

The Link

Advent 2023

The Church of Scotland
Parishes of Ardoch and Blackford



Ardoch Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC000139
Blackford Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC005594
ardochparishchurch.org | blackfordparishchurch.org
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2023 Sunday Services (Timings swap for 2024)

10:00am Ardoch Parish Church and livestream through websites
11:30am Blackford Parish Church

Office Bearers in the Parishes of Ardoch & Blackford

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The next dates for The Link are as follows:

Issue	Articles in by	Copies come out
Easter 2024 (31/3 Easter Day)	13th March	20th March
Autumn 2024	16th August	23rd August
Advent 2024 (1/12 1st Sunday)	20th November	26th November

Editor: Gordon Roy, 01764 682356, gordon.roy@outlook.com

Dear Friends,

The first year of the much anticipated Perth Presbytery Mission Plan has now passed and we find ourselves still waiting for so many answers. We continue to wait and see how it all comes together and how it all pans out. Sometimes the waiting has been frustrating, sometimes the waiting has been exciting and, at times, with the uncertainty of everything, the waiting has been painful and hurtful.

At this time of year we are called to wait for a very different reason.

As we approach the start of the church season of Advent on the 3rd of December, our thinking changes to waiting. Waiting in anticipation, waiting with awe and with wonder, waiting once again for the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Have you ever wondered what Joseph might have felt as he waited for the birth of Mary's son and wondered if everything would then make some kind of sense?

Have you ever wondered how Herod felt as he waited and waited for news of this birth? Was it fear or was it anger?

Have you ever wondered how Mary felt as she waited 9 months to give birth to God's Son?

We are so often called upon to wait on the Lord remembering that our time is not always God's time.

This Advent I invite you to approach this time of waiting in prayer as you journey towards Christ's birth in awe, wonder and gratitude.

May God's blessing be with you all this Advent and Christmas.

Rev Mairi

Our cover photos for this issue

Blackford copies show our sanctuary ready for Advent & Christmas. Candles and lights point to The Light of The World. The Bible takes us to that Light. Through the empty cross (and the empty tomb) we wait and prepare for Christ's return as well. Ardoch copies show the David Cairns Memorial Bench. More details on page 5.



Ardoch Kirk Session

In the August edition of the Link, I stated that the Kirk Session had asked for help and advice regarding moving forward with the Presbytery Mission Plan. I am now pleased to report that the Rev Karen Fenwick, Convenor of the Perth Presbytery Planning and Deployment Committee and Rhona Nicol, Presbytery's Congregational Officer, confirmed they will attend our November Kirk Session meeting.

Elders Training: six elders attended the Communication Access training course kindly delivered by Lyndsey Thomas to help us reach accredited status and be able to support people with communication difficulties. Two elders are registered to attend a Presbytery Elders' Training Course at the end of November.

During the four Sundays in Advent four church groups will be leading the services of worship. This is a new venture and will involve many members of the congregation delivering the Christmas Story.

3th "Hope" Choir

10th "Peace" Guild

17th "Joy" Kirk Session

24th "Love" Youth Team

In the New Year our Sunday services will be held in the Church Hall.

On behalf of the Kirk Session, I wish you all a blessed Christmas and send all good wishes for a healthy and happy New Year.

Charles Robertson, Joint Session Clerk

How's our Communication?

When each church is accredited through implementing the Communication Access Training mentioned above, you'll see this logo displayed.

We're looking at how written materials such as PowerPoints and The Link are designed and displayed to ease reading for everyone. You'll see more symbols around the buildings tying in with Makaton signs and signing that is used already.

As we've mentioned in services, most people read The Link in an A5 size which fits nicely inside your Bible. If you'd prefer the larger version printed to A4 size, then please mention it to your Elder or Session Clerk.



The David Cairns Memorial Bench

On 5th November - a lovely autumn afternoon - members of the community gathered in the Church Community Garden to pay tribute to the memory of the late David Cairns. David loved his church, his family, his friends, his neighbours and everything about the countryside and the villages of Braco and Greenloaning. The village was in shock when we heard the news of his sudden passing.

David was a founder member and major contributor to the Braco Days Facebook Group which now has 585 members. He posted photos of magnificent views of the countryside and many shots of nature from all seasons. Many of his photos have been published in previous editions of the Ardoch Link and we include two of his favourites on this issue—the sunset on the Ardoch Link front covers and, here, the rainbow over Braco.

To recognise David's devotion to our community, a very dear friend, Josh Gaunt, instigated a Community Memorial Fund commissioning Sam Bowsher, a very skilful chainsaw artist, to make a bench to be placed in the Church Garden. What a very fitting tribute this is!

Rev Mairi dedicated the memorial bench and Josh cut the ribbon declaring the bench open for all to use.

Charles Robertson



Ardoch Foodbank

The foodbank donations are coming in regularly and are delivered at the end of each month to the Blue Door Foodbank at Auchterarder Parish Church.

The items collected at the Harvest Thanksgiving Services for Braco Primary School and Ardoch Church were shared with the Crieff and Auchterarder foodbanks. The weight of donations amounted to an amazing total of 118 kilos.

The co-ordinators of both foodbanks are very grateful for all donations received and thank members of Ardoch Parish Church and the staff and pupils of Braco Primary School most sincerely for their generous support.



Blackford Kirk Session

At our September meeting we accepted with sadness the resignation of Moira Hanslip as a member of the Kirk Session. Through challenging health and mobility, Moira "cannot be the Elder I want to be," but remains committed to leading on our contact with the families of baptised children as well as being our organist on Sunday mornings. Moira joined our Kirk Session in August 2017 having been ordained in Muthill and



returned to Blackford where she and Ian lived a number of years earlier. We've really appreciated having Moira's wisdom, energy, enquiring mind and determination on our Session—in more than just monthly meetings. There's a prize for the first person to say which TV programme she was on for this photo.*

Since the summer, we've enjoyed building on the mission presentations at June's Stated Annual Meeting by involving many members in the teams and activity being planned and delivered as part of our work as a church community. Asked for three goals by Presbytery, we felt that we had the energy, vision and breadth of commitment to work on all fronts of the five Marks of Mission. Across the page you can see what these projects and goals are and there is more information on the noticeboard in the sanctuary.

On the advice of Perth Presbytery, we have reviewed and added good practice policies in areas such as financial security, data protection and whistle blowing. To access any of these documents either click on the "Policies and procedures folder" link at the bottom of our website's home page or view the list on the Session Room noticeboard and speak to either your elder or a Session Clerk.

Practically, we have replaced the kitchen window, added reflective insulting materials behind radiators and pipes, repairs to the tower clock and to pointing and clearing gutters; all time consuming. We've also been attending and recruiting others for training opportunities in Food Hygiene, Safeguarding and Communication.

As we head towards Christmas, we look to how we share the life changing Christmas message and take practical steps to change lives in smaller ways through our gifts, actions and fellowship together.

Gordon Roy & Sandy Marshall, Joint Session Clerks

*Shona Stewart and Janette Guthrie are also in the photo and are not eligible to enter or we'll print their photo in the next Link.

Blackford Missions Goals



1. To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom (Tell)

To run two ALPHA Courses before the end of 2025.

To grow a monthly fresh expression of church giving an understanding, voice and equal participation to those with Additional Support Needs

2. To teach, baptise and nurture new believers (Teach)

To keep in contact in age-appropriate ways with baptised children and their parents to stimulate and encourage church involvement and membership through Profession of Faith

3. To respond to human need by loving service (Tend)

To develop practical, pastoral and prayerful support across the church and community through a volunteer team leading on visits, prayer ministry, a regular drop in and charitable social events.

4. To seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation (Transform)

To extend our support for refugees and asylum seekers through Friends of Scottish Settlers and Causeway Music Project collecting IT, musical instruments, footwear, clothing toiletries etc.

5. To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth (Treasure)

To create, develop and use creation-based worship resources from external and internal sources.

To share and implement good practice in addressing climate change and conservation

These new goals are in addition to established aspects of church life such as our Sunday worship/teaching, prayer gathering and Bible Study; Ways and Means or community events; youth and children's work; and support for organisations such as Blythswood Care, Churches Action for the Homeless and Christian Aid.

At the heart of mission is how the Kingdom of God might be grown by the local congregation and how the Gospel of Jesus Christ can transform lives.

The health of a congregation might therefore be measured not so much by how many people attend on a Sunday but how the local congregation engages with the local community and how it through word and action communicates the love of God.

Perth Presbytery Mission Plan

Ardoch Youth Team

Hot Chocolate runs from 6:30–8:00 on the second Friday of every month and is for young people in P7 and above. We had good fun in November with an extra session, followed by an extra long session on the in-service day to film our new nativity film. We were very grateful to be given permission by Scripture Union to film a version of their new Christmas story *The Grumpy Owl and the Joy of Christmas*. We look forward to sharing it with you all in our services in December.

Filming The Grumpy Owl and the Joy of Christmas



Forest Mission is on the Saturday after Hot Chocolate Club – usually the second Saturday of the month, from 2.00 – 3.30 p.m. and is for children in primary school, or pre-school year. We have been very fortunate with the weather and almost always meet outside, wrapping up warmly and enjoying hot chocolate in the winter sunshine.



This is a photo of a feely bag from our November meeting.

Can you guess what connected all the items?

Our December Forest Mission will be on Sunday 17th December to combine with our Christingle Service. We hope to be outside for *Muddy Christingle* activities at 2:30, then join the children for a hot meal before the Christingle Service in the church. We're very grateful to The Blue Door who have supported both Hot Chocolate Club and Forest Mission by providing hot food for our November / December activities.

Our links with Braco Primary continue to grow. The school are now publicising our youth activities via the school app, and we're hopeful that more children and young people might join us in the coming months. We are giving a Christmas book to every child in the primary school who would like one – *The Grumpy Owl and The Joy of Christmas* to Nursery – Primary 5, and a graphic novel version of the Christmas Story to P6 and P7.

We're also excited to announce the launch of our youth team Instagram account. You can find us [@ardoch_youth](#). We've posted some photographs of our November activities, we're sharing stories about relevant campaigns, such as anti-bullying week and Children in Need, and we'll be posting a virtual Advent Calendar, which we hope will help people reflect on the spirit of Christmas as they get ready for the festive season.



Some of our December dates for your diary

Sunday 17th 2.30 – 4.30 Muddy Christingle

Sunday 17th 4.30 Christingle Service in Ardoch Church (including showing of *The Grumpy Owl and the Joy of Christmas*). All welcome, tea and mince pies after the service.

Sunday 24th 10.00 The morning service will be led by the youth team (including showing of *The Grumpy Owl & the Joy of Christmas*)

Lyndsey Thomas and the Ardoch Youth Team

Countdown Conundrums

Over the summer and autumn, we've looked at some of the key words that Paul used in his letter to the Romans equipping us to understand, appreciate and explain the truth and richness of the Christian faith. We'll spare you the challenge of the anagrams that were part of a Sunday service conundrums, but there are other puzzles to solve.

Gospel

Paul's Letter to the
Romans
Ch: Verse: “ ”

Justification

Paul's Letter to the
Romans
Ch: Verse: “ ”

Repentance

Paul's Letter to the
Romans
Ch: Verse: “ ”

Sacrifice

Paul's Letter to the
Romans
Ch: Verse: “ ”

Grace

Paul's Letter to the
Romans
Ch: Verse: “ ”

Redemption

Paul's Letter to the
Romans
Ch: Verse: “ ”

Righteousness

Paul's Letter to the
Romans
Ch: Verse: “ ”

Sanctification

Paul's Letter to the
Romans
Ch: Verse: “ ”

Firstly, in his letter to the Romans, where does Paul write about each idea? Write the chapter and verse on the right envelope.

Ch1v16 2:4 3:24 4:3 4:25 5:1 11:6 12:1-2

Secondly, which of our words best reflects these eight bold phrases? Write the number in the quote marks below the right word:

The **(1) Good News** is that through the **(2) unmerited love of God in action**, Christ's **(3) significant death** on the cross **(4) pays the price for my rebellion against God**. My **(5) acknowledgement, confession and turning away from sin** therefore swaps my sinfulness for Christ's **(6) perfection** and I am **(7) made clean** before God, at peace with him and welcomed into his Kingdom and his family. The **(8) lifelong work of making me Christ-like** begins with the Holy Spirit now living within me.

Finally, if you were to celebrate each word and theme, which song from our Church Hymnary might express and shape your praise? Borrow a book for the church then write the number. Celebrate by singing what you know.

363, 380, 396, 436, 458, 553, 555, 559

Blythswood Christmas Shoeboxes

Between Ardoch Church and Braco Primary School we filled 28 shoe boxes and 5 bin bags with knitting, toiletries, baby clothes and other items. We also had very generous giving of €239.65 in donations. Well done, Braco.

Ann Spiers

18 shoe boxes, 8 blankets and two bags of donations were delivered from Blackford to the Blythswood shop in Crieff. A big thank you to all those who donated items or knitted jumpers and squares to make into blankets.

Items for the 2024 appeal have already been received. If you knit and would like something to do over the winter, would you consider knitting squares to make into blankets - 30 stitches - 30 rows - or you could knit strips - 30 stitches - 30 rows - don't cast off just start the next 30 rows in a different colour. I am happy to sew the squares and strips into blankets. There are plenty needles and lots of wool at the church if you need them. Get in touch if you would like to help.

Shona Stewart, 07986 614027



Blackford Community Lunches

We moved through to the sanctuary in September and it may well be difficult to move back as we're appreciating the space for serving and for singing. We're still not as "all-age" as we'd like to be but we've made a bit of progress. We're supported by both the Blackford Community Fund and Perth & Kinross Council so they can all see the value in what we're doing. Get along and enjoy.



Macmillan Coffee Morning

Over £700 pounds was raised and sent on to the local branch from September's Coffee Morning in Blackford. David, your hair's looking great!



Ardoch Fundraising Team

I am happy to report that our Cheese, Wine and Dessert Supper with Silent Auction held on 21 October was a resounding success. The church hall was buzzing with chat and I think we can say everyone enjoyed a fun night bidding for a wonderful variety of auction lots; and the supper went down a treat! The sum of £1705.42p was raised for church funds. Thanks to all who contributed in any way to make this such a success.

Our next fundraiser is being organised as I type. After the success of last year, we are holding another Quiz Night in the church hall on Saturday 16th December at 7:00pm. Please come along for a fun night. Teams of four people; BYOB; nibbles provided; there's a raffle. Contact any Fundraising Team Member to book your table. Be quick, as last year the hall was bursting at the seams!

Going into 2024, we are scheduled to have our annual Whist Drive. The date is to be confirmed but probably early February.

Please continue to use easyfundraising.org.uk when ordering online, especially now that Christmas is nearly upon us.

I'll finish as I usually do by saying a huge thank you to our church community for always greatly supporting any fundraiser we organise along with kindly donating to our Special Retiring Collections throughout the year. The final one for 2023 will be at the Watchnight Service, which this year will go to [CHAS](https://www.chas.org.uk) (Children's Hospices Across Scotland). Grateful thanks from the Fundraising Team.

Maureen

Sunday evening Alpha in Blackford

You're now too late to join our first Alpha course as it's likely to be Week 4 by the time you read this, but we'd hope to have another series along during the year. Stay Curious.

As someone who gets the Link, you might see Alpha as an opportunity to hit the pause button and review the back story of what Christians believe and make more sense of how we live it now. Others may be exploring faith for a first time. Alpha answers many questions.



Are you on email? Do we have your address?

Can we keep in touch with you this way?













Please email your Session Clerk (addresses on page 2)
or talk to us one Sunday morning.



Our Bible Readers

And a possible pattern for personal Bible reading using the Lectionary



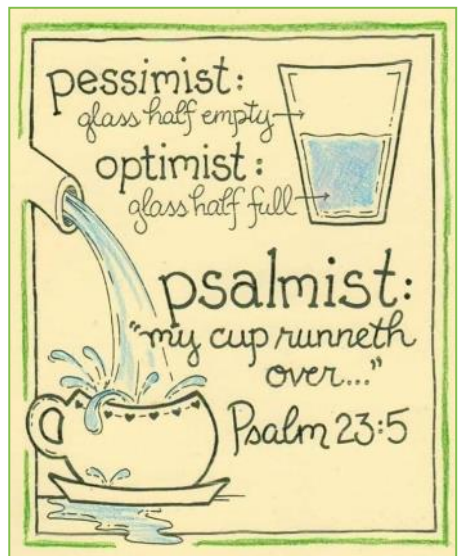
Date	Ardoch/Blackford	Lectionary readings
 3rd Dec	Heather McDonald Shona Stewart	Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37
 10th Dec	Peter Scott Sandy Marshall	Isaiah 40:1-11; Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13; 2 Peter 3:8-15; Mark 1:1-8
 17th Dec	Ann Gordon Shona Stewart	Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thess 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28
 24th Dec	Pat Duncan Jacqui Crawford	2 Sam 7:1-11, 16; Psalm 89:1-26; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38
31st Dec	Dorothy Johnston Jeannette Barr	Isaiah 61:10-62:3; Psalm 148; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:22-40
7th January	Michael Boxer Moira Hanslip	Genesis 1:1-5; Psalm 29; Acts 19:1-7; Mark 1:4-11
14th January	Irene Robertson Thelma McNaught	1 Samuel 3:1-20; Psalm 139:1-18; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; John 1:43-51
21st January	Heather McDonald William Hensley	Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Psalm 62:5-12; 1 Cor 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20
28th January	John Souter Richard Bolton	Deut 18:15-20; Psalm 111; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Mark 1:21-28
4th February	Joyce Wighton Shona Stewart	Isaiah 40:21-31; Psalm 147:1-20 1 Cor 9:16-23; Mark 1:29-39
 11th Feb	Peter Scott John Graham	2 Kings 2:1-12; Psalm 50:1-6; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Mark 9:2-9
 18th Feb	Barbara McLaren Karen Shaw	Genesis 9:8-17; Psalm 25:1-10; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:9-15
 25th Feb	Charles Robertson Gordon Roy	Genesis 17:1-16; Psalm 22:23-31; Romans 4:13-25; Mark 8:31-38
 3rd Mar	Morag Smillie Jane Roy	Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22
 10th Mar	Ann Gordon Jeannette Barr	Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21
 17th Mar	Bob Aitken Jacqui Crawford	Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33
 24th Mar	Sally Young Laura Peacock	Isaiah 50:4-9; Psalm 31:9-16; Phil 2:5-11; Mark 14:1-15:47
 31st March	Lyndsey Thomas Robyn Peacock	Isaiah 25:6-9; Psalm 118:1-24; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; John 20:1-18

Our Flower Rotas from now to Easter

Date	Ardoch Flowers	Blackford Flowers
3rd December	Mandy Rimmer	Stuart Laing
10th December	Marrion Dawson	Vacant
17th December	Pat Aitken	Billy Gardner
24th December	Christmas Tree	Billy Gardner
31st December	Christmas Tree	Rita Marshall
7th January	Marrion Dawson	Fiona Smeaton
14th January	Ann Spiers	Jennifer Davidson
21st January	Liz Paterson	Margaret Earl
28th January	Margaret Ferguson	Karen Shaw
4th February	Gillian Scott	Robert Miller
11th February	Anne Walker	Sheila Wight
18th February	Lilian Ayre	Jean Robertson
25th February	Phyllis Macleod	Jane Roy
3rd March	Christine Souter	Jeannette Barr
10th March	Moira Hay	Shona Stewart
17th March	Dorothy Scott	Jessie Wilson
24th March	Heather McDonald	Moira Hanslip
31st March	Jenny Kemp	Helen Laing

Thanks to Jenny Kemp and Helen Laing who organise the flower rotas and to all those who serve on the rotas or help deliver flowers after the services.

Should Bible readers be unable to find a replacement, please contact John Graham on 01764 218734 or jag_annfield@hotmail.com or Christine Souter on csouterbraco@aol.com or 07767 380011.



Blackford Music Club

It has been said that time flies when you are having fun and that is true for our Music Club as we approach our third year already! The club normally meets in the church on the last Thursday of the month from 8pm. Everyone is welcome to come along and either join in or listen and enjoy a cuppa! Having met on 23rd November, our next is on 28th December. Dates for early 2024 are as follows:

25th January (Burns Night) 29th February

28th March 25th April

30th May 27th June

For more, contact Sandy Marshall 01764 682354.

Blackford Musicfest23

The 4th annual "MUSICFEST" event took place over 4 days on the last weekend in October. The Music Club concert on the Saturday evening was particularly special as the entertainment was given by many of our regular Music Club "sessioners". We are so fortunate to have such a wealth of talented singers and musicians in our community complementing each other with a fantastic variety of different musical selections. Thank you to everyone for taking part.



Our MUSICFEST23 finale on the Sunday afternoon was a real treat. A delicious afternoon tea was served and we then sat back and enjoyed a great selection of "Songs from the Musicals" by the wonderful singing of Kirsty Duncan. A fabulous concert and a privilege to be there. Thank you, Kirsty.



Blackford Christmas Social

Party time is back at Blackford Church! We are really looking forward to our Christmas Social once again on Monday 11th December from 7.30pm. Come along and enjoy a fun-filled evening of songs, games and of course the traditional festive fayre of mince pies and mulled wine. Tickets are £5.00 and available from Laura or Sandy

2024 Blackford Church Burns Supper

We are holding our Burns Supper evening on Thursday 25th January 2024—7:15 for 7:30pm start. The £10 ticket provides a two course meal with cheese and coffee followed by a programme from the Blackford Music Club members to celebrate the music and songs of Robert Burns. Tickets will be available from Sandy Marshall.

Blackford Youth & Children's Work

Rocky's Plaice was open for business again in mid-November when the in-service day brought 25 primary pupils and another 8 secondary helpers back together for Takeaway! In other words, we moved on through Acts for stories of God working in and through Paul rather than Peter.

The children toured the Mediterranean with Paul and took away stories from Jerusalem, Damascus, Joppa and Philippi, Malteser cake from Malta (there's worse to come!) and these much worked at Christmas lanterns...from Turkey.

It was great to welcome new faces and help them settle in with the *Harvest Handclap* song that they knew from October's Harvest Assembly and they could help teach the team of red and yellow T-shirts.

Very soon they were getting as tangled up as everyone else with songs such as *Jesus never, never, never turned anyone away; Nothing's too big, big, big for his power; Great, Great, Brill, Brill Wicked, Wicked, Skill, Skill* (remember Evie and Emma the Blackford Gala Queens leading us in that in June?) and—still relatively new to us all—*God can do anything, anything at all* which reminds us “Don't put him in a box, don't shove him in a corner, don't you limit what he can do.” Jesus is not a Christmas decoration to be put away in early January.

That evening the yellow T-shirts were back with a few others meeting with Bruce, Gordon & Jane for their monthly evening session with nukemball, table tennis, pool and some board games.

Which would you not want to live without: hope, joy or peace? That was their question. What would be your answer? In a relationship with God, as we saw on Sunday 19th from Romans 15:13, we don't need to choose. He can fill and overflow us with each of them through the power of the Holy Spirit.



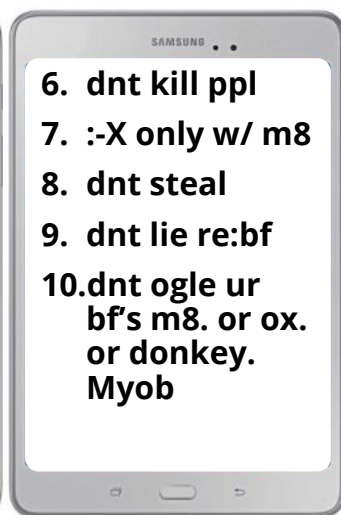
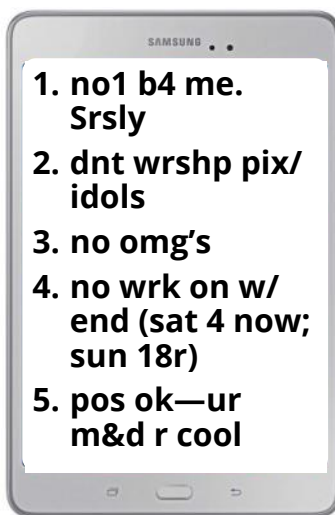
Set in tablets...

If today, Moses was called up Mount Sinai (see Exodus 20) and was given the Ten Commandments on two tablets, might they look like this?

Would he understand this instruction?

*M, pls rite on tabs & give 2 ppl. Ttyl, JHWH.
P.S. wwjd?*

Pat and Bob Aitken



Root66 Prayer Labyrinth

We are excited that our long-term prayer labyrinth project, "Root66" is taking shape despite progress having been hindered by the weather of late! Looking ahead to the brighter months of spring and summer, we will be planting Biblical themed plants and working on other special features to enhance the garden. "Many hands make light work" and if you or someone you know can help with either this project or our church garden then please speak to Sandy or one of our elders. There is a lot to do!



Reflecting on the Nativity Story

In the August issue of The Link, we compared meditating on a Bible passage to sucking a hard sweet (rather than crunching it) allowing all the flavours to coat my mouth and fully taste the sweetness.

Across the page is a passage from Luke 2 that we'll hear read a few times in December, but take time to taste it. For those who think or reflect in pictures, use the margins and the words to doodle and respond to the voice of the Lord. Others may add question marks, exclamation marks, light bulbs, or highlight, underline and join up words or phrases that seem to connect with each other or with you.

So Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.



Ardoch Pastoral Care (Outreach Team)

Pastoral Care is perhaps the one thing that people most associate with the church. Expressing care and concern for one another in our community in practical ways. This has been part of the Christian faith since it first began. The team have been faithfully visiting and delivering flowers to the housebound and the bereaved in the parish and also to those in hospital and care homes.

Please tell us of any problems and we will deal with them as they arise. Good communication is a key factor to the success of Pastoral Care work. The contact phone numbers are listed below.

We welcome new residents to our community and offer transport to people who have difficulty attending appointments. The wheelchair lending service is available to anyone requiring assistance. The team will deliver Christmas gifts to deserving households in our community.

Community Lunches are proving to be a huge success bringing people together for food, fun and fellowship. Future lunch dates are:

15th December, 26th January, 23rd February, 29th March.

WHEN THERE IS TEAMWORK AND COLLABORATION, WONDERFUL THINGS CAN BE ACHIEVED.

The team would like to thank Rev Mairi and all our friends for their support throughout this year and wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and a healthy and peaceful 2024.

Team contacts: Charles 880947, Barbara 880509, Lilian 880509, Heather 880556, Anne 880347.

The Ardoch Hub

The Hub Warm Space and Social Club is now up and running.

We meet every Tuesday 11am – 3pm in Ardoch Church Hall from November '23 until the end of March '24.

Tea, coffee and biscuits are served to welcome you followed by a light lunch around about 12 noon. The afternoon is filled with a variety of activities from bingo and singalongs to quizzes and games afternoons. There's lots of chatting and Wi-Fi is available as well as a book swap. So come along and meet old and new friends. You will be made most welcome!

Funded by Perth & Kinross Council.

Wholeheartedly supported by Ardoch Parish Church.



The Feeling of Inadequacy (From Charles Robertson)

Feeling inadequate is often the result of trying to live someone's life instead of your own. Perhaps you work in a career that you don't really enjoy or find meaningful but keep going because it's prestigious and looks good to your family, friends and society. You defer important decisions to others because you feel unsure of yourself.

You won't feel pride in your successes if you're always comparing and competing with other people. There will always be people who are better than you in every way, but you must avoid competing against them. Not only is this detrimental for your mental health but comparing won't get you anywhere except leave you more miserable than you already were.

We all have achievements that we sometimes either forget or fail to acknowledge. By acknowledging certain achievements you've had over the years, you will feel more adequate and secure yourself. No matter how minor they seem, no accomplishment or success is too small to recognise.

You should realise that it is not healthy to hold onto unrealistic expectations, whether they're towards yourself or others. You will always be disappointed if this is the case because perfection is an unrealistic standard to meet. A lot of people think happiness is a destination, but it's something you can choose every day. Choose a positive frame of mind by realising you can make a difference!

The reason behind your feeling of inadequacy is you need to have confidence in Jesus Christ every day in order to believe you can achieve your goals in his strength. Otherwise, you'll always feel that you're lacking something significant, no matter how hard you try.

Dear Lord.

You know us better than ourselves. Search the deepest parts of our hearts for anything that is displeasing you. Give us your support for the inadequacies we have in our lives. Give us endurance and encouragement for any challenges we face in our daily living. Comfort us with your mercy, protect us with your power and bind us with your eternal love through Christ, the Saviour of our race. Amen.

**"FOR EVERYTHING THAT WAS WRITTEN
IN THE PAST WAS WRITTEN TO TEACH
US, SO THAT THROUGH ENDURANCE
AND THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE
SCRIPTURES WE MIGHT HAVE HOPE."**

Romans 15:4

Church of Scotland Stamp Appeal 23/24: an easy way to get involved in the world mission work of the church.

This year's appeal proceeds will go towards establishing tree nurseries in Africa.

Please leave a small margin round the stamps and put them in the box or dish in either church vestibule or entrance area.

Firmly Planted is a community-based agroforestry initiative with the ambition of making a sustainable impact across Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It is spearheaded by our partners in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP), and built around the church's community structures. The initiative will resource individual groups to establish tree nurseries.

Agroforestry presents an opportunity to address challenges of food insecurity, deforestation, climate change and youth unemployment. Tree nurseries create employment opportunities, fruit trees improve nutrition and wider tree planting helps mitigate the impact of the climate crisis, in turn improving agricultural productivity.



HEROES OF THE FAITH



JJOHN

A few words from two of our heroes of the faith.... Reminding us to keep on with the "how" and the "why:"

Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tyre?

Corrie Ten Boom

The aim and final end of all music should be none other than the glory of God and refreshment of the soul.

Johann Sebastian Bach



The Blackford Board Games Club runs on the 1st and 3rd Thursday of the month from 7-9pm. The games are not all as complicated as this but the group are good at teaching you as you go along. It's also supported by the Perth & Kinross Council Warm Welcome Fund, so get along and enjoy the warm welcome.



Ardoch Church of Scotland Guild

The Guild's 23/24 session began on 9th September with the Guild Gathering live streamed from Edinburgh's Assembly Hall into Ardoch's Church Hall. 14 of our Guild members and 10 guests attended from Crieff, St Blane's and Dunblane Cathedral. We started with a welcome morning coffee and cake. The morning programme was really interesting and after lunch we were entertained firstly by the present Moderator of the General Assembly, Sally Foster-Fulton. She was followed by Jason Leitch (the National Clinical Director) and then the Govan Songsters, as well as annual Guild business. As part of Guild Week we held a convivial afternoon tea, raising £130 for project funds. 24th September was the Guild Rededication Service, where Guild members took most of the service.



At the Guild's first meeting in October I spoke, accompanied with photographs, reminiscing on my trip to the Holy Land in March. I was ably assisted by others who had made a similar trip. I was so glad to have done this before Gaza and Israel dominated our news once more. The collection enabled us to donate £50 to the Bible Society and £50 to Red Cross.

Mid-October we served bacon rolls after morning worship raising £150 to help finance the Blythswood Care boxes on their journey.

The November meeting was a bit tense, with the intended speaker from the Scottish Charity Air Ambulance having taken ill. We had to wait until 11.30am on the day of our meeting to hear that a speaker was confirmed. Claire from Crieff was a terrific speaker. This was an open meeting where we welcomed guests from Auchterarder Guild, including Marjorie Paton. Guild members had made lots of produce which was almost sold out on our produce table. We sent Claire back to SCAA with a cheque for £250 raised on the day. We have had over 20 attendees at meetings.

Mid-November we had an evening of whist with 6 tables and an additional table of very able tea makers and raffle distributors. Good fun and £246 raised for Guild Projects. As you can see, Ardoch Guild has been very busy.

Can I just highlight that Bruce Tarbet will be speaking on the first of February on the subject of "Asylum Seekers, Falkirk" and Jackie Mahoney from the Blue Door Foodbank will be our speaker on 4th April. All are welcome to attend any of our meetings. We look forward to welcoming you!

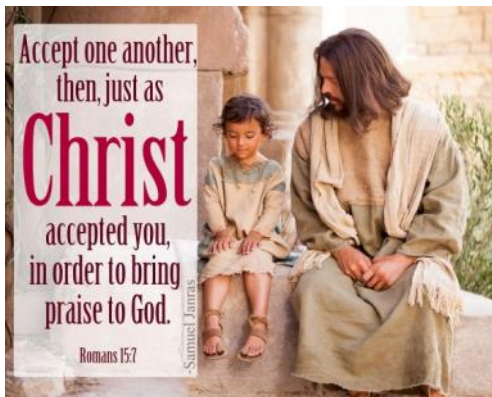
Heather McDonald, President Ardoch Guild

Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers in Dundee

Thank you to everyone from Ardoch who responded to the appeal fed through from Presbytery for warm clothing for the 110 young unaccompanied male asylum seekers placed in Dundee by the UK Government. They have arrived with nothing. Because they are asylum seekers they cannot work, and get barely any support. Connections café, a conversation and English practice project of The Steeple Church in Dundee saw young men arriving to learn English, in flip-flops and t-shirts; in Scotland, in October.

Nine black bags of warm jackets, trousers, jumpers, socks, shoes and underwear were collected from Ardoch and were gratefully received when delivered to Dundee.

Liz Paterson



Blackford's Christian Aid Week, 2023... the results are in!

We raised £496.60 this year mainly through donations at our Big Brekkie led by our able young people from the Hot Chocolate Group that meets every 2nd Friday of the month. Our "pastry or a pancake" menu continues to go down well with the addition of toast and marmalade this year for those who fancied some freshly toasted... homemade... village... sourdough! (Are you coming next year??)

In addition, we still like to give every person in the village the opportunity to donate so we pop an envelope through every letterbox... the only difference is we depend on people returning the envelope to us or taking on board online giving using the 21st century QR codes! We can all be part of helping those in poverty. THANK YOU! Please join us next year.

Christian Aid's work continues throughout the year with a Christmas Appeal for Bangladesh and an emergency appeal for the Middle East where they are responding to those most recently displaced to south Gaza as a result of the war. They're providing mattresses, medicines and emergency food from a community kitchen for displaced people.

Jane Roy



Ardoch Church and Community Patio, Paths and Ramp

The project was supported and built by members of our church community, volunteers from our surrounding community of Braco and Greenloaning, including quite a few of our ex-Boys' Brigade members. The watchword was fun, and the camaraderie and patter made the time fly past. Somehow the ladies seemed to know when we were working and appeared with welcome tea and goodies, and this was much appreciated.

Our thanks go to all who contributed in kind and money; your donations will be on show for the grand opening in the shape of teak benches, tables, chairs, flower pots and patio edging.

A very special thanks is due to the Ardoch Community Trust for their magnificent donation of the ramp which gives excellent access to the Hall for wheelchairs and handrails for greater safety.

Our hope is that the Community Garden will be well used and become another attractive facility in our beautiful village.

Gavin Whitton, John Souter



Keeping up to date

Neither congregation produces a printed order of service now with all the "intimations." We each do some emailing and run a series of slides on PowerPoints as we gather for worship, occasionally talking through the highlights at the start of the service.

You're able to catch up on some Ardoch news when slides are posted on the home page of their website. Blackford are experimenting with posting the series of slides to access by scanning this QR code which is also available in the church building or click on it on Blackford's home webpage.

Please refer to and use the information to make the most of your church.



A few snippets from our Church Diary

November

Monday 27	Joint Meeting of Elders	Blackford	7:00pm
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December

Sunday 3	First Sunday of Advent	Ardoch & Livestream	10:00am
		Blackford	11:30am
Friday 8	Hot Chocolate	Ardoch 6:30pm; Blackford 7:30pm	
Monday 11	Christmas Social	Blackford	7:30pm
Saturday 16	Quiz Night	Ardoch	7:00pm
Friday 22	School Christmas Assembly	Blackford	11:30am
Sunday 24	Sunday worship	Ardoch & Livestream	10:00am
		Blackford	11:30am
	Family Carols by Candlelight	Blackford	6:30pm
	Watchnight Service	Ardoch	11:30pm
Monday 25	Christmas Day Service	Ardoch	10:00am
Friday 29	Community Lunches	Ardoch 12noon, Blackford 1pm	

January

Sunday 7	Sunday worship (2024 times)	Blackford	10:00am
		Ardoch & Livestream	11:30am
Friday 12	Hot Chocolate	Ardoch 6:30pm; Blackford 7:30pm	
Saturday 13	Forest Mission	Ardoch	2:00—3:30pm
Thursday 25	Burns Night	Blackford	7:30pm
Friday 26	Community Lunches	Ardoch 12noon; Blackford 1pm	

February

Thursday 1	Guild	Ardoch	2:00pm
Friday 9	Hot Chocolate	Ardoch 6:30pm; Blackford 7:30pm	
Saturday 10	Forest Mission	Ardoch	2:00—3:30pm
Tuesday 13	Stacks of Pancakes	Blackford	2pm to 5pm
Wednesday 14	Holiday Club	Blackford	9am to 3:15pm
Friday 23	Community Lunches	Ardoch 12noon, Blackford 1pm	
Thursday 29	Music Club	Blackford	8:00pm

March

Friday 8	Hot Chocolate	Ardoch 6:30pm; Blackford 7:30pm	
Sunday 22	Palm Sunday services	Blackford	10:00am
		Ardoch & Livestream	11:30am

The Link—Advent 2023

The Church of Scotland Parishes of Ardoch and Blackford



Ardoch Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC000139
Blackford Parish Church Scottish Charity Number SC005594
ardochparishchurch.org | blackfordparishchurch.org
facebook.com/blackfordparishchurch

2023 Sunday Services (Timings swap for 2024)
10:00am Ardoch Parish Church and livestream through websites
11:30am Blackford Parish Church