

CROSSWIND

The Journal of St Michael's Parish Church

St
Michael's
at
Springfield

May 2023
Vol 26:1



How good and pleasant it is when
God's people live together in unity!
PSALM 133:1

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Communion

Sunday, 28th May
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 Graham Black and Gordon Young

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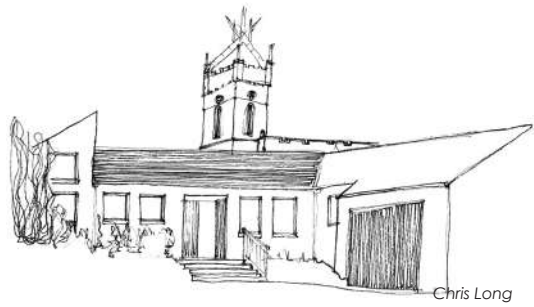
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The deadline for the August 2023 issue is 1st July 2023.

VIEW FROM THE MANSE



by Rev Dr Liam J Fraser

Aged three, I nearly died. I developed a rare condition called aplastic anaemia, which meant that my bone marrow did not produce the blood or antibodies I needed to live, or to fight off infection. To make things worse, during treatment I suffered a brain haemorrhage, and my parents and I had to wait many months to see if healing would come.

From a young age, then, I've had reason to think about life and death, and also where *true* life is found. Because while, after a long wait, medicine saved my life, it didn't give me a reason to live. While it saved my physical life, it didn't save *me*, and it was decades later that I found something like true life. That life was beautifully represented on Easter Sunday when, after admitting new members, the congregation decorated the Good Friday cross with daffodils, representing new life in Christ, and our participation in his life.



Everyone knows well the basic Easter story, whether they be religious or not. Yet like a place, a person, or a favourite tv show, familiarity blinds us to the nuance and depth of this wonderful story. John's account of the Resurrection brings this out well. His Easter story comes in two parts, revealing different responses to the empty tomb of Jesus. Firstly, Peter and a disciple, probably John, run to the tomb and find it empty. Yet after finding it empty, they head home.

I wonder if you can empathise with Peter and John taking their leave of the empty tomb here. Perhaps you've had your hopes crushed too many times, and – preferring the safety and security represented by home – fear disappointment. Perhaps life is going reasonably well, and you're scared that this God stuff might upset all that. Or you may be indifferent to the empty tomb, don't see how it relates to you or your life. Yet, while Peter and John head to the familiarity and security of home, Mary Magdalene waits weeping in the early morning dark: not simply accepting the mystery of the empty tomb but seeking the Christ who has left it.

Yet we only seek Christ because we have been found by him, and because Mary waited for Jesus, yearning for him – even through tears – everything changed for her. She spoke with angels, heard God call her name, and in a flash, came face to face with the Lord, the risen Christ. Thus, Mary found Christ, and also life. But that life was hidden from her for a time, and she had to wait.

What are you waiting for right now? A piece of news? A loved one's return? Or perhaps something vaguer but no less acute: love, peace, contentment.

In the Letter to the Colossians we read this:

'So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above... for you have died, and your life is *hidden with Christ in God*. '

Over Winter, we looked out into our gardens and saw only bare earth, punctuated by a little grass or weeds. Yet even though, to the naked eye, there was nothing to see, buried, hidden within the earth, the bulbs of spring were growing, taking shape, putting out shoots until suddenly, spring flowers are all around. Yet they were hidden all Winter, and we had to wait for them.

The problem is that more than ever, we *refuse* to wait. We demand the good life now. Instant happiness, instant change, instant karma! But God is more mysterious than a fast-food McDonald's drive-through experience, more complex than a service station Costa machine. We read in the Song of Songs, 'do not awaken love before it is ready', and sometimes, we must wait.

Just as Mary waited for Christ and so witnessed his resurrection, and like hidden bulbs burst forth in Spring colour, so the wait is worth it. For as Paul continues in Colossians:

'When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.'

The Winter of life can be long, but just because it's long doesn't mean we give up waiting for Spring, and while we must sometimes wait for God's blessing, it is just about the only thing *worth* waiting for.

Because I'm not content living in a vastly imperfect world, full of indifference and evil, floating in a black, uncaring universe. I'm not content to recover from a life-threatening illness only to die again, nor am I content for others to die and be lost forever. Instead, I want to live again in this world, but a world cleansed of everything that is wrong, wicked and dark. For tyrants to be overthrown, for millions of innocent slain to return, and for righteousness, love and truth to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

Some hope in politics and become disillusioned; others hope in themselves only to falter and fail, but we hope in the Lord, the Lord who was tortured, murdered, laid dead in the earth, but then rose again. And not him alone, but us. For like the flower that lives in the root, the child that lives in the womb, and the grapes that flourish on the true vine, because of Easter, we live in Christ, and he lives in us. When the story of our lives is told, after we've taken our final breath, then, we will reign with Christ forever in that kingdom without end.

For Jesus Christ is risen – he is risen indeed.

So let us not witness the empty tomb, only to return to everyday life. Rather with Mary Magdalene – *wait*. Wait for that true life found only in Christ.



by Rev Dr Liam Fraser

When people see me at services in St Michael's, a medieval gothic church, dressed in a cassock and preaching from the pulpit, many would assume that I was firmly traditional in terms of my worship tastes. Yet before I was preaching in a large medieval church I was preaching and leading services without cassock or collar or organ. Instead, I was leading services in a hall with stackable chairs, neon lighting, and pizza as part of Edinburgh University Campus Ministry.

It's a delight, then, to be returning to that simpler style of worship in our contemporary service. We want to create an environment that is friendly, informal, down to earth and approachable, a service that you would feel comfortable inviting someone to, and which is a pleasure to attend. In addition to – as the name suggests – more modern music, there will also be a bigger emphasis on interaction, with various activities taking place after the sermon. It will also be an evolving service, as we try different things out, seeing what works and what doesn't.

Yet the contemporary service is not just an additional worship opportunity for existing Christians. It is a statement of intent. It is a statement that, in a time of church closures and declining faith, God is still at work. That through the love and forgiveness that God offers, men, women and young people can experience something that the world cannot give: a saving relationship with the God of all, in whom there is hope, and joy and life.

It is as a tool for God's mission to Linlithgow that this service exists, and to which you are invited to be part of. There are lots of ways to get involved, from simply supporting this new venture by worshipping with us, to being part of the set-up teams, prayer team, or taking a role in leading worship.

The service will take place in the Kirk Hall on the last Sunday evening of each month from April 30th onward. There will be tea and coffee from 6.15pm, with the service beginning around 6.30pm. So come along and join us and be part of this new chapter in St Michael's long history.

EDINBURGH EASTER PLAY

2023

I was approached by Anita to get involved in 'The Edinburgh Easter Play', back in January, and I thoroughly enjoyed our Wednesday evening rehearsals, getting to grips with the script and learning my lines. They were a great bunch of people, of varying ages, from all walks of life, and Suzanne Lofthus, the director, had endless patience, encouragement and enthusiasm. I wasn't too worried about forgetting or muddling up my lines – after all, the public wouldn't know one way or another. My worry was the cold – because I don't do cold. I've been known to go to bed with a hot water bottle in summer – albeit a Scottish summer – and my house is like a sauna. Now, I had been told to layer up. Well, just as well the costumes were on the generous side, because I was well layered up – picture the Michelin Man! So, if you saw a fat – oops – enormous, Samaritan woman, waddling towards Princes Street Gardens, on Saturday 8th April – it was me!



Yvonne Fraser



I've been an audience member of the Easter Play for many years from Dundas Castle to Princes Street Gardens. I've watched Anita play many parts but resisted joining the productions, but this year I accepted the calling for more cast members and became Thomas, a disciple. I joined this eclectic group of actors from a professional actor playing 'Jesus' to first time actors and regular cast members. It's a happy experience; rehearsals have been fun with this lovely bunch of people, although two

freezing afternoons in the gardens were challenging. If you were there, I hope you enjoyed the experience and were challenged once again by seeing the Easter story performed for you.

Peter France

This is the second time I have taken part – this year I play Mary Magdalene who is also the Narrator. Our Director encourages us to think about our character in depth, their motivations and journey throughout the play, so I've done some research which I've found fascinating:

- Magdalene indicates that she was probably from Magdala, a prosperous town renowned for fish processing and production of purple cloth.
- She was not a prostitute (blame Pope Gregory – the great, who wanted a good contrast to Mary the mother of Jesus in a sermon).
- Not certain that she was the woman who anointed Jesus feet, but we're including it as it provides a good connection with Mary taking spices to the tomb.
- She was not Jesus' love interest but a female disciple.
- Likely to have been a mature woman of independent means who supported Jesus' work financially.

Thinking about her reactions to the well-known gospel stories brought me new perspectives. As Liam said in a recent sermon, the people in the gospels were ordinary, not expecting miracles in their everyday lives. And of course, Mary Magdalene has the ultimate privilege of being the first witness to Jesus' resurrection

Alison Parkinson

Those of you who know me know I love drama so it's not surprising I got involved with The Easter Play. The other 3 will have told you how friendly the other actors are, how kind and helpful the backstage crew are, especially Suzanne the director so I won't repeat it. I'm going to tell you why I especially enjoy being involved with this production every year. Sitting in Church listening to Bible readings and sermons you're usually presented with one way of saying things. Jesus can tell a story one way, or give an answer in one way, but did He actually? When acting, you become involved with the character of the person and consider the many ways he or she might have reacted, thought and spoken. For example, you hear the actor playing Jesus experiment with the various ways He would have presented a parable or teaching. Most of the professional actors who have played Jesus have not been Christians so come to the problem without any preconceived ideas.

The results sometimes are surprising and insightful. Another reason I love doing this play is that we are told to go and preach the gospel. In Princes Street Gardens, an Easter outreach to a few hundred people takes place; I'm involved and it's fun. This year I'm playing the part of Mary, the mother of Jesus. I pray I do that courageous lady justice. To continue this fun outreach next year, we will need more Churches and people to become involved, acting, stewarding, catering, come on, join us, I dare you.

Anita France



ST MICHAEL'S FORGOTTEN MINISTERS PART 1

by Bruce Jamieson



The Rev Donald Macleod.

St Michael's has had many long-serving ministers during its centuries of existence including John Ferguson (1878 - 1913); Robert Coupar (1914 - 1938); Charles Rutherford (1939 - 58); David Steel (1959 -1976) and Ian Paterson (1977 - 2003). Alongside these luminaries, however, some served for much shorter periods.

The Rev Dr Donald Macleod, minister from 1862 to 1869, was originally a Stirlingshire man, born in Campsie where his father was the local parish minister. After graduating from the University of Glasgow, he was called to the parish of Lauder and from there to Linlithgow where he set up house in the early 19th century Manse, at the top of Manse Road. Later, he was joined by his wife Isabella Anderson whom he married in Linlithgow in 1864.

The Rev Macleod was an aficionado of brass band music and he organised boat races on the loch on Saturday mornings. He is also credited with encouraging the formation of the first Sunday School in the burgh and the setting up of Sunday Learning Classes for local apprentice lads who had left school at an early age to take up employment in the leather and shoemaking trades. Some classes were held in Shoemakers Land at 129 High Street – a property which still bears the oak leaf crest of the Fraternity.



Shoemakers Land today.



The Shoemakers' crest.

These educational pursuits came in for some criticism at the time from those who believed that the Sabbath was not a suitable time for such an activity. Later, in their old age, many residents remembered Dr Macleod's work, stating in an article in the 'Linlithgowshire Gazette' that, 'it was the good Reverend who taught us to read and write for the first time.'

The Rev Macleod moved on after just seven years to become minister of the Park Church in Glasgow, leaving his beadle a mightily disappointed man. When the minister had first arrived at St Michael's, just seven years before, the church officer had taken him round to the North side of the churchyard and pointed out graves of previous, long-serving ministers, declaring, 'There's where Dr Bell lies, and there's where Dr Dobie lies, and there's where you'll lie, if you're spared'. On hearing of the Rev Macleod's departure the beadle's remarks were just as pithy, stating, 'Ye're the first minister that was ever lifted out o' Linlithgow, except to the grave.'



The graves of the Revs Bell and Dobie



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Jolly Babies

... OR SHOULD IT BE JOLLY MUMS?

by Fiona McCracken

'Two are better than one... If one falls down, his friend can help him up.'
Ecclesiastes 4 9-10 (NIV)



For many women, the transition to motherhood can take time; with overwhelming feelings – both positive and negative. Feelings of isolation and loneliness are not uncommon for mums on maternity leave, but they are not always identified as such until looking back much later. Mums may question how can they feel lonely when they have a new baby by their side 24/7? What's more, if they admit to feeling lonely, or bored, or that they miss their old life, what does that say? What will people think?

Dr Alexandra Sacks explained in her 2017 New York Times article 'The Birth of a Mother', 'When women find themselves feeling lost between who they were before motherhood and who they think they should be now, many worry that something is terribly wrong, when in fact this discomfort is absolutely common.'

The thing is, while you can love your child with all your heart – you can still feel a terrible sense of isolation. You can still love spending time with your baby but be overwhelmed by the daily monotony of endless feed, nappy changes, and sleep deprivation. You may feel like motherhood is the best thing that has ever happened to you while at the same time long for meaningful adult conversation. You can feel blessed that you have your baby; yet miss the life you had before; miss work colleagues and feel sadness over friends who don't call you anymore.

Another thing that new mothers may struggle with is feelings of lost identity. Since having a baby, they may feel that they do not know who they are anymore. A study by The British Red Cross found that more than eight in ten mothers under the age of 30 had feelings of loneliness some of the time, while 43% said they felt lonely ALL THE TIME. Another survey found that 90% of new mothers felt lonely since giving birth, with over half feeling they had no friends.



However, as well as all this, the effects of COVID 19, the cost-of-living crisis and cuts to public services are having a huge impact on new mums in 2023.

In September, we started a new group, called 'Jolly Babies' to specifically reach out to new mums in our community – to offer a safe space to come along and meet other new mums, have a chat, a cuppa and make some connections.

We are open from 11am-1pm on a Wednesday, in the Kirk Hall and from 12 noon, a cup of soup and some bread and cheese is served.

We started with three mums and babies in September. Now our average attendance is around 24 mums every week, with our all-time high (to date) being 29!! We are delighted that our original Jolly Babies have now moved on to join our Toddler Groups on a Tuesday and Friday.



Our hope is that, through this group, mums will have the opportunity to get to know other new mums in the town and provide support and friendship to one another. We are keen to make sure that the group is a place where mums can be honest about the challenges of motherhood. We have enjoyed getting to know the mums and babies. Recently one mum asked if anyone could help her to learn to crochet and we were delighted to persuade my mum Agnes to come along and share her skills. We have also been able to invite along a local reflexologist to share some hints and tips to comfort babies.

Linlithgow is a town where many young people choose to come and live when it is time to start a family. However, it can be difficult to discover all that is on offer. We were delighted that our mums went along to the Christmas Tree festival and were amazed to discover all the groups and organisations that exist in the town.

Through Jolly Babies, and indeed all our groups and activities for families we hope to embrace the motto of the town 'St Michael is kinde to strangers'.

Jolly Babies is run by me and a few lovely volunteers. If you would like to volunteer your time – to either make soup, set out the tables, chairs and toys, or come along and chat – please contact me on fiona@stmichaels-parish.org.uk You will be made most welcome.

LENT STUDIES

A PERSONAL REFLECTION

by Paul Davidson

By the time you are reading this, Lent (and indeed Easter) will be long past. However, I did want to highlight something from 'Lent for Everyone' by Tom Wright, the book focussing on Mark which we have been reading. I found the individual studies both interesting and challenging, and one in particular stood out, from the second week in Lent.

The reading from Mark (4: 35-41) is one of the stories we may have heard many times before and know quite well. Jesus and the disciples are in a boat, and a storm suddenly blows up. The disciples (a number of them fishermen, who would be used to storms) are afraid, and wake up Jesus who is asleep in the boat. Jesus rebukes the storm, and then the disciples. Like the parables Mark has been talking about earlier in the chapter, this event has left the disciples (and possibly us) with questions.



I'm going to quote directly from the Tom Wright book here, because I really liked what he has written.

'Sometimes these questions are forced on us by events that are frightening and worrying at the time. Sometimes they grow slowly out of things we have read in the Bible or heard in church. This is normal and natural, however unsettling it may seem at the time. 'Don't you believe yet?' asks Jesus, almost teasing his frightened followers. This theme continues 'Don't you get it? Don't you understand? You still don't get it?' (Mark 8: 17 & 21). Part of the point of Christian discipleship is to have our minds and imaginations challenged, opened, stretched, reshaped. The world – God's world! – is quite different, and a lot more unpredictable and interesting than we often suppose. And at the heart of it is Jesus himself, sometimes apparently asleep but ready to wake up, transform our scary situations, and bounce the question back to us. When we pray 'Wake up, Lord!' we need to be prepared for him to reply that it is we who have been asleep. Our wake-up call to God is often the moment when God's wake-up call to us is finally getting through.'

I found many of the studies fascinating this year, looking at familiar passages in Mark's Gospel in a new light. This one was particularly challenging, especially thinking about how often it is me that is asleep, not Jesus.

OPEN CHURCH UPDATE

by Vicki Carlin

In the February edition of Crosswind, Alan Miller wrote an article on the Aspire project and predicted that the work on the Crown of Thorns would begin in Spring 2023. This is now going ahead, with work starting in May and hopefully finishing in August.

Unfortunately, this means that the church will have to be closed to the public during the week as there is no access via the South Door and a small risk of falling debris at the West Door.

However, at the weekends, we should be able to open on Saturdays from 10.30am to 4pm and on Sundays from 1pm to 4pm. If you know of any visitors to the town, or indeed local people who would enjoy learning about the history of our beautiful church, please let them know. We also have a 'treasure hunt' for primary school aged children which keeps them occupied while adults can take the time to read our interesting guide, or sit quietly in contemplation. Everyone is very welcome at the weekends.



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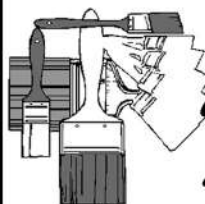
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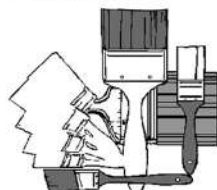


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STEWARDSHIP AND FINANCE

– How did we do in 2022?

by Linda Jamieson



I do hope that you and your families are well.

The annual accounts for St Michael's for the year ended 31 December 2022 have now been finalised and approved by Kirk Session (the Elders are the Trustees of the charity). The figures show an operating deficit of £22,000 in our general funds and overall surplus for the year of £113,587. The funds raised for the Crown of Thorns (Aspire Linlithgow) is the main reason for the overall surplus. Let me share some context to the figures and hopefully explain the operating deficit, what this means and why it is important to address this.

Our general income has increased by some £14,000 to £344,000, achieved largely due to the regular giving by standing orders and weekly offerings. Whilst the return to our normal operating model following covid has resulted in a huge increase in income flowing from activities such as weddings, Cross House groups and Church visitors when compared to the previous year, it is still well down on pre-pandemic levels. In addition to our general income which is used for the ongoing repair and maintenance of our two grade A-listed buildings and to meet the operating costs of St Michael's and Cross House, we raised funds in support of our 'Aspire Linlithgow' appeal.

The fundraising team led by Alan Miller, have worked incredibly hard to deliver fundraising events in support of our appeal 'Aspire Linlithgow'. Through the generosity of donors, an impressive £129,000 was raised in 2022. We are extremely grateful for the support of members and the wider community in helping us to reach this stage.

Our general running costs for 2022 include our 'Ministry and Mission' contribution of £156,000 to the national church and this remains our largest expense and something that is out with our control. This is being replaced with 'Giving to Grow' in 2023.

Costs in maintaining our property including repairs and maintenance for the Church and Cross House amounted to £69,000. The upkeep of two grade A-listed buildings presents us with great challenges in meeting the associated costs in their care and maintenance. However, let us not forget the enormous opportunities in their use.

When we add staff costs, council tax, insurance and the many other costs associated with the running of St Michael's, our general expenditure for 2022 is £366,000 compared to £297,000 for the previous year. The increase in costs can mainly be attributed to some property costs from 2020/2021 being carried forward to 2022, increase in 'Ministry and Mission' contribution and increased staff costs.

In summary, when we exclude the 'Aspire Linlithgow' activity which is ringfenced, we have an operating deficit of £22,000 in 2022. St Michael's will continue to face significant financial challenges in the months and years ahead. It should be noted that our fixed tariff for energy comes to an end this year and we expect our annual costs to increase as a result.



We will continue to closely monitor our costs and look at ways we can reduce costs and increase income in what is a turbulent economic environment. We are very conscious of the challenges many of our supporters face and we thank you for all that you do to support St Michael's.

In addition to the financial statements, our year-end accounts include a summary of what has been achieved at

St Michael's. 2022 has been another challenging year; however, thanks to the skills and commitment of members, volunteers, staff and supporters, we have delivered a diverse range of activities to demonstrate that with God's help we can deliver on our promises to work on his behalf.

Our thanks to the Stewardship and Finance team for their work in helping to manage and monitor our finances and a particular thank you to Tim Brown for his work in preparing monthly income and expenditure figures.

The Stewardship and Finance team at St Michael's would welcome additional support from volunteers with financial/management skills to join their team. This is not an onerous commitment, but it is important in helping to ensure the church looks after everyone's money properly. If you have some spare time and have financial experience, please contact Linda on: LJamieson58@aol.com to find out how you can help.

There will be an opportunity for the full congregation to hear about the annual accounts at a meeting to be arranged in early summer. It is important that we all work together for the future prosperity of St Michael's Linlithgow. Lots of people doing a little can make an enormous difference.

I thank you again for your continued support for St Michael's, both in terms of financial support and to all our volunteers who work tirelessly in Christian faith.



**ST.
MICHAEL'S**
Parish church

Parish Register

WEDDINGS

They are no longer two, but one



April

Emma Flint to Jack Wrighton

NEW MEMBERS

For we are all members of one body

by Certificate of Transference

January

Robert McIntosh and Martine McIntosh, Linlithgow

February

Trea Holmes, Linlithgow



March

George Shiels and Margaret Shiels, Linlithgow
Sonia Watson, Linlithgow

by Profession of Faith

April

Jim Gilmour and Fiona Gilmour, Linlithgow
Maryam Labaki, Linlithgow
Graeme Reynolds, Gillian Reynolds, Kaitlyn Reynolds and
Finlay Reynolds, Linlithgow
Stephen Rodger and Matthew Rodger, Bo'ness
Alistair Young and Christine Young, Linlithgow

FUNERALS

I am the resurrection and the life

February

Helen Gray, Linlithgow
Sheila Forrest, Bridgend
Muriel Shearer, Linlithgow
Jennifer McNish, Linlithgow

March

David Russell
Janette Stanners, Linlithgow
Ann Gallie, Linlithgow
William (Bill) Hourston, Linlithgow



April

Jessie Laing, formerly Linlithgow
Marion Swan, Linlithgow
Forbes Kidd, Linlithgow

BAPTISMS

Let the children come to me

February

Ailsa Cassidy, Linlithgow

March

Liam and Nathan Smith, Linlithgow

April

Elizabeth Wrighton, Aberdeen



SPRINGFIELD'S RUBY ANNIVERSARY

Photos by Graham Black





Dates for your Diary

EVENTS IN THE CHURCH

Sat 3rd June	7.00pm	NYCoS Summer Concert
Sat 24th June	7.00pm	Linlithgow Ladies Summer Choir Concert
Sun 16th July	2pm	Linlithgow Arts Guild Summer Concert
Sun 23rd July	2pm	Linlithgow Arts Guild Summer Concert
Sun 6th Aug	2pm	Linlithgow Arts Guild Summer Concert
Sun 13th Aug	2pm	Linlithgow Arts Guild Summer Concert
Sun 3rd Sept		Antonine Ensemble – TBC
Sat 7th Oct	7.30pm	Flutes Unlimited Concert
Sat 11th Nov	7.30pm	Linlithgow String Orchestra Concert

OTHER EVENTS

7th – 11th Aug 10am-12noon Holiday Club, Cross House



All events are conditional upon what Scottish Government / Church of Scotland COVID guidelines and regulations are currently in place.

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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CHRISTIAN AID

by Anne Sutherland

What does Christian Aid do?

'We work with local partners and communities to fight injustice, respond to humanitarian emergencies, campaign for change, and help people claim services and rights they are entitled to. Every pound donated and fundraising event held helps us to eradicate poverty.'

What has that looked like in the last year?

A War in Ukraine



As we remembered with sadness the start of the war in Ukraine on 24th February 2022, we recall that Christian Aid was founded in 1945 by British and Irish churches to help refugees after World War II. Christian Aid equipped and enabled partner European churches to provide what people needed. Nearly 80 years later, Christian Aid works with many partner organisations worldwide giving shelter to people fleeing homes damaged by war.

Ukrainians grateful for shelter and places of safety said,

'Our village was destroyed, bombing every day. I feared for my husband and family.'

'When there was bombing at night, I did not know where to go. We feared that our building would be destroyed. In this shelter, I feel peaceful.'

Some Ukrainians have come to Linlithgow seeking safety and peace and many of us will know their stories.

An Earthquake in Turkey and Syria

One of the most powerful earthquakes in 20 years hit Turkey and Syria, leaving people homeless in freezing, driving rain, dealing with aftershocks and the grief of losing loved ones.

Christian Aid has been working there with partners, beginning with search and rescue, then moving into a new phase where they focussed on providing shelter, medical treatment for the injured, heaters, blankets and warm clothes, and ensuring people have food and clean water.



A Partner staff member commented during a late-night distribution, 'Dozens of families – including many children – are sleeping on the streets without cover (or with makeshift covers) around fires. Our teams are trying to help these people and provide them with heaters, heating materials and food. In these cold and harsh conditions, it won't be enough. We need to help as much as we can.'

Cyclone Freddy hits Malawi

Cyclone Freddy, at 34 days, the longest-lasting tropical cyclone on record and equivalent of a full North Atlantic hurricane season, hit Malawi and Mozambique in March 2023. Malawi experienced a year's worth of rain during the 4-week cyclone. Over 508,000 people are displaced and hundreds have died. There was also an increased risk of malaria and cholera in the immediate aftermath.



Christian Aid's response to this together with partners and team in Malawi was to provide:

- Corn soya blend for porridge for breastfeeding mothers and children under 5
- Mosquito nets for families to protect against malaria
- Providing temporary toilets and bathrooms, water containers and water treatment to help prevent the risk of cholera
- Mobile clinics to help people process the emotional trauma of the cyclone
- Distribution of cash to 1,000 households to help them purchase essentials

Sometimes when we read these headlines or listen on the news we can feel we need to do something but we're not quite sure what. One thing we can do is help Christian Aid help all of these people.

Christian Aid needs our time, prayers and money. If you haven't had an opportunity to contribute to the Christian Aid week collection, there is still time. There are many ways to donate; we have a Linlithgow e-envelope at <https://envelope.christianaid.org.uk/linlithgow-envelope> also on Facebook. All year-round donations can be made by direct debit, online cash donations, payroll giving, telephone and postal donations. While money donations are of huge importance, also are our prayers for all that Christian Aid do and all the people they help.

Something to pray

God of abundance, thank you that you have always been concerned for those who have the least. Even when times are hard and I feel I have less than I did, incline my heart towards justice and help me to share out what I can. Amen. (Rev Claire Jones)

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PASTORAL CARE POSIES

by Margaret Gunstone

'Just to let you know that we are thinking of you.'

This wording is on the little card that accompanies a posy of flowers from St Michael's Church.

Our beautiful Church welcomes people from all over the world. Some come to worship with us, some spend time in the sanctuary in quiet prayer. Others come to learn more about the history of the ancient building, admire the stained-glass windows, the organ, the carvings, tapestries. All this beauty is further enhanced by the fresh flowers arranged by members of the Church Flower Group.

Flowers show the beauty of God's creation, and while they do eventually fade, we know the love of God never fades.



Many churches give the flowers away after the Sunday service. Because our church is open, we cannot do that; about seven years ago the idea was put forward that, in addition to the large flower arrangement, a little posy could also be made every week to give to someone who would benefit. It was quickly realised that it was best to form an additional little team to make these posies.

This is how it works:

The name, address and telephone number of a person who could benefit from flowers is suggested to Sheila Rae by perhaps, a Church elder, a Church visitor or member of the Ministry team. The telephone number makes it possible to deliver at a mutually convenient time! To save on the use of plastic, we encourage recipients to return the containers for re-use. The posy team works on a rota, which is flexible, thus swaps are made for holidays or illness. The ladies love flowers and enjoy creating and delivering their handiwork.

The Pandemic changed everything as everyone was fearful. Instead of delivering fresh flowers, cards were printed with Michaelmas daisies and the Crown of Thorns spire on the front and some helpful Church telephone contact numbers on the back. During those particularly scary and isolating times St Michael's continued to show it cares.

The Posy team and friends do meet up occasionally for a coffee. Following the last few strange years, this gentle return to socialising in a small group that shares a love of flowers is greatly appreciated.

Church posies show St Michael's is thinking of you. Renewing friendships and making new.

FROM LENT TO HOLIDAY CLUB

by Steve Chaffee



Lent has been a season of increasing import for me over the past few years. I am constantly amazed at how it deepens for me and becomes a sort of 'lens' that amplifies my interior life. For a season to be marked with sackcloth and ashes as we consider our sins on the road to Easter, I have found it a very busy, hurried season. How fortunate, I was able to visit Iona briefly in March!

Very early in Lent, my friend Dr Katie Harling-Lee and I hosted a Lenten Poetry night where we read and pondered three poems of R S Thomas. There was a lovely group of about 10 adults present, and it had that wonderful feeling of all contributing and... almost... praying along with the text. Shortly after, I was away to Iona for an annual Youth and Family Worker's Retreat Conference hosted by Suzi Farrant and 121. And as I returned: Briony from St John's and a crew from both our churches welcomed nearly 200 Primary School children into the Kirk for CRACKING EASTER. And, just before the start of Holy Week: Messy Church, where we explored the Easter story, and what eggs have to do with it!

All of this is in addition to the ongoing work of Sunday Club, Bible Class, and Youth Fellowship! In each, we have continued to teach and show what it means to *practice the faith*. This sort of work often can go quietly under the radar, but we must always remember the incredible efforts of our volunteer teams, without whom these programmes would not run. As always: there is always room for more to come on-board!

Finally, I would be utterly remiss if I did not mention HOLIDAY CLUB. Briony and I have been hard at work prepping and thinking about it this summer!

Make sure to mark **7-11 August** in your calendars! We will start having open calls for volunteers through April, and our first team meeting in mid-late May. If you're interested in helping, or have any questions whatsoever, please do not hesitate to reach out as soon as you can!



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A world map with a dark blue background. The map is covered with numerous small, glowing white dots, representing light or prayer. In the center of the map, there is a logo consisting of concentric white circles and a vertical line, with the text 'thykingdomcome' written below it.

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Say One For Me –



by Alison Miller

Thy Kingdom Come (TKC) is a global ecumenical prayer movement that invites Christians around the world to pray for more people to come to know Jesus.

From Ascension to Pentecost

Thy Kingdom Come invites us to pray for other people for the 10 days between Ascension (when we remember Jesus going up to heaven) and Pentecost (when we remember the Holy Spirit coming to the disciples like tongues of fire). In particular to pray for 5 other people. There are many ways we can do this. There are two suggestions in this article

- 'Say One for me' which involves asking for prayer for yourself or someone else.
- And praying the Lord's Prayer each day for 10 days.

For more ideas or information go to
<https://www.thykingdomcome.global/about-us>

Say one for me!

If you could ask someone to pray for one thing today for you, what would it be?

The Wednesday prayer group at St Michael's would be happy to pray on your behalf. Simply write your request on the slip below, cut it out, and put it in an envelope marked 'Say One for me'. Then either pop it through the letter box at the front of Cross House; or place it in the prayer box in the Queen's Aisle in the church; or or post it to 'Say one for me', Cross House, Linlithgow, EH49 7AL.

Say One For Me –

Time to pray?

It is said that everybody prays some of the time. Sometimes it's just 'Help', or maybe a desperate cry in times of physical, mental or emotional pain.

The prayer at the heart of 'Thy Kingdom Come' is the Lord's prayer. I wonder if you would like to take time to think or say the Lord's Prayer at midday each day from 18th to 28th May?

The Lord's Prayer (New Living Translation)

Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy.
May your Kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us today the food we need,
and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.
And don't let us yield to temptation,
but rescue us from the evil one.
For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory for ever. Amen

New Living Translation (NLT), Matthew 6:9-13

A quick introduction to the Lord's Prayer

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray, he crafted a meticulous, memorable, rhyming prototype.

The Lord's Prayer are words we can actually say – and when we repeat these familiar lines, we echo the words of Christ himself, alongside billions of Christians throughout time, all over the world.

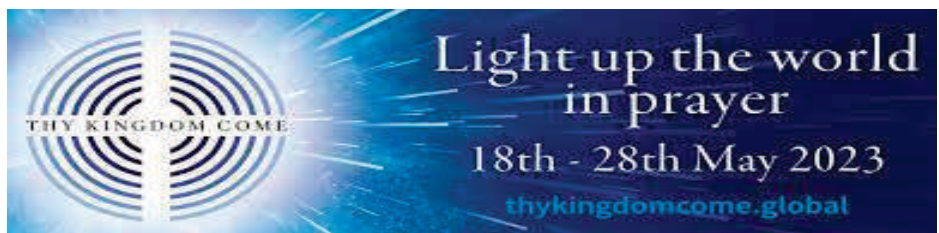
This prayer given by Jesus can be used in two distinct ways:

As a model. The Lord's Prayer serves as the ultimate prototype. It teaches us what to pray.

As a map. The Lord's Prayer guides us as we express the things on our hearts. It teaches us how to pray.

See the 24-7 Prayer Course for more information at:

<https://tinyurl.com/ykvtd8bf>





YESTERDAY ONCE MORE



by Iain Harrison

Sadly 1973 was not a great year on a number of fronts. There was conflict in Northern Ireland that also spread to Britain, the Yom Kippur War between Israel and the Arab countries (primarily Egypt and Syria) took place and the Royal Navy had to protect British fishing vessels during the Cod Wars with Iceland. VAT was introduced and in January the UK joined The European Economic Community. Across the pond in the USA, the Watergate Scandal was about to unfold.

What was happening in Linlithgow and in our Church 50 years ago? Another dig into the Kirk Session Minutes provides some of the answers.

Damage to Cross House

In February 1973 a claim was settled against the Town Council for damage done to Cross House. The original offer made by the Council was doubled to £1,042.90, an offer that was accepted by the Kirk Session.

Communion Cups

Once again, and long before Covid and other nasty ailments, the question of using individual Communion Cups whilst retaining the use of the Common Cup at Holy Communion was discussed. A total of 52 Elders voted with 21 in favour and 31 against. It was agreed that this matter was now concluded and that this decision should be intimated to members of the congregation.

Sale of Old Manse

It was agreed at the February meeting that the existing manse be put up for sale at an upset price of £27,000 and that this offer be left open for a period not exceeding 3 months. It was felt that this sum would cover the cost of a New Manse to be built behind Cross House. The 3-month offer was subsequently reduced with offers closing on 5 April 1973. However, by 17 April no offers had been received and it was agreed that the sale should be inserted in the Index of Properties for sale in the Edinburgh and Glasgow Solicitors Property Centres. This must have worked as on 25 September notification of the sale of the Old Manse was given.

Grave Situation

The Town Council approached the Moderator regarding the condition of the graveyard, which was and still is the Council's responsibility. The Council wanted to 'clear up' the graveyard and this was agreed subject to the preservation of any stones of historical importance.

A pain with Pay-ins at the Bank

The Treasurer pointed out at the October meeting that there had been frequent errors in totalling the amount of money being paid into the Bank from Church offerings. Team leaders and Elders were asked to take special care!

Rev Dr David Steel

The October meeting also coincided with the announcement that the Rev Dr David Steel had been nominated as Moderator Designate of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. It was noted that the Kirk Session and congregation were 'deeply proud that their minister should be about to be called to the supreme office in the Church of Scotland'. In reply Dr Steel said that his selection was an honour, 'not least to St Michael's and to the other congregations which he had served both at home and abroad.'

Kirkgate Shop

At the November meeting, following complaints from those involved with the Sunday School, the lack of adequate heating and the poor condition of the floor and door lintel were discussed. Two night-store heaters were quickly installed to combat the cold and damp. It was also agreed to carry out repairs to the door lintel as a matter of urgency. Estimates for replacing the floor had been received and were passed on to the Property Committee. They acted quickly and the work was done in December.



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1ST STEP

by Maria Throp



1st Step Development Ventures has been operating for 7 years and started as a constituted community group wanting a safe space for people in recovery from addictions to meet.

The group had directly experienced a huge gap in opportunities for people in recovery to socialise, learn and volunteer in a safe and trusted space with peers as positive role models.

In October 2018 we became a charity (SCIO). Our main charitable purpose is to provide safe, supportive environments for people affected by illegal substance addictions. Importantly, to create opportunities for people in early recovery to gain confidence, build diverse supportive relationships, develop skills and learn to build better relationships with the wider community.

We work with diverse partners including the NHS, West Lothian and Falkirk Councils, West Lothian Food Bank, social work teams, criminal justice teams; Change Grow Live (CGL) and the Cyrenians.

We offer:

- Weekly recovery meeting at the Longcroft Hall in Linlithgow
- Weekly community café at the Longcroft Hall in Linlithgow
- A Community garden at the Longcroft Hall
- 1st Step Bike training and refurbishment social enterprise based at the Linlithgow Recycling Centre and Howgate Shopping Centre in Falkirk
- Two community food pantries in Bridgend Village and the Howgate Shopping Centre

The 1st Step café is the heart of 1st Step, providing a safe and supported space for many people at the start of their recovery. The café is often the 'first step' people take to recovery before 'growing' into our social enterprise opportunities.

The café garden provides food for the café and encourages people to learn to grow and enjoy the benefits of being outside.



Bikes for Bonnytown Nursery

Over the last 4 years we have developed 1st Step Bikes, offering bike refurbishment training courses (people affected by addiction/poor mental health), bike repairs, services and monthly bike sales. The training courses target people at the right point in their recovery to start to learn new skills, develop routines, make wider social connections (important to preventing relapse) and start to rebuild their lives. Providing social connections, a sense of purpose and importantly, hope, and tackling boredom and stigma are the key ingredients needed to build recovery capital and recover sustainably.

In 2018 we were awarded 'Cycling UK Community Group of the Year' and then in October 2022 we were awarded by 'Cycling Scotland' Community Champion Of The Year For Everyday Cycling!



We are now taking bookings for people who would like their bikes serviced or repaired and we even have a number of appointments under the UK Cycling scheme, which contributes £50 towards work done on your bike.

If you would like to find out more about 1st Step, would like to refer someone to us or have a bike you would like to donate or be repaired please email Maria Throp firststepdevelopment@gmail.com

Follow us on Facebook [1stStepcafeandbikes](#)

THROUGH JESUS' EYES

by Gordon Wardall

'The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but in seeing with new eyes.'

So wrote the French author, Marcel Proust, around 100 years ago. Without doubt, it's enlightening to view life through the eyes of other people. Our view of life can be completely transformed when we try to see the world through Jesus' eyes.

First, Jesus gives us a new view of our fellow human beings. When we regard other people as annoying, unpleasant or thoroughly unloveable, as we all too often do (I certainly do, while realising that others may have a similar view of me...) it helps to remember that to Jesus, each person is infinitely valued and loved. God created each in his image and sent Jesus to live as a human being and die for them.



Jesus also teaches us to view life in this world in the light of eternity. Eternal life with Jesus has been likened to a journey with him, beginning here and now in this world and continuing after physical death. Our actions to serve God and our neighbour are milestones upon that journey.

To most of us, eternity is a difficult, abstract concept, the province perhaps of the physicist or philosopher. Jesus, instead, relates eternity to our everyday life and actions. To Jesus, the person who feeds the hungry, welcomes the stranger, provides shelter for the homeless, cares for the sick or visits the prisoner is the person concerned with eternity. It's both inspiring and sobering to realise that the decisions we make and the actions we take in this life, particularly those concerning our relationships with God and other people, have an eternal significance.

In addition, seeing things through Jesus' eyes helps to give perspective and a sense of proportion to the worries and challenges that beset us here and now, and helps us to reset our priorities. As Joni Eareckson Tada wrote, 'Perspective is everything when you are experiencing the challenges of life'. Without God, relatively minor matters may assume disproportionate significance. When we see things through Jesus's eyes, and follow his teaching to love God with all our being, putting him first in our lives, life's worries and our sometimes muddled priorities fall into their proper place. Our hearts and minds are then opened to his help and guidance.

Prayer: Eternal God, help me to see things more from the viewpoint of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Give me a new view of my fellow human beings and of life in this world. This I ask in his name. Amen

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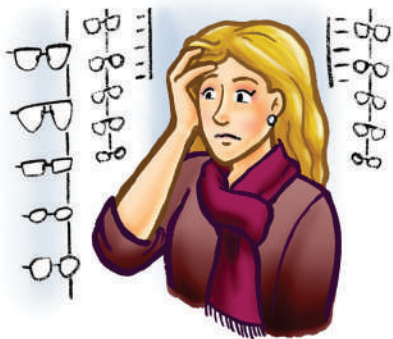
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