

The Link

August 2026



When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon
and the stars, which you have set in place,
what is mankind that you are mindful of them,
human beings that you care for them? (Psalm 8:3-4)

Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there.
If I rise on the wings of the dawn,
even there your hand will guide me,
your right hand will hold me fast. (Psalm 139: 7-10)

Ardoch and Blackford Parish Church of Scotland
Scottish Charity Number SC000139

ardochparishchurch.org | blackfordparishchurch.org
facebook.com/ardochandblackfordparishchurch

Ardoch and Blackford Parish Church | Our key office bearers

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Our cover pictures on The Link

Ardoch copies of The Link come with a image of the church building which also shows off shows the impressive work of the Ardoch in Bloom team.

The Blackford image comes from this month's eclipse and captures our Wonder Zone Holiday Club. We often took the participants to the Psalms of David as we wondered and responded to God's wonderful, wonderful world. Two of these Psalms—[Psalm 8 verses 3-4](#) and [Psalm 139 verses 7-10](#)—are quoted on the Blackford covers.

Church financial details

Our bank details can be used to set up a standing order or make a one-off donation through internet banking or at your bank.

Account Name: Ardoch and Blackford Parish, Church of Scotland

Sort Code: 80 - 22 - 60 **Account number:** 28398863

Card donations can be made through the Church of Scotland website at cos.churchofscotland.org.uk/donate/. Type *Ardoch and Blackford* into the box in the *Donate to a Congregation* section.

Dear Friends,

I hope you are enjoying this marvellous summer. It is such a joy to see the sun, feel the heat and enjoy the glory of God's creation. I never cease to be amazed at God's work.

Summer for some is a time of relaxation, a time to slow down enjoy and take stock. The church on the other hand continues with all its business and includes even more. Holiday clubs, summer fetes, extended fellowship time. We as a church have had a great time this summer. Our doors have been open far more and many people have engaged in conversation over coffee and juice in the church gardens.



You may have noticed our new prayer labyrinth in the Blackford Church Garden. ROOT 66 is based on the 66 books in the Bible. As you meander along 66 stones cut into the grass, take time to pray, meditate and slow down; take time to think, just to be nearer to God. "ROOT 66" will develop with biblical plants along the way and seating to rest upon.

As we move into our autumn season, we as a church body—with direction from our elders—will be taking time out to look at two very important and exciting issues. We are going to be developing our five year Mission Action Plan and we are developing a stewardship strategy. Both have already had much groundwork carried out and now is our time to get excited and move forward together.

Lastly, let me take this opportunity to say a massive thank-you to every member of our congregation, community and Kirk Session for your continued support in making YOUR CHURCH THE HEART OF OUR COMMUNITIES.

YOUR CHURCH is the place to gather, to find love, to find fellowship and to find Christ.

With love,

Rev Mairi x

We print and distribute around 130 copies of *The Link* across our parish. PDF copies are also available to download on the home pages of our websites. These addresses are on the front cover. All blue underlined text is a hyperlink in electronic versions. Click or tap to go to the websites we're referring to for further information.

Kirk Session

The Kirk Session met in early July before taking a much-needed summer recess. We resume our regular meetings on Wednesday 23rd September.



The Stated Annual Meeting was held on Sunday 3rd May with a "Question Time" format. This different approach received very positive feedback from members of our congregation who were able to attend the meeting and the Kirk Session would like to thank everyone for their support.

Our five Year Mission Action Plan (MAP) was submitted to Presbytery at the end of March and we currently await their response. In the meantime, we really want to move forward with our MAP and feel excited about what we can do as a church to reach out to communities in our parish. The MAP is a *living* document which means that some items may need some tweaking while other new initiatives can be added as we move forward. Our MAP will become an important agenda item at every Kirk Session meeting so that we can review progress at each step along the way.

The MAP is included in the centre of this Link magazine so please take some time to study its contents and if you have any suggestions or ideas or wish to be involved with the plan then please let us know. A large copy of the plan will also be displayed in each building so that we can update and annotate each key area.

An example of our MAP already in action is with the formation of worship teams for Ardoch and Blackford so that we can grow together in Christian fellowship and assist Mairi with her ministry and work balance by sharing and leading worship on the first Sunday of every month. These United Services will alternate each month between our two buildings with our next service at Ardoch at 10:00am on 6th September.

Please continue to pray for our minister Mairi and her ministry work in our parish. As a Kirk Session we also pray that God will guide us through his grace with the many challenges facing our church as we move forward.

Sandy Marshall, Session Clerk

How's the print size?

Most people read The Link in an A5 size which fits nicely inside a Bible. If you'd prefer the larger version printed to A4 size, please ask.

Ardoch Guild

The third part of the Guild's three year strategy of 'Let us Build a House' is *Beyond the Walls*. This focuses on serving others by going beyond the church's own walls into wider communities. It encourages the Guild to act outwardly, engaging with local and global needs, and sharing God's love through practical action. This statement is what we recognise our Guild is all about, but it challenges us to be more proactive.



The Guild will lead the United Service on Sunday 6th September then our formal act of Rededication will take place in Ardoch Church the following Sunday when Mairi is present.

On Saturday 12th September the Annual Guild Gathering will take place at Perth North Church. A map with all sorts of relevant details has been sent out to Ardoch Guild members who may wish to attend. If you wish a paper copy, some will be available in the church foyer. Perth is definitely a more manageable distance to travel compared to Dundee or Edinburgh so perhaps we will have an Ardoch contingent making the effort to participate.

Our syllabus this year reflects this year's theme.

At our first meeting on 1st October we have a representative from the charity [Social Bite](#) to come and share with us about their work. Social Bite envisions a society where no one should have to be homeless, challenging the status quo with innovative, scalable solutions that combine food, housing, and jobs to break the cycle of homelessness. This talk is for everyone to hear not just Guild members, so we are hopeful that the church hall will be full to capacity to hear the speaker talk about a charity whose aim it is to change lives in a meaningful way. This is ministry in action!



On the 1st November we celebrate [CrossReach Sunday](#) with a soup lunch fundraiser in the church hall after the United Communion Service. Please do support this event.

On 5th November the Guild is to welcome Norman Liddle to speak about our [Bibles for Bairns](#) Project. This is a Scottish Bible Society initiative that provides children with Bible stories and resources from ages 1 to 5 to support early learning and spiritual growth.



On 3rd December we will have our Guild Christmas Social.

*We are still collecting nightwear and purses for giving to female prisoners being released. Please pass on any excess items in good condition to Pat Duncan who will collate and pass on for distribution.

Pat Duncan and Heather McDonald.

Our Bible Readers | August to Advent

Please join us to pray for them as they prepare to lead us in worship as they read. Pray also for Mairi and others leading us in worship through music, teaching and livestreaming the service?

Date	Ardoch Blackford
6th September	Pat Duncan United service in Ardoch
13th September	 Dorothy Johnston Karen Shaw
20th September	Irene Robertson Lisa Sinclair
27th September	Maureen James Lyndsey Thomas
4th October	United service in Blackford Jeannette Barr
 11th October	Charles Robertson Thelma McNaught
18th October	Sally Young Shona Stewart
25th October	Ann Gordon Lyndsey Thomas 
 1st November	Fiona Lyle United service in Ardoch
 8th November	Michael Boxer Bruce Tarbet
15th November	Heather McDonald Laura Peacock
22nd November	Liz Paterson Sandy Marshall
 29th November	Joyce Wighton Lyndsey Thomas

Should our Bible Readers be unable to arrange a replacement, please contact Christine Souter for Ardoch on csouterbraco@aol.com or 07767 380011 or Karen Shaw for Blackford on 682684, 07505 081873 or kshaw05@yahoo.com

Use this list of Bible books as you take on the challenge on the next page	1 & 2 Chronicles	Amos	1 & 2 Corinthians
	Ezra	Obadiah	Galatians
	Nehemiah	Jonah	Ephesians
	Esther	Micah	Philippians
	Job	Nahum	Colossians
	Psalms	Habakkuk	1 & 2
	Proverbs	Zephaniah	Thessalonians
	Ecclesiastes	Haggai	1 & 2 Timothy
	Song of Solomon	Zechariah	Titus
	Isaiah	Malachi	Philemon
	Jeremiah	Matthew	Hebrews
	Lamentations	Mark	James
	Ezekiel	Luke	1 & 2 Peter
	Daniel	John	1, 2 & 3 John
	Hosea	Acts	Jude
	Joel	Romans	Revelation

There are 30 books of the Bible in this paragraph.

Can you find them? This is a most remarkable puzzle. It was found by a gentleman in an airplane seat pocket, on a flight from Los Angeles to Honolulu, keeping him occupied for hours. He enjoyed it so much, he passed it on to some friends. One friend from Illinois worked on this while fishing from his john boat. Another friend studied it while playing his banjo. Elaine Taylor, a columnist friend, was so intrigued by it she mentioned it in her weekly newspaper column. Another friend judges the job of solving this puzzle so involving, she brews a cup of tea to help her nerves. There will be some names that are really easy to spot. That's a fact. Some people, however, will soon find themselves in a jam, especially since the book names are not necessarily capitalised. Truthfully, from answers we get, we are forced to admit it usually takes a minister or a scholar to see some of them at the worst. Research has shown that something in our genes is responsible for the difficulty we have in seeing the books in this paragraph.

During a recent fund-raising event, which featured this puzzle, the Alpha Delta Phi lemonade booth set a new record. The local paper, The Chronicle, surveyed over 200 patrons who reported that this puzzle was one of the most difficult they had ever seen. As Daniel Humana humbly puts it, "The books are all right here in plain view hidden from sight." Those able to find all of them will hear great lamentations from those who have to be shown. One revelation that may help is that books like Timothy and Samuel may occur without their numbers. Also, keep in mind, that punctuation and spaces in the middle are normal. A chipper attitude will help you compete really well against those who claim to know the answers.

Remember, there is no need for a mad exodus; there really are 30 books of the Bible lurking somewhere in this paragraph waiting to be found.

Ardoch Fundraising Team

It's hard to believe summer is closing in on us and autumn is looming but the Fundraising Team at Ardoch have again been busy with events.

Alongside you can see our events and monies raised so far and we still have the Summer Fete on and Quiz Night to look forward to.

Whist Drive	12 February	£389.00
Songs of Praise	12 June	£502.85
Summer Fete	22 August	
Quiz	10th October	
Total to date		£891.85

Arrangements for the Summer Fete are in full swing and lets pray the weather is kind to us. There will be lots for the youngsters, outdoors there will be a bouncy castle, side stalls Hook the duck and Chuck the Duck in a Basket, indoors there will be a Tombola stall, Produce stall, Bric-a-brac and Plants, Guess Teddy's Birthday and most importantly, strawberry cream teas.

Just to recap on fundraisers since the Easter Link, heartfelt thanks to everyone who supported Christian Aid's Big Brekkie on Saturday 10th May in Ardoch Church Hall. Once again the hot filled rolls and fruit smoothies went down a treat. Between The Big Brekkie and the church Retiring Collection on the Sunday, a total of £435.00 was raised for Christian Aid.



On 12th June our second Songs of Praise Evening was again very well supported. It was a delight to welcome our congregation from Ardoch and our sister church in Blackford along with friends from Auchterarder, Muthill and Crieff who helped make it a joyous night of singing favourite hymns chosen by members of Ardoch and Blackford Church. The Ardoch choir, supported by friends from Auchterarder Community Choir sang a medley accompanied by John on the piano and the choir was led by Sandra Miller from Auchterarder Community Choir. The Brazen Feddals and Ardoch

High Strings gave us wonderful performances and Peter Scott gave us an interesting talk including the connection with football's World Cup and Ardoch Church.... who knew! Refreshments as always were enjoyed afterwards in the church hall. It was a delight to hear all the chatter and fellowship.

Diary notes for the remainder of the year

- Summer Fete - Saturday 22nd August
- Quiz Night Saturday—10th October

Please continue to use

easyfundraising.org.uk when ordering online, it really does help and is a painless way to raise Church funds.



Once again, a huge thank you to our church community for always greatly supporting all fundraisers we organise along with kindly donating to our Special Retiring Collections throughout the year.

Grateful thanks from Maureen and the Fundraising Team.

Retiring Collections 2026	Date	£ raised
Scottish Red Cross	12 April	£71.00
Christian Aid (Including Big Brekkie)	9 May	£463.19
Scottish Bible Society	12 July	£80.00
Special Collection for Fiona and Nat Chalamanda's Malawi Appeal	26 July	£340.00
Blythswood (new)	13 September	
Disasters Emergency Committee	October TBC	
Poppy Scotland	8 November	
Church Action for the homeless and Christian Aid	24 December	
Total so far		£954.19

Our Twinning Church in Trebsen Germany

It was with great excitement that we welcomed our friends from Trebsen at the end of May for the Blackford Highland Games weekend. As this friendship with Trebsen and Blackford has developed through the Highland Games, so has our relationship with the church in Trebsen under the care and direction of Pastor Birgit Silberbach. A close bond developed between Pastor Birgit and myself, Laura and Robin and this is now a well established twinning.



Each time I visit I use my best but very limited German to give my message to the congregation in the service in Trebsen. I have also been very privileged to speak and pray from the platform at the opening of their Highland Games. It was a very humbling and moving experience praying on front of and with 1000s of people.

Pastor Birgit has also taken part in our services during their visits. This year we were given a beautiful bird box and a knitted robin. Just in case you have been wondering why the robin is there, the robin in Germany compares to our Celtic traditions. We were each also given a candle.

A small group of us are now in the process of developing a Trebsen corner within Blackford Church to echo the Scottish corner they have in their church in Trebsen. We want to look at ways in which we can grow this partnership between our two churches.

Although not everyone who travels from Trebsen has an active church connection, they always come to our Sunday service and always say that they take something very meaningful away from it. This year it fell on our Same God/Different Boats Sunday, and they said they were blown away with how inclusive and accessible we made it. They were very touched by our use of Makaton, German and English, by how moving it was and by our hospitality and our love so that everyone felt equally included. There are so many more exciting adventures to be had here, so please, if you would like to be part of it, we will welcome your input.

The next visit to Trebsen is at the end of September and although I am not sure if I will make it this year, Robin and Isla will be there and we will be asking them to take our gift and prayers for Trebsen Church congregation and people.

Rev Mairi

Where do we keep the First Aid kits in each building?
Would you know where to look? Read on to find out!



Makaton

We continue to use Makaton to make Blackford services more accessible for anyone with a communication difference. At least 2 hymns and a prayer are signed in most services.



Our “End Of The Month Services” are intended to be even more accessible, with signed Bible readings, videos and interactive activities. The Lord’s Prayer is spoken, signed and symbolised. These services have been well attended and the multi-modal communication was very much appreciated by our German friends when they visited from Trebsen.

We delivered a Makaton Taster session, with a focus on signs and symbols for church, in June. This is a shorter course than the Know and Grow Makaton course, lasting only 2 hours, and we felt this might be more achievable for some. We were pleased to welcome new friends as well as some familiar faces from our congregation and we’ve been delighted that some of them have gone on to join us at Sing and Sign.

Sing and Sign is on the 2nd Thursday of each month. We are getting ready to sing at the Blackford Music Festival Concert in October. Whilst several of our regulars are becoming more confident, we always assume that people don’t know any Makaton and teach each song slowly, step by step. If you would like to have a go, Sing and Sign is free, and open to anyone, you don’t need to be a good singer, just enthusiastic and willing to learn.

We are planning another Makaton Taster Session on Saturday 10th October, a Know and Grow Course on Friday 13th November and are already preparing for a Makaton Nativity and Carol Service on Sunday 13th December.

For news of upcoming activities and the Makaton Sign of the Week follow us on Instagram [@Blackfordchurchmakatontutor](#)

Lyndsey Thomas

“There are no algorithms in the Bible. It doesn’t give you what you want to hear, but what you need to hear.”

(Andrew Ollerton, writer of [The Bible Course](#), pastor and Bible Society podcaster at the [Refuel Festival, 2026](#))



Blackford Fundraising and events

Now that the summer holidays are behind us, we can begin to look forward to our forthcoming events and fundraising efforts.

Saturday 29th August: Makaton International Awareness Day Coffee morning. 10:30-12:00. Come and learn more about Makaton and how you can use it and enjoy coffee and home baking with us. Contact Lyndsey Thomas for more information.

Saturday 3rd October: Blackford Giveaway 2-4pm. Bring along any items you feel someone else could benefit from. Either book a whole table or let us know how much you will bring so we can ensure we have space. All items must be removed if not taken. Contact Ruth Feather for information.

18th-25th October: Blackford Music Fest. Events all week. A full programme is being worked on with more information to come or contact Sandy Marshall

Saturday 21st November: Christmas Craft Fair. 2-4pm. We will have unusual and interesting items on sale to help you find those special Christmas Gifts. If you would like to book a table or find out more, contact Laura Peacock.

Additionally, we hope to continue to have regular bingo events in the church hall raising funds for different charities throughout the year. Watch out for posters and posts on the [Blackford Cares](#) Facebook Group for the upcoming dates.

Thank you to all of those who regularly provide support for our fundraising through baking, helping on the day or donating items. We appreciate all you do and it is vital in helping us continue the work of the church.

Laura Peacock



Perth Presbytery Mission Plan

The summary minute of the Presbytery of Perth meeting of 7th May states:

It was agreed to a change to the Presbytery Mission Plan whereby Muthill (sic) shall be placed under Guardianship, with a view to future readjustment, and shall not link with Ardoch and Blackford.



Ardoch and Blackford Parish Church

Mission Action Plan 2025 – 2030



All across the Church of Scotland, Kirk Session, have been asked to create

a five-year Action Plan that brings together the vision of the charge (*our united parish*) for its mission, worship, life and service, taking account of its present position, its capacity and finances.

The template provided by General Assembly identified the nine areas to focus on and gave us the defining text in black in each table.

In discussing this plan, presenting it to Perth Presbytery and sharing it here with you as our congregation, we are required to make all the aspects of the plan SMART. That's Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-limited

We were also asked to use a further traffic light system to capture the availability of resources to allow us to move forward on these objectives.



- One of our objectives is shown in red meaning we believe its “achievement will depend on extra resources which will be difficult to obtain; and/or depends on factors largely outside our control.”
- We identified none in the amber category of “better than 50% likelihood of being achieved, but depends on obtaining further resources; and/or depends on other factors which may delay implementation.”
- Most of our objectives are shown as green meaning that they are “likely to be achieved with existing resources.”

We still have to fulfil two aspects of this planning stage, namely:

- 1) To develop our Mission and Vision statements so we know our purpose as a United Parish
- 2) To prioritise, and pick out the 3 or 4 items that we see as being essential to the realisation of our vision, as opposed to what we need to do to just keep going.

This document is provided within the middle of our August 2026 Link Magazine for your information, retention, engagement and support.

Ardoch and Blackford Parish Church Kirk Session, August 2026

Worship and Teaching: Worship/teaching is at the heart of all that we do	Time-scale
Develop worship teams to be able to have more regular involvement in services and leadership	
Grow prayer groups	
Grow and develop Bible Study in both locations so people can choose which to go to	
Christianity Explored/ALPHA type course for church members and invitees. Youth Alpha in Blackford	
To grow new and inclusive ways of worship for all people including those who are marginalised	
To enable people who have connected with the church (including adherents) to come to faith	

Pastoral care and fellowship: To ensure that all people from the oldest to the youngest feel that they are loved and cared for, as this helps to develop a sense of belonging	Time-scale
Continue to develop post-service fellowship	
Explore the concept of fellowship groups	
Continue Pastoral Care Teams	
Develop elder/member relationships	

Youth and Children: To support our younger church family by providing a range of services and activities for young people, giving them a safe and fun place to learn, worship and grow their faith	Time-scale
Explore Messy / Crafty Church	
Explore new ways to encourage faith in our young people in both locations including via Hot Chocolate & Holiday Clubs	
Continue developing relationships with schools	

Local Mission/Community Outreach To reveal the love of God for all people in our parish and our wider area	Time-scale
Develop community lunches, café, warm spaces and other events	
Continue food bank support	
Develop other church led club activities	

Wider Mission: including ecumenism and inter faith relations and relationships with the world church (as applicable)	Time-scale
Explore ways to build interfaith understanding and relationships	
Grow mutual faith-based relationship with Trebsen Church (twinning)	
Encourage, grow and support the Guild	
Proactive work to identify and support need through other organisations throughout the world	

Finance	Time-scale
Develop a stewardship programme covering talents, time and money. Commence the Church of Scotland's <i>Bearing Fruit</i> programme	

Communications	Time-scale
Develop a communication strategy to determine how, what and why we communicate via printed materials, online presence, social media, meetings etc	

Property	Time-scale
Explore the need for retention of both buildings beyond 2027.	
Explore options for keeping a “Christian Centre” in both village communities if we lose one of our premises.	

Human resources/staffing within the charge: eg Ministries Development Staff, Reader, locally employed staff	Time-scale
Explore and utilise our internal expertise and Presbytery training to develop our people, including elders, Worship Team, volunteers and Lyndsey as Makaton Tutor	
Explore the need for a Youth Worker across our local Parish Grouping	

Relationship with provisions of approved Mission Plan for the Presbytery of Perth	Time-scale
Grow relationships with our local Parish Grouping	
Engage more with the Presbytery of Perth	

The Kirk Session will review this Mission Action Plan every year starting this November, asking questions such as:

- i) Is the objective still relevant?
- ii) What has been achieved so far?
- iii) What remains to be done?
- iv) Which ‘traffic-light’ indicator is appropriate now?
- v) Are there any new objectives we should add?

Please join us in the conversation, prayer and action contained within this Mission Action Plan.

Ardoch and Blackford Parish Church
Scottish Charity Number SC000139

Ardoch Pastoral Care (Outreach Team)

Community Lunches will re-start on the last Friday of the month, namely 25th Sept, 30th Oct, 27th Nov, 18th Dec. Please bring along a friend or neighbour to enjoy food, fun and fellowship. Charlie's Angels are already planning new soups and home baking recipes.

They have been providing funeral teas recently which have been very successful and popular with local families.

Our Pastoral Care Team is a small team of dedicated members whose aim is assist and support the minister through regular visitation of the elderly, hospitalised, bereaved and confined members of our community.

Good communication is answer to the work of Pastoral Care, please let a member of the team know when a situation needs help and they will follow up the request.

Always remember help can be arranged with transport for people having difficulty attending appointments, and there is a wheelchair lending service available to anyone requiring one temporarily.

Team contacts: Charles 880947, Barbara 880438, Heather 880556

Ardoch Foodbank Appeal

The congregation is aware of the need in our community for support from the foodbank and continue with generous donations to the Blue Door Foodbank in Auchterarder. The hamper is delivered once a month filled with donations. In return, the Foodbank deliver a supply of rolls and bread to make sandwiches for the lunch at the Tuesday Warm Space Hub.



The Foodbank Co-ordinators are very grateful for all the donations they receive and thank the church members most sincerely for their generosity.

We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.

Ardoch Wildlife Project

The well stocked feeders in the church grounds are attracting many species of birds. It is great to see red squirrels feeding from the nut feeder. The new wild flower bed is establishing itself and has created a biodiversity area for pollinators

Look after the natural world, the animals and plants in it too. This is their planet as well as ours.



Blackford Music Club

I begin this report by expressing our deep sadness at the very sudden loss of Yla Steven in June. Yla was a great friend and supporter of our monthly sessions even although she was always busy with engagements for the Scottish Fiddle Orchestra and the Edinburgh Highland Reel and Strathspey Society. We will always remember her wonderful performances at our Musicfest concerts and Burns Suppers. Yla will be greatly missed.

The club usually meets on the last Thursday evening of the month in the Blackford Church from 8pm. Our Music Club sessions are always relaxed and informal with different genres of music and songs to enjoy. Everyone is welcome to come along and join in or listen with a cuppa! Our upcoming dates are:

27th August | 24th September | 22nd October
26th November | 17th December

Blackford

And finally ... a note for your diary! **MUSICFEST26** will take place from Thursday 22nd to Sunday 25th October. Stay tuned for more details coming soon!

Sandy Marshall



Health and Safety

As noted at our March Kirk Session meeting, the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland recommended a greater focus on Health and Safety in 2026 including improved housekeeping. This would include awareness of good manual handling and keeping routes clear to avoid slips, trips and falls.

Church groups and other users who have the capacity to move furniture and equipment need to take the time to put it back rather than expect others to do this. They may not have the same numbers or time to complete this task safely.

Smaller items of equipment and property become a liability when lying from week to week for other users of the building to work around. Moving them out of everyone's way improves safety for everyone and enhances those experiences rather than feeling that we are worshipping, serving, eating or otherwise located in a storage facility rather than a church.



Are you on email? Do we have your address?

Can we keep in touch with you this way? Please email Sandy or Charles or talk to them one Sunday.

Blackford's Young People's work

Blackford's '25 and '26 Gala Queens continued the tradition of opening the week by delivering our Bible readings. We've given the Queens a book for a few years and it was great to give Kelisse (left) and Lucy (right) with the [Youth Edition of the Good News Bible](#). The Friday night Hot Chocolate group chose to pass on the Gala Car Treasure Hunt this year and stick to our regular meeting format in the church.

As before, the group were out in force to help cook bacon and pancakes for our guests as part of our Christian Aid Big Brekkie. We were able to send on a gift of £346.08 to Christian Aid including some elements of Gift Aid.

We promoted the Wonder Zone Holiday Club at the Blackford PS end of term assembly with the Litmus test showing us what we're really like—and God knows that all along. We also led *One more step along the world I go* and the now equally traditional P7 water fight.

Through songs, experiments, games, sketches, story-telling, puzzles and an experiment filled family night Sausage Sizzle, the Wonder Zone Holiday Club viewed the richness of God's creation and the glorious fact shared in one of our songs, "Nothing's too big for his power, or too little for his care." Across the week we met with almost 30 primary and secondary pupils thanks to the team of Bruce, Gordon, Jane, Joyce, Laura, Mairi and Marjorie supported by themed bakers Sheila and Shona plus the yellow t-shirt secondary helpers and your prayers.



Do you think that we are a praying church?

That was Mairi's question to the congregation on Sunday 19th July. Although we can't see the show of hands in response when [revisiting the recording](#) on the Ardoch Church YouTube Channel, Mairi described it as "very interesting but not surprising that very few hands went up." There seemed to be general agreement that we are not a praying church.



One aspect of being "a praying church" was already in the minds of the Kirk Session as we developed the Mission Action Plan (MAP) and saw "growing prayer groups" as an objective. At the moment our one regular gathering is at 9:30 in Blackford and that's not currently growing. But what else might "a praying church" look like?

What if you heard yourself or others say over coffee, "Thanks for telling me that, I'll be praying for you," or, "I've been praying for you this week; how did that go?" or "Do you mind if we pray about this right now?" or, "I've checked with my neighbour and they are happy that we pray for them as a church." That would also help us record progress on another MAP objective— to continue to develop post-service fellowship.

Our Flower Rotas

Thanks to all those who serve us, and subsequently our communities, in this way led by Jenny Kemp and Helen Laing.



Date	Ardoch Flowers	Blackford Flowers
6th September	Linda Dawson	United Service in Ardoch
13th September	Fiona Lyle	Jessie Wilson
20th September	Margaret Ferguson	Karen Shaw
27th September	Judi McColl	Laura Peacock
4th October	United Service in Blackford	Robert Millar
11th October	Lilian Ayre	Jane Roy
18th October	Mandy Rimmer	Jean Robertson
25th October	Anne Walker	Helen Laing
1st November	Guild	United Service in Ardoch
8th November	Sheila MacGregor	Remembrance Poppies
15th November	Irene Robertson	Helen Laing
22nd November	Sheila MacGregor	Rita Marshall
29th November	Hazel Duncan	Fiona Smeaton

Ardoch Church Choir & Braco Community Choir

Both choirs re-start on Thursday 3rd September in the Ardoch Church Hall. We practise at the following times on Thursdays from September to May except when the Guild meets on the first Thursday of the month.



Church Choir 1.30 – 2pm | Community Choir 2 – 3pm

You don't need to be able to read music for either of these choirs and you can choose to come along to both choir sessions or one.

The Community Choir has performed for residents at Parkdale Care Home in Auchterarder and we have been asked to sing on occasions at The Hub, The Rural, Ardoch Guild and other community events. It is our hope to continue to expand our repertoire and find new places to perform. We sing a range of popular songs from the 50's, 60's and 70's, Burns and other Scottish songs.

I would be delighted to see new members coming along to enjoy singing for pleasure and for the pleasure of others.

John Duncan, Conductor

You are invited to the concert premiere of *Cycle of the Seasons* by John Duncan on Sunday 25th October at 3pm at Ardoch Church.

Over the past decade John has been writing both music and lyrics for this piece for voice, piano, violin, cello, double bass and flute. John will conduct, with Kirsty and a group of musicians involved in performing this piece for the very first time.



Cycle of the Seasons is about 40 minutes long and traces the changing seasons as they unfold and the moods and reflections they evoke. John and Kirsty are keen to share this musical journey with you, so mark it in your diary and come along to celebrate this important occasion!

The Ardoch First Aid Kit can be found in the kitchen along with the accident book for logging all incidents. The Blackford First Aid kit is also in the kitchen in the cupboard at eye level as you enter the room. The Blackford Accident Book is in the Policies and COSHH ring binder on the Session Room window sill.



The Bible you use during the week—bring it on Sundays!

There are those who do this, but when the Blackford Kirk Session bought new Bibles with Presbytery funds in 2020, it was with the intention of encouraging more of this. We didn't buy *pew Bibles* we bought *church Bibles* and churches are people not buildings.

There are still around 20 of those New International Version Bibles remaining in two print sizes and they are now on the book table near the sound desk at Blackford. We'd encourage anyone to claim one of those Bibles to use throughout the week and to bring on Sundays.



Bible Study

Our time after Easter was given over to a series on what Jesus said on earth after Easter. It went on longer than you'd think—the series and the conversations Jesus had from the Emmaus Road in [Luke 24](#) to the Damascus Road in [Acts 9](#).

If you're reading through The Link, you'll know by now that one of our objectives in our Mission Action Plan is "to grow and develop Bible Study in both locations so people can choose which to go to." The re-scheduled Kirk Session meeting in July was therefore asked to consider, in the light of our very low level of engagement with group Bible Study, "What do we need to change? Location? Material? Purpose? Expectations?"

Blackford Heating

The calendar on the Session Room wall is the key means of communicating heating requirements, hence why it hangs below the controls. To allow this to work well, Gordon needs to see your start and finish times as well as information on what part(s) of the building you'll use. He'll reset the time clocks on a Sunday. The first Sunday he will be available to do this is the 13th September. If any heating is needed before then, use the most fuel efficient of the four methods given in the notes below the time clock.



PS How are we getting on being thermostats rather than thermometers? See [Romans 12:2](#) and the Easter Link for a reminder.

The Hub Warm Space and Social Club

The Hub meets in Ardoch Church hall and operates between October and April inclusive. I think we are entering our fifth session of The Hub and it has proved a successful venture.

From Tuesday 6th October we meet for tea, coffee, biscuits and activities every Tuesday afternoon between 1-3pm. From the 3rd November until the 30th March we will meet weekly on Tuesdays 11am – 3pm. We offer a welcome tea, coffee and biscuits at 11am and at 12 noon we serve a light lunch eg soup and sandwich with home baking to follow.

After lunch we usually have a visit from Braco Nursery when we entertain our young visitors with stories, games etc. This has proved enjoyable for both the children and Hub attendees alike.

Once our young visitors have departed, we organise a variety of activities that are both enjoyable and sometimes challenging. Besides jigsaws, bingo, games and live entertainments etc our favourite activity is the one and only MEGAQUIZ. The megaquiz is a serious group challenge consisting of 10 different items including sudoku, wordsearch, trivia questions, a jigsaw without a picture, a conundrum and more than a few surprises thrown in for good measure! This activity has proven to be seriously competitive..... and a lot of fun!

At the end of March we revert to meeting Tuesday afternoons 1-3pm and gradually edge our way into summer.

The Hub has almost equal attendance of men and women and our gatherings are very convivial and welcoming with lots of chat.

You are never too old or too young to enjoy the Hub. So why don't you come along and see if it's for you. Whether you are a new mum, in between jobs, recently retired, living on your own or with a partner etc, you might be surprised to find it's just what you need!

Pat Duncan, 3 Ardoch Way, Braco, berryduncan@hotmail.co.uk; 07799 100050

Blackford Community Lunches

With the school still working on the last Friday of June, we added an extra lunch this spring. We're due a chat with the school regarding plans for this session which may well start on the 25th September.



HIGHLIGHT

What stood out or grabbed you?



QUESTION

Did these verses raise any questions?



INSIGHT

What did you learn about God?



THEME

What are the key themes in this passage?



ACTION

What can you pray, say or do this week?



Source Bible Engagement

In this issue we're offering Psalm 8 as the text to explore using our [Source Bible engagement method](#). The children had this text to work with one morning at holiday club and they drew pictures in the borders of what the words brought to mind, You can do the same or stick with underlining, highlighting and annotating using the questions. The text is the Contemporary English Version (CEV) from [biblegateway.com](#)

Our LORD and Ruler, your name is wonderful everywhere on earth!

You let your glory be seen in the heavens above.

² With praises from children and from tiny infants, you have built a fortress.

It makes your enemies silent, and all who turn against you are left speechless.

³ I often think of the heavens your hands have made, and of the moon and stars you put in place.

⁴ Then I ask, "Why do you care about us humans? Why are you concerned for us weaklings?"

You made us a little lower than you yourself, and you have crowned us with glory and honour.

You let us rule everything your hands have made. And you put all of it under our power—

⁷ the sheep and the cattle, and every wild animal,

⁸ the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and all ocean creatures.

Our LORD and Ruler, your name is wonderful everywhere on earth!

Gratitude

Gratitude is one of the most transformative forces available to the human spirit. It is far more than saying “thank you” for the pleasant moments in life.

True Gratitude embraces the whole journey, the victories and disappointments, the arrivals and departures and the mistakes. It recognises that every experience, whether welcomed or resisted, has contributed something valuable to our growth. Gratitude teaches us that even our losses have lessons, our failures have wisdom, and our struggles have shaped strengths we might have never discovered otherwise.

At its heart, gratitude is an act of humility. It reminds us that we are not self-made, the countless blessings, opportunities, lessons, and acts of kindness have helped shape our path. It softens the ego and opens the heart.

A grateful person understands that life is not owed to them, it is entrusted to them, and because of that understanding, they move through the world with greater wonder, greater compassion, and greater reverence.

Be grateful for being here. Be grateful for what you have learned, for what you have overcome, for the people who have loved you. Give thanks for the journey itself. For when gratitude becomes your way of life, you no longer wait for life to be perfect before you appreciate it. You discover that life with all its imperfections, has been a gift all along.

Charles Robertson

Chapter 3 verse 16

The Bible was not written with chapters and verses; they were agreed in their current form c1550.

Nevertheless, working through the verses with that “3:16” reference (and there are fewer than you’d think) is a worthwhile exercise. We’ll meet the most famous verse in the Bible and a verse that explains its authority and purpose—God breathed and useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

In Colossians 3:16 we have biblical ways to express gratitude.



News from a Christian perspective

We've noted in the past that the Premier [radio stations](#), [news](#) and [podcasts](#) share "news from a Christian perspective" alongside music, and discussion. For example while many news outlets focused on the scenes of arrogance and aggression at the end of the men's football World Cup Final, Premier and others reported the prayer huddle involving both English and French players after the third-fourth play off.



Likewise, Evangelical Times, reflected on Easter's global news story in an article called [Trump's AI Jesus and the dangers of cultural Christianity](#) noting, "when a political leader can present himself, even half-seriously, in the likeness of Christ, and be applauded rather than rebuked by many who profess faith, something has gone wrong.

We cannot settle for mere cultural Christianity. The church must therefore recover its clarity. Our hope is not in cultural revival, but in spiritual regeneration. Not in stronger institutions, but in a sovereign Saviour. Not in an 'AI Jesus' fashioned to reassure us, but in the living Christ who confronts, redeems, and reigns. Cultural Christianity may fill churches for a time. It may even steady a nation's moral compass in certain respects. But it cannot save our souls. Only the real Jesus can do that. And he will not be remade in our image.

Don't let me go until you bless me!

In preparing the service earlier this month on the wrestling match between Jacob and God (Genesis 32), this John Newton hymn was on the [Hymnary](#) website. Years on from the Amazing Grace he experienced and wrote about as a slave trader saved by Christ, he looks to God in later life looking for ongoing blessing in Jesus' name.

Lord! I cannot let thee go,
Till a blessing thou bestow;
Do not turn away thy face,
Mine's an urgent, pressing case.

Once a sinner, near despair,
Sought thy mercy-seat by prayer;
Mercy heard and set him free
Lord! that mercy came to me.

Many days have passed since then,
Many changes I have seen;

Yet have been upheld till now,
Who could hold me up but thou?

Thou hast helped in every need
This emboldens me to plead;
After so much mercy past,
Canst thou let me sink at last?

No--I must maintain my hold;
'Tis thy goodness makes me bold;
I can no denial take,
Since I plead for Jesus' sake.

Blythswood Shoebox Appeal

Wrapped shoe boxes will be available from Blackford Church from mid September or you can take your own to wrap. Donations of items can be left at each church to help fill the boxes. They will be packed ready for early November.



Donations are welcome and the key needs are:

- face clothes, combs, hair brush, toothpaste, toothbrush
- Coloured pencils, colouring books (small enough to fit in a shoe box), small toys
- hats, scarves and gloves which can be bought or hand knitted but no knitted jumpers or cardigans.

Please get any knitted squares for blankets to me soon so that I have time to sew them up into a blanket, and get the edges crocheted to finish it off.

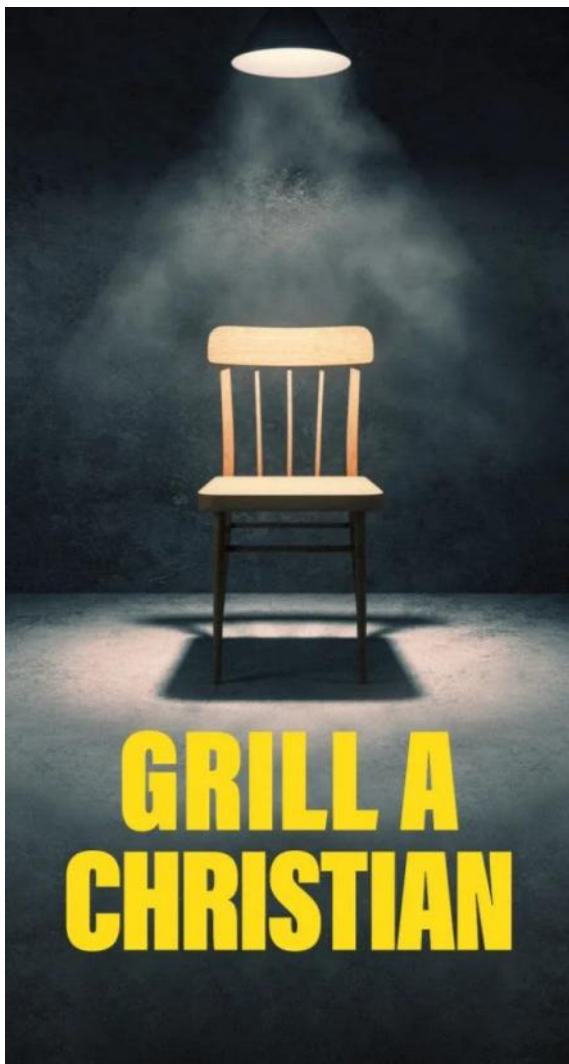
I am hoping to have a day in October to pack boxes - if you would like to help please let me know. Thank you in advance for all the donations for this appeal.

Shona Stewart,
07986 614 027

How are you with questions about what Christians believe?

Whether you are a Christian knowing Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, or yet to come to faith, where do you take questions?
Yours or others?

This leaflet contains answers to seven very typical questions of faith. If you're reading an electronic copy [click here](http://blackfordparishchurch.org/goodnews) or download it from blackfordparishchurch.org/goodnews where we have other similar resources.





Our regular Sunday Services

Blackford: Prayer 9:30am; Service 10:00am
Ardoch: Service with Livestream 11:30am.

Our changes to this pattern

30th August	Last United summer service	Blackford	10:00
6th September	United Service	Ardoch	10:00
4th October	United Service	Blackford	10:00
1st November	United Communion Service	Ardoch	10:00

Harvest Services

Both churches will have Harvest Services on Sunday 11th October and are likely to host primary school assemblies on Friday 9th

Remembrance Sunday

Both churches will hold Remembrance Services at their regular times on Sunday 8th November followed by services at the village War Memorials in Blackford (11:00am) and Braco (12:30pm)

Local Praise Evenings

Various members of our congregation have joined these worship events in Auchterarder over the years. We commend these three autumn gatherings to all our readers for the opportunity to unite hearts and voices in an extended period of sung worship and prayer.

As our Mission Action Plan also sees us aiming "to grow relationships with our local Parish Grouping" and "to grow new and inclusive ways of worship for all people including those who are marginalised," fresh experiences and partnerships like this have a further benefit to our planned church growth.

**Auchterarder
Parish Church
Praise Evenings**

**6:30 to 7:30 on Sundays
13 Sept | 18 Oct | 22 Nov**

This issue of The Link runs through to the end of November. Copy date for the Advent issue is Sunday 22nd November with the magazine available later that week and running to the start of Holy Week in March 2027.