

Connected



BATHGATE

Parish Church



Advent 2024

Scottish Charity No. SC007418

From the Editor

Every year the church looks resplendent, bedecked in beautiful Christmas decorations. It is a lovely feeling to walk into church and marvel at how beautifully presented it is. I am aware that this is only made possible by the sheer hard work of a well-oiled machine! To find out more, I interviewed someone in the know, to find out all the different steps in the process of Operation Christmas Decorations!

- 🌲 The tree is delivered by the Council.
- 🌲 The Tree Team comes one night to put the tree up.
- 🌲 Carolyn, Wilma and Jean decorate it on the Thursday.
- 🌲 Sunday – the Flower Committee stay behind after worship, to decorate the garlands.
- 🌲 The Garland Team comes to hang the finished garlands from the gallery.
- 🌲 Monday – the Flower Committee prepares the cages for the pulpit, ready for hanging.
- 🌲 Thursday/Friday – the window arrangements are created.
- 🌲 The stable arrives at the front door for Jean and Alex to assemble.

Thank you to everyone for all your AMAZING work! Alison



Gift Service



There will be a Gift Service on **Sunday 8th December at 11am in Bathgate Parish Church** in aid of River Kids, West Lothian, Toy and Gift Appeal for Christmas.

River Kids supports disadvantaged children and young people in West Lothian by providing new toys and other gifts for them to open at Christmas. This is for all ages from babies to teenagers and from teddies to toiletries!

Unwrapped gifts are requested and should be placed under the Christmas tree in the chancel on your arrival for morning worship.



Your kindness and caring will be much appreciated.

Elan Simpson

Locum's Christmas Message

Here we are approaching the year's end. How time has flown by, or is it that I am that one year older?

It has been an eventful year in our congregation with the last service in the former St John's taking place on Easter Sunday.

It is nice, pleasing to look out on the congregation, Sunday by Sunday, and see a good turnout. Don't get me wrong, there is plenty of room for more, many more, to join us, support us and share in the Lord's work.

We have advertised for a new Minister to lead us forward on our personal Christian journeys and the sharing of the good news of Jesus' love for the world in our schools, amongst the unchurched and to visit those who are unable to join us on a regular basis. We pray earnestly for our Nominations Committee to find our new minister.

We've seen a change of Government at Westminster and the election of a new President in the United States. We pray for God's blessing on those elected to serve their people.

The Christmas adverts appear to have been on our TV screens for ages, the Christmas lights are up but not lit in our town centre and of course, the Christmas songs ringing out through the supermarkets and malls.

We pray that the real reason for the season won't be missed in this frenzy of spending as if there is no tomorrow. Jesus is the reason for the season.

In this season of Advent I ask, I urge you, to support the Advent events organised through Bathgate Churches Together, let us fill our churches

Continued...

Locum's Christmas Message Continued

and celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Saviour of the World but always mindful that we prepare for Jesus' return. He is coming back to take His children home.

Christmas is a time for families. Please pray for families where this Christmas will be different, they have lost a loved one and there is that empty chair at the Christmas dining table.

Pray for families that are broken and pride hinders any reconciliation, let there be love shared among them.

Pray for families where money is tight and parents long for their children to get what their friends have, leading them into further debt.

Pray for folks who will spend Christmas on their own, either through choice, or they have no family, or no family nearby.

Pray for folks who need to work on Christmas Day, those in our emergency services, hospitals, care homes and carers visiting folks in their homes.

We pray that this coming year will bring peace to this troubled and broken world. It is pleasing to see a ceasefire in the Holy Land. We continue to pray for Ukraine that they will see an end, a fair and just end, to the hostilities there.

In this season of Advent, go that extra mile to show God's love. Be the hands, the feet and mouth of our Lord Jesus.

Faithfully read your bibles, pray to God, your Heavenly Father, through Jesus His Son and know and share His peace in your family this Christmas.

God Bless you all and have a Merry Christmas.

David Wilkie, Locum

Bathgate Churches Together



You are warmly invited to our

**Services and Events in the
Christmas Season
December 2024**

Bathgate Churches Together - Continued

CHRISTMAS SERVICES IN BATHGATE 2024

All welcome

Sunday 1 December: St Columba's Episcopal Church 6.30 pm.
Advent Service: Choral Evensong

Sunday 8 December: Boghall Church 6.30 pm.
A Christmas Celebration

Sunday 22 December: EU URC 6.30 pm.
Christmas Service

Tuesday 24 December – Christmas Eve

St Columba's Episcopal Church 4.00 pm.
Christingle Service (suitable for children)

Bathgate Parish Church 7.00 pm.
Christingle service (suitable for children)

St Columba's Episcopal Church 11.00 pm.
Community Carols followed by Midnight
Eucharist at 11.30 pm

Wednesday 25 December – Christmas Day 10.30 am

Boghall Church: Christmas Day Service

St Columba's Episcopal Church: Christmas Day Service

Contact person for BCT:
The Rev. Rosie Addis (St Columba's)
07795 225098

Bathgate Churches Together – Continued

Bathgate Parish Church

Gideon St,

Bathgate

EH48 4HB

<https://www.bathgateparish.com>

Bathgate EU URC Church

48 Marjoribanks St,

Bathgate EH48 1AT

<http://www.bathgateeuurc.org.uk>

Boghall Parish Church

Elizabeth Drive

Bathgate EH48 1JB

<http://www.boghallchurch.org.uk>

St. Columba's Episcopal Church

Glasgow Road

Bathgate EH48 2AJ

<https://stcolumbasbathgate.org.uk>

Also in Bathgate

St. Mary's and St. Columba's RC

Livery Street. EH48 4HS.

and (moving shortly to George St.)

Centrepont

Simpson Primary School, Leyland Rd, Bathgate EH48 2SG

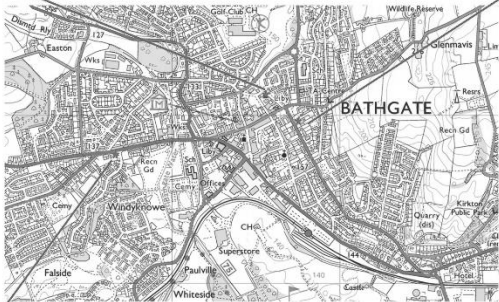
Bathgate Churches Together – Continued



Bathgate Parish Church



Bathgate United
Reformed Church



St. Columba's
Episcopal Church
of Scotland



Boghall Parish Church

For addresses and full information see back of this leaflet

Liz Orr

The Mighty Stride

In September 2024, I took part in the Edinburgh Kiltwalk to raise funds for SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association).

In 2024 SSAFA benefited from fundraisers at the Aberdeen, Dundee, Glasgow and Edinburgh Kiltwalks to the tune of a combined total of £56,000 with some matched giving still to come.

I would like to express my thanks to all of our parishioners and their friends who sponsored me for the Mighty Stride (approx. 20 miles).

Many thanks,

Jim Jack



BPC Working Group

It has been a pleasure to work with such a dedicated group of people who make up the working group. They have been tackling large and small jobs around our church building, St John's garden and more recently, the Parish Church manse garden (Hunter Grove). The number of workers is sometimes just a few, sometimes plentiful. However, everyone works so hard even though they know there will be sore backs and aching limbs the next day. We've enjoyed the banter and camaraderie with everyone.

A great big 'Thank you' to you all --- you know who you are.

If there is anyone else who is interested in joining us, please approach Christine or myself. We don't work set days or even every week (and definitely not if the weather is very cold or inclement) – it just depends on the work needing done. We tend to meet in the morning and labour for a couple of hours at a time – which is long enough! We do make a difference.

Here's to the next task – it won't be long in coming.

Christine and Dave Robertson



Foodbank December 2024

The 'Angels' and 'Cherubs' (our two foodbank teams) are still kept busy on a Tuesday morning. We continue to receive regular donations of money and goods from our own church members --- Thank you once again. The E.U. church and St Mary's church also keep us well stocked, along with the Train Drivers' Union.

Our numbers are still about 24 each week which include individuals, couples and families who find it difficult to stretch their income to meet their needs. We also have some customers who are residing at the Kaim Park Hotel who, although they have a place to stay, they have very little in the way of cooking facilities, which is a bit of a challenge for them -- and the foodbank has its limits in what we can give them.

At this time of year, we start to think of what we might put in our customers' Christmas gift bag. Usually it is a tin of soup; a tin of ham /chicken / beef; a tin of vegetables and potatoes; a small Christmas cake or pudding and some chocolate. In other words a mini Christmas dinner.

Windyknowe Primary School is on board again with this idea as they have a Reverse Advent calendar, where each class is given the opportunity to donate grocery gifts on a certain day before Christmas. This year (on Monday 16th Dec) we are hoping to welcome a small group of older children up to the church hall to let them see how we sort, check and store our donations as well as explain to them how our system works.

Continued...

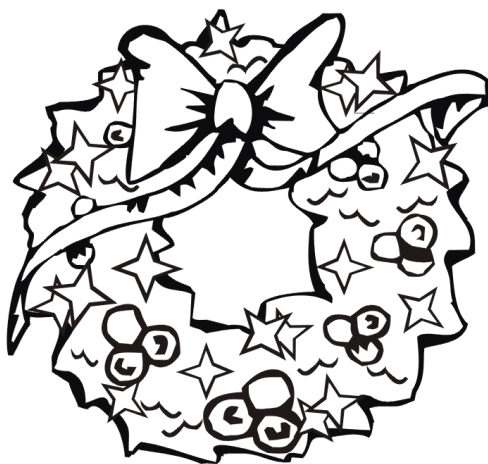
Foodbank December 2024 - Continued

We have decided to close the Foodbank on 24th and 31st December this year to give the volunteers a break over Christmas. We will be open again on Tuesday 7th January.

Thank you to all of you who have donated to us in the past and who continue to support us on a regular basis. We really appreciate all the goods and money we receive.

The whole Foodbank team wish you a blessed Christmas.

Christine Robertson



Finance and Property Matters

All of the works mentioned in the last edition of the Connected magazine have now been completed:

- The communion table and chairs from St John's Church have been relocated to Bathgate Parish Church.
- The relocation of the war memorial plaques from St John's to the vestibule of the Parish Church and the subsequent repair of the wall in St John's at a cost of £4,027. The memorials were rededicated on Remembrance Sunday.
- Inspection and upgrading of the lightning conductors at the former St John's Church (not done since 2012) costing £4,614.
- Removing vegetation and cleaning gutters at the church and manse in Mid Street at a cost of £1,195.
- An unexpected replacement of the hot water tank at St John's manse - £1,200.
- New handrails to access the stage in the large hall costing £980.

It is hoped that the tenant at the Mid Street manse vacates the property by 6th December 2024. Rent has only been paid up to 21 October 2024 and an arrears payment of £2,746 is being pursued.

The tenant at the Hunter Grove manse vacated on 14 October 2024 and the property was inspected soon after by the Presbytery Building Officer. There are a number of works requiring attention and he recommended that a budget of £15,000 to £20,000 be set aside for this.

Continued...

Finance and Property Matters - Continued

The Church of Scotland Legal Department has provided advice in relation to the sale of the former St John's Church and manse. This advice was discussed at the Session meeting on 14 November 2024. It was agreed to accept the advice to put both the church and the manse on the market at the same time, offering them for sale as one or two lots.

It has been noticed that there is a considerable increase in the amount of cash received in the open plate on a Sunday. Some of these donations are in envelopes and are very generous for which the church is grateful.

If any of these donors are taxpayers it would be more beneficial to the church if they could donate by standing order, or through the free will offering envelopes, and sign up to Gift Aid. The church can claim 25% of your giving at no extra cost to you if you sign a Gift Aid form. These forms are available in the vestibule and in the church office. This has been mentioned in every edition of the Connected magazine and it is hoped more donors consider this going forward into 2025.

Crawford Morgan

A View From the Pew

I have written a couple of articles for the Church magazine; the first covering changes and how we are resistant to change and why we feel safe with the old and familiar. The second article, I wrote about substance abuse and how that impacts not only the individual but their families and friends too. As we draw nearer to celebrating the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, I am reminded that despite thousands of years separating us from being first-hand witnesses; our highs and lows of life are no different to those experienced from Adam and Eve right up to and including the birth of Jesus Christ our Lord. They knew hunger, homelessness, drug misuse, worshipping false idols and the list could go on and on.

The only major difference is the invention of technology such as online media e.g. Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, YouTube etc. Some say the apps are the way forward in communication, others say apps such as these create a false narrative, and the images we view do not reflect real life. Some would argue that the increase in the use of apps is matched by the increase in poor mental health and well-being.

That said, John 1:2-15,16 NKJV could serve as a warning when people are addicted to the smart phone apps. “Do not love the world or things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of this world.”

Me, I say that if used correctly, messaging via these apps could be a boon in spreading the words of Jesus “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6, NKJV) We have to rise to the challenge, we need to embrace innovative technology and add it to our toolkit.

Continued...

A View From the Pew - Continued

Already, the Church uses Facebook which I find useful if for some reason I cannot attend church, and I always try and remember to hit the SHARE button to spread and share the services online. As it says on the notice board outside the church “All are welcome.”

We must however follow the wisdom of Jesus when exploring the worldwide internet (Matthew 10:16, NKJV) “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.”

By using FB and other platforms, and sharing our services online, we can reach people who are facing changes and challenges in their lives whether that be bereavement or celebrations. We can reach people and families who are facing personal issues such as addictions, debts, or family separation.

Speaking about separation, and especially at the lead up to Christmas, for some it can be a daunting and lonely time, and we must make connections to those we know who will experience this. For others, it can be a time of coming together and forgiveness. I am reminded of the book I read by Kenneth E. Bailey Jacob & the Prodigal; How Jesus Retold Israel’s Story. It is an excellent read. But for now, I am looking at Luke 15:18 – 24 (NKJV) “For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” What family of a child who has lost their way does not desperately want their child to find the straight path home again and welcome them home with open arms.

The Birth of Jesus reminds us of what His mother Mary, and Joseph, as a family had to endure on the lead up to His birth too, and I would suggest times were tougher physically than they are today.

Continued...

A View From the Pew - Continued

They could not dial a smart phone app to book a hotel room via Hotel Booking.com or order a food delivery. Yet, out of their trials they continued and gave us, by the grace of God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 2:8-11 (NIV) “And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. ⁹ An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. ¹¹ Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord.”

I pray we can spread GOOD NEWS in-person in our daily lives and by embracing innovative technology platforms to share our stories at Bathgate Parish Church.

Wherever you are in life, I hope you share in the great joy, and I pray you have a blessed peaceful Christmas and New Year.

Isabel Hutton



St John's War Memorials

Among the various items to be removed from St John's Church, and relocated to the new Bathgate Parish Church, were two large wood/brass War Memorial wall plaques.

This was quite a task to undertake as we first had to decide where we could site them. Then we had to obtain approval from Church of Scotland property group and the War Memorials Trust.

Our preferred position was on the wall adjacent to the existing War Memorials, but this involved overcoming a few problems. Mainly that the wall is an old lath and plaster wall and we needed to get fixings into the stonework.

Having obtained approval from Church of Scotland for this position we contacted local company Warrington Property Maintenance for advice and quotation to carry out the transfer work.

We found them to be extremely professional and helpful, so engaged them to carry out the work involved at both churches.

Their team of workers firstly carried out repairs to the lath and plaster wall, fixed a large plywood board to the stonework and repainted the wall and board to match the existing wall. Then they fixed the two War Memorial plaques to the plywood board.

They then repaired and repainted the walls at St John's Church where the Memorials had been removed.

Continued...

St John's War Memorials - Continued

The completed job, I am sure you will agree, is a first class finish, our thanks to the staff of Warrington Property Maintenance.

Dave Robertson

Property Convener



Final Update of Bathgate Churches Together (BCT) for 2024

It is hard to believe that we are almost at the end of another year!

It has been a busy one and it is special to finish the year with the Bathgate Churches Together Advent/ Christmas events and services, details of which are included in this magazine.

BCT are involved in the 'Switching on of the lights' event on Saturday 7th December. This will include the Kirkton Band, Community Carol Singing, a Christmas message to be delivered by either Pastor Tom Jackson of Centrepont or Rev. Rosie Addis from St Columba's Episcopal Church, and stalls with Christmas cards and other items. Flyers will be handed out letting people know what is happening in the various churches in the town in Advent until Christmas Day. We pray for dry weather and a good time of fun, joy and friendship. Above all else, may the love of Jesus be shared among all who gather, as we remember in our hearts 'that Jesus is the reason for the season'.

The final meeting of BCT is on Monday 9th December, when we will be reviewing the year and discussing plans for The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity to be held in January 2025.

May the New Year be blessed with the Churches working, witnessing and praying together in the unity and power of the Holy Spirit, reaching out to all in need, bringing hope and peace. **We pray that the lord will appoint and call the ministers/leaders needed to lead us forward with vision, compassion, courage and wisdom in all that lies ahead in the work of His Kingdom.**

Shine, Jesus, Shine fill this land with the Father's glory,
Blaze, Spirit, Blaze, set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow, flood the nations with grace and mercy,
Send forth Your word, Lord, and let there be light.

Liz Orr

Children's Corner - Elan Simpson

Hello Bathgate Parish Church children. I thought it was about time you had your own pages in the Newsletter. So here goes!

Well Christmas will soon be here with all the good things that it brings. What would these be? I bet if we were talking face to face you would be shouting out PRESENTS, SANTA, DECORATIONS, HOLIDAYS, SNOW and I could go on and on adding all the good things that you love about Christmas to my list - BUT-Would you remember to include JESUS in your list? - Because if we didn't have Jesus we wouldn't have Christmas, so we wouldn't have a list at all.

When I was thinking about Jesus and Christmas I couldn't help thinking of a LION – because I think the lion actually is like Jesus in a lot of ways. Can you think how?



Lions!

Did you know lions, good and bad, are mentioned in the Bible 146 times?

Lion Verse from 1 Peter 5, verse 8

'Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour!'

That's a bit of a scary thought, isn't it? But Jesus was also called a lion in the Bible, the Lion of Judah – Judah was where Jesus grew up. Well, let's find out more about lions..

Continued...

Children's Corner - Continued

At one time there were many, many lions and they roamed all over Europe and the near east. Now you only find them in Africa, the west of India or looking a bit miserable peering out of secure cages in zoos and safari parks.

The male lion has a large mane of hair, covering his head and shoulders – this is usually a darker colour than the rest of his body. The female, called a lioness, is smaller and is a very good mother to the cubs she gives birth to. The lion and lioness take it in turns to babysit their cubs – quite right too!

The lion comes from the same family as our pet cats but wouldn't like to sit on your knee and be stroked! It is speedy and has sharp teeth, very sharp claws and a claw – like a spur in the tuft of hair at the end of his tail.



These Lion Kings enjoy family life, and a family of lions is called a pride. They are meat eaters and enjoy hunting and eating other animals, usually grazing in the neighbourhood – well I suppose we all have to eat something! Usually only two types would attack a person: an old lion who is too old or ill to race and catch its prey and a young lion who has got used to eating humans for some reason. However scientists have noticed that in 90% of cases lions leave their wives to do the hunting for the family!

Bible facts

There are good and bad lions. In the Bible Jesus was called the Lion of Judah but the devil was also described as a lion, an evil lion. This makes me think about the film 'The Lion King' – it had good lions and bad lions. I'm sure you will all have watched it.

Continued...

Children's Corner - Continued

The Bible tells us to watch out for the evil lion, because if we don't keep Jesus in our lives, he can sneak up on us when we least expect it and can do all sorts of damage to us and those we love. Remember what went on in the film.



For you to do

Draw a lion, and also a pet cat at the bottom of the page. Then talk about the ways in which they are similar and the ways in which they are different. Use the pictures above to help if you want.

A prayer

Thank you, God, that Jesus is like a lion, – so mighty that he cannot be destroyed. Let us pray for those who don't know this and who let the evil lion sneak into their hearts.

Amen

LION

CAT

The Seafarer's Version of the 23rd Psalm

The Lord is my Pilot, I shall not drift.

He guides me across the dark waters.

He steers me in deep channels.

He keeps my log.

He pilots me by the star of holiness for His name's sake.

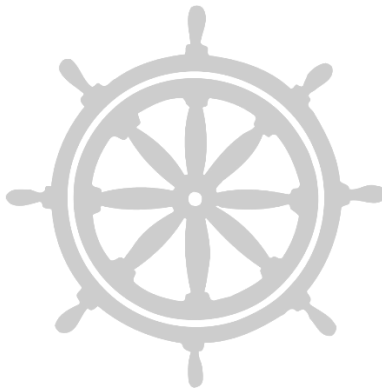
Yea, though I sail 'mid the fenders and tempests of life I shall
dread no danger for he is near me. His love and care shelter me.

He prepares a harbour before me in the homeland of eternity.

He anoints the waves with oil, my ship rides calmly.

Surely sunlight and starlight shall favour me on my voyages, and I
will rest in the Port of our Lord forever.

Submitted by Liz Orr



Fabric Fund Appeal

This was launched in church on 1 December 2024 following discussion at the last Finance and Property Group meeting and then approved by Session on 14 November 2024.

You may be wondering why this is necessary. We have had significant essential fabric fund spending in recent months, and other such spending is anticipated soon. Consequently, we are making an appeal to members of the congregation asking you to consider if you can assist with the funding of these costs.

In the article on Finance and Property Matters, earlier in the magazine, you will see a breakdown of how much has been spent recently on fabric matters, a total cost of £12,016. This has meant drawing on £10,000 of GENERAL fund reserves, something which we cannot continue to do.

As mentioned before, it has been recommended that a sum in the region of £15,000 to £20,000 be set aside for work at the manse before the appointment of a new minister. Also, a recent survey of electrical installations at both the church and the large hall has identified necessary upgrading work. The total cost for the surveys and the work will be £3,852.

This work **MUST** be done before the legal requirement of an electrical safety certificate can be issued.

To donate to this appeal please use the Fabric Appeal envelope in this magazine or collect one in the church vestibule or office.

Continued...

Fabric Fund Appeal - Continued

Regular giving to this appeal can also be made by Standing Order. Both methods can be increased by 25% if you are a taxpayer and complete a Gift Aid form – again available in the vestibule and office.

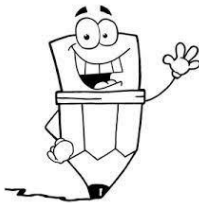
For those who have access to online banking, a one-off donation, or regular standing order, can be set up to the following account with the Royal Bank of Scotland – Sort Code: 83-16-05, Account Number: 00149991, and please give your name as reference.

Many thanks in advance for donating to this appeal.

Crawford Morgan

Bessie's Quote

I always try to go the extra mile at work, but my boss always finds me and brings me back!



Girls' Brigade Report

We have a small group of 6 Explorers this year who are all very enthusiastic about games and crafts. They have enjoyed watching Bible stories on the laptop, learning about Jesus and the wonderful things he can do.

The girls learned about the different colours of poppies and why we have them. They made poppy crosses and our annual Explorer poppy wreath.

We have started the nativity story and are in the process of various Christmas crafts. The girls had fun decorating gingerbread men, a bit messy but they were very creative!

They are all looking forward to our Christmas Party Night on the 11th and wish everyone a Merry Christmas.

Our Juniors have had a busy time since we started back after the summer holidays.

We have enjoyed getting to know our new surroundings and seeing so many familiar faces come back to join us as well as welcoming lots of new faces too. We now have a very busy (and loud) group of 23 Juniors!

There has been lots of fun, friendships, games and giggles. We have made exciting crafts, learned new skills and we had a great food tasting night when we had visitors from Singapore who shared some of their culture and tasty food with us.

Continued...

Girls' Brigade Report - Continued

We have made friendship bracelets, planted grass heads, made pictures from natural autumn resources to name just a few of our activities!

Over the past couple of weeks we have been busy getting into the Christmas spirit making Christmas decorations and Christmas cards for our upcoming visit to Heatherfield Nursing Home for an evening of friendship and fellowship as we spread some festive cheer for others ahead of our Christmas party.

The Brigaders have started the session with 5 girls. The girls created their own charter for their evenings which they have proudly displayed in the hall.

So far, we have been busy working on developing yoga skills and learning some mindfulness exercises too. The girls are really engaging well with these activities and we hope they can use the techniques to help them in their everyday lives! It can be very stressful being a teenager!

At the end of October, we had a girls choice film and pizza night - which they very much enjoyed! We are sure this may be repeated at some point as the session continues.

We are currently busy making pom poms for a Christmas decoration. Some are finding it easier than others but we know the finished results will be fabulous!

After Christmas we will begin discussing and learning the story of Noah. This is the theme for this session's Spiritual Quiz. We are looking forward to sharing our creativity for this also!

Hazel Gallacher

Flower Committee

“Joy to the World the Lord has Come”

Where has this year gone? Here we are, time for the Christmas decorations and we are not ready!

Sadly our small team has been hit with ongoing illness and acute shortage of staff. Despite this, and our restrictions to limiting flowers to 2 arrangements per week, we have distributed over 100 arrangements throughout the year to vulnerable members of our church family. To all who continue to generously provide and deliver flowers and for the monetary donations which helps swell our Flower Fund – grateful thanks. We depend on elders and members of the congregation to let us know of bereaved families, anyone who is ill, in hospital or moved into care. This is particularly helpful in the distribution of flowers.

Those of us who deliver flowers are always warmly welcomed into homes, kindly given a cup of tea and a chocolate biscuit, sometimes even a hot bacon roll is on offer – tempting but bad for the waistline! – Though much appreciated on a cold winter’s day. Household members are always keen to hear church news, enjoy a chat and know they are not forgotten though no longer able to attend church. However, we can still use more help in providing this service. The good news is we have been encouraged by the response to our plea for help with our church Christmas decorations. So far, so good, and we are hopeful matters will improve early in the New Year.

Continued...

Flower Committee - Continued

The Flower Committee appreciate the help of the Church Office staff who print the flower cards that accompany the flowers and are also responsible for producing the Flower Calendar. If you have a favourite date in mind for flowers, keep a sharp lookout for the new Flower Calendar appearing in the vestibule soon!

We all live such busy lives in this troubled digital world of ours, but an app, text or phone call, though thoughtful, does not compare to a visit with church flowers to a lonely soul within our fellowship. The letters of appreciation we receive are testament to that and prove this is still an integral part of worship, maintaining our pastoral care commitment.

Amid all the frazzle, glitter, jingle of tills ringing up the price of the “must have” gifts, stress of cooking the turkey, stocking up the freezer, posting mail and all that goes with the commercialism of Christmas, the question remains – Are we ready to welcome the Babe of Bethlehem conveying the Advent message of HOPE, PEACE, JOY and LOVE?

Christmas Blessing to One and All – especially to our housebound friends.

Beth Anderson



Reflection

I came across this verse a few months ago, some of our readers might find interesting:

When I was younger in my prime,
My life was mapped out for me most of the time,
There were children to ferry around everywhere,
And elderly parents who needed my care.

My career demanded those long working days,
As I strove to provide in dutiful ways.
I coped, I was healthy and strong in my spring,
Long years lay ahead to do my own thing.

Now that I am older and past my best,
In my autumn of life, I can pause and take rest.
Wizened but wise and now able to choose,
With time on my hands, yet there's none to lose.

For things seem to take longer and how the time flies,
Whilst my body complains and is not over size.
Yes, now I have options to do my own thing.
The irony is, I struggle for zing!

Jim McLean

Thrift Shop

Our Autumn Thrift Shop was held in the Large Hall and realised the superb total of £3625.

Once again, we are grateful to everyone that donated goods to stock our stalls and came along throughout the week to either purchase or just enjoy some fellowship over a cup of tea / coffee and some home baking.

While people buying our goods are necessary, we could not function without our ever attentive sales staff, both members and non-members, of our congregation and the suppliers of the home baking.

The commitment of all of those individuals who were involved - from the setting up on the weekend before opening, tidying up and restocking throughout the week and finally dismantling and storing the unsold goods - is worthy of the highest praise.

Jean Logie



Church Flowers

Grateful thanks to the Parish Church Congregation and the Flower Committee for the beautiful floral display I recently received. Thank you to Beth and Christine for delivering them, I thoroughly enjoyed our chat. Once again, thank you.

Sincere thanks, **Karen Thomson**



Many thanks to the Flower Committee for the beautiful floral arrangement Karen kindly delivered to me on Sunday – I did enjoy her visit! It made my day. Best wishes to all,

Yours sincerely, **Jane Adamson**



Thank you for the beautiful flower arrangement Beth delivered for us a few weeks ago. They were really lovely and the arrangement lasted for quite a few weeks. Beth stayed a wee while for a chat.

Thank you again, **Jean and Jim McLean**



We would like to thank you for the flowers we received when Hugh Marshall had his stroke and also for the flowers that Zara Fredriksen received at her christening. Many thanks to Beth who visited with the flowers for Hugh.

Many Thanks, **Isobel and Danielle**



Church Flowers - Continued

Thanks very much from Mark and me for the beautiful floral arrangement we received on Sunday, and many thanks to Beth for delivering them and having a nice chat.

Janette and Mark Wilson



Heritage Bibles

During the re-purposing of St John's Parish Church, two Heritage Bibles were found, dating from the 17th century.

Alistair Small from Bathgate Churches Together arranged the restoration of one of the Bibles with a company in Falkirk. He also secured donations to cover the cost.

In July 2024 I attended a meeting in Bathgate Partnership Centre, attended by Emma Peat, West Lothian Council Museums Officer and Billy Weir of Bathgate Community Council.

It was agreed that the Heritage Bibles should be displayed in the foyer of Bathgate Partnership Centre for the general public to view.

The Bibles remain the property of Bathgate Parish Church. We are indebted to Alistair Small for his efforts in this regard.

Anne E Noble
Session Clerk

A Wee Bit of History

I noticed on 4th September that it has been sixty years since the Forth Road Bridge opened (4th September 1964).

How time flies! Before that, I remember the ferries – you threw a penny overboard for luck.

Anyhow, the saddles which support the main cables, one in each corner of the bridge, you will see when you walk the bridge, were cast in the North British Steel Foundry, Bathgate (Menzies). I worked there for 49 years as a pattern maker. I remember the moulders and men who worked on these castings, now long gone.

The site is now Morrisons supermarket, no industry now left, just this note to let people know Bathgate old Menzies Foundry is still holding up the bridge.

I used to cycle the bridges nearby, every year, but these days are gone with the pass of time.

I hope the readers like my wee bit of history.

Jim McLean



Advent

December's here, the year's near passed,
A new one soon begins.
We've turned the heating up full blast,
The nights have fair drawn in.

Outside the morning's cold and dreich
And getting up's a chore.
It's easy staying beneath the sheets
Another hour or more.

Though winter weather feels the worst,
The days grown long and dark –
December's here and on the 1st
Our Advent Calendars start.

A time to give and to receive,
For quiet contemplations,
A time to smile and to believe,
For gift-wrapped expectations.

The weans want what's been brought them
And left below the tree,
Hope Santa's not forgot them –
Oh the joys of being wee.

Continued...

Advent – Continued

The same old films on telly,
Lots of prezzies if you're lucky,
Slippers, socks and smellies –
Just don't burn the spuds and turkey!

How quickly that year past went,
Treasure those you've spent it with.
Now every day's an Advent
And the best's the 25th.

© Stuart Paterson

Submitted by Beth Anderson



Songs of Praise – Thank you!

Grateful thanks to all those who chose a favourite hymn for our Songs of Praise service on Sunday 27th October. What a lot of joyous singing there was that morning, stretching a good quarter of an hour beyond the noontime bells!

From the feedback received, the service was greatly enjoyed, with the suggestion that this becomes a regular feature of our Sunday worship!

There were so many hymn suggestions, that many praise items had to be carried over to subsequent services, where suitably fitting with the readings and theme of worship. In fact, there were a few last-minute suggestions which are still to be fulfilled, so we look forward to singing these hymns too, in due course!

Special thanks to John Wood for his seamless crafting of scripture and song – spoken word, visuals and music, bringing depth of meaning to our prayer and reflection.

Thanks to the Music Group who certainly raised the rafters that Sunday! They are a sheer joy to listen to each and every week.

Here's to lots more singing!

Alison

