

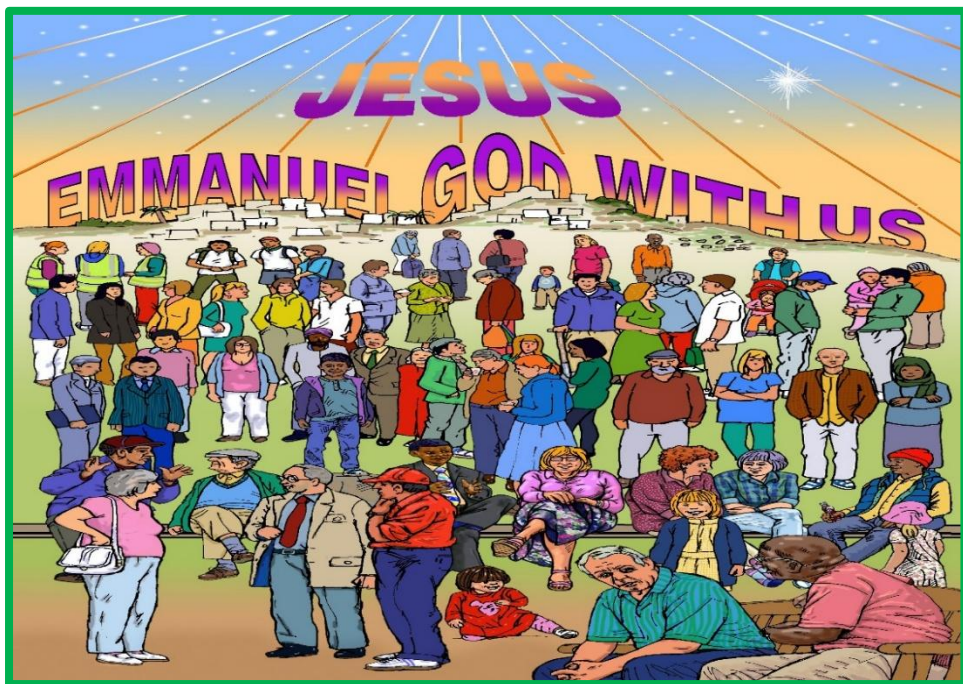
KIRK NEWS

November 2025
No. 845



BLACKHALL
ST. COLUMBA'S
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

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



Celebrate Christmas at Blackhall St. Columba's

Christmas Services – Details on page 9

Christmas Shopping at the Christmas Fair - See page 13

Nativity Trail - Come and follow the trail! Bring the family - Page 17

Christmas JOY – Seasonal Gospel music at BSTC's - See page 20



A Christmas Welcome

As we approach Christmas it is all too easy to bask in nostalgia, which, as I've said before, isn't what it used to be! The story of the Nativity has been, over the years, condensed, sanitised and simplified so that the Nativity story that is familiar to many, bears little relation to what may have actually taken place. Much of what we see, especially in school and church nativity plays, regarding 'Wise Men', shepherds, 'the stable' and the assortment of animals on show is largely unsupported by the text.

Part of the accepted tradition is that Mary gives birth in a stable because "there was no room at the inn". Leaving aside the fact there is no mention of an innkeeper there is also no mention of an inn. The word readily translated as 'inn' can equally mean a room reserved for guests or for special occasions. It is the same word that Mark uses for the room where Jesus celebrated Passover the night before his death. This was in the days when, in the Middle East, poorer people lived on a raised platform in their houses with animals at ground level. The room mentioned would have been a portion set aside for visitors or guests.

There has always been a strong tradition of hospitality in the Middle East and it is unsurprising that in Bethlehem, with so many arriving for census, 'guest rooms' would be occupied by other visitors. Wherever Mary and Joseph arrived, it is likely that the house was already a hospitable one and the space had already been taken.

Considering this, it is likely that Mary may have given birth among animals, probably in the lower part of the house and quite possibly at one of Joseph's relatives, even if a distant one. If true it is unlikely Mary would have been alone. It is probable that other female family members of the house would have been present to assist in the birth.

From the Minister

I think this can have significance for us today. The Christ Child, God with us, was welcomed into a family home, one which had probably already opened its doors to others. Despite being full that home was now willing to stretch that offer of hospitality to include some, perhaps unfamiliar, or even unknown, family members or unknown people who were in need. The metaphor for us as individuals, as a country and as a nation is striking. As refugees move across the globe, attempting to flee violence and seeking safety we cannot help but think of Jesus' flight to Egypt as a young child.

This Christmas, as we offer and enjoy hospitality to family and friends – and, perhaps, are challenged by the Christmas story to extend our welcome beyond the usual – let us not forget that Christmas very likely starts in a home, and one which is generous and hospitable in its welcome.

God bless all, Fergus



Harvest Thanksgiving October 2025



Harvest Thanksgiving at Blackhall St Columba's was conducted by Martin Pearce. The church was beautifully decorated with flowers and fresh produce. A special harvest loaf of bread made by Lyndy Paton was displayed in front of the communion table with the harvest display of fruits and vegetables. The service was followed by a Harvest Lunch. The donations of tinned food and long-life produce went to Ferryhill Primary School Sharing Shelf and FreshStart. The fresh produce was donated to the FreshStart Pantry.

Kirk Session Report

The Kirk Session

The Kirk Session met on Tuesday 26 August 2025.

Mrs Moira Purves

The Clerk paid tribute to Moira Purves who passed away on 24 June in Strachan House. Moira had been a lifetime member of our Church and had occupied many roles and was involved in many of the activities taking place.

Building For The Future (BFTF) 2

Kirk Session has been considering how the residual monies (c £80,000) from the earlier BFTF project should be used. A number of meetings have been held and the view is that the priorities should be (not in this order)

1. Extending the Audio Visual to the halls
2. Upgrading the toilets
3. The entrance to the halls.

There will be an update for the Congregation at morning worship on 26 October. There will be a future opportunity for members to expound their views and ask questions while hearing more of what is being contemplated.

Congregational Roll

It was agreed to admit the following member by resolution of the Kirk Session:
Anthony William Shepherd, Craigcrook Road

Correspondence

A letter of thanks was received from the Monte Cassino Society with 2 cheques, each for £50 (Society and Secretary) while there was also a letter of thanks from Mary's Meals for the donation of £387.55 at the June Communion.

Elders Conference

The conference to be held on Sunday 2 November has been POSTPONED. A new time and date will be announced at the next meeting of the Kirk Session.

Kirk Session Report

Fabric

Readers will recall that an incident occurred in the Sanctuary and halls late in the afternoon of Tuesday 11 February following the upgrading of our meter to a new meter. This was at the request of Scottish Power with the work carried out by a sub-contractor.

When the work was completed and the power reconnected, there was a surge in power or some form of unbalanced restoration of the supply to the various distribution boards. This resulted in significant damage across the building and in particular to the heating pumps and lighting

It has cost the Church circa £35,000 to make good the damage caused. The total cost thereof has more or less all been recouped from our insurance company.

Ferryhill Primary School

Michael Cockburn introduced this item concerning the support we have been providing to the Food Shelf within the school. The need for donations is greater than ever and has been exasperated by the closure of Pennywell Pantry putting the Ferryhill parents in a worse situation. Currently we have been providing support on an informal basis, with Kevin Russell, our Church Officer, delivering our donations each week and Michael, James Burr, Pat McLeod and Rosi Watt helping especially at school holidays when donations are sent to Drylaw Neighbourhood Centre. Michael proposed and it was agreed by Session that we should formalise arrangements and assure Ferryhill PS that we will provide support throughout the 2025/26 academic year, school holidays included.

Life and Work

The Moderator confirmed that, following the decision taken at this year's General Assembly, there would be no more Life and Work magazines in printed form. He thanked Alison Hewat for all her work over a number of years in organising their distribution via District Elders.

Finance

It was noted that Sandy Weir was stepping down after a number of years faithful and diligent service, for which he was thanked, as Gift Aid Convenor. Kirk Session agreed that Susan Scrimgeur be appointed as Sandy's successor.

Organist

It was agreed that Elizabeth Smith be appointed as deputy organist. Elizabeth is well known to us having deputised for Donald Cameron on a number of occasions and is a member of the Choir.

Presbytery Plan

There have been no developments to report to Kirk Session. The ball continues to remain in the court of the Presbytery Deployment of Resources Committee.

Kirk Session Dates 2025 / 2026

The Kirk Session will meet on the following dates: -

2025

11 November

2026

13 January, 17 February, 17 March, 21 April, 26 May, 23 June

Eddie Thorn
Session Clerk



Psalm 85 v 12 the Lord will bless us with good things and the land will
produce rich harvests

Church Family News

We welcome our new members.

New member admitted by Profession of Faith

Mr Sam Ritchie-Halpin

New members admitted by Resolution of the Kirk Session

Mr Anthony Shepherd

Miss Elizabeth Smith

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

August 2025

5th Miss Sheila McCulloch

September 2025

19th Miss Elma Scott

October 2025

21st Mrs Jenny Logan



Sheila Mackintosh, Roll Keeper

Wedding

11th October 2025 Louise Hunter to Charlie Neal



Louise Hunter and Charlie Neal were married in Blackhall St Columba's Church on Saturday 11th of October 2025. The ceremony was conducted by Rev Fergus Cook.

Mr and Mrs Neal are photographed at the church entrance.



November

2 nd	10.30am	Morning Worship
9 th	10.30am	Service of Remembrance
16 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
23 rd	10.30am	Morning Worship with Donald Cameron
30 th	10.30am	Gift Service (You are invited to donate a Christmas Gift to a child in need). First Sunday of Advent.

December

7 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
14 th	10.30am	Morning Worship
	4pm	Blue Christmas Service
18 th		Nativity Trail
19 th		Nativity Trail
21 st	10.30pm	Morning Worship
	7pm	Christmas JOY - a gospel celebration of Christmas with lessons and carols.
24 th	6pm	Christingle Service
24 th	11.30pm	Watchnight Service
25 th	10.30am	Christmas Day Service
28 th	10.30am	Christmas Carol Service

January 2026

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	Sacrament of Holy Communion
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A Personal Remembrance by Adrian Johnston

A Personal Remembrance

The taxi arrived at 4am! My brother and sister were already in it and with Catriona, we four were off to France to fulfill a long-held intention to visit the grave of my Dad's cousin, after whom I had been named.

Lt Adrian Alexander Hope Johnston of the Middlesex Regiment had been killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme just three weeks before his 20th birthday. I think it unlikely that any other family member had visited his grave. Before being posted to France and fresh out of RMA Sandhurst, he had visited my Dad at his boarding school resplendent in his uniform and made a big impression on his younger cousin.

Ryanair are famous for flying to airports miles from the major city they purport to fly to, but on this occasion, the flight to (Paris) Beauvais was exactly where we wanted to be. We hired a car and drove on the nearly deserted country roads to the Gordon Dump Cemetery at Oivillers-La-Boisselle near Arras.

By pure chance, I had learned from Michael Cockburn that his Grandfather's brother is buried in the same cemetery. He also died on 1st July 1916. There are 1,676 British and Commonwealth servicemen of the First World War buried or commemorated in this cemetery. 1,053 of the burials are unidentified. Considering that around 125,000 British and Commonwealth servicemen died over the 141 days of the battle, both Adrian Johnston and George Cockburn being in the same cemetery is quite a coincidence.

Fergus had given us remembrance crosses to place at the two graves and with some solemnity we placed them and stood in a few moments of silence. If you have visited a Commonwealth Graves Commission cemetery, you will know how well maintained and peaceful they are. It was a poignant experience that made an impression that will be with us for a long time.



Remembrance Cross

A Personal Remembrance by Adrian Johnston

The next day we had booked a Somme battlefield tour with a British ex-soldier who lives in France. His knowledge of the battle seemed encyclopedic. He had researched where the 4th Battalion Middlesex Regiment had fought and looked up the burial records for Lt Adrian Johnston as well as consulted the battalion's war diary. He was able to take us to the field where Adrian was killed and was originally buried until in 1919 when he was exhumed and moved to the Gordon Dump Cemetery. Another unexpectedly emotional moment. It is 109 years since this young man died, along with thousands of others, fighting for his country and yet being in the exact place it all happened made it personal and current.

Since returning to the UK, we have learned a lot more about Lt Adrian Johnston and his short military service. Going to France to the location of his part in the battle and visiting his grave has fully vindicated my wish to honour the memory of the man for whom I am a namesake.

Adrian Johnston, Church Treasurer



Resting place of Lt Adrian Johnston



Resting place of Pt G. Cockburn

Christmas Fair

CHRISTMAS FAIR Saturday 29th November 2025. 2pm

This year's Christmas Fair will be held a bit earlier, with Santa visiting as usual. The Brownies, Guides, and Rangers will assist with face painting and run stalls featuring books, puzzles, and toys in the small hall downstairs.

Refreshments, including seasonal treats, will be served in the Sanctuary. The event will also include performances by the Junior Choir and Suzuki musicians, featuring a selection of Christmas music.

The large hall will feature various stalls, including Tombola, Hampers, Books, Bric-a-Brac, Baking and produce, Crafts, Bottle stall, sweets, and a lucky dip.

All donations for the stalls will be gratefully received in the church hall on:

FRIDAY 28th November 10am - 12pm, 2pm - 4pm, 7pm - 9pm

SATURDAY 29th November. 10am to 12pm.

The "Hampers" welcome donations before the deadline to help with planning. Please donate tinned goods, bottles, jars, chocolates, biscuits, cakes, napkins, etc. Drop off items at the church office (Tues-Thurs, 9am-12pm) or at the church on Sundays.

Envelopes for the Hamper Draw can be collected from the Church Office, with a box provided for completed envelopes.

We will be very grateful to have any new items for the Tombola stall, such as any unwanted gifts or unused purchases.

The WaTch team look forward to seeing you all at our Christmas fair so that we can share our Christmas spirit. The Christmas fair will be held to raise funds for the Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity. Please note that all stalls will accept cash only.

We would also be delighted if anyone wishes to volunteer your time to help with refreshments or the stalls on the day. Please contact Lynn Bunney 07742271878 Rosi Watt 07533955025

Christmas Fair

**Adult Entry £2
CASH ONLY
PLEASE**

**Come to our
Christmas Fair!**

Saturday 29 November 2025
Blackhall St Columba's Church Hall
2pm - 4pm

Visit Santa!

Bottle stall & Tombola

Face painting

Bric a brac Books

Our fabulous Xmas Hamper Raffle

Refreshments & home baking served in the Sanctuary

- with wonderful live music in the Sanctuary from the Children's Suzuki Band and the Junior Choir

**In Aid of this year's Charity
EDINBURGH CHILDREN'S
HOSPITAL CHARITY
Scottish Charity No SC020862**

Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity
Help. That's Medicine.

Christmas Fair Tombola Appeal



Christmas Fair planning is in full swing!



SO



The Tombola Team will appreciate your help

Please could everyone think of a business they could ask
to donate a voucher or a prize

These may include

beauticians, cafes, florists, garden centres, hairdressers,



restaurants, shops, sports clubs or events....



just a few of our ideas but hopefully you can think of others.

Please ask your family, friends and neighbours for their ideas too.

The more prizes we have the more we can raise for
Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity



Your help will be greatly appreciated.



Please contact

Rosi Watt 07533 955025 rosijwatt@outlook.com or

Lynn Bunney 07742 271878 lynnbunney@gmail.com

Thank you

Nativity Trail 2025

Many of you will remember that for the last two Christmases we have held a very special Nativity Trail event which has been highly successful and, this year, we are very excited to announce that a third Trail will be happening. We have based it largely on last year but there will be a few changes. Our doors will be open wide to welcome everyone, young and not so young, to come into the church at the heart of the Blackhall community and experience for themselves our “Nativity Trail- The Christmas Celebration” You will not want to miss this event and so get your diaries out and note down the details now.

NATIVITY TRAIL- THE CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

THURSDAY 18TH DECEMBER from 5-7pm

FRIDAY 19TH DECEMBER From 4-7pm

This is an interactive exploration of the Greatest Story Ever Told using the church itself and all its halls and buildings. We want members of our community to join us in finding out the true meaning of Advent and Christmas in a novel and exciting way as they learn about preparing for the birth of Jesus and the Good News of Christmas itself through hearing the Angel Gabriel’s message and going on their own journey with Mary and Joseph. They will find the shepherds and encounter King Herod before they finally reach Bethlehem, search for a resting place and finally arrive at the stable and discover the most wonderful gift we have ever been given. As if that wasn’t enough, we are also planning to offer a Christmas Nativity Escape Room for the older children who come along. This has been extremely popular in the last two years.

As you can understand, such an ambitious project needs the help of many people to ensure that it is the best that it can be and this is where you all come in. We need lots of help before the day itself and then during the event as well. More information will be provided as we get closer to Christmas but, at the moment, we are looking for volunteers.

Volunteers Required!

We need people to help set up our trail which involves scenery and props and we need others who can be helpers on the day to ensure everything goes smoothly. We need a cast of characters too, of course. We also need folk who can help prepare crafts for the children beforehand and who can supervise the crafts on the day. Then, of course, we need bakers and people who can serve refreshments. Lots of people who have helped in the past have offered their help again which is wonderful but some are unable to do so and so we need some folk who maybe haven't volunteered before. If you feel that you can help in any way, however small, please get in touch with Shona Cook by email (shonacook505@gmail.com) or by phone (07981 970054). Any help you can give will be gratefully received and just makes everything easier AND more fun.

We will be looking for several items/ props to help create our trail and ensure the experience is the best we can make it and, in the very near future, we will be making available a full list of things we are needing. Please keep an eye out for this. If you could donate/ lend any of these, that would be brilliant. Please just let Shona know how you can help. If you don't have any of the things on the list that will be issued later but would like to contribute, a small donation would help us to buy any of the things we can't source like craft materials. Last year, many of you kindly lent us toys, animals, ornaments etc and we would be very grateful if we could borrow these again. Last Christmas, we welcomed over 450 people from the community through our doors in a single day. I am confident we can do even better this year. So come on Blackhall, let's show them what we can do to spread the Good News this Christmas.

Thanks,
Shona

Nativity Trail

Follow the star to our
Christmas Celebration

at
Blackhall
St Columba's

All welcome



Thursday 18th December 17.00-19.00

Friday 19th December 16.00-19.00

Tearoom, Crafts & Escape Room

Admission Free

CrossReach Christmas Cards

CrossReach - the Social Care Council of the Church of Scotland

Christmas is coming and once again and I will be selling Christmas Cards on behalf of CrossReach. Over the years members of St Columba's have been most supportive of this vital section of the Church's work.

Cards will be available for purchase at the back of the sanctuary after morning worship on the five Sundays in November. All profits that CrossReach receives from card sales are allocated to areas of greatest need in its work. CrossReach Sunday this year is on 16th of November.

Margaret Brown, Church "Link"

Samaritans' Purse Shoe Box Appeal

Bring some joy to an underprivileged child this year with the gift of a Christmas Shoebox!



You are invited once again to collect a flat-packed shoe box from the table at the back of the Sanctuary. Full instructions on how to fill your shoebox will be provided.

Packed shoeboxes can be returned any Sunday or handed in to the church office during the week. **The filled shoeboxes must be returned to the church by Sunday 16th of November, or they will miss collection.**

Thanking you in anticipation of another year of your generous support.

Adrian Johnston, Co-ordinator

Music@St Columba's

Autumn Concert



Edinburgh Mandolin & Guitar Orchestra
with guests
Da Capo Alba

Saturday 8th November at 7pm
Free Entry. Donations Welcome

**A rare get together of East and West of Scotland
Mandolin & Guitar Orchestras,
playing light entertainment, classical
and folk music**

St Columba's Church, Columba Road, Blackhall

Autumn Concert

We have our first ever concert on 8th Nov by the Edinburgh Guitar and Mandolin Orchestra. If you have not heard of such a thing this is your big chance to come and be amazed at the variety of sounds and textures that can be achieved by this mix of string instruments. This group will be about 35 players strong and they are joining with a group from the West of Scotland playing a range of light classical and folk and Scottish tunes.

Donald Cameron

Joy by Joel Raney

This year, instead of the traditional Lessons and Carols on Sunday 21st December we are bringing together the Choir, the Band and Singers and the Junior Singers to perform a musical called JOY. This has several new songs which cleverly weave in the traditional carols we all know using very different styles from Swing to Bossa. We are confident this is a very exciting innovation which will have you tapping your toes and singing the tunes throughout Christmas

We have been rehearsing JOY since August and we hope the congregation will take the opportunity to invite friends and family to come and hear the Christmas Story as you have never heard it before. Perhaps you know some younger family members who would not be attracted to the traditional 9 Lessons and Carols format but who would like to hear the band playing and the 30 folks on the stage perform this brilliant piece of work.

We are excited to be involved in this project and please put the date in your diary now and we look forward to seeing you all there on 21st at 7pm.

Donald Cameron, Director of Music at Blackhall St Columba's



Christmas at Blackhall St Columba's



A Gospel
Christmas Celebration
for SATB Choirs

Composed & Arranged by
Joel Raney

Sunday 21st December at 7pm
Blackhall St Columba's Church

News from the Junior Singers

Junior Singers started back after the summer break with three new young folks 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 resulted in us losing a few choristers. Fortunately, the remaining girls have chosen singing over sport, so we still have, albeit smaller, a primary-aged choir 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 (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.



The summer months saw Sunday Club regulars and children visiting family in the area, coming along each week to join in the activities. It was good to see these new faces in the group and enjoy their input to our chats.

Unfortunately, since then, a few of our leaders have decided it is now time for them to step back from Sunday Club, although they are still happy to help out when needed. This means that we are now looking for two or three people to join our group. We work a rota with two leaders at each Sunday Club session, and this works out as being on duty about one Sunday in the month.

If you think this is something you would enjoy (and it IS enjoyable working with the youngsters!) then please do get in touch with any of the team members. We would be delighted to hear from you.

Amy Donaldson

Sunday Worship at BSTC's



The Baptism of Sam Ritchie- Halpin and admission to the membership of the church by Profession of Faith.

Music @ Blackhall St Columba's



Donald Cameron introduces the RESOL Quartet at their lunchtime concert on Saturday 6th of September at Blackhall St. Columba's

Outreach Events Diary Notes

The Outreach Team has produced a programme of events leading up to Christmas. This is on the church website. Please support as many of the events as you can. Remember participation benefits everyone. It's not just what we, personally, get out of attending but what we bring for others too. As a family of God here in Blackhall, it is not only good but essential to get together regularly to socialise and enjoy a time of fellowship which encourages new friendships and strengthens existing ones. We cannot truly love one another unless we know each other.

Saturday 8th November: Music@St.Columba's Edinburgh Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra

Please join us in the sanctuary from 6:30 pm for a 7pm start (to 9pm) to enjoy a 50 strong mandolin and guitar orchestra. Come along and bring a friend. Refreshments will be served and donations will be gratefully received.

Wednesday 26th November 2-4pm: Afternoon Tea Dance

Blackhall St Columba's Scottish Country Dancers invite you to a St Andrew's Day themed Afternoon Tea Dance. There are 80 tickets@£5 raising money for our church charity Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity.

Saturday 29th November: Christmas Fair

Our annual WATCH Committee Christmas Fair will take place throughout the church buildings between 2pm and 4pm. Expect all the usual stalls and come along with your friends to start your celebrations early while contributing to an excellent cause: Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity.

Outreach Events

Saturday 6th December: Getting Crafty at Christmas

Come along to the sanctuary between 10am and 12noon to enjoy some festive crafts. Try your hand at creating a beautiful, seasonal table decoration or something at our Christmas craft table. Channel your inner Mary Berry and make your own sweet treat to enjoy later. In order to cater this event and ensure we have enough supplies, please indicate your intention to come along to Shona Cook by 25th November

(07981 970054/ shonacook505@gmail.com).

Thursday 18th December and Friday 19th December: Nativity Trial

A Christmas Celebration

Bring your family and friends along to the church on Thursday 18th between 5pm and 7 pm or Friday 19th December between 4pm and 7pm to experience our third annual Nativity Trail. This year's theme is celebration. Once again, we are throwing our doors open to the community to explore the Greatest Story Ever Told and to discover the true meaning of Christmas through our Trail and Escape Room. There will be crafts and refreshments available too. No tickets are required. Donations to help cover costs will be gratefully received.

FUTURE EVENT: MARCH 2026 (around 14th-20th) COMING TO A CHURCH NEAR YOU, THE KNITTED BIBLE

This is a fantastic opportunity to see this unique exhibition of over 30 intricately knitted scenes from the Old and New Testaments. Further details will follow.

Shona Cook

Watch Committee Fundraising

WATCH Committee Update

It's November already, and it's hard to believe how quickly this year has flown by. Throughout the past months, the WATCH committee have been dedicated and industrious, working tirelessly to support our community.

Successful Coin Collection

Over the summer, we held a coin collection that proved to be exceptionally successful thanks to the generosity of our congregation. Each Sunday morning, members happily contributed to our donations bucket while joining in with our collection song, specially composed for us by Amy Donaldson. We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our young helpers, who did a fantastic job assisting with the collection. Your energy and enthusiasm were greatly appreciated.

Craft Coffee Morning

Our Craft Coffee Morning was a tremendous success, with an impressive turnout on a beautiful, sunny day. We are grateful to everyone who attended and supported us; together, we raised over £1,500 for our chosen charity this year, the Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity.

Thanks to Our Volunteers

We owe a massive thank you to everyone who contributed to the success of the Coffee Morning. Special appreciation goes to the volunteers who helped set up the tables on Friday evening, as well as all the talented bakers who provided a wonderful variety of delicious treats. Thanks also to those who served, sold items, washed dishes, created banners and bunting, and arranged the beautiful flowers donated by the "flower ladies."

Celebrating Local Talent

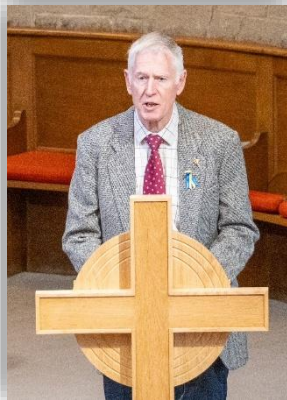
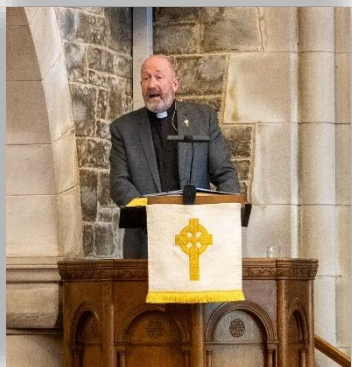
The stalls showcased an incredible array of crafts, highlighting the impressive talent within our district. Thank you to all who participated and shared their creations with us.

Thank you to those who came along and supported us.

Lynn Bunney

WaTch Committee

Sunday Worship



BURNS SUPPER – 24th January

Why Not Make It a Christmas Present?

It has been a sell out in recent years and it's never too early to set your plans now. Open to all in the community you can bring along friends, relatives, neighbours and, maybe especially, anybody who needs converting into enjoying a traditional Scottish evening of good food, entertainment, music and company. All this for £30 p.p. in the church large hall doors opening at 6pm with a 6.30pm start planned. Tables will seat 6 but folk on their own or with any number of others in their company are welcome. A table plan will be organised with any parties wishing it placed together but it's good to meet new folk as well so don't be shy.

If you wish to ensure a seat or seats is set aside let me know now and I'll be in touch in the early New Year for confirmation and payment. Include names of those joining you, if any, and whether you'd like a printed ticket to give them. It won't have a price tag and is not needed as the Guest List with Table Plan tells who is expected and will be welcomed on the day.

Dress code is smart casual with a bit of tartan encouraged but not obligatory. Alcoholic beverages are allowed but as there is no licence you must bring your own.



If you have any questions, just get in touch and if you don't know anybody to give such a delightful present to, then don't forget yourself!

Sandy Weir
Tel 07737 780209
weirsmachine@blueyonder.co.uk

Mid-week PEACE service

We meet every two weeks, on a Wednesday at 12.00. in the small hall. We have a short act of worship followed by a soup lunch and everyone is welcome.

We rely on drivers to bring some of our members to this service so, if you would be willing to join our group of drivers, you would be extremely welcome.

Our syllabus is below.

PEACE SERVICE - SYLLABUS FOR 2025-2026

'Music is a higher revelation than all wisdom and philosophy.... Beethoven

'Music is the explosive expression of humanity'. Billy Joel

17th September - 'Who am I?' - Shona Cook

1st October - Communion - Rev. Fergus Cook

15th October - 'God has raised you out of darkness' - Muriel Stenhouse

29th October - 'Do you hear the people sing?' - Shona Cook

12th November - Remembrance - Rev. Philip Patterson

26th November - 'Bring him home' - Shona Cook

10th December - Christmas Celebration - Shona Cook

7th January - 'Empty chairs at empty tables' - Shona Cook

21st January - 'To love another person is to see the face of God' - Muriel Stenhouse

4th February - Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity

18th February - 'You'll never walk alone' - Muriel Stenhouse

4th March - 'Climb every mountain' - Muriel Stenhouse

18th March - The Knitted Bible - Shona Cook

1st April - Easter - Rev. Gordon Farquharson

15th April - 'Any dream will do' - Shona Cook

29th April - 'Tradition' - Shona Cook

13th May - Cruse Scotland

27th May - Communion - Rev. Fergus Cook

For further information please contact

Ruth Laidlaw ruthlaidlaw@gmail.com

Flowers in the Church



Thank you to everyone involved in this work:
to the Donors who give us money whether in remembrance of a loved one or for a special occasion or just for the joy of the beauty of flowers and foliage
to the Flower Team who arrange them using their time, talents, and encouragement to the people who deliver them and visit the recipients using their time and resources.

to the people who enjoy the flowers they receive
to the congregation in church and online who enjoy them.

It's a wonderful circle or cycle showing the care the Members of the church give and receive.

Please feel free to join us as we always need whatever help you can give, whether in time, talent or money.

You are all welcome.

Alison Hewat

Cameo Club

Our last meeting at the time of writing featured the Cantilena Ladies Choir from West Lothian, who gave us a wonderful programme of harmonised singing. In August, The Rock Choir performed in our hall with more than thirty singers. Currently the entertainment programme for the first six months in 2026 is nearly complete.

On Friday 14th November 10.30 – 12.00 we will welcome Sarah Laing who includes some Doris Day songs in her playlist. There will be no meeting in the halls on 28th November as we will be enjoying a festive lunch at the Leonardo Hotel. The only meeting in December will be Friday 12th when the Ukulele Trio will be returning.

Around St Columba's

Cameo Continued

Our membership is increasing making a total of forty members currently. We would like to supplement our volunteer bank and would particularly welcome car drivers. We always need help with serving coffee, tidying up, and chatting to our members. There is a rota so that there is no requirement to come every fortnight.

Please consider coming along to see what Cameo has to offer.

Fiona Drinnan 343 6762

Scottish Country Dancing

You are invited!



Blackhall St Columba's Scottish Country Dancers
invite you to
a **St Andrew's Day** themed Afternoon Tea Dance.



There are 80 tickets@£5 raising money for our church charity Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity.

Wednesday 26th November 2-4pm: Afternoon Tea Dance

Muriel Stenhouse



Some photographs of our Daffodil Tea Dance

Around St Columba's in August

Blackhall St. Columba's Golf Outing Trophy Presentation



The annual Blackhall St. Columba's Golf Outing is a much-anticipated event that brings together members for a day of friendly competition and camaraderie. Participants can look forward to a challenging round on a picturesque course, followed by afternoon tea and prize-giving in the clubhouse. All skill levels are welcome, making it an enjoyable experience for everyone involved.

In the presentation photograph 2025 from left to right- Frances Douglas, Graham Patterson, Fergus Cook standing in for Matt McGowan, Barbara Duguid and George Miller.

Frances Douglas

The Prayer Circle

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



Blackhall St Columba's Prayer Circle is a small team of people who will pray frequently for anyone in need of help in complete confidence. We are also happy to accept prayer requests giving thanks for a happy event or asking for God's help with any forthcoming personal endeavour or challenge. Please contact Prayer Circle secretary Betty Watt at lzbthwatt@yahoo.co.uk or Fergus Cook at Fcook@churchofscotland.org.uk or 0131 466 7503. Alternatively, please put your request slip into the locked box on the table in the church vestibule.

FreshStart

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

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

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

Tuesday Topics

Tuesday Topics got off to an excellent start with a most interesting talk about the city Poorhouse at Craiglockhart. We had 30 attending, many of which joined as members.

The next meeting is on Tuesday 29th of October at 7.30pm in the small hall as usual. The speaker is Maggie Quayle from the RNLI and she will tell us about the RNLI in general but South Queensferry in particular. I hope to see as many of you as possible at that meeting.

We have a gap in December as there is so much else on so, our next meeting is our Christmas lunch on the 13th of January 2026 at 12noon at Howies Restaurant. We will be taking numbers for that at the next meeting.

Lyndy Paton

Art Club



We have welcomed 5 new members this term. We have taken on extra space in the small hall on a monthly basis for art demonstrations and workshops. This started off with a model who came along for figurative drawing.

Our Christmas meal will be at the Toby Carvery to end our term in December.

Marge Whiteside

Edinburgh Floral Art

Syllabus

14 November - Hands on workshop, see below for sign up details.
Kirstin Coltman - Creative Christmas door decoration.

12 December - Kath Doggett demo, "Christmas is Coming

We do not meet in January

13 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 or to book a place at the November Workshop (by 7 November) call Suzie Stark, Chairman, on 07888. 942561.



“Soup n Chat”

Come along on any of the following dates and join this friendly, happy group. Bring a neighbour and even if not a soup fan the “Chat” is always good.

- Friday 7th November 12noon to 1.30pm in the Large hall
- Friday 21st November 12noon to 1.30pm in the Large Hall
- Friday 5th December 12noon to 1.30pm in the Large Hall
- Friday 16th January 2026 12noon to 1.30pm in the large Hall
- Friday 30th January 2026 12noon to 1.30pm in the Large Hall

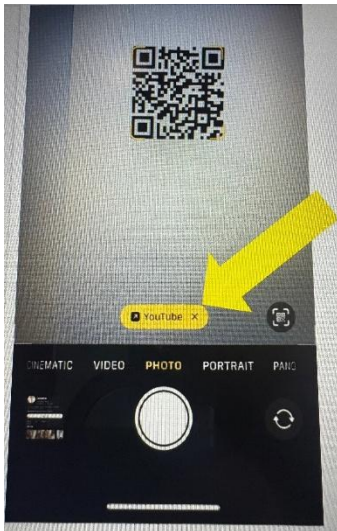
Michael Cockburn, Lead and admin Volunteer.

Can't make it along to church?

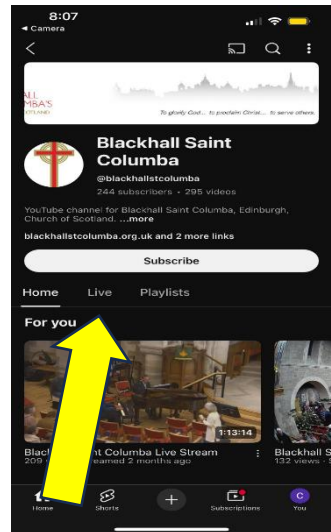
Many people who can't manage along to Blackhall St Columba's Church in person still manage to join us for worship through our livestreaming service. If you, or anyone you know, would like to join us this way why not use the attached QR code and follow the simple instructions 1 to 3. We hope you can join us for worship soon.

Fergus

1. Put your device camera over the QR box



2. Your phone will display the screen shot shown. Now click on the yellow "Youtube" button shown.



3. This should take you to the Blackhall St Columba's livestream page. You now need to press the "live" button. You should now be able to join us in worship.

VJ Day Commemoration



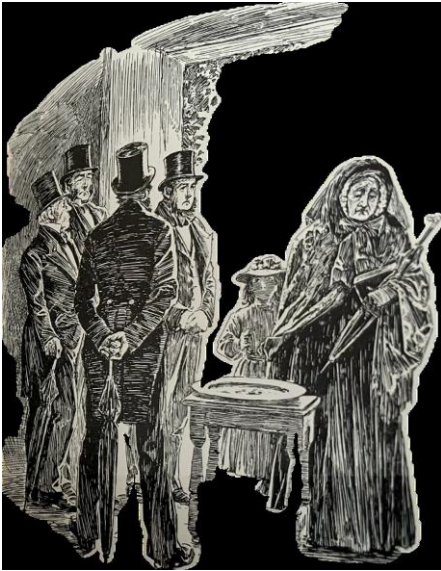
Victory over Japan brought WW2 to an end on the 15 August 1945 when Japan announced its surrender to the Allied Forces. Blackhall St Columba's marked the 80th anniversary of VJ DAY 80 with a service followed by a curry lunch and strawberry tarts in the Sanctuary.

Craft Coffee Morning



The Craft Coffee Morning raised £1500 for this year's Watch Committee charity the Edinburgh Children's Hospital Charity. Stalls with an array of crafts and homemade produce filled the Large Hall. Morning coffee and baking were served.

Food for thought!



A couple of verses and illustrations from R L Stevenson's poem "A Lowden Sabbath Morn", first published 1898, and illustrations by A. S. Boyd, shows how the "welcome team" on a Sunday morning has moved on!

"The solemn elders at the plate
Stand drinkin' deep the pride o' state
The practised hands as gash an' great
As Lords o' Session;
The later named, a wee thing blate
In their expression."

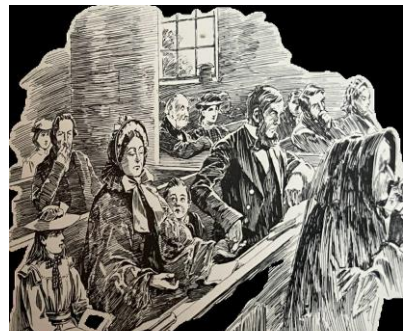
And later in the poem....

"An' than the peppermints are raxed,
An' southernwood."

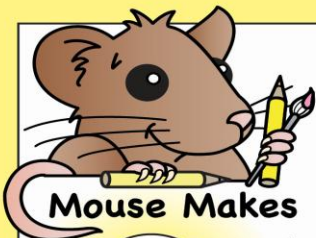
I was also interested to see that passing peppermints along the row when the sermon was about to start wasn't just a 20th century phenomenon, though I noticed that some in St. Columba's have moved on to Werther's as the choice of sermon sweet!

The poem also mentioned "southernwood" which I hadn't heard of, so I looked up southernwood and read that a bunch of the herb was sometimes taken by ladies to church to stop them dozing off during the sermon. It is also a moth repellent!

Fiona Cooke



"An' than the peppermints are
raxed,
An' southernwood."



Mouse Makes

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

Advent Sunday this year falls on 30th November.
ADVENT is a time to celebrate the ARRIVAL of Jesus, God's Son, our Saviour. We look forward with HOPE, we give thanks for God's LOVE and the PEACE and JOY we have in Jesus.



JOY

Read:
LUKE 2:10-11
Who is 'God's news of great joy' for?



LOVE

Read:
John 3:16
How did God show He loves us?



HOPE

Read:
Isaiah 40:5
What shall be revealed?

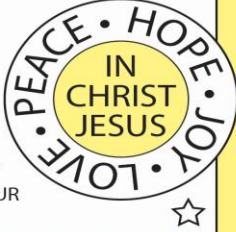


PEACE

Read:
Romans 5:1-2
Through who do we have peace with God?

L G L O R Y E M P R O M I S E
S O K J Y A A R R I V A L W F
A D V E N T G O O D N E W S O
V P L S V L I R P S V P C A R
I E I U I O F C H R I S T H T
O A G S U V T M E S S A G E O
U C H O P E O P C A N D L E L
R E T U R N J O Y T W D B E D

ADVENT • ARRIVAL • HOPE • JOY • LOVE • PEACE • GOD • GLORY
MESSAGE • PROMISE • PROPHECY • FORETOLD • JESUS • SAVIOUR
CHRIST • GIFT • GOOD NEWS • RETURN • CANDLE • LIGHT



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

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For contributions to Kirk News:

(judith.mair@hotmail.co.uk)

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We are happy to accept articles on any relevant subject.

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