for an overall shortfall in general funds of £10,000 but this was recovered because of legacy monies received. Whilst this is a strong performance in 2023, legacy monies are one-off receipts and not a source of regular income we can rely on. Further information on our 2023 financials will be provided in the next Crosswind when our year-end figures are finalised.

At St Michael's we rely on the ongoing regular financial giving of members and are very grateful for their ongoing support. We currently depend on a small number of generous donors and would like to see that number increase. We not only encourage everyone to review their giving; we also monitor costs closely and look for opportunities to reduce expenditure. Fixed rate tariff for energy and a great team of volunteers supporting the general maintenance work on our buildings all helps. Our fixed energy tariff is due for renewal in July 2024, and we expect to see an increase.

Our contribution to the national church in 2023 (Giving to Grow) was £149,000 and we expect this figure to increase by approximately £5,000 to £154,000 in 2024.

A huge thank you to all who supported fundraising activity in 2023. Raising a further £210,000 in support of the Aspire Linlithgow appeal is a fantastic achievement and a result of a lot of hard work from Alan Miller and his fundraising team in securing generous donations and grant funding.

If you are looking for a fresh challenge in 2024 and have financial or management skills, why not consider volunteering with us and become part of the Stewardship and Finance team. To arrange a chat over a coffee and find out how you can help, please contact me LJamieson58@aol.com

Thank you to all our volunteers, members, and the wider congregation for their support – it is appreciated and makes a huge difference. May God richly bless you, your family and friends.

CHRISTMAS BY NIGHT

by Rev Dr Stewart Gillan

Like the noir sound produced from the trumpet of Miles Davis on 'Blue in Green' (*Kind of Blue*, 1959), Christmas was muted in Bethlehem this year. Observed in grief, with over 20,000 dead in Gaza, all festivities were cancelled for Advent and Christmastide. I'm sure you took note.



'Christ in the rubble,' by Kelly Latimore, 2023

Images like the Christ child in or under the rubble of Gaza, Jesus in an incubator in Bethlehem Square, and a Christmas tree with a crown of thorns in place of a star or an angel, have predominated. On some trees, like ours in Scotland over the years, it is the archangel Gabriel atop the tree, his trumpet seen to be announcing to Mary news of a most surprising pregnancy and child to come. This year the sound of even his horn has been heard as coming from under a shroud, and the bagpipes of the Scouts of Bethlehem have not been sounded.

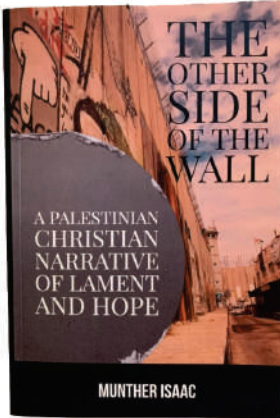
In the words of a student at Tabeetha School, spoken during the Christmas assembly of the junior school on Friday 22 December, 'How can you put up a

tree when it is so terrible for people?'

His empathy can be seen to have begun with his classmates – Arab, Israeli and International together. Warning sirens had sounded several times in Jaffa the previous day, shaking the student body, its teachers told me, with many of the younger children crying as they were led to the school's bomb shelter. I started, then, with the experience of our students the day before. The trauma of the war was/is being felt in every family.

And yet this is Christmas, has been Christmas, and will continue to be Christmas. Many of the Orthodox Churches will hold their observance on 6–7 January, and that of the Armenian Patriarchate will be on 18–19 January. Inshallah. God willing.

Palestinian Christians are angry, battered, and fiercely faithful to the Lord who comes to them and lives among them amid the ruins and wreckage of war. Speaking for many, the Rev Dr Munther Isaac, pastor of Lutheran Christmas Church in Bethlehem, stated in a sermon that was heard around the world, 'Christmas is a ray of light and hope from the heart of pain and of suffering. Christmas is the radiance of life from the heart of destruction and death.'



He went on to say: 'In Gaza, God is under the rubble. He is in the operating room. If Christ were to be born today, he would be under the rubble. I invite you to see the image of Jesus in every child killed and pulled from under the rubble. In every child struggling for life in destroyed hospitals. In every child in incubators. Christmas celebrations are cancelled this year. But Christmas itself is not and will not be cancelled. For our hope cannot be cancelled.'

The nativity he built with his parishioners, showing Baby Jesus in a keffiyeh on top of a pile of rubble, has been widely shared on social media, a new icon of God with us. Created in lament and hope.

Taking it one step further, it is possible to see the image of Jesus in every child that has been killed in 2023, a number that includes those killed on the West Bank and on 7 October. It is a statement that challenges us to recognise the sanctity of life of all children, the image of God in all children, equally. Their lives not to be taken, their bodies not to be marred, their futures not to be erased.

Reviewing what I've written, I am put in mind of what Simeon told Mary in the Temple: 'This child is destined for the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed, so that the inner thoughts of many in Israel will be revealed – and a sword will pierce your own soul too.' (Luke 2.35)

Mary found a way to carry on, heartsore and soul pierced as she was. So too did her son when he came to it. As did his followers, God being their helper. And what of us? I ask myself.

We continue to pray the war will be over early in the new year, the bombs and killing stopped. This in the face of official announcements that it will go on for months yet. As we enter this new year, it is worth remembering that it is Gabriel's trumpet that sounds the Day of Judgment, his annunciation to Mary accomplished.

It is in darkness that light shines, that Christmas by night be not without a light for our steps.

Your friend

Stewart

Alexander places the figure of Gabriel atop our tree in Glasgow last year.



SEATING ST MICHAEL'S

by Bruce Jamieson

In 1890, inspired by the restoration of the Cathedrals of St Giles and Dunblane, a congregational meeting was arranged in St Michael's to discuss the possibility of removing the early-19th-century galleries and opening up the whole church – with new, oak pews and a rearranged seating plan. After almost four years of fund-raising (including a Grand Bazaar in Linlithgow Palace) and of securing grants, donations and legacies, sufficient funds (£7,300 – about £600,000 today) had been secured to begin the project.

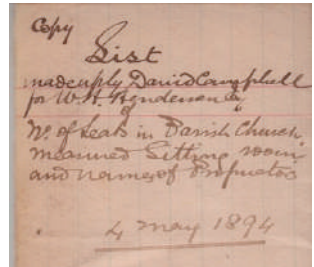


St Michael's undergoing restoration

In 1894, the church was totally cleared of all its old pews (which were sold off) and the lofts, which had seated over 200 people, were removed.

This necessitated a completely new configuration of where the congregation was to sit. The Rev John Ferguson's desire for individual seating was over-ruled and instead large oak pews were installed. In the Rev Ferguson's words, 'they are not unseemly and they are moveable, but chairs would have been preferable'.

All these changes meant that a new allocation of pew seating had to be devised. Those who had lost seats in the galleries had to be given equivalent accommodation in the new set-up and families with long-standing pew provision had to be given satisfactory new arrangements. To try to solve this problem, an eight-man committee was formed with the minister as Convenor, William Gilkison of the British Linen Bank as Treasurer and Town Clerk W H Henderson, acting as Secretary. The group decided to give the job of reallocating and apportioning the seating to local surveyor, David Campbell, and I recently came across a document, dated 4 May 1894, outlining his findings. He carefully measured each pew and allocated a precisely measured section to each applicant.



Title page of David Campbell's Report.

Only two fraternities chose to pay for seating – the Gardeners bought 7 feet 4 inches of Pew 61 and the Dyers purchased 6 feet 6 inches of Pew 84. In addition, the Guildry bought 8 feet of pew 104.

Some sections of the pews were allocated (on a payment) to local tradesmen such as John Sanders, gluemaker; James Hardie, tanner, Robert Spence, pharmacist, Robert Boyd, skinner, James Watt, shoemaker and Charles Beattie, tailor. On average, each received 6 feet 5 inches of pew length although Thomas Woodcock, *mein host* of the Star and Garter, purchased 13 feet 10 inches.

Local dignitaries were keen to keep their place in the kirk – and no doubt were also willing to help the Church's finances. Local doctor, Provost Andrew Gilmour, received 15 feet 10 inches of Pew 27 and his wife, strangely called 'Mrs Dr Gilmour', received her own allocation of 10 feet 1 inch. The Burgh Magistrates got 13 feet 6 inches of Pew 136; the Burgh Officer and Halberdier got 10 feet 9 inches of Pew 141, the Burgh Teacher – 11 feet 5 inches of Pew 137. Oddly, the 'Burgh of Linlithgow' was only granted 2 small allocations of 2 feet 2 inches (Pew 35) and **10 inches** of Pew 59! The Minister of St Michael's received 13 feet 10 inches of Pew 38.

The vast majority were allocated to men although a few women were allowed to purchase a family pew including Miss Henderson of Dogwell Wynd, Mrs John Anderson and Mrs Louisa Adie, Rockville, who lies buried today beside the south entrance, close to her pew.

By far the largest portions of pew were sold and apportioned to the wealthier members of the community. Sizeable sittings were sold to John Dawson of Greenpark, William Dawson of Bonnytown, John Miller Richard of Clarendon and the Earl of Roseberry. Two pew sittings were granted to the Earl of Hopetoun, Major Hamilton of West Port, Sir Alexander Seton of Preston and William Blair of Avontoun, while the Earl of Selkirk (by dint of his estates at Riccarton and Pardovan) purchased four sections of various pews. The biggest buyer was Captain Johnston Stewart of Champfleurie who obtained five sections. Her Majesty Queen Victoria was allocated 15 feet, four inches of Pew 119, although she never sat in it! Her Crown Tenants received space on pew 123.



Louisa Adie's headstone



The reconfigured church

One problem – which was to cause complications in the future – was that pew ownership was bought by people living outside the parish, including Andrew McElfrish of Stirling; Robert Badger of Penicuik; John Scott from Glasgow; Alexander Nimmo, Falkirk and Mrs Mickel, Edinburgh.

30 sections of several pews, altogether measuring 341 feet, 8 inches. Pews 115 through 122 were additionally bought and removed to house the new organ, duly installed in 1896 – a harmonium providing accompanying music until then. As feared, not everyone was pleased at their allocation – but that's another story!

The Kirk Session retained ownership of

A page from Campbell's Report

John Scott, Esq., of Glasgow, has purchased 10 pews, 115 to 122, for the purpose of erecting an organ, and has removed the same to the new organ case, which was erected in 1896.

Pews retained by the Kirk Session		Pews purchased by John Scott, Esq.	
No.	Length	No.	Length
1	11	115	10
2	10	116	10
3	8	117	10
4	8	118	10
5	8	119	10
6	6	120	10
7	5	121	10
8	4	122	10
9	4		
10	4		
11	4		
12	5		
13	14		
14	12		
15	4		
16	4		
17	7		
18	6		

John Scott, Esq., has also purchased 10 pews, 115 to 122, for the purpose of erecting an organ, and has removed the same to the new organ case, which was erected in 1896.



**ST.
MICHAEL'S**
Parish church

Parish Register

FUNERALS

I am the resurrection and the life



November

Margaret Thom, Linlithgow
Elizabeth (Betty) Crawford, Linlithgow

December

Mary (Myra) Morrison, Linlithgow
Alastair Scott, Linlithgow
Adeline Walker, Linlithgow
Barbara Roy, Linlithgow

January

John Cowan, Linlithgow
David (Davy) Roy, Linlithgow Bridge
Joyce McKinlay, Linlithgow
Hector Woodhouse, Linlithgow

February

Barbara Bell, Linlithgow



BAPTISMS

Let the children come to me

December
Alexander Cassells, Larbert

January
Jenson Burns, Winchburgh



DEDICATION

Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good

January
Jannet and Martin Singh and Jaden Martin Singh

NEW MEMBERS

For we are all members of one body

by Profession of Faith

Andrew Povey-Richards
Kay Povey-Richards
Karen Gaillie





GUILD MATTERS

Look Forward in Faith
Theme 2023-24: New Wine, New Wineskins

by Margaret Henderson

Guild meetings resumed after the summer break on 28th August with a joint Dedication Service at St Ninian's Craigmalen. We have been meeting fortnightly since then and have been delighted to welcome new members. One change this year is that we are sharing our syllabus with the members at St Ninian's Craigmalen in light of the forthcoming union of the four congregations – Avonbridge, St Michael's, St Ninian's Craigmalen and Torphichen – and we have enjoyed going along to each other's meetings.

One of the main thrusts of the Guild is supporting projects locally, nationally and internationally and from our first meeting until our Christmas party we have raised over £2,700. This is an amazing sum to raise in a period of only four months and Aspire Linlithgow, 1st Step, Cycling Without Age Scotland (Linlithgow Branch) and Guild projects have all been grateful recipients. We are not finished but will continue raising funds until our last meeting in May.



It isn't only money that we send to worthy causes. During lockdown one of the projects we were supporting was The Sailors' Society. We sent money to this charity, but the Society was also seeking more practical help. A lot of the sailors who arrive in Scotland during the year come from much warmer climes and, if staying here for a long time, they do not have appropriate clothing for our cold, wet days. This led to some of our members knitting beanie hats which were sent to the minister at Invergordon who is chaplain to the sailors and distributes the hats where needed. Oh, the number of hats sent to date is 1,500! Well done, ladies. We are so proud of you.



'All work and no play etc' is not a term that you can apply to the Guild ladies. We celebrated Christmas by decorating a tree at the Christmas Tree Festival and enjoyed recycling small toiletry bottles and turning them into 'bottles of wine' in line with the Guild theme for this session, New Wine, New Wineskins. Some of our members also crocheted bunches of grapes.



On 11th December we carried on celebrating Christmas in style at The Park Bistro where Colin, Paul, Brian and Rachel treated us to a delicious meal and went the extra mile by providing a bale of straw! When I was making final arrangements for the dinner I happened to ask if they knew where I could find some straw for our

Alternative Nativity Play and true to form, Colin said he would get one. This led to a truly amazing, totally unrehearsed rendition of the nativity with absolutely everyone there joining in what was an 'A-maz-ing! Wow!' evening. There was also a surprise visit from Santa who came bearing gifts of mince pies to have with our coffee.



2024 promises to be just as enjoyable and fruitful as we continue to meet fortnightly in the Kirk Hall from 8th January at 7:30pm. Please come along if you are free. You will be assured of a warm welcome.



Dates for your Diary

COFFEE MORNINGS *10am to 12 noon in the Kirk Hall*

Sat 2nd Mar	Project Trust Fundraiser
Sat 11th May	Linlithgow Reed Band

EVENTS IN THE CHURCH

Sun 10th Mar	3pm	Occasionally@stmichaels
Sun 17th Mar	4pm	Glasgow Chamber Choir Concert
Sat 6th Apr	3pm	NYCoS Boys' Choir Concert
Sat 11th May	7.30pm	Toccata Choir Concert
Sat 18th May	7pm	Linlithgow Ladies Choir Spring Concert
Sun 19th May	3pm	Occasionally@stmichaels
Sun 2nd June	7pm (TBC)	NYCoS Summer Concert
Sun 9th June	2pm	Hilary Crichton Pupils Concert

OTHER DATES FOR THE DIARY

Sat 9th Mar	10am–12.30pm	Book Sale, Cross House
Mon 18th Mar	9am	Cracking Easter, Church
Sat 23rd Mar	3pm	Messy Church, Cross House
Sat 6th Apr	10am–12.30pm	Book Sale, Cross House
Sat 18th May	3pm	Messy Church, Cross House
Tues 18th Jun		Marches Day
Sat 22nd Jun		Gala Day

WEBSITES

www.stmichaelsparish.org.uk – See Crosswind in full colour! Also find recordings of services, current intimations, details of upcoming events and all other church activities.

www.helpcentre.org.uk – For information on support available for most situations.

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THE CHURCH IN TORPHICHEN:

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

by Lynne Sloan

The monks who, over 1600 years ago, set up the first place of Christian worship in Torphichen were probably followers of St Ninian. We know that the site gained significantly in importance when, around 1143, King David I granted lands in Torphichen to The Knights Hospitaller of St John of Jerusalem. There is some evidence that, in establishing their Preceptory, they added to an existing Norman-style stone building. It was around this time that the king conferred on the church of Torphichen the Great Right of Sanctuary and, indeed, the central sanctuary stone still stands in the kirk yard today.



The Preceptory was spared demolition at the time of the Reformation and, from around 1560, the nave of the chapel was used as the parish church. By the mid eighteenth century this building had fallen into disrepair and, at a cost of £300, met by John Gillon of Wallhouse, a new church was built on the foundations of the nave of the Preceptory chapel. The T-form building, with its three galleries and adjoining the Preceptory, is the one which is in use today as Torphichen Parish Church. There have, of course, been modifications and additions to the building since the first, undoubtedly lengthy, sermon was preached there in 1756. It is worth noting, however, that the pulpit from which that sermon was delivered was not new. Rather, it was the one from the nave of the Preceptory chapel which was carried into the new kirk and put into the position that it still occupies today.

It may seem admirable, even rather cosy, that for centuries Christians have worshipped at the same site in Torphichen. However, it will come as no surprise to those who know something of the history of the church in Scotland that

Torphichen Kirk had its share of troubles too. The struggle between church and state over the right of congregations to call ministers of their own choice was one of the issues which led to dissension and strife in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Matters came to a head in 1843. Following The Disruption of that year, the Free Church of Scotland was established. Rev William Maxwell Hetherington, minister of Torphichen, supported the break-away church and became the first minister of the Free Kirk there. He preached in a new purpose-built church, St John's, the first stone-built Free Church in Scotland. After The Disruption, Rev William Branks was inducted as the Church of Scotland minister in Torphichen. For over eighty years the village had two churches and two ministers. Nationally, it was not until the reunion of 1929 that the rift between the churches was healed. In 1931, Rev. Patrick Hugh Robson Mackay, minister of Torphichen Free Kirk, became minister of the newly united church and conducted services in the 1756 building. St John's is now used as the church hall.

Since the reunion, Torphichen has had six full-time ministers, the last of whom demitted the charge in 2014. For some eight years now, the congregations of Avonbridge (linked with Torphichen in 1966) and Torphichen have been fortunate to be led, supported and nurtured by an interim minister, an interim deaconess, two locum ministers and a small group of supply ministers.



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HIGHER ASPIRATIONS

by Alan Miller

By the time you read this, the refurbished Crown of Thorns spire may be fully visible in its new gold-look cladding. But even as we pause and smile while viewing our iconic spire, it's time to look ahead – and look beyond.

Looking up is a good place to start, however, because that reminds us how grateful we are for the magnificent support Aspire Linlithgow has received to date. Totalling close to £400k, that support has come from you, the people of St Michael's; from the wider community; and from our grant funders Historic Environment Scotland (£90.4k), the Church of Scotland General Trustees (£40k), The Scottish Landfill Communities Trust (£30k) and the Pilgrim Trust (£10k).



The result? St Michael's iconic Crown of Thorns spire will once again stand proud over the town for decades to come as 'A symbol of certainty, of stability, and even of eternity' in Liam's wonderful phrase.

Our fundraising team is now looking ahead as we switch our gaze to higher targets (even higher than the spire!) St Michael's 2030 Vision involves transforming Cross House into a community hub, securing the fabric of the church building for the future and – potentially – upgrading the church interior for more flexible future use.

We have a responsibility to look after our two A-listed buildings. Yet more important still than preservation is to see their role as portals through which we, as God's co-workers in this corner of His Kingdom, can respond wholeheartedly to the changing needs of the community in service, witness and facilities. The purpose of all these plans is to give us new places of care and connection to signpost neighbours and visitors alike to the love of God.

So we look beyond what we can see, to the unseen Kingdom of God, as we start on what may be a £5M+ journey over 5 years. The fundraising team is now testing this vision against the challenging realities of major grant funding. We're developing a case for Cross House that intertwines community and heritage benefits, while also seeking heritage funding sources for fabric projects on the church building.

We'll continue to organise fun or unusual events from time to time: watch out for news of these online and in the newsletter. Most of all, though, we prize your support in prayer as we all seek God's will that lies above and beyond anything we can ask or imagine.

QUIET WATERS

LISTENING, COUNSELLING AND TRAINING SERVICE

by Sheila Rae



Quiet Waters is a small, not-for-profit charity which has been based in Camelon, Falkirk since 1995. The aim is to provide a range of listening and counselling services, free of charge (although donations are encouraged and are very welcome), for the people of central Scotland. The hope is that the service offered will improve the quality of life of individuals and families by enabling them to cope

with trauma and loss, to overcome personal, relational and spiritual difficulties and to re-establish a sense of self-worth and connectedness within the family and the wider community.

The ethos is to meet people at their point of need and to journey with them as their need requires, unconditionally and without discrimination or partiality of any kind. The staff and all the volunteers have an active Christian faith, but it matters not if clients share our faith, have a different faith or no faith at all.

Our practice manager and our admin assistant are both part-time and are salaried. All our trained counsellors and bereavement listeners are volunteers, giving of their time and expertise freely.

The counsellors and the student counsellors on placement from their college or university provide a safe, supportive and confidential space for individuals and couples to explore the issues that are causing concern or distress. The sessions give people time in which to focus on their needs and aspirations and to find a new perspective on their difficulties. The counsellors also help people to consider options for the future and to discover their own inner strength. People are enabled to find their own answers and are empowered to be able to move forward, changing the aspects of their life they found troubling and to make healthy life choices for the future. The counselling team commit to regular supervision of their work.

Bereavement support is provided by a team of listeners who are trained in active listening and in grief work. They are fully trained in all aspects of bereavement care and have a working knowledge of relevant grief theories

and can support grieving people, journeying with them towards new hope, meaning and purpose. The team also commit to regular supervision of their work and confidentiality is of paramount importance.

The support is for those struggling with the pain, sorrow, chaos of thought, anger and guilt that often follow the death of a loved one. Grief is a normal response to loss and most people will have the resources to adapt and adjust, but for some the process is more complex and challenging and they may require additional support. Bereavement is not an illness, but a normal part of living. There is no right or wrong way to grieve, nor any set period of mourning which is right for everyone.

Quiet Waters also provides training opportunities in Active Listening and Accompanying and in Comforting the Bereaved. The bereavement listening teams in both Quiet Waters and in our own St Michael's team have been trained in this way. These workshops have also been delivered to a variety of churches as they have sought to establish their own bereavement support teams. It is also possible to design a workshop for a particular voluntary setting. In the past training has been delivered to the street pastors and to the Carer's Centre. Pastoral care workshops, along with mental health first aid courses, have also taken place.

All funding for Quiet Waters comes from client donation and from grants. A large part of our admin assistant's work is to make applications for funding.

The work of Quiet Waters is overseen by a Board of Trustees, who also are voluntary and who meet regularly. Tom Brown stepped down from Chair of the Board in November after eight years in post and the agency is indebted to him for his skilful leading of the agency. Our incoming chair is David Graham-Service and we are delighted to welcome him and look forward to working with him.

The amazing Festival of Christmas Trees, recently held in St Michael's, attracted 3000 visitors and the proceeds are generously being donated to Quiet Waters. We are seeking to buy our property, currently owned by the Church of the Nazarene, and this most generous donation will help towards the £35,000 required. We are enormously grateful for this exceedingly kind gesture and thank the fabulous organisers, all who helped and the community for supporting this event.



Further information is available from the website www.quiet-waters.org.

THE PROPERTY TEAM AT ST MICHAEL'S

by Robin Watson



2004 marks my third year as Convenor of the Property Team. Sometimes I feel like a swan on the Loch – all calm above the water, but below the surface lots of frantic movements going on to maintain the semblance of grace.

The property portfolio is large and challenging. We have the privilege of being custodians of two Category A Listed buildings – Cross House and one of the finest medieval churches in Scotland, St Michael's. In addition, we also look after the Manse and the Kirkgate flat.

The Team's year begins in September, when we carry out our annual inspections of the properties and grounds, identifying any maintenance items for the coming year. This forms

the basis of our annual budget, which is then shared with Linda's team at Stewardship and Finance and presented to the Kirk Session at the end of the year for approval. So far so good... but ask any homeowner about certainty in property budgeting and the dreaded word 'unforeseen' arises. In recent years we've had to respond to unplanned maintenance work in the stone ceiling of the south aisle in the church, and leaks to the Vestry roof. So, whilst we try to anticipate all eventualities, we also carry a contingency sum within our budget to cover unexpected work – which usually presents itself via late night weekend telephone calls! We work closely with the Finance team to track expenditure against the annual budget.

Besides regular maintenance work, which is carried out by contractors or by our own team members, depending upon the complexity of the task, we also carry out regular statutory inspections. Many of you will probably have witnessed our weekly fire alarm testing. You may not have seen the annual fixed wire testing, or the Lightning Conductor testing in action. During the Crown of Thorns work, I had an opportunity to climb to the top of the scaffolding. The views are incredible – this is the highest point for miles around, and I was reassured that the lightning protection is maintained to the highest standard.

Of course, no team exists in isolation. We maintain strong links with Open Church, and the Cross House user groups who bring such vitality to the life of the Church. An understanding of people's needs is essential for our work to be a success. We report monthly to the Church's Co-ordinating Team and to the Session, where all key pieces of work are presented for challenge and scrutiny. At the end of each year, we present a report to Presbytery setting out our activities and achievements. We are always delighted to receive a positive report for this submission. Our work is highly regarded by both Presbytery and the Church of Scotland General Trustees.

We are so lucky to have such a wide range of practical skills within the Property Team – always offered with kindness and grace. As well as giving of their technical expertise, they happily 'muck in' with regular work parties, clearing drains and gutters of leaves after the autumn, sprucing up the grounds in the spring and making our properties look at their best for the Marches. These get-togethers not only get the job done, but they provide a great opportunity for friendship and fun – and don't we all need a bit of that in these hard times?

Much of our work goes unseen. Last year's achievements saw the boilers in Cross House and the Manse 'persuaded' to keep going for yet another year. The door entry codes were updated and the wheelchair for emergency use re-conditioned. Oh, and the lightbulbs were all checked and replaced as required. Sometimes it's the little things, isn't it?

One thing that certainly couldn't be described as such is the project to repair and re-clad the iconic Crown of Thorns. Now nearing completion, this work will be sure to delight the eye for many years to come. We are so grateful to our highly skilled Health and Safety and Architectural input from the team, without which this unique and complex project could not have been a success.

Future Capital Projects under consideration include renewing the lead gutters on the church and providing adequate below ground drainage to take the water away. Climate change has made this work a priority. We are also progressing a project to repair areas of rotten roof timbers above the Sanctuary, and to carry out pointing work to the external stonework of the church. The windows and external render at Cross House are also on our radar for repair. We are working closely with the Fundraising Team to secure funds to carry out these large, but essential projects.



So, as you'll see there's lots going on. We carry out our work with humility and in Faith, knowing that all we do is for the fulfilment of God's Kingdom.



YESTERDAY ONCE MORE



by Iain Harrison

Background to 1974

In the UK in 1974 it was a difficult year. The economy was struggling following the oil crisis in 1973 and there was political unrest as the National Union of Miners made life difficult for the Conservative Government. Unusually there were two General Elections with Harold Wilson leading the Labour Party to two narrow victories. In the US, Richard Nixon resigned as President as a result of the ongoing Watergate Scandal.

Nearer home a group called Abba won the Eurovision Song Contest and Scotland qualified for the Football World Cup in West Germany. They were unbeaten but unfortunately did not qualify for the knockout stages, sadly that record remains. In Glasgow a long-haired teenager joined The Royal Bank of Scotland and was still there in 2016, only modesty prevents me from revealing his name!

What challenges did our Church face in 1974 and how were they overcome?

Woodworm Strikes Back

Sadly, inspection of the Church Organ revealed the base of one of the organ pipes to be very badly damaged with woodworm. The company who had the annual contract to 'maintain' the organ refused to accept any responsibility although they did offer to rebuild the organ and submitted an estimate for £20,000. This was not only turned down, but the Church wisely decided to dispense with the services of the company shortly thereafter.

Communion

The frequency of Communion was discussed with a motion to supplement the four existing services with a monthly Communion on the last Sunday of each month. A counter motion was put forward to maintain the status quo. In a close vote the status quo won the day by 27 votes to 25.

Fuel Crisis

The Rev Dr David Steel advised that because of the ongoing oil crisis the Church's appeal against their allocation of 500 gallons had been successful. The allocation had been increased to 1,000 gallons and this should meet the requirements for the Communion services and the visit of the Kings Singers on 31 January. This would also now allow the St Michael's lecture to take place on 30 January.

Window Cleaning

The moderator reported that the Friends of St Michael's had agreed to meet the cost of cleaning all the stained-glass windows in the Church. This offer was on the proviso that the Kirk Session indemnify them against any additional costs which might arise due to the delicate condition of some of the leaded glass.

Pastures New

In March 1974 the moderator presented the Assistant Minister, the Rev Derek Chittick, with a print to mark his impending departure to take up his first charge at Stromness in the Orkney Islands. The moderator also advised that the Rev Norman Maciver had accepted the appointment of Assistant Minister and would take up his duties on 1 July.

St Ninian's Craigmalen Church Centenary

The moderator advised that St Ninian's Craigmalen Church would celebrate the centenary of the building of their church with a special service on the evening of 21st April to which they invited members of St Michael's. It was agreed to cancel the evening service at St Michael's on that date to allow members to attend.

New Manse

The saga of the proposed new manse rumbled on through 1974. Planning permission was applied for and there was £31,000 in the kitty. Planning permission was approved in March for the manse provided it was built of stone which it was estimated would cost £4,000 more. The Kirk Session agreed to appeal this decision and in September the appeal was successful. Tenders were sent out to building companies to quote to build the new manse but sadly all the tenders submitted were greatly in excess of the funds available. The architect and the contractors were going to meet in an effort to achieve savings. The lowest revised tender received for the manse was £43,000 (the equivalent of £451,070 today). This was some £7,500 above the funds now available and it was therefore agreed unanimously not to proceed with the new manse at the present time.

Quiet Please

A complaint had been received about the noise made during the counting of the offering after an evening service. This had detracted from the atmosphere at a recent evening Communion Service. Steps would be taken to avoid this happening again. It must have been the coins as notes tend to only make a faint rustling noise in my experience!

GREETINGS FROM THE GREATER TOKYO AREA IN JAPAN

by Lorna Ferguson

This might be the last time I write to you from Tokyo, where I have served on the leadership team of OMF Japan for the past 11 years. 2024 marks the end of my term in leadership, so this year is one of transition. By December, I will have handed over my current role to the person appointed to succeed me, packed up and moved out of my house, said goodbye to the people in my local church, and come back to Scotland for about 8 months of what is called Home Assignment. I plan to return to Japan again in the summer of 2025 and am hoping to get back into Japanese church ministry. Over the next few months, I am looking to visit possible places for my next term so that it can be decided before I leave.

In the meantime, as well as serving on the leadership team of OMF, I also help out in my local church. The minister's wife took a course in baby massage, and we felt this was a good way to connect with new Mums in the local community and provide a place for them and their babies to come and relax. I was asked to do a couple of English action songs, and I also bake snacks for the teatime we have together at the end. In Japan it is difficult to find places to advertise an event in a religious setting, but we are gradually getting the word out. It's lovely to be able to chat with the Mums as well as listen to their concerns and seek to encourage them. Very few people in Japan have ever heard the good news of Jesus or would usually come into a church, so providing something for Mums and babies provides a good way to make a bridge into the local community.



I wonder if you have heard of Tokyo Skytree, the world's tallest tower, standing at 634 metres. The highest point visitors can go to is just over 450 metres but even from there the view is incredible. If you are lucky enough to go up on a clear day, you can see Mount Fuji, about 100km away. The area between the mountains and the Pacific Ocean is home to the Greater Tokyo Area, which is the biggest metropolis in the history of the world.



As you walk round the viewing gallery of the tower, the area you see is home to nearly 43 million people. As I looked out over this vast area, I wondered how many of these people knew Jesus, or have even heard of Him. So, afterwards I did some research. In that area I could see from the tower:

- There are around 2,600 churches – that is about 1 church for every 16,500 people.
- On average one church (pre-pandemic) had 50 people attending their worship service.
- So out of the 43 million people living in this area, an average of just over 130,000 would have been in church on a Sunday. That's about 0.3% of the population of the area.
- The pandemic has generally reduced the number of people

attending a worship service, so this number will now be less.

It was a reminder to me of the vastness of the task in Japan to give everyone a chance to hear and understand the gospel and is why I am hoping to return to Japanese ministry in 2025. In the meantime, my four sons are making their own plans. Daniel is currently working in Bangkok but plans to move back to London in the next 12 months with his Thai wife. Matthew is finishing up his traineeship in Edinburgh and will be looking for a job in a law firm for the next stage of his career. Calum is still hoping to find a professional football contract – somewhere in the world! Alistair is entering his third year of University in Japan and starting to think about jobs afterwards, either as a footballer (he's a goalie) or as a coach.

In Proverbs 16:9 it says, 'In their hearts humans plan their course, but the LORD establishes their steps'. Like the Ferguson family, you probably all have different plans, aspirations and hopes for the coming months and years. It is good to think ahead and make plans, but it is God who will guide our steps. And there are great words of encouragement in verse 4 of that same chapter, 'The LORD works out everything to its proper end...'.

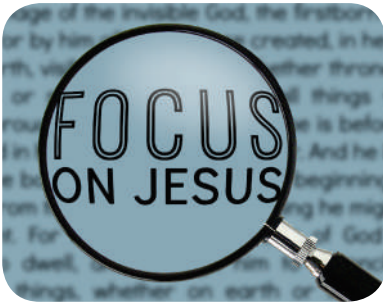
Whatever our situation, may we have that comfort and assurance that God is working everything out, whether in Japan or in Scotland, and that He will be our guide.

IN FOCUS

by Rev Thom Riddell

I wonder if, like me, you have ever experienced the appearance of a black, spidery blob in your line of vision. You can blink furiously, swipe your eye, or splash water in it, but it doesn't go away. And suddenly there can be other blobs appearing. It can be very disconcerting, and lead to some negative thoughts about what is causing it.

I asked my optician if there was anything wrong and, after examining my eye, she told me that it was a 'floater'. It was obstructing the light coming into my eye, casting shadows on my retina. And the good news is that there was nothing to worry about. She instructed me to stop focusing on the floater, but to look beyond the shadow. Our brains are wired to strengthen what we focus on and, if I focused on the floater, it would remain in my vision.



Thinking about this led me to realise that it also applies to what we choose to focus on in other parts of our lives. If we focus our thoughts on moaning and complaining about the negative things in our lives, and in the world around us, we will see only what is negative. If we choose to turn our gaze and focus on Jesus through prayer, and praise, and studying scripture, our vision will be clear. We will be able to see beyond our immediate concerns and find reasons to be cheerful.

Paul summed it up in his letter to church in Philippi:

Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Prayer

Loving God, you know how easy it is for us to forget all that you have done, and continue to do, for us every day. Enable us to focus on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, and find reasons to be thankful. May our vision be clear, and our purpose be to tell others the good news of your forgiving grace.
AMEN

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Organisations

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Sunday Club Leadership Team

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Sunday Club (3-11yrs)
Bible Class (12-14yrs)
YF (15+)

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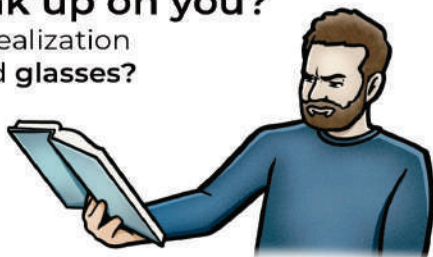
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