

BLACKHALL BULLETIN

December 2025

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No. 179

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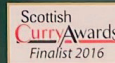
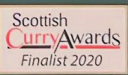
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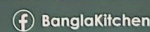
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HOPE

The other day I gave a reflection at a local care home about hope. I began by sharing a story about a time when I saw a Miracle and how that Miracle was connected to Hope.



I went back to the days when I was at university training for the ministry in order to become a minister. At that time, I was also working as a lifeguard and as a swimming teacher. Due to some of my shifts, I couldn't always get to Church on a Sunday morning and so, one day, I ended up at an evening service at a Baptist Church in Paisley.

It was there I saw a Miracle connected to Hope. I say I saw a Miracle and that is because there was only one of her and she was at the Church to be baptised. I said that Miracle was connected to Hope because Hope was her little sister. I knew that because they were both in one of my swimming classes. They are wonderful names and, as you can probably tell from their beautiful names, both girls were of African descent.

If you google the word hope, you will find it says; 'Hope is a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen.' Hope is the desire for a certain outcome that is different from the situation we find ourselves in.

In Paul's letter to the Romans 8: 24-25, we are told:

*For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees?
But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

When we read these verses, faith immediately springs to mind (another popular name.) There is a correlation, a connection between hope and faith. Faith can be defined as a complete trust in someone or something. Although faith, as defined, does not include a specific outcome, as hope generally does, the two are intrinsically intertwined and interrelated.

We can see this from the letter to the Hebrews where at chapter 11 verse 1 it says: *Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.*

Faith and hope work together. We cannot have faith without hope, and we cannot have hope without faith. Both faith and hope require patience, endurance and perseverance. We never hope for something we already have, we always hope for an expectation of something better than our present reality. We need to always remember that our present situation is never permanent. Our present circumstances do not represent our final outcome!

We also need to remember that whenever we are hoping for something, we are waiting. Whenever we are hoping for something, there is a period when nothing is happening; at least in relation to thing we are hoping for. There is a time when the thing we are looking forward to has not yet come to fruition, it has not come to pass yet. We are able to hope, or wait, not because we can see it but because we are confident that it will come to pass in due time. As the Psalmist put it; *And now, O Lord, what do I wait for? My hope is in you.* (Psalm 39:7). This, in turn, requires faith, in order to believe that what we hope for will come to fruition. As we wait, we must remember to endure. As I said, perseverance is a requirement whilst we hope. Hope is not always easy, it requires determination, it requires focus and, ultimately, it requires trust. It is like the Proverb says *Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.* (Proverbs 13:12)

Put another way sometimes the waiting in hope can make us feel sick but, when at last a hope becomes fulfilled, when a dream becomes a reality, it makes all the waiting all the more worthwhile and the reality all the sweeter.

God, through Jesus Christ, has made us many promises. By persevering in prayer, by trusting in God's word, by putting our faith in Him, we can continue to hope and endure the waiting that comes with that. Then, when that desire finally comes to fruition, our joy will be complete.

As you read this article, the Advent season is upon us. Advent is a season observed in most Christian denominations as a time of waiting and preparation for both the celebration of Jesus's birth at Christmas and the return of Christ at the Second Coming. At this time, in the world we have much to wish for. The world is in turmoil with conflict and the risk of it spreading. The economic situation is bad for many people. Now is a time when we need hope.

The message of Christmas is hope. Jesus is sometimes referred to as *Emmanuel* which translates as *God with us*. Whilst God is always with us, it is through Jesus and His teaching that we can learn how to be reconciled to God. It is that reconciliation that gives Christians hope. As we prepare to celebrate Christmas and mark the birth of Jesus Christ, we also prepare ourselves for what is referred to as the Second Coming. There are different understandings of what that means and what that will look like, but it is through the teachings of Jesus that we learn to have the faith that our hopes will be ultimately fulfilled.

Merry Christmas and God's blessings to all.

Fergus

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we just need a hug.
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A WEE HUG



There`s jist nae doot about it,
We scarcely could survive without it.
A hug delights and warms and chairms,
It must be why God gave us airms.



Hugs are great for faither and mairthers,
Sweet for sisters, even for brithers.
And chances are some favourite aunts
Love them mair than potted plants.



Kittens crave them, puppies love them,
Heids of state are naw abune them.
A hug can brek the language barrier
An` mak the dullest day seem merrier.



Nae need tae fret about the store o`em
The mair ye gie, the mair there are o`em
So stretch those airms without delay
An` gie someyin a hug today!



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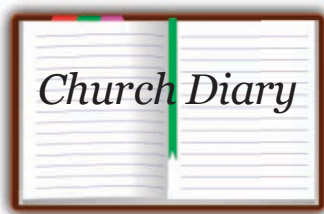
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DECEMBER

7 th	10.30am	Morning Worship with St David's Brass Band
14 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
	4.00pm	Blue Christmas Service
21 st	10.30am	Morning Worship
	7.00pm	Joy! – a new celebration of Christmas by the Choir & Junior Singers
24 th	6.00pm	Christingle Service
	11.30pm	Watchnight Service
25 th	10.30am	Christmas Day Service
28 th	10.30am	Family Carol Service

JANUARY

4 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
11 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
18 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
25 th	10.30am	Morning Worship

FEBRUARY

1 st	10.30am	Holy Communion
	3.00pm	Holy Communion
8 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
15 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
22 nd	10.30am	Youth Service -Thinking Day
29 th	10.30am	Morning Worship

If, for whatever reason, you find yourself unable to attend any service in person you can join with us online when the service is happening (i.e. at 10.30am) or watch later if you cannot do that. Go to:

www.youtube.com/@blackhallstcolumba

OR

you can scan the QR code with your phone or tablet, click the yellow link which appears and you can follow the service that way.



Please note times and dates are correct at time of printing but may be subject to change so check the Church website nearer the time.

*Wishing all our readers a Merry Christmas
And a very Happy New Year
From the Minister and congregation
of Blackhall St Columba's*

The Prayer Circle



Do you know someone in need of prayer? A friend or relative perhaps who is unwell, grieving or find themselves in a position where they don't know where to turn?

Blackhall St Columba's Prayer Circle is a small team of people who will pray frequently for anyone in need of help in complete confidence. We are also happy to accept prayer requests giving thanks for a happy event or asking for God's help with any forthcoming personal endeavour or challenge.

Please contact Prayer Circle secretary Betty Watt at lzbthwatt@yahoo.co.uk or Fergus Cook at Fcook@churchofscotland.org.uk or 0131 466 7503.

Alternatively, please put your request slip into the locked box marked "Prayer Requests" on the table at the back of the Church.



MIDWEEK PEACE SERVICES

Our midweek Peace services continue at 12 noon in the sanctuary with a short act of worship with an invited speaker followed by a soup lunch. It is an opportunity to share fellowship, food and worship together and everyone is most welcome. Please consider joining us.

10 th December	Christmas Celebration
	- Shona Cook
7 th January	'Empty chairs at empty tables'
	- Shona Cook
21 st January	To love another person is to see the face of God
	- Muriel Stenhouse
4 th February	Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity
18 th February	'You'll never walk alone'
	- Muriel Stenhouse

For more information please contact:
Shona Cook 07981 970 054 or
Ruth Laidlaw 07513 967 974

We rely on volunteers to make and serve lunch and to drive some of our attendees to the church so if you think you might be able to help, even on an ad hoc basis, we would love to hear from you.

On behalf of FreshStart management a big **THANK YOU** to you for the donations of cleaning and personal care products to our Harvest Festival Service on 12th October. These were delivered on the next day and really will be appreciated by the people when receiving their “starter packs”. The Pantry Food Shop at FreshStart also was most grateful to receive the fresh fruit and vegetables that had decorated the church and also items donated by the congregation.

Demand for surplus household items shows no let up and remember any donations can be handed in to the church on Friday mornings between 10 and 11.30 am to one of our team of volunteers on duty. As winter approaches FreshStart expect a rise in demand for bedding and curtains as well small electrical items like kettles/toasters etc.

This month is also the launch of the annual appeal by FreshStart of “Cookers for Christmas”. Can you imagine being moved into a flat/house just before Christmas and have nothing to cook the family meal on - it does happen. You can donate any amount of money either via their website (www.freshstartweb.org) or by cheque to their office at 22-24 Ferry Road Drive EH4 4BR (cheques payable to FreshStart and mark the envelope “Cookers for Christmas”).

Your ongoing support for FreshStart is much appreciated.

Lilian & Michael
c/o Church Office
0131 332 4431

Breath - Works



From the week beginning 3rd of November Dee@Breath-works will start running her Monday evening class from 6-7 pm at Cramond Kirk and her classes Tuesday and Thursday morning from 9.30am -10.30am at Blackhall St. Columba's Church Livestream available
Book from the the website : www.Breath-works.co.uk
Email: dee@breath-works.co.uk



BOOK HERE

YOGA MOVES

Yoga Moves with Mary
Monday 9:30 am-10:30 am Yoga Sculpt
Blackhall St. Columba's Church
(Livestream available)
Tuesday 6:30am -7:15am
Online Yoga Rise - Zoom
Thursday 6:00pm -7:00 pm Vinyasa Flow
St Columba's Church , Upper Hall
(Livestream available)
From November 1st.



BOOK HERE



BLACKHALL BADMINTON CLUB

Invites you to come and join them

We meet at times to suit both those free during the day and those who are free in the evenings.

Wednesday Eve 8-10.15pm

Adults (over 18)

Mixed standard

Thursday Morning 9.30 -12noon

Adults (over 18)

Mixed Standard

The season runs from September to April.

We are looking for new players.

The cost is £80 for the year or £6 for visitors and those who want to drop in and give it a try.

EVERYONE IS WELCOME

For further information please contact

Elspeth Martin

elspeth_martin10@yahoo.co.uk

WATCH CHRISTMAS FAIR

Well, the clocks may have changed, and the days seem shorter,

BUTits not all doom and gloom –

It's time for the **CHRISTMAS FAIR** which is always full of Christmas Cheer!

It's on Saturday 29th November – a little earlier than usual but you can be sure it will be as full of all the familiar stalls to help us raise funds for this year's charity **THE EDINBURGH CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL CHARITY**. This is our final fundraising event this year, so let's make it a truly great one.

Come and meet Santa, have your face painted or see what fun games and puzzles and books we have for sale. There are all the usual stalls – Baking, Candy, Bric a Brac, Accessories, Tombola, Bottle Stall, Books and of course our wonderful **HAMPERS** ! Admission is £2 (cash only please) for adults and children are free.

Tea, coffee and treats will be served in the Sanctuary where you can sit back relax and listen to some seasonal music.

DONATIONS

If you wish to donate to any of the stalls please bring your donation to the Church Hall on Friday 28th November from 10am - 12 noon, 2pm - 4pm, 7pm - 9pm or on the morning of the 29th between 10 am and 12 noon. **All donations will be very gratefully received**



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THE CAMEO CLUB

(Come And Meet Each Other)

Cameo Club, held every fortnight in St Columba's Church halls, is a social club to which anyone in the community can join. We meet for refreshments at 10.30 followed by an hour of entertainment till 12 noon. We have a varied programme with choirs and individual musicians as well as groups. We will be having The Ukulele Trio at our only meeting in December on Friday 12th. Meetings in January will be on 9th and 23rd when we will be enjoying music from some of our favourite singers. You can always find the dates when we are in the halls by looking at the church website at blackhallstcolumba.org.uk under "calendar".

We will just have enjoyed our Christmas lunch outing by the time you read this. We returned to the Leonardo Hotel to start the festive season. We also have a bus trip in the Summer and last year enjoyed an outing to North Berwick on a perfect, sunny day.

If you would like to come along either to join as a member (which is free), or to help as a volunteer, you will be very welcome. We have increasing numbers of gentlemen in our ranks. More information can be had by contacting the number below.

Fiona Drinnan 343 6762

KNIT AND NATTER

We are now well into another busy session of Knit and Natter and our boxes are filling up with items for Pregnancy Counselling and Care. We are also delighted to have welcomed new members to our group.

If you would like to join us on Monday evenings you would be most welcome, whatever your knitting abilities are or if you would like to learn.

We have a new project for the church which we are also working on. Watch this space next year.

If you would like any further information about Knit and Natter, please contact me, Lilian Cockburn at stcknitnatter@gmail.com



EDINBURGH FLORAL ART CLUB



Our talks/demonstrations continue as follows

12th December - Kath Doggett
demo, "Christmas is Coming"

We do not meet in January

13th February 2026, "The Club Entertains"
Speaker tbc and Afternoon Tea

We meet from 2pm - 4pm in the large hall at Blackhall St Columba's,

Visitors always welcome, £10.

For more information call Suzie Stark, Chairman, on 07888. 942561.

TUESDAY TOPICS

We had an excellent start in September when 30 of us heard about the *City Poorhouse at Craiglockhart* and on 28th October, Maggie Quayle gave us a most interesting talk about the *RNLI*. By the time you read this, David Hughson will have given us his talk on *Lighthouses*.

We take a break in December as there is so much else on, so our next meeting is our 'Christmas' lunch at Howies on **January 13th** at 12 noon. We return to the small hall on **27th January** for Ann Clark to tell us about *Therapets* and the joy and help their visits bring people.

Most of our members will recall we have a representative from *Edinburgh Zoo* for the last two years and we decided to ask them to return for 2026, so please do come on **24th February**. Their talks have been most entertaining and informative so we look forward to another visit.

On **24th March**, Odile Hughson (David's wife) will be with us with her talk about the *Auld Alliance*. All historians welcome!

Our meetings are at 7.30 in the small hall, and all are welcome for our talks, tea, coffee, and chat.
Do come and join us. For more details please contact:

Lyndy Paton. Sec. 0131 332 7377 or 07460212174
Sheila Mackintosh 0131 336 1357



Merry Christmas



NORTH WEST HERITAGE

Talks take place in Davidson's Mains Parish Church North hall at 7.30pm. All are welcome. Cost is £3.00 payable at the door.

Remaining talks for 2025-26 session Are:

Wednesday 26th November

The Characters of Cammo House
Speaker Ann Carrigan

Wednesday 28th January

Historic maps of our area of Edinburgh
Speaker: Laragh Quinney

Wednesday 25th February

The Bombing of Leith in WWII
Speaker: Tom Wood

Wednesday 25th March

Glassmaking in Edinburgh
Speaker: Dr Helen Spencer

Wednesday 22nd April

Life in the 19th c Old Town
Speaker Eric Melvin
This will be followed by the AGM

For more information about the group, please contact
Secretary, Charlotte Cowe 0131 336 2494
Email: charlotte@dmains.co.uk

Soup 'n' Chat

Back in operation and growing in popularity both for members and the wider community. Soup 'n' Chat opens at 12noon and there is always a warm welcome for everyone. Why not bring along a friend or neighbour (all ages welcome) who would enjoy the company and make new friends? It meets every two weeks on a Friday on the dates are below.

It finishes when the soup runs out and when chat is exhausted (the latter never happens). Enjoy the soup, warmth, chat and company – we look forward to seeing you there.

Michael
Lead Volunteer.

Friday 5th December Large Hall.

Friday 19th December-**NO SOUP N CHAT**
due to Community Event

Friday 16th January 2026 Large Hall

Friday 30th January 2026 Large Hall

Friday 13th February 2026 Small Hall



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SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING

The Autumn term has flown past, and we are already preparing for our St Andrew's week Afternoon tea Dance on 26th November. Report and photos in the next Bulletin)

The class continues to be well supported, with four sets filling the hall each Thursday evening. We have many dancers from the Blackhall community, but also from other parts of the city, and it's good to have people with a range of experience, from first-timers to those who have danced for decades.

I've asked five of the members to share just a sentence or two about why they come along and they agreed to have their photo included how many do you recognise ?



Margaret lives very locally and has been a member in the church for many years. When I arrived in Blackhall, she was the first person to invite me to the country dancing .

She says: I came to the country dancing when my family moved to Blackhall and, over the years, I have met so many lovely people. It's good that we now have men and women and we all mix together well. It keeps me active and challenges my brain too, remembering the formations, rights and lefts and so on. I hope to keep going, albeit not so quick as I once was!

Grace is another long-serving member of the class, whose son drives her over to the hall each week.

She says: I come to the dancing for the company and enjoyment. It's always a good night.



One of our very welcome male dancers is Peter, who comes down from Ravelston each week with his wife. They also enjoy the regular Music at St Columba's concerts and have made friends beyond the dance group.

He says: Linda and I come to the Scottish Country Dancing because it's something we can do together – get a little exercise, make new friends, learn something new and keep our brains active.

Another pair who have joined fairly recently are mother and daughter, Karen and Aileen. Karen has the distinction of being our youngest member (by far) and she has been like a breath of fresh air to us older ladies.

She says: My mum and I joined to try something new and we've been made very welcome. We both enjoy the company of the other dancers and we always have a great night together.



I leave the last word to a dancer I admire SO much.....Isabel is in her late nineties and has danced for longer than all of us. She comes with her daughter each week and everyone is inspired by her enthusiasm and her lovely personality.

She says: I love the dancing and the social company.

That is the essence of our Thursday evenings – and perhaps you would like to come along in the new year. Just contact me for any further information.

Muriel Stenhouse 07908 805 364

BLACKHALL GARDENING CLUB (Formally Blackhall Horticultural Society)



The nights are truly drawing in now, and our gardens are getting ready for winter. There are still warm days occasionally which encourage us out to tackle a few tasks, including sweeping leaves off our lawns. The latest advice is to leave them on the flower beds! The first named storm of the year, Storm Amy, swept through early in October, hopefully not causing too much damage.

Our 25/26 season began in October with a very interesting talk by Sarah Gerhardt, from Gerhardt's Garden Service, on Stonecrops for dry gardens. The group includes sedums which we are probably well aware of. We learnt how these drought tolerant and adaptable plants can help future proof our gardens while supporting pollinators. Sarah gave us a propagation demonstration and we were able to buy plants.

The programme for the rest of the 25/26 session includes talks on trees by Bob Glen on his project to reforest parts of Scotland, Bees in our Gardens, Shade Plants and a talk by MT O'Donnell from Scotland Grows magazine. We will be having a Christmas Social in December with drinks and nibbles, a display demonstration and a quiz.

The group meets at 7.45pm on the second Monday of the month from October to May in the small hall at Blackhall St Columba's Church. Look out for each month's poster displayed locally in Tesco's and Sainsburys and on the church notice boards. You can also check out our facebook page which can be found at www.facebook.com/groups/211472892232483. Talks are open to members and non members, we look forward to seeing you at one of our meetings. If you would like more information please email blackhall.horti@hotmail.com.



Blackhall St Columba's Art Club

With a new season underway we have welcomed 5 new members to the Art Club this term. We are now using the small hall monthly, for a programme of art demonstrations and workshops. This started off with a model who has come along for figurative drawing.

For those interested in the group, we are looking forward to learning new techniques in different mediums in the coming months.

Our Christmas meal will be at the Toby Carvery at Silverknowes in December. We wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a good New Year.

Marge Whiteside.



ADVENT CONVERSATION 2025

THERE IS LIGHT

This year we will be trying something new for our Advent Conversation Series. Members of the Church (and anyone else who might be interested) are invited to get a copy of a **'There is Light'** booklet. The booklet contains a very short daily reading accompanied by a short reflection and thought. Booklets are available at the Church for a £1 donation. They are ideal to spend less than five minutes reading at home as a personal preparation for Christmas.

For those who wish, we will have four **'Advent Conversations'** to discuss the contents of the booklet and more. The Conversations will take place at **6pm** in the Church on the four Sundays of Advent – 30th November, 7th 14th and 21st of December. As the readings start on 1st December the first conversation will be about what we expect from the series. Booklets will also be available then.



ENJOY A CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION on BLACKHALL'S NATIVITY TRAIL

THURSDAY 18TH DECEMBER 2025 from 5.00 -7.00pm

FRIDAY 19TH DECEMBER 2025 from 4.00 -7.00pm

Take a moment or two to be reminded of the Good News of Christmas amid all the hurly burly of Advent. Let yourself relax and enjoy what Christmas is really about. If you have little ones yourself or “grand” little ones or if you find it hard to suppress your own inner child, just make your way along to Blackhall St Columba's Church this Christmas to experience something very special that is happening in the heart of our community - our ***Follow the Star Nativity Trail*** which, this year, focuses on our preparations for, and enjoyment of, our Christmas Celebration on Thursday 18th or Friday 19th December.

On the last Thursday and Friday before Christmas (the last week of school before it closes for the holidays), throughout the late afternoon and early evening, Blackhall St Columba's is hosting an interactive exploration of the Greatest Story Ever Told using the church itself and all its halls and buildings. (If you haven't seen the church since its renovation a couple of years ago, why not take this opportunity to come in and have a look around?)

Discover what Advent is preparing us for and find out the true meaning of Christmas in a novel and exciting way as you hear the Angel Gabriel's message and go, with Mary, on a journey to Bethlehem. You will follow the star and discover the shepherds, King Herod and some busy innkeepers on the way until you finally reach the stable with Mary and Joseph and discover for yourselves the most wonderful gift we have ever been given.

As if that wasn't enough, we are also offering a Christmas Nativity Escape Room for the older children who come along. In addition, there will be lots of Christmas crafts, some seasonal musical entertainment and, of course, plenty of Christmas treats and refreshments. There couldn't be a better way to start your Christmas celebrations!

Our doors are open from 5.00 -7.00pm on 18th December and 4.00-7.00pm on 19th December and all are welcome. There is no charge, but you can, if you wish, make a donation which will be divided between covering costs and charity.

We look forward to seeing many of you there.

Shona



JUNIOR SINGERS

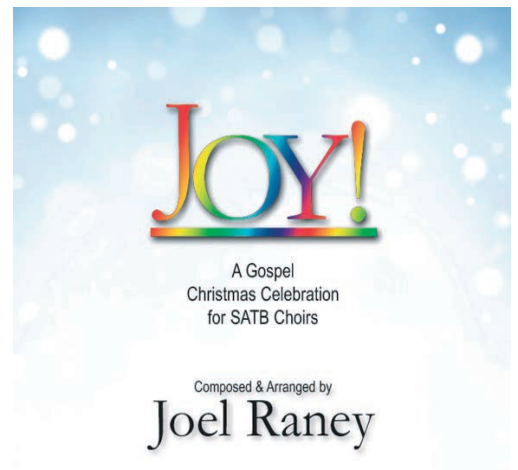
Junior Singers started back after the summer break with three new young folk coming to join the choir. Unfortunately, at the same time, the local primary school started up a new after-school club – netball for girls – and this regretfully, but understandably, resulted in us losing a few choristers. Fortunately, the remaining girls have chosen singing over sport, so we still have a primary-aged choir, albeit smaller, ready and eager to fulfil our Christmas commitments.

The children have received an invite to sing to the residents of Queen's Court – an event much enjoyed by the choir in the past – on the 18th December and later that week, on **Sunday 21st at 7pm**, they will be joining the church senior choir, praise group and praise band to sing "Sing Joy" under the direction of our organist, Donald Cameron. This will be a new experience for our present singers as they have never sung with the adults before. True to form, however, they are learning the new material with great enthusiasm and we hope they will again rise to the occasion.

Junior Singers is open to any child in the P3 – P7 age group, residing in the local area. We meet every Thursday during term time from 3.45 – 4.30pm in the upstairs hall at Blackhall St Columba's Church.

If your child enjoys singing and would be interested in trying out the choir (there is no audition), then please come along any Thursday or phone me on 07711659849.

Amy Donaldson



A modern suite of songs which tell the Christmas story from prophecy to birth of Jesus.

Welcome Back !

New to Blackhall, an addition to the other health services in the area are Ross and Jamieson Hearing Consultants.

Glenn Jamieson tells us a little about why they have established themselves in 'the dip'.

Ross and Jamieson Hearing Consultants is your new Independent family run Audiology clinic based on Queensferry Road. Having grown up in Blackhall, and still having family here, I am delighted to be able to give back to the community that gave me such a wonderful place to grow up.

Blackhall has always felt like 'home' and I am so pleased to give Blackhall an Audiology clinic that is not just highly professional, but deeply personal.

Ross & Jamieson Hearing Consultants offer Hearing Assessments, Wax Removal and Hearing Aids...or just a cup of tea and a chat!!!

*I look forward to seeing you soon,
Glenn Jamieson*



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How Christmas gifts can fight poverty



Tea garden worker Munni picking tea in Moulvibazar, Bangladesh.
Credit: Fabeha Monir/Oxfam

With Christmas on the horizon, why not consider a gift that creates real impact? Oxfam Unwrapped is our range of charity gifts that directly support projects around the world.

In Bangladesh, tea workers like Munni are living on very low daily salaries. Munni earns just 170 Taka (around £1) a day. As well as working long days for low pay, women face legal and social discrimination and carry the heavy burden of unpaid household care work too – all while facing the risk of violence and abuse.

Our Valuing Women's Work gift cards are directly supporting our partner organizations like Breaking the Silence, who are helping women like Munni advocate for their rights through group meetings and training.

"Previously I had a fear inside my mind. Now there is no fear." – Munni.

From just £5, you can give a gift that helps fund impactful projects like this one.

Shop Oxfam Unwrapped

To help others less fortunate when buying your Christmas cards and gifts why not go to Oxfam Unwrapped ? (just enter that and search) There you will find many great value and different gifts and know that you are helping women like Munni ; children who still do not have access to clean water ; safe education for girls ; rebuilding after conflict and so many more.

Check out their Christmas Gift Guide which has gifts for everyone whatever their age or interests.



THE KNITTED BIBLE – A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

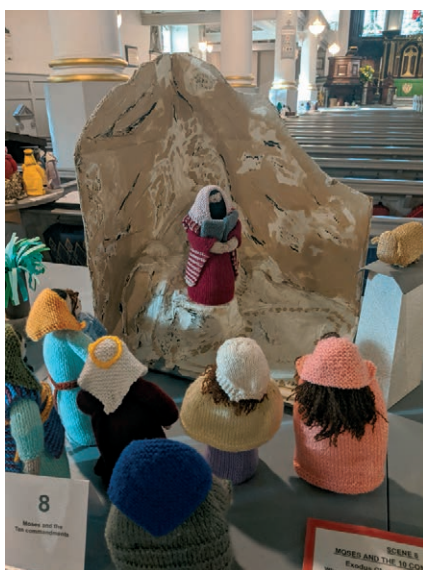


Blackhall St Columba's is very excited to be hosting the **Knitted Bible** - 36 scenes from both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible in knitted form, created in 2008 by over 40 people in St George's URC in Hartlepool. It will be on display in the church from **Friday 13th March until Friday 20th March 2026**. Further information regarding opening times will be available nearer the time.

This is *only the second time it has been displayed in Scotland* (the first being at St Annes's in Dunbar earlier this year). So, it is a rare opportunity to see this very special exhibit. These photos do not do justice to the skills of the knitters. We hope you will come and see for yourselves. Many who have visited have not only been impressed by the knitters' skill, but moved by the way they illustrate the stories from the Bible.

For more information, please see <https://www.stgeorgesurc.co.uk/the-knitted-bible/>

The 36 knitted Bible scenes created by St George's URC, Hartlepool included Noah's Ark, Jacob's Ladder, Moses and the Ten Commandments, the Good Shepherd (complete with 100 knitted sheep), the Last Supper, the Crucifixion and Breakfast on the Beach. Knitters from churches across Dunbar had worked together to create two new scenes to add to them: 'Jesus Calms the Storm' and 'The Holy Spirit Comes at Pentecost'.





BLACKHALL PROBUS CLUB



After a successful start to our session of talks in October, our final meeting before Christmas will be on 4th December when we shall be learning about the Archives of the National Trust for Scotland. This will be followed by our Christmas Lunch at Bruntisfield Golfing Society.

Looking ahead to 2026, our talks resume on 15th January when we shall hear about the work of The Commonwealth Graves Commission, which will be followed on 19th February by a talk about Dolly the Sheep who was the forerunner of much scientific advancement in the world of genetics.

Going forward into March, we have a speaker from Blood Bikes Scotland on the 5th. This charity does exactly what you would expect - the rapid transportation of urgently needed blood supplies to hospitals by motorbike. A fortnight later on the 19th, we shall learn about Wojtek the Bear, a Polish war hero, whose statue was unveiled in Princes Street Gardens several years ago.

Our session of talks will end on 2nd April when we shall have a speaker from the group of volunteers restoring the Barnton Bunker, which is situated off Clermiston Road North.

If you want to join us for any of these meetings, please come along to Blackhall Bowling Club in Keith Row from 10am on the day, with the talks starting at 10.30. You will be made very welcome.

If you wish any further information about the Club, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Gordon Hamilton

President

gdhprobus@gmail.com

0131 332 6089

CRAIGLEITH MEN'S PROBUS CLUB

Is it too early to make your New Year's Resolution? Mine is probably to be more observant about Edinburgh's heritage and its environment, and one way, of course, is to be more attentive at our talks !

Our New Year starts on Wednesday 21st January when we will welcome back Keith Potts, one of the Rangers at Holyrood Park and he will be highlighting the rich biodiverse fauna within this greenspace. Were you aware of the conservation project involving the Northern Brown Argos, and so the need for planting of rock roses in Holyrood's vicinity? I am sure Keith will tell us more, as well as explaining that Holyrood Park / Arthur's Seat Volcano is Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). 'Auld Reekie' certainly now has a very diverse fauna and flora so close to its centre.

Perhaps our talk on Wednesday 4th February by Bill Hagen will develop into another flight of fancy as Bill explains that '*Travel by Air is the Safest Way to Travel*', and while thinking of air travel, our charity themed talk on Wednesday 18th February will focus on the work of the Scottish Charity Air Ambulance <https://www.scaa.org.uk>. Were you aware that by donating only £40 your name is printed on their new air ambulance ? Here's hoping after the talk, the name, Craigleith Probus, will be clearly embossed six or more times! Like many others our family has had the benefit of the use of an air ambulance and it is such a worthy charity for us to consider in 2026.

With early narcissi showing and giving the message of Easter we look forward, on Wednesday 4th March, to the visit by Adam Cumming, Chair of Scotland's Churches Trust (SCT), and his talk on *Medieval Churches of Edinburgh*. The SCT seeks to protect Scotland's rich cultural and ecclesiastical heritage to preserve it for future generations, whether the reasons are religion, history, architecture, culture or genealogy.

Our session concludes on March 18th when we welcome back James Waugh who will tell us about the completion of the *Trans USA Railway*.

Please just email me if you want more information and no need for a formal invite, just pop along to Blackhall Bowling Club at 10am on any of these days.

John MacLennan - Secretary

johnmaclellannanuk@googlemail.com

PARKING AT CRAIGLEITH SHOPPING CENTRE

As Christmas approaches you may well find yourself parking at Craigleith Shopping Centre to visit the various stores there. Did you know that there is a time limit on how long you can park without being fined ?

Did you know the Car Park at Sainsburys is run by a different company to the one at M&S/ Currys/Boots ?

No ? Well unless you are a giraffe with excellent eyesight that's not surprising as the notices are so high on the poles. To help you know the difference **in charges** if you overstay the **3 hours** I attempted to photograph both. As you can see, if you are over 3 hours at Sainsburys the fine is £75. However, at the M&S end it is £100! Both fines go up if you do not pay when you receive your fine. I know of several people who have been fined recently.

BUT you can avoid this (after all if they are going to fine you for shopping there it does seem more than a bit ridiculous). You can park in one car park and then move to the other before your 3 hours are up. The Group Nexus (M&S end) photograph you going in and out and you cannot return to their car park for 1.5 hours. Sainsburys (Euro Car Parks) do not seem to do this as yet. Should you receive a fine, you can appeal to the managers of Craigleith Shopping Centre, showing your receipts for the shopping you did on that day. This usually results in the cancelling of the fine. After all, getting an eye test, shopping in M&S, Lidl and possibly Currys would take over 3 hours. As would a visit to the grooming parlour at Pets at Home.

The problem was caused by people parking their cars for the day and taking a bus into town. That resulted in lack of space for customers. But now customers are being penalised for being loyal ! The Gyle has, I believe, similar restrictions though possibly 4 hours there. *Happy fine free shopping !*



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BLACKHALL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Being a House Captain

At Blackhall Primary school there are four Houses Craigleith (red) Ravelston (blue) Columba (green) and Telford (Yellow) and each of these have two House Captains.

To become a House Captain, we had to go through an interview with Mrs Martin and the former House Captains. If you get through the interview, you have 2 weeks to prepare a speech/rap/poem and make posters to encourage the people that are in your House, to vote for you.

Becoming a House Captain is a big role to take on.

You have a number of roles and responsibilities that you must take on.

Being a House Captain, means you must act as a positive role model to all your peers and younger members of the school community.

One of our tasks, is to deliver the correct milk before playtime to all the classes in the school.

We also count the House 'pennies' each week, these are rewards that are given out to pupils during the week for showing, good conduct, good manners, and a good work ethic. At the end of the year, the House with the most pennies have a House event that is organised by the House Captains and our House Event Coordinators.

We meet on a regular basis and discuss how we can improve our school environment and to ensure that Blackhall Primary school continues to be a great place to learn and grow.

By Holly P7G

PICTURE:

This year's House Captains



BLACKHALL NURSERY NEWS DECEMBER 2025



Blackhall Nursery is situated within the wonderful nature resource of Ravelston Park and Woods. At Blackhall Nursery, we put the children at the heart of everything we do. We provide a safe, healthy and happy environment where children grow and develop through play and active learning. We were inspected in May 2025 and achieved 'very good' in all areas.

We began our new term in August, welcoming new families as well as lots of returning ones. We spent the first term getting to know the children and their families. After the October holiday we began our woodland walks, where the children explore Ravelston Woods in small groups, looking out for the changing seasons, building shelters and learning how to take appropriate risk by climbing trees, balancing on logs etc. We play outside everyday supporting the children to develop their gross motor skills and to stay physically active. We have learned about Diwali, St Andrew's Day and taken part in World Nursery Rhyme week. December brings great excitement. As I write this we are looking forward to a trip to St Columba's Church to hear the Nativity story told with wonderful knitted props, we hope to raise money through the NSPCC Christmas Jumper Day as well as teach children about the importance of giving by collecting gifts for Radio Forth's Mission Christmas and of course, we are looking forward to our Christmas party.

Blackhall Nursery is a registered Scottish charity working in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council. We offer full day (8:25am-2:35pm) places for 3-5 year olds during term time.

You can place your child's name on the Nursery waiting list from their 2nd birthday by downloading an application form at www.blackhallnursery.co.uk or by contacting the Nursery for an application form on 0131 332 8296. We recommend applying as early as possible -there is no cost or obligation by doing so.

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Girlguiding

Blackhall Guiding



202C Brownies have been working on the Railway Challenge badge, celebrating 200 years of train travel. This has included making posters to Save the Roseburn Path, making bridges from junk and imagining what railway carriages of the future will look like. The Brownies also enjoyed an evening of dancing with Ceilidh Kids.

Morag Higham – 202C Brownie Leader

202 Rainbows have enjoyed a fun term doing marble relay and a paint race as part of the Skills For My Future Theme badge. Our new Rainbows took their Rainbows promise and we had a visit from Ceilidh kids. Plus we are loving the 12 new Rainbows interest badges which have been added to our Rainbow programme.

Nicola McDermid – 202 Rainbow Leader

202A Rainbows and all 3 Brownie units went on a trip to Blair Drummond Safari Park with Girlguiding Scotland

157 Rainbows have been learning about recycling and had a go at making our own paper. We were very excited to learn some circus skills including juggling and spinning plates and we enjoyed some ceilidh dancing for St Andrew's day. **Caroline Murray 157 Rainbow Leader**

202 & 202B Brownies went paddleboarding and kayaking to start the term.



1 of our Brownie leaders Nicole was invited to represent Girlguiding Edinburgh at the Royal Garden Party this year.



202 and 202B Brownies have had an action packed start to the term making zip wires for teddies, completing the Up in the Air challenge badge, talking about how all our families are different and made family trees. They have all been busy growing a £1 to raise money for Cash for Kids Mission Christmas. They are ending the year with their annual silent disco. **Nicole Harland– 202&202B Brownie Leader**

202 Guides learnt vital skills for their First Aid badge & filled shoeboxes with Christmas gifts for Ukrainian children. Fundraising is well under way for their trip to World Centre Our Chalet in Switzerland next July.

Matilda Lomas- 202 Guide Leader

202A Rainbows enjoyed a fabulous Halloween party hosted by Jojo's albeit a week after Halloween. Lots of spooky fun had by all. They have also been working with 202 and 202B Brownies to raise money for Cash for Kids Mission Christmas

Barbara Bon – 202A Rainbow Leader

Volunteer with Girlguiding Edinburgh?

Could you spare some time to volunteer with us? It's an exciting time to be part of Girlguiding as we get to grips with our most exciting (and biggest) programme overhaul in 100 years!

We are looking for enthusiastic adults to help with Rainbow, Brownie & Guide units city-wide,

Full training and support provided. See our website or register online for more information:

<https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-volunteer/>

Blackhall.districtcomm@gmail.com



BEAVERS



As the Autumn term restarted, we had 23 beavers camp at Fordell Firs, many of them gaining their first experience of being away overnight. There was a range of adventurous activities and games. Beavers had a go at climbing, with some courageous members reaching the top of the tower to ring the bell; descended from the treetops on a zip wire, completed a challenge course, and also tried out some campfire cooking and bushcraft. In the evening, they enjoyed roasting marshmallows with some campfire songs despite the rain! Everyone pushed themselves out of their comfort zone to try something new and challenging. The camp was generously supported with funding from the Blackhall Children's Sports Committee.

cubs



Before the summer our Cubs and Scouts attended canvas camps at Bonaly and Fordell Firs, with the usual mix of adventurous activities and traditional scouting skills. A highlight for the cubs was the newly commissioned Alpine coaster at Hillend.

On a weekly basis the sections the sections have been building rockets, completing scientist badge, working through DIY badge (safe use of power tools anyone ?) .



Scouts



The Scouts have had also had a focus on community work and enjoyed spending a Saturday morning as windows cleaners at Blackhall primary, and a recent collection for the Edinburgh Clothing store. As we approached Armistice Day, they have also visited the Lady Hague Poppy Factory and will be launching a fund-raising effort through November in support of poppy Scotland.





PUZZLE PAGE



TWO SUDOKUS

THIS ONE IS SLIGHTLY EASIER

THAN THIS ONE

9			6					
2	7			8				6
	8	6		4	3	1	9	2
	9			1	6	5		
		5				2		
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AND FOR THOSE WHO LIKE A WORD CHALLENGE

How many words of two letters or more, can you make from the word **CHRISTMAS** ? You can use each letter only once (except S because there are two of them). Plurals are allowed. There are at least 75.

No, I'm not going to give you all of them. Just a 'wee challenge' for when you've nothing else to do (is that ever the case?) or can't get to sleep ! Happy word finding!



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Nativity Word Scramble

1. STRA _ _ _ _

2. MAGREN _ _ _ _ _

3. MYAR _ _ _ _

4. SEPHE _ _ _ _ _

5. DOEYKN _ _ _ _ _

6. AEGLN _ _ _ _ _

7. JPHOES _ _ _ _ _

8. JSSEU _ _ _ _ _

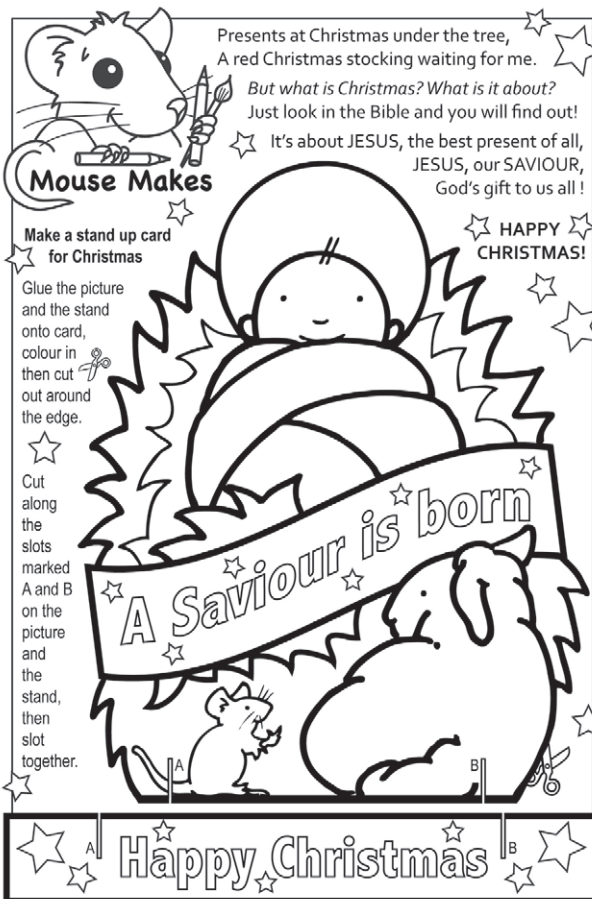
9. KIGSN _ _ _ _ _

10. STBALE _ _ _ _ _

All these words come from the Christmas story. Can you unscramble them?



www.ActivityVillage.co.uk - Keeping Kids Busy



Dec14 @deborah noble • parishpump.co.uk

Nativity Word Scramble

Can you unscramble these words from the Christmas story?

1. MHCEROIL _ _ _ _ _

2. GEBLAIR _ _ _ _ _

3. IPNREEEKN _ _ _ _ _

4. MSHESA _ _ _ _ _

5. BSARTALAH _ _ _ _ _

6. SHEDSPERH _ _ _ _ _

7. FESANNIERCKN _ _ _ _ _

8. MRYHR _ _ _ _ _

9. BEMETLHEH _ _ _ _ _

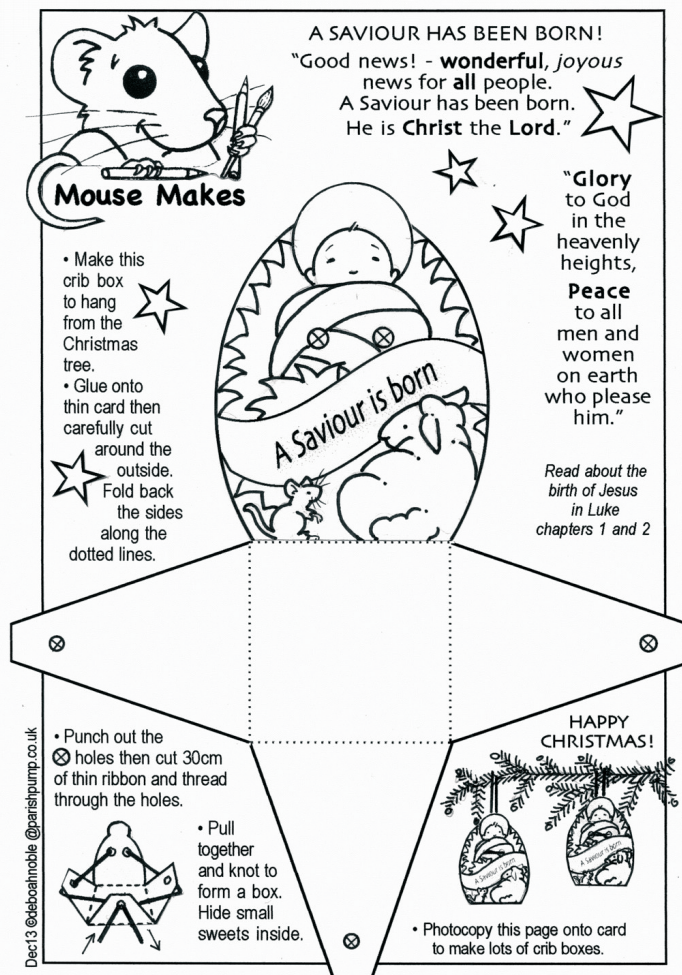
10. NTAERHZA _ _ _ _ _

11. GDLO _ _ _ _ _

12. CPRSAA _ _ _ _ _



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Blackhall St Columba's Church of Scotland, Edinburgh
Scottish Registered Charity No SC008756

Minister

Rev Fergus Cook
5 Blinkbonny Crescent
Edinburgh EH4 3NB
Telephone 466 7503

Session Clerk

Eddie Thorn
Telephone 332 5702

Church Office

Tel: 332 4431 or email
secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk
Hall Bookings
bookings@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk

DEADLINES

Kirk News (February edition)

Friday 16th January

Please send all items to the Editor;
Judith Mair, c/o Church Office
or by e-mail to: judith.mair@hotmail.com

Blackhall Bulletin (March edition) -

Sunday 1st February

Please send all items, including **Advertising Enquiries**
to the Editor: Barbara Wilson, c/o Church Office
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READING THE BULLETIN FOR THE FIRST TIME?

Welcome to the area. We do hope you enjoy living here. To help you find your feet, Blackhall St Columba's Church website gives you all you need to know about activities happening there for young and old. From leisure activities like painting and dancing to our youth groups and junior singers. You can find it all at www.blackhallstcolumba.org.uk or contact the office by phone (see above) or e mail secretary@blackhallstcolumba.org.uk or

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