

Cornerstone

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF STRATHBLANE PARISH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
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FROM THE STUDY DESK

Chris Gordon, Locum

If you ask any member of my family, they'll confirm that I am prone to forget things. Rarely do I leave the house without having to return a short time later to grab a personal item which was left behind.

Recently, I was relaying this frustrating trait to someone who gave me this helpful advice: "Just remember that you are forgetful". Easier said than done!

These last few weeks in church we've been considering the importance of remembering. Not tasks or items as such, but rather aspects of God's character alongside our own way of being. Because when we look at the story of God and his people, it seems that their memories are short too. Time and time again in the Old Testament they become distracted and slip into unhelpful habits that are the outworking of having forgotten their creator. And then similarly in the New Testament the early church needs to be reminded of the words and example of Jesus as they stray off course.

So that call to remember God remains important for us. To remember his faithfulness and his promises. To recall what he has done in the past and then to expect him to be working today and the future.

The prophet Samuel thought it was important to mark this truth when he erected his Ebenezer stone to mark God's provision saying 'thus far the Lord has helped us' (1Samuel 7:12). At that time God's people were regularly being pursued by invading armies but they trusted that God



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would defend them and they considered Him to be faithful, even though they had turned away from Him in the past.

I find that encouraging, that God is faithful to us. Even when we are prone to forget him. That he remembers us when it seems that everyone else has forgotten us. That's a theme that runs through the Bible too; God remembering people who society has forgotten. Hagar felt abandoned by Abraham (and everyone else) as she hid from the scalding sun with her son Ishmael, having been banished into the wilderness. But God remembered her and as He rescued her she named him as 'the God who sees me' (Genesis 16:13).

Perhaps you feel a bit abandoned right now. Perhaps you look at the church, locally and nationally, and wonder where God is and what he is doing? Well, looking back at His faithfulness should give us hope. God is still in the business of saving people. He has plans for Strathblane Parish Church and this community. And he remains our source of strength and hope in adversity.

So, let's remember that God has helped us in the past. And let's be confident that God sees us now. And then allow those truths to generate expectancy that he will do marvellous things for us, in us and through us that proclaim his glory.

Chris



SESSION REPORT

Lynne James, Session Clerk

We are now firmly in vacancy territory as a congregation, but are heartened and upheld by many instances of God's providence as we move through these times.

Firstly, we have, since October, had Chris Gordon leading us as our locum. This he is doing with grace and a sure heart and head knowledge, as he leads worship each week. He has also taken on pastoral duties and we know that he has already visited parishioners and, by the time this report is in your hands, he will have visited Blanefield Nursing Home with some of the young people from Strathblane Primary.

Secondly, we have an able and empathetic minister, Ramsay Shields as our Interim Moderator. Ramsay hails from St Luke's in Milngavie as a minister, and many of you will know that our good friends John and Elizabeth Wilson attend his church. He has already proved to be a "good man to have in our corner". He had spoken, on our behalf, to the Convenor of the Vacancy Committee regarding the make up of our joint Nominating Committee in November and, I am sure, had it been necessary, would have asked for a reconsideration of the make up of that committee. Ramsay has attended our mid week prayer meetings and will be leading the service of Communion on Sunday 7th December.

Thirdly, we were very touched by the gracious intervention of Killearn church and Session, on our behalf, as below;

A notice of decision by the vacancy procedural committee was read to the congregation on Sunday, 16th November granting Killearn and Strathblane permission to call a minister on the basis of a seven year reviewable tenure.

This edict indicated that there would be 11 members on the Nominating Committee, 7 from Killearn and 4 from Strathblane. At a recent session meeting of Killearn Kirk, the Elders requested that, for harmony and unity between the two churches, the session clerk request of the vacancy procedural committee that the numbers on the nominating committee be more equitable. The request that the nominating committee should be 13, with 7 members from Killearn and 6 from Strathblane, was upheld by the Vacancy Procedure Committee and we await a further Edict from the Presbytery of Perth to be read to the congregation at a future date.

We have recorded our thanks to Killearn for this gesture, as it has enabled the process to continue without a time consuming appeal process.

So, as we head towards Christmas and the new year of 2026, we have much to be thankful for, and many reasons to look forward with hope for what is to come.

We continue, as a Session, to need the prayerful support of our church family, but we would also wish you to know that we pray for God's Guidance in all that we do and ask for His continuing blessing on all His church family in this place and our sister church family of Killlearn.

Printer

As some of you will know, our printer/photocopier in the office has been slowly but surely laying down its weary head! It is no longer able to be supported under our service contract, indeed it was well past its sell by date in many many ways! After a long process, we are hopeful that a shiny new model will be delivered very shortly and normal service will be resumed very soon.

Lindis has coped manfully, womanfully in fact, with all the vagaries and hiccups thrown her way over the last few months, and we thank her for her patience with a tired old lady (the printer, not me!) and hope the new model gives us as many years of service. It is worth noting that the representative from Kyocera was frankly amazed at how long our current printer had lasted, so mark 2 has a lot to live up to! This Winter Cornerstone may not appear in print straight away, but an electronic version will be made available through the elders and on our website.

Lindis can supply a link to the electronic version for you to download and print off if you would wish to do that. Email her at strathblanekirk@gmail.com

TREASURER'S REPORT

Jean Strachan

Treasurer's Report

Below are the figures for unrestricted giving for 10 months to 31 October 2025 compared with the first 10 months in the previous year.

	2025 £	2024 £	Change £	Change %
Gift Aid	30,711	30,865	-154	-0.5
Open Plate	4,474	4,380	94	2.1
	<u>35,185</u>	<u>35,245</u>	<u>-60</u>	<u>-0.2</u>
Other Donations	1,362	1,763	-401	
Gift Day	1,395	1,736	-341	
Guild	500	500	0	
Weddings/Funerals	270	530	-260	
	<u>38,712</u>	<u>39,774</u>	<u>-1,062</u>	

Jean Strachan, Treasurer.

MESSY CHURCH

Lynne James

What a joy to hold Messy Church again after a long absence.

On 9th November we met for games, crafts, food... and delightful chaos!

Thank you to all who came along to join in the fun, and to reflect on Remembrance and Forgiveness, and thank you also, to the gallant team in the kitchen who rustled up pizza and chips and ice cream, including mini pizzas designed by the messy (And I MEAN messy!) church kids!

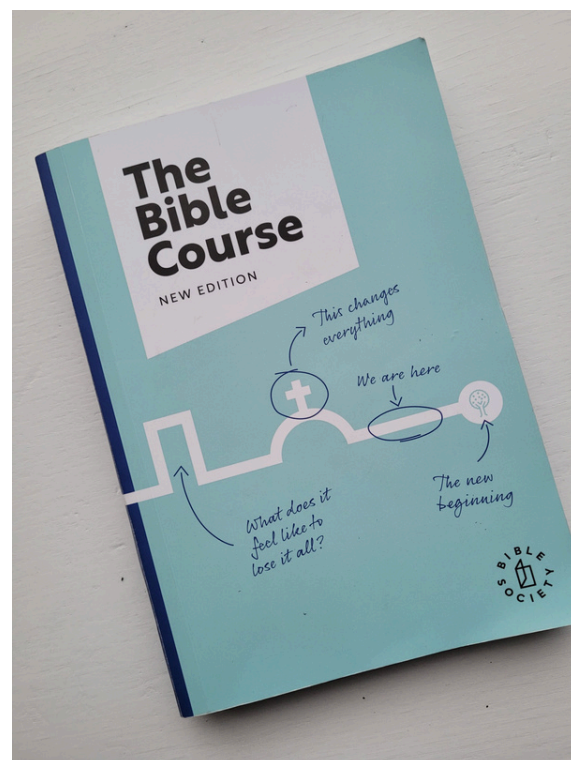
We meet again on Sunday 14th December to; put up the church tree, decorate the church with a heavenly host of knitted angels, fill the Christingle bags and enjoy a festive afternoon tea!



BIBLE COURSE

Nancy Sharp

The Mission and Discipleship Group was pleased to host a new 2025 edition of The Bible Course by Dr Andrew Ollerton, published by the Bible Society. This was an 8-week course which explored the big picture of the Bible, one step at a time, looking at God's plan for his world from Genesis right through to Revelation. We saw how all the main characters and events pointed us forward towards Jesus, his birth, ministry, death and resurrection and then, in Revelation, what we can look forward to when Jesus returns. The course was well attended with numbers ranging from 15 – 22 per week. We looked at many bible passages in the daily reading plans provided, as well as in our weekly meetings, and we hope that this has inspired and encouraged each one of us to get into our bibles more. Using daily bible notes or joining others in home bible studies is always helpful. Thank you to all who came along to these meetings.



TRADITION!

Ian Mills

The musical *Fiddler on the Roof* has maintained popularity with audiences across the world for over sixty years. Margaret and I recently attended a performance in Edinburgh of the latest West End revival which was touring the country. This brought back memories as we both appeared in a former pupils' production of the show fifty years ago and it was amazing how much of the words and music we remembered! Watching the story set in 1905 in the fictional village of Anatevka (which would be located in what is now Ukraine) and the struggles the villagers had with the Russian authorities, makes you wonder how some situations do not seem to change. Whilst the opening chorus led by the main character Tevye emphasises the importance of the traditional ways of life in the community, the storyline highlights the changing lifestyles emerging, in particular where his daughters are no longer willing to accept the role of the Matchmaker in being responsible for finding them a husband. Few musical shows have had the script analysed to the same extent as *Fiddler on the Roof* in which people are trying to maintain their cultural traditions in the midst of an ever changing world around them. Commentators have highlighted the themes which feature throughout the musical around the conflict between tradition and change.

We will shortly be moving into the Festive season which for many families will be a time when various year on year traditions are celebrated. These can vary from the groups who gather together, the menus which are served, events attended including for many at least one of the church services taking place which (in the past) involved large numbers of the Sunday school taking part in a Nativity event, favourite carols being sung and so on. I remember also my mother ensuring that we watched the Queen's broadcast at 3 pm on Christmas day. New Year also has its traditions built around the family, especially with people "coming home" for part of the time. How many of us still make New Year resolutions? Aside from the Festive season, many aspects of our lives have changed over the years. For those of us of a certain age, we remember the traditional place which religious observance (principally Church of Scotland) had in our school lives. At Primary school, saying the Lord's Prayer each day was commonplace and in secondary school weekly school assemblies were held often addressed by the school chaplain. Interestingly, the topic of religious observance in schools was discussed at a recent meeting of Perth Presbytery.

In our own church we look ahead to further change with the appointment of a minister in the new year but this time in conjunction with the congregation of Killearn Kirk. Many of us will recall traditional Sundays of the past, where for many families (wearing their "good clothes"), attendance at church was the norm as sports fixtures took place on a Saturday,

most shops and other venues were closed on a Sunday and there were fewer external activities for young people. Now, many sports clubs run their youth programmes on a Sunday morning. In the church itself, patterns of worship followed a particular format. What has happened to Sunday evening services and the Youth Fellowship? We can reflect on the various social changes over the years with varied forms of entertainment now available, many family units being geographically dispersed, more people having to work on a Sunday and even in the church, people being able to link in to a service “online” - something which is a benefit to those who for various reasons are unable to attend in person.

As we look forward to a new year and what this will mean for our congregation, whilst there will be some traditions which may simply be overtaken by the change in circumstances, new ideas could emerge which will form the basis of traditions for the future.

Going back to *Fiddler on the Roof*, the character Tevye reflects: “because of our traditions we’ve kept our balance for many years - we have traditions for everything - how did these traditions get started? I’ll tell you... I don’t know, but it’s a tradition.”

I am sure many of our traditions will continue, but we should also be open to fresh ideas and develop what might become NEW traditions to benefit our congregation and community in the future.



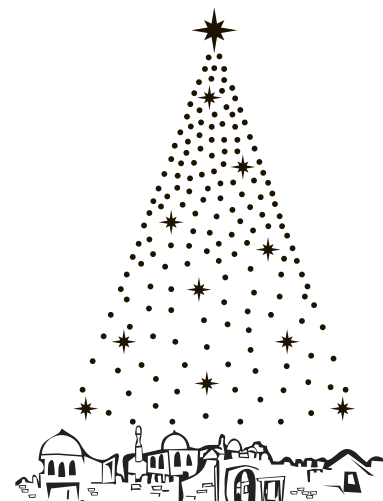
A KING'S STORY

Christine Cresswell

Beneath the mountain's jagged scar
 we cannot see beyond each rise,
 but fear what hidden danger lies
 deep down in midnight's black inside.
 With hopes and dreams we've come this far
 on faltering step and camel ride,
 still searching for a new-born king,
 our heavenly guide this brilliant star.

Palatial towers of marble, stone
 pink-hued by sun's first slanting ray.
 We've reached our goal! This is the day!
 But deep dismay - no infant king.
 Where's his kingdom? Where's his throne?
 What end to weary travelling!
 Star-led once more upon our way
 to Bethlehem's humble home we came.
 On bended knee our gifts we bring
 to Him who's given us everything.
 So homeward by a different way
 our lives can never be the same.

Do some still search, as years rush by,
 travelling along a rocky way?
 Or on life-journey's quest so far
 perhaps turn back to rest, to stay?
 How many things prevent and mar
 our progress to the Saviour King,
 but when we truly seek we find
 Love, greater than the brightest star.



CUPPA TIME

Georgina Marshall

Cuppa Time Christmas special will be on Thursday 18th of December at 2pm in the Kirk Rooms .This is open to anyone and we hope that as many people as possible will come along and help us celebrate!



DONATION THANKS

Sandra Ritchie

What a great selection of toys and toiletries everyone brought to share with City Mission nursery group and older children at Start Up Stirling. Chris our minister said when he thanked everyone it showed "Hearts that were aligned to Christ" and it was wonderful to see us all sharing what we have to children who are not so fortunate.

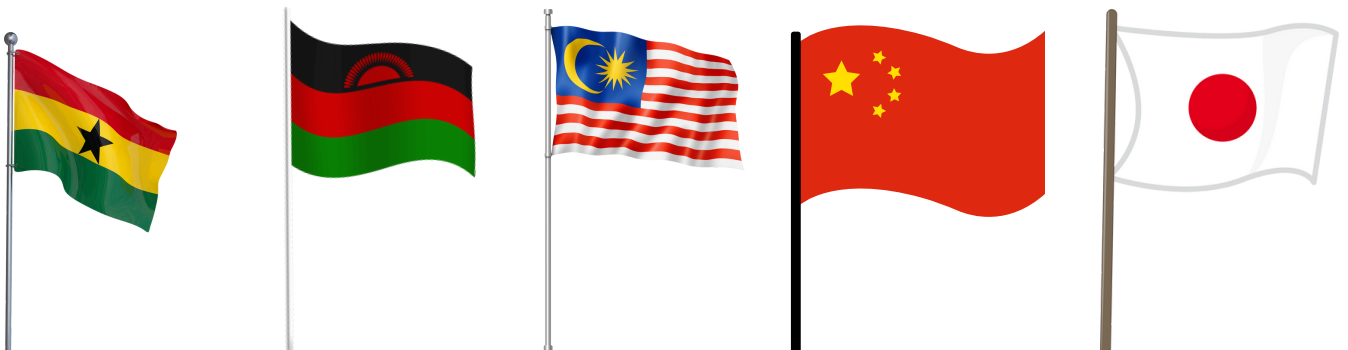
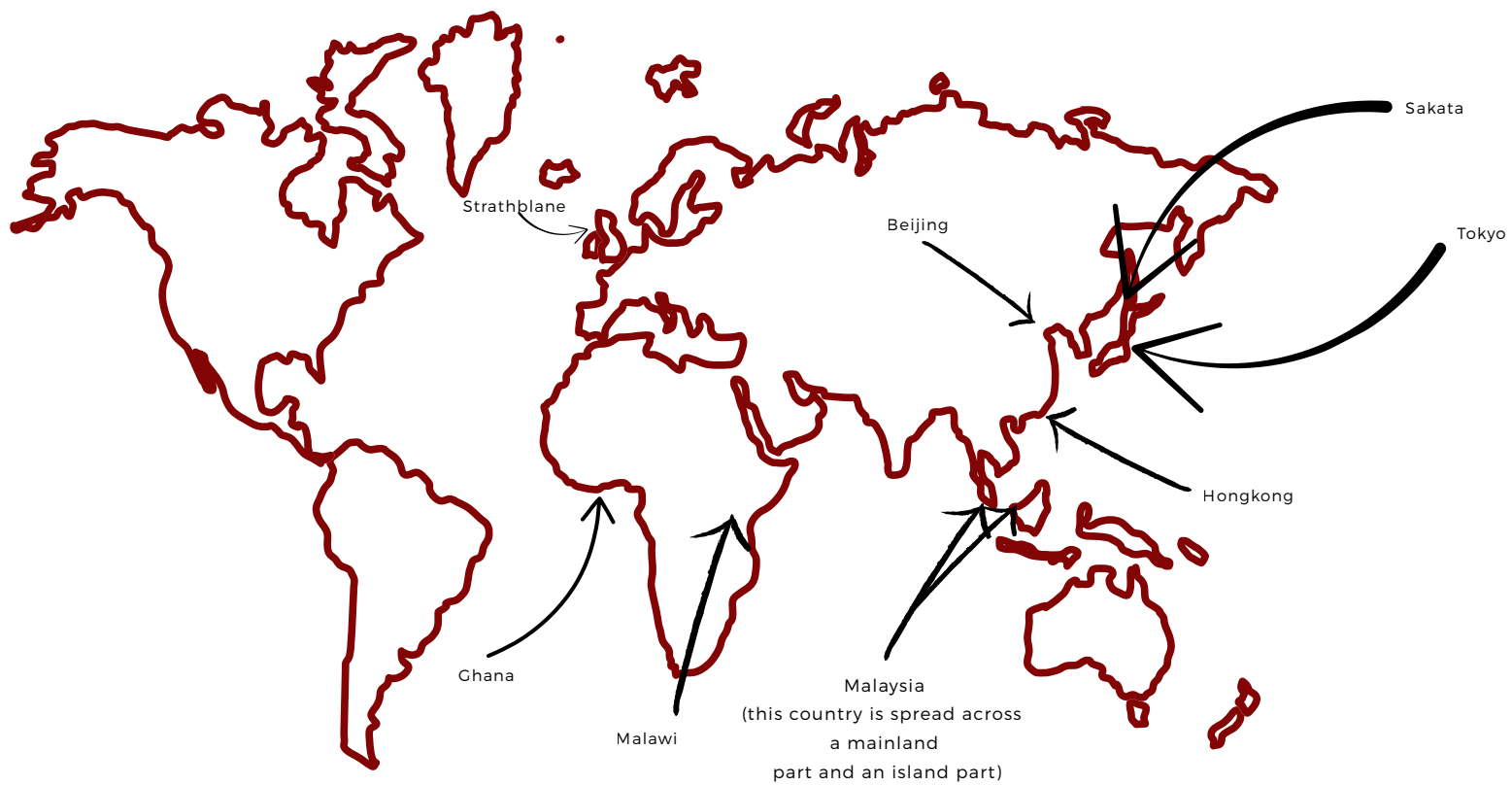
Blessings to you all,

The Mission and Disciple Group.



MISSIONARY NEWS

This little graphic is intended to give our readers a better idea of roughly where the different localities mentioned in our articles are within the world and where they are in relation to Scotland.





Lorna Ferguson now settling into Sakata, has identified five areas for her to be involved in, including outreach through the church and support of her pastor and his family. She was asked to lead a Scottish cookery class in November for local ladies, which was to include a short gospel message. On the menu: lentil soup, cheese scones and apple crumble.

Pastor Kizu and his wife have just welcomed a new member of the family - their fifth daughter! Lorna has been told to prepare for snow so has acquired a small car fit for the conditions. It sounds like life in Sakata will not be dull.



Malcolm and Liz McGregor support younger mission leaders and continue to undertake regular travel for SIM ministry. Back at home in Edinburgh, the growing church of which they are part - Carrubbers Christian Centre on the Royal Mile - is undertaking a major renovation and remodelling project of their five-storey building, so the church has vacated its usual premises and is meeting elsewhere while work progresses.



Both *Carolyn Kemp* and *Catherine* have had close family bereavement in recent weeks. We pray with them: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles..." 2 Corinthians 1 v 3.



James and Kirsty write, "We continue to live by faith, so are indebted to churches and supporters who have generously enabled us to reach 63% of our 2025 budget so far." Their mission organisation, OMF (formerly China Inland Mission) has, since its inception in the nineteenth century, depended on God's provision through the missionary support of churches and individuals.

We remember the families of missionaries, thinking just now of Deborah as she prepares for prelims as well as the ongoing need for the balance of this family's annual budget.



CHANGING LIVES MALAWI

Sarah Black

It's been a busy few months for the community we are helping to support in Malawi. A nursery/classroom block has been built and almost finished but it has been more complicated as supplies are scarce, prices have risen a huge amount and there have been fuel shortages. It's been a stressful time for Levison. I'm not sure how we would get anything done under those conditions!

The food crisis in Malawi is getting worse, and we are trying our best to continue feeding children, but it's not enough. Sometimes the weight of responsibility feels such a lot but we can only stay faithful to the Lord and try our best to follow His plans.

At Bright Futures Secondary School, students have started learning basic carpentry skills. They have researched beehive designs and made their drawings, then have had the help of a carpenter to make the beehive. It is almost ready to put in place. Then they will make more. Hopefully, they will be able to sell some of the honey to help the school be more self-sufficient and to help pay the teachers salaries.

Students have also visited the local health centre with donations for the newborn babies. Thank you to everyone who knits for us. Babies have had blankets, hats and cardigans to keep them warm.

We also raised funds to provide students at Chambo Primary with notebooks and pencils. They cannot afford to buy their own and their families are struggling to feed them so cannot buy stationery.

These are just a few of the many things that are happening. If you are able, you can see the rest of our projects on our website, facebook or instagram. www.changinglivesmalawi.com Many thanks again for all the support and prayers. If anyone would like to make a Christmas donation then please do get in touch contact_us@changinglivesmalawi.com or speak to my mum, Christine Cresswell. Wishing you a very happy Christmas. Sarah x





WINTER AND CHRISTMAS JINGLE

13th of December,
7:15 pm

Strathblane Parish Church
Tickets £10, proceeds to
Strathcarron Hospice

FESTIVE EVENTS

Strathblane Parish Church

7th December
Communion Service
11.30 a.m.

13th December
Winter and Christmas Jingle Concert
Tickets £10
(proceeds to Strathcarron Hospice)
7.15 p.m.

14th December
Messy Church
Christmas Tree and Tea afternoon
3.30 p.m.

19th December
Strathblane Primary School service

24th December
Christingle Service
All welcome.
4.30 p.m.

Watchnight Service
11.30 p.m.

Christmas Day
Family Service
Children bring a favourite present to show.
11a.m.

Killearn Church

7th December
Communion Service
10 a.m.

Sanctuary Service.
A short service for people who have lost loved ones. Lighting of candles in remembrance.
3 p.m.

13th December
The Guild Christmas Coffee Morning,
10 a.m.

14th December
Christmas Gift Service -
10 a.m.
Gifts will be donated to the Salvation Army,
Stirling.

18th December
Killearn Primary School Service

24th December
Family Service
6 p.m.
Including lighting up Christmas Village Window Number 24.
Retiral Collection will be donated to Shelter.

Christmas Day Service
10 a.m.
Children to bring a favourite gift.

All regular events continue to run throughout the festive season. Normal services 11:30 on Sunday;
Prayer meeting Wednesdays at 7pm, Cuppa Time Thursdays at 2pm

KEY CONTACTS

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in vacancy
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