

# Cornerstone

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF STRATHBLANE PARISH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND  
SCOTTISH CHARITY NO: SC007261



## FROM THE STUDY DESK

Chris Gordon, Locum

Sadly, my kids are just beyond the age of being read stories at bedtime. It's a shame as I used to enjoy making sure they were cuddled up and then gently reading one of their favourite books.

The stories were wonderful, full of engaging characters who were often on some kind of adventure. Frequently there would be a challenge of some sort that needed to be overcome, requiring courage or asking for help. Perhaps a moment of peril was introduced before a conclusion that, more often than not, was a happy ending.

We would come back to the favourite stories time and time again. Indeed, only this week, during a clear-out, we still retained a shelf's worth of kids books because the attachment was just too significant and the memories were too strong.

You see, the best stories demand multiple readings. They can't just be flicked through and then discarded. And often we pick up something new within the story even though it is familiar, discovering a character trait that was hidden or a sub plot that was lurking beneath the surface.

These recent weeks we've been exploring the wonderful story of Ruth within the Old Testament. It's a short book, but packed with intrigue and told in a way that is actually



## IN THIS ISSUE

From the Study Desk - p.1

Session Report - p.3

Church Family - p. 4

Treasurer's report - p. 4

General Assembly - p.6

A letter of thanks - p. 8

Ministries - p. 9

Fay's Special Birthday - p. 12

Missionary news - p. 14

Key contacts - p.19

very similar to kids stories today, with chapters that have a beginning and an end. It's concise length makes it possible to read in one sitting. And there's a richness to reading a narrative text in that way, the way it was intended to be retold.

Sometimes in church we are constrained by time but our personal reading at home will benefit if we are able to read bible narratives in the way they were intended to be received.

So, if there's a letter in the New Testament try, if possible, to read it in its entirety. Or if you are in a gospel story then take that part to its natural conclusion. And while the Old Testament can be hard at times, there are these wonderful narratives that can be explored that reveal the fullness of the character of God.

Sometimes the context of the story will need some explaining, as it was with the situations we found in Ruth, but there are lots of sources out there that can help with our understanding of concepts that seem foreign to us. I have benefitted from the Bible Project series which can be found online and also the website Got Questions, both of which can help with theological and cultural issues.

So, whatever reading you are able to do, ask God's spirit to guide you into a right understanding and then share your learning with a person you trust. And if something doesn't seem right please don't sit in silence; ask one of the many people who would be willing to spend time exploring some of the trickier aspects within the Bible.

Then together we become a family that is closer to God, as we begin to understand His-story and the fullness of his mercy and grace.

*Chris*



## SESSION REPORT

Lynne James

On Sunday 31st May, the congregations of Strathblane and Killearn voted for the members of the joint Nominating Committee who will be tasked with selecting the next minister to lead our two church families. This is, for them all, both a privilege and a great responsibility, as they seek to discern God's will in this matter. Please support them in the coming weeks, both by respecting the fact that they cannot speak about their discussions held among themselves, and, more importantly, by praying for them throughout their time as a group. We can be assured that God already knows who we need for our next minister, and we must wait patiently for this to be revealed to us!

The Nominating Committee will be 13 members in all, 7 from Killearn and 6 from our own congregation.

Our members are

Tamara Armstrong

Karen Flashman

Lynne James

Ian Mills

David Titterington

Richard Wakefield

The Killearn members are

Lisa Collins

Stuart Collins

Ashley Edwards

Sandra Kirk

Nigel Kelly

Teresa Prescott

Carole Young

We were very grateful on the morning, to Drymen Congregation who were willing to send members of their congregation as independent tellers to both churches for the necessary elections. How good it is to have the Strathendrick Churches working together and supporting each other. Hopefully, we can continue this trend as we progress. We must also continue to pray for our Interim Moderator, Ramsay Shields, who will have even more meetings to cram in to his already busy schedule. His calm good humour is a boon to these, and other meetings.

Thank you to everyone who was willing to allow their names to be put forward to serve on the committee.

The committee will have had its first meeting together by the time this edition of Cornerstone comes out and the hard work will have begun for them all!

May God be with them and uphold them in the days ahead

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Jean Strachan

For the first 4 months of 2026 and 2025 our General Fund giving may be compared as follows:

|                   | 2026<br>£     | 2025<br>£     | Change<br>£  | Change<br>%  |
|-------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Gift Aid          | 15,288        | 13,688        | 1,600        | 11.69        |
| Open Plate        | <u>2,020</u>  | <u>1,778</u>  | <u>242</u>   | <u>13.61</u> |
|                   | 17,308        | 15,578        | 1,842        | 11.82        |
| Other Donations   | 339           | 443           | (104)        |              |
| Guild Donation    | 0             | 500           | (500)        |              |
| Weddings/Funerals | <u>0</u>      | <u>270</u>    | <u>(270)</u> |              |
| <b>Total</b>      | <u>17,647</u> | <u>16,639</u> | <u>968</u>   |              |

## CHURCH FAMILY



Born on the 19<sup>th</sup> of May and weighing in at 9 lbs 10, Messy Church welcomes a new member!

Congratulations to the Kerr family on the birth of Pippin! A brother for Amelia and Madi. We look forward to lots of cuddles at the next meeting!



The one who longs to make us whole  
is waiting to embrace  
our broken lives, so we can know  
the power of healing grace.  
God's love surrounds our suffering,  
and keeps us through the night;  
God helps us bear our deep despair  
till we see morning light.

The one who saves us from ourselves  
is waiting to release  
our hearts from chains of self-reproach  
and failure to find peace.  
When harmful habits leave us bruised,  
distraught by inner pain,  
God comes to us through trusted friends,  
and helps us hope again.

The one who understands our need  
accept us as we are  
and, like a loved one, welcomes us  
when we have wandered far.  
God never says we come too late  
to be forgiven, free,  
but promises we can become  
the self we're meant to be.

Edith Sinclair Downing

## GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2026

Ian Mills

I can well remember from a young age that in May of each year, my mother (who was a long standing member of the Woman's Guild as it was in those days) would comment that the General Assembly was taking place in Edinburgh and indeed the television and radio news bulletins featured full reports of the proceedings as did the daily newspapers. Long before the Scottish Parliament, the General Assembly was considered the nearest Scotland had to a Parliament as people from across the country met to discuss matters relating to the church, but also social issues of the time which were impacting on the population. Fast forward to May of this year when I attended the Assembly for the first time as one of the commissioned elders from Perth Presbytery. Climbing the steps past the statue of John Knox to enter the Assembly Hall, I realised this was not just 'another Kirk meeting' but an event which dates back centuries and since 1929 has taken place on the Mound.

The Assembly is similar to an AGM where financial, legal and administrative matters are discussed under the chairmanship of the Moderator. However along with issues which relate to the organisation and management of the Church of Scotland, consideration is also given to wider social and community issues at home and abroad. Decisions taken by the Assembly are then passed on for Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to address as appropriate. This year, the Assembly was held over a long weekend as opposed to a week. Commissioners could attend on Zoom or in person and all documents were provided on line thus allowing 'a paperless assembly' - although the committee reports alone amounted to over three hundred pages! Thankfully, Perth Presbytery had produced an AI summary of the reports which highlighted the main points - only sixty pages.

I opted to attend in person to experience the 'feel' of the occasion at first hand. Given the history of the Assembly, a number of traditions are associated with the format and conduct of the proceedings. Some would argue in 2026 - why do we need this! I have to confess I like events where recognition is given to what has gone before and so appreciated the more formal and ceremonial parts which occurred during the weekend - including bowing to the Moderator as he took his position at the start of each session.

The significance of the position of the Lord High Commissioner is interesting. Unlike the Church of England where the monarch is the Supreme Governor of the Church, the Church of Scotland is Presbyterian - something which the monarch takes an oath to protect. Whilst the monarch has the right to attend the Assembly, they are normally represented by the Lord High Commissioner who both this year and last year was Lady Elish Angiolini. This in itself was a break from tradition as she was the first Roman Catholic to be appointed and required Parliamentary approval to change the law of 1689 which banned a Roman Catholic holding this role.

I attended a meeting arranged for 'first timers' on the evening before the start when we were shown round the Assembly building followed by a briefing on the format of the Assembly business sessions including how motions, amendments and counter motions etc are considered – all quite bewildering but as it turned out, a useful piece of information. In addition to the Commissioners from Presbyteries across the country, there were delegates from twelve other UK based ecumenical denominations and representatives from churches in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Caribbean. This international presence was of particular significance as the Assembly received a report from the Legacies of Slavery Group and adopted an apology for the Church of Scotland's historical involvement in transatlantic chattel slavery. A presentation was also given on the services provided by Cross Reach as well as an update on the work of Chaplains to HM Forces. A group of chaplains were in attendance including our former minister Rev Richard Begg looking the part in his army chaplain uniform.

Two additional events took place outwith the Assembly Hall which I attended. One was the Assembly Service held in St Giles Cathedral on the Sunday morning where the Moderator preached on his theme for the Assembly, 'Walk in All his Ways'. The other was a reception at the Palace of Holyroodhouse hosted by the Lord High Commissioner who is in residence during the Assembly. Apparently my invitation was based on being a first time attendee at the Assembly!

For those wishing information on the business sessions, the Church of Scotland website has details of the committee reports and minutes (running to forty pages). I appreciated the opportunity to attend the Assembly during which I became more aware of 'the bigger picture' surrounding the activities of the Church of Scotland. Whilst for most of us our level of influence on these matters is within our own parish, it is clear that the challenge posed by declining numbers, parish readjustments etc remains a matter of ongoing concern. However, the importance of the church to the people in its local area should not be underestimated as described in one comment I noted - 'a transforming church transforms its community'.

## STAMPS

Marjorie Peddie

We are still collecting, and Liz is sorting, used postage stamps. Our last big bundle went to the Church of Scotland Stamp appeal, now , sadly closed. The proceeds from this appeal were used to support the only Christian hospital in Gaza.

I am now looking for another worthy recipient of stamp bundles! So keep donating!

Marjorie

## A LETTER OF THANKS

Dearest church family & friends:

Thank you all so much for your kind wishes and thoughtful words. Your messages truly meant a great deal to me and brought much warmth and encouragement during this difficult time. Many of you know I was diagnosed in January with a recurrent cancer and currently having chemotherapy treatment.

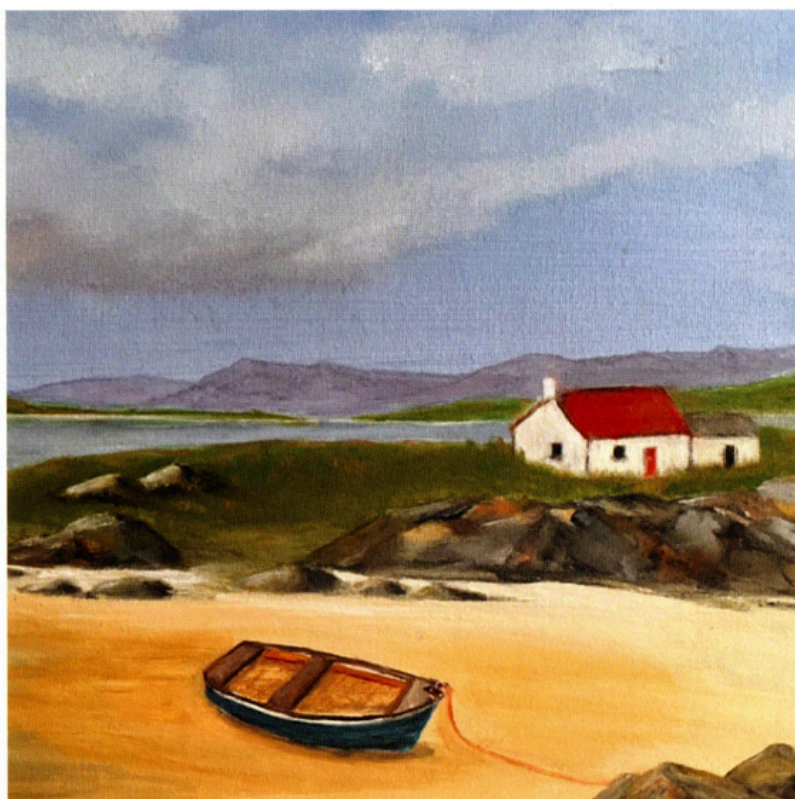
I appreciate your kindness and support and the time you took to reach out. It is so comforting to know that there are people like you who care and share in my wellbeing.

Please accept my heartfelt thanks and once again, your good wishes are deeply valued and will always be remembered.

With kind regards  
Dorinda

21/5/26

Old Manse Stables  
Belfry  
963 05X





## CUPPA TIME

Georgina Marshall

Emily and friends knitted chickens and little bunnies to hold Easter eggs. We sold them at our Easter special and raised £45 for church funds. Any that were left were given out to the children that attended the egg hunt on Easter Sunday ! Well done Emily ! We had an enjoyable Easter quiz on Maundy Thursday and Tamara came along to play for us . We enjoyed singing Easter songs and hymns . A good time was had by all. We are now trying to resurrect our painting table which was always well used. We would be delighted to see anyone in the village who would like to come along and join us for friendship and fellowship. Every Thursday 2pm to 4pm.



## FELLOWSHIP GROUP

Ella Hyam

The FELLOWSHIP GROUP and 'FRIENDS TOGETHER' are hosting a COFFEE MORNING on SATURDAY 22nd AUGUST in the KIRK ROOMS from 10am until 12 noon.

There will be home baking and a bric-à-brac stall too. Tickets costing £5. will be available soon.

Please come along and support us again.

We heard how disappointed you were to have no coffee and cakes at the recent Plant Sale, but we needed all our manpower (and woman power) to man the tables for the plants. An amazing total of £1920. was raised for Strathcarron Hospice.

## START UP STIRLING

Sandra Ritchie

Start Up Stirling has been providing food support for the past 12 years, although the Charity has been in operation since 1994. Beginning initially by helping 12 families in October 2012 with one small foodbank, by 2025, this had risen to 143,500 meals, supporting 3,722 people. They now coordinate 2 city centre food banks, as well as 6 rural ones, plus a rural delivery service to reach outlying villages and towns. Start Up Stirling is now the largest independent provider of crisis food covering the whole of the Stirling Council area.

Start Up Stirling relies on the food that they receive to support all who need them through their Crisis Food Service. Unfortunately, donations are down on last year but the need for our services remain, with Start Up Stirling now purchasing additional food each month to meet the demand. More and more families find themselves struggling to make ends meet as the cost of living continues to rise. On average, we are supporting around 400 people every week.

If you would like to make a food donation, here are some of the items that they need most at the moment.

- Cup a soups
- Cereal bars
- Jam or spreads
- Tinned pasta (such as macaroni or ravioli)
- UHT milk

Recently, Start Up Stirling has not had as many donations and so they are extremely grateful to the congregation for their continued support.



## MISSION AND DISCIPLESHIP GROUP

Nancy Sharp

### Try Praying

At the end of April we were re-introduced to Try Praying, a 7-day guide to prayer aimed mainly at people who do not attend church and are not yet Christians. However, churches are also being encouraged to use this. Each day there is a biblical quote (or paraphrase), a commentary, a pre-printed prayer with encouragement to pray for something important to the reader, plus a personal testimony. We are also very pleased that youth and children's editions were given out to our young people, as well as adult copies.

But the thing that will make this project a success is that, once we have finished using the book, we should give it to someone else. So we encourage anyone who has finished the book to pass it on, or you can just leave it somewhere to be picked up! Prayer is such a lovely, powerful gift from God - let's use it!

### Bible Course

At the end of last year many of us benefitted from The Bible Course by the Bible Society. The M&D group hope to offer another course on the book of Romans by the Bible Society in early autumn this year. This course follows a similar format to The Bible Course and we are told that "this will take you on a journey that helps you discover your place in God's story". We hope many of you will join us.



## FAY'S SPECIAL BIRTHDAY

Anne Balfour

Fay Nimmo deserves to put her feet up. This much-loved former district nurse and community midwife has recently celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday!

She finds it hard to believe that some of the newborns she dandled in the early 1970s are not just parents but even grandparents. Though she rarely ventures out these days, “my bairns” as she still sometimes calls them, often call at her bungalow for a chat and a cuppa. She says: “I enjoy catching up with them and hearing their news. I love seeing them prosper in life.”

Fay was the oldest of five from the St Ninians area of Stirling. She was working as an office junior when she became a committed Christian and felt the call to missionary nursing work in Africa, after learning that her local United Free Church was sponsoring a hospital in Botswana. For the next four years she completed her general nursing qualification and trained as a midwife before embarking on her big African adventure in 1961. During the next six years she oversaw the delivery of hundreds of babies and trained dozens of midwives from her base at the Scottish Livingstone Hospital in Molepolole. “Most mothers gave birth in their thatched mud huts. You just had to get on with it. Once we delivered quads. Amazingly, they all survived.” Her duties included venturing into the Kalahari Desert to run open-air clinics for nomadic tribes.

In 1967 a serious health problem meant Fay had to return to Scotland, where she worked as a ward sister in Glasgow's Rotten Row maternity hospital, before deciding to take her skills into the community. “I made a mistake. I thought I was being sent to Dunblane but it turned out to be Blanefield! I thought I'd come and see what it was like and I've been here ever since.”

Many of us who are now senior citizens remember with gratitude Fay's cheerful guidance and reassurance when we were exhausted first time mothers struggling to cope with a fretful small bundle. Fay bustling around her patch with her little black bag was a familiar sight for more than two decades.

A bad fall during one of her rounds led to knee problems, an eventual knee replacement and the decision to retire in 1993. Dozens of “her” bairns joined a great send-off party at the Edmonstone Hall. It is a measure of the affection and respect felt by the community that the collection for a retirement present was able to purchase a posh recliner chair. After such an active working life, it was time to put her feet up.

Fay's faith has always been at the centre of her life, which is why she says she never feels lonely. Over the years she has made several return trips to Botswana and still enjoys the

occasional phone chat. It gives her a chance to practice Tswana, the local language she learned while she was there.

Her big birthday in March precipitated a stream of celebrations, including trips to Luss and Loch Fyne and a day at Dunblane Hydro. For weeks her home was like a florist's shop. Friends commissioned a special cake featuring babies and even a pink and blue umbilical cord! (It was the icing on the cake.) Fay would like to thank all those who contributed to making her birthday such a joy: "I feel so grateful."

Does she know our locum Chris Gordon? "Of course," she beams, "He was one of my bairns!"



Fay Nimmo relaxing in the recliner chair she received as a retirement present in 1993



## ROW FOR LIFE

Marjorie Peddie

3 women. One ocean. 2,800 miles

On June 6th, my daughter , Victoria Peddie Bell and 2 other ladies, both Cancer survivors, will set off from Monterey ,California, rowing In an open, unsupported , ocean rowing boat to Kaua'i , Hawaii. The boat is the length of 2 small cars, without any creature comforts - their toilet is bucket!

The other 2 ladies, Felicity and JP have had Bowel cancer and Melanoma respectively. Victoria is rowing in memory of Donald who had Neurocrinal Cancer of the Pancreas, and Felicity lost her father to Renal Cancer just after she completed a similar row across the Atlantic.

The ladies will face the unpredictable and powerful forces of Mother Nature, sleep deprivation, sea sickness and the relentless strain on body and mind of rowing 2 hours on, 22 hours off, 24 hours a day. They hope to make it to Hawaii in under 40 day.

Of Course, they have trained hard, attended courses on Navigation, using radios , survival and so on. They hope to raise £100,000 for Cancer Research uk.

First of all, they need our prayers that God will go with them and keep them safe.

Secondly, if anyone would like to donate to them the links are below.. I have taken the liberty of having a heart sticker from Strathblane Kirk put on the boat.

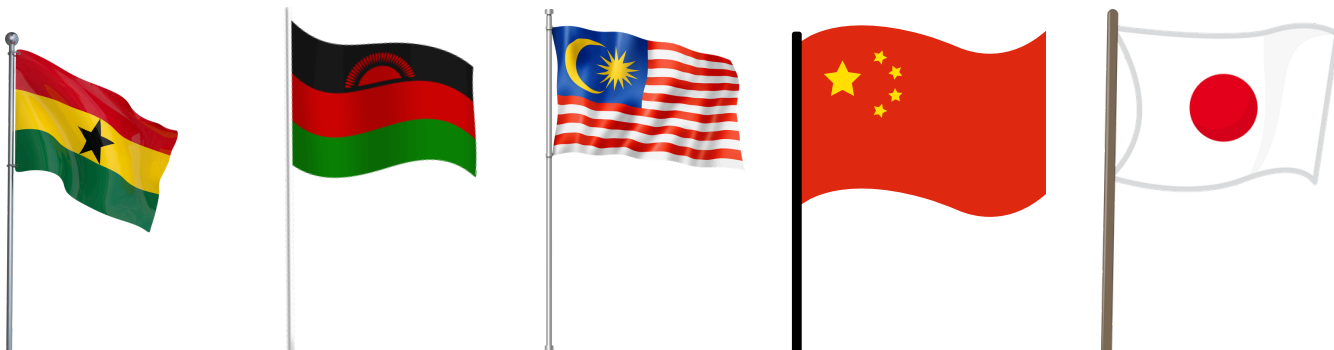
[fundraiser.cancerresearchuk.org/rowforlife](https://fundraiser.cancerresearchuk.org/rowforlife). Or Gofundme.com/f/rowforlifepacific

For more information about the journey and crew please go to <https://rowforlifepacific.org.uk/>.



## 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.



This time last year we enjoyed a visit from *Lorna Ferguson*. She has now been in Sakata, in the north of Japan, for nine months.

Like our own congregation, hers is small and members are mostly retired- aged with just a handful of school-aged children.

English classes for local young people, which include a Bible story, now run twice weekly. Plans are also underway for a kids' gospel five-day outreach event in the summer.

She has passed her first fukiya (blow darts) exam and this spring she met up with three of her four sons.



Mount Chokai from just outside Lorna's flat.

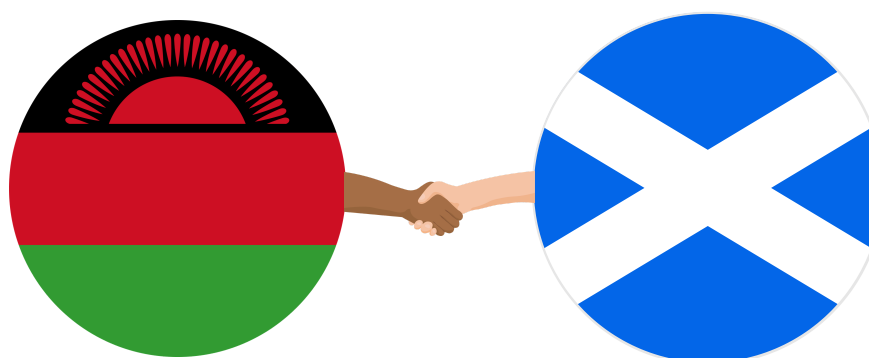
In the middle of June *Carolyn Kemp* is due to be on holiday, in search of "Rest, Rest and .... Rest ☺". If she finds this, it will be a complete change from her usual routine. Like our congregation, her own in Kirkcaldy is in a period of vacancy. She has recently heard that her current financial support is insufficient for her to continue her work with OMF (she has been with the organisation for around 30 years). She asks supporters to join her in praying for the shortfall to come in.



*James and Kirsty* sum up their work: our job is to share Jesus with people across cultures and across the world. Though the family no longer lives in Asia, Kirsty regularly uses her Chinese language skills as she meets weekly with three groups of international students for Bible study; the sessions are either bilingual or entirely in Chinese!

## CHANGING LIVES MALAWI

Sarah Black is currently on her way back from her trip to Malawi - expect an in-depth update in the next edition of Cornerstone!







**Blythswood**  
CHANGING LIVES FOR GOOD AND FOREVER

Margaret McIntyre received this letter from Blythswood... we are including excerpts from it here to help you in your prayers for all those who work with Blythswood

As you know, this year, Blythswood is giving thanks for 60 years since our work began. There have been many changes through the decades, but something that hasn't changed is the necessity of prayer. Prayer was essential to the group going out with gospel tracts on the streets of Glasgow in 1966, and it is essential in the work of seeing lives changed for good and forever across Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe in 2026.

While we (may) invite you to set aside 60 minutes to give thanks for 60 years of Blythswood, the Bible reminds us that we are called to live with an attitude of continual prayer.

Alistair Begg says:

"Lest we fool ourselves into thinking that prayer is simply a nice treat once we get around to it, the calls to continual prayer alert us to just how essential an activity it is. Prayer is not optional; it is vital. Prayer is not an item to check off our to-do list, as though five minutes in the morning will cover us for the rest of the day. It is impossible for anyone to enjoy an intimate relationship with God without walking through their day, and the circumstances it brings, in an attitude of prayer."

Will you set aside 60 minutes to give thanks for 60 years of Blythswood on Wednesday, the 3rd of June? Please keep Blythswood's work in your prayers; not only on Blythswood's Day of Prayer on Wednesday 3rd June, but throughout the year. Sixty years after the work began, our need to depend on the Lord every day, in every way, has not changed.

Thank you so much for your prayerful support,  
from

**Mairi McHardy** | Prayer & Christian Literature Administrator | Blythswood

## REGULAR EVENTS

Every Sunday: 11:30 am Sunday Worship, church & Sunday Club

Every Wednesday: 7pm Prayer Time, Kirk Rooms

Every Thursday: 2pm Cuppa Time, Kirk Rooms



## KEY CONTACTS

Your Minister

in vacancy

Locum: Chris Gordon

[CGordon@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:CGordon@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Session Clerk

Mrs Lynne James

07796 871607

[lynnej1257@gmail.com](mailto:lynnej1257@gmail.com)

Treasurer

Mrs Jean Strachan

01360 770143

[jhmstrachan@gmail.com](mailto:jhmstrachan@gmail.com)

Church Office

[strathblanekirk@gmail.com](mailto:strathblanekirk@gmail.com)



[www.strathblanekirk.co.uk](http://www.strathblanekirk.co.uk)



[www.facebook.com/StrathblaneKirk](https://www.facebook.com/StrathblaneKirk)