

Mar - Jun 2024

# stJohn's

Dumfries  
a church for everyone



M A G A Z I N E

# st John's Dumfries

## a church for everyone

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The St John's Magazine is published quarterly and is available free of charge. **People occasionally ask if they can contribute to the cost. If you would like to do so, we would suggest £12 per year would be a suitable sum.**

There is a facility for doing this on the St J's website, or the office can take card payments. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the editorial team or of the Vestry of St John's, but are intended as a sharing of the life of the people who make up the community there, and those elsewhere whom we invite to contribute.

The next edition of the Magazine is due out in **June, and the nominal copy deadline is 15/05/2024.** Please send comments and/or contributions to [pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org](mailto:pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org).

If you have any ideas or suggestions for articles, please contact the Editorial Team. Copy should ideally be 300-700 words, with supporting illustrations or photographs (these available as separate files), if possible.

**Editorial team:** Janice Aiton (Rector), David Kerr, Margaret Morton

You can contact us at [pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org](mailto:pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org), or 07754 596140.

See [www.stjohnsdumfries.org](http://www.stjohnsdumfries.org) and weekly notices for more information.

## worship

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As mentioned previously most of our worship services are back up and running pretty much as they did before the pandemic; however we are retaining some of the online provision that was set up during it. See the printed Diary and Notices week by week and also the St J's website ([www.stjohnsdumfries.org](http://www.stjohnsdumfries.org)) for what's going on. Besides our flagship 11.00 1982 Sung Eucharist on a Sunday, we continue to offer a wide range of other services of worship, including said Eucharists at 18.30 on a Tuesday evening, 10.30 on a Wednesday morning, Mothers' Union-led Eucharists one Thursday a month, and Choral Evensong at 18.00 on a Sunday evening, alternating with our Contemporary Service provision; as well as sundry other services, observation of Saints' Day and the like. See our weekly published Diary & Notices or the St J's website ([www.stjohnsdumfries.org](http://www.stjohnsdumfries.org)) for details – as well as our weekly online service.

## rector

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Revd Janice Aiton  
07487 653069

01387 254126

[rector@stjohnsdumfries.org](mailto:rector@stjohnsdumfries.org)

If you wish to contact any individual or group within St John's, please email [pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org](mailto:pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org), or call 07754 596140, stating your name and how we can contact you back. We will pass on your details to the correct person or people, and ask them to contact you.

All post should be addressed via the Rectory/  
Office, 8 Newall Terrace, Dumfries DG1 1LW.

## from the registers

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### Baptism

24 March, 2024:

Remi Mac McCulloch

## getting in touch

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The Office is currently staffed Mondays and Fridays, but you can also make contact on 07754 596140 or at [pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org](mailto:pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org)

### St John the Evangelist

Junction of Newall Terrace and Lovers' Walk, Dumfries DG1 1LW  
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## editors' notes

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In this edition, the Rector is thinking about Reset buttons; Carolynne Sorrell appreciates St J's Burns' Night, 2024, and we then have three Lent-related articles: various people involved in the annual Lent Lunches describe their experiences, the Rev Chris Wren asks (and answers) the question, Why Bother About Lent?, and Andy Brooke, creator of last year's beautiful Lenten butterfly, talks about this year's project. Linda Scott describes a vital, but often unseen, aspect of St J's work - that of the Pastoral Team, and Gill Swales brings us up to date with the (Diocesan) Regional Council's project on pilgrimages. Kay & Esther Solaja look back to the Christmas Bring & Share Lunch and Secret Santa event; and David Kerr reports on a concert. Returning to Christmas Past for a moment, now the dust has settled and the last of the pine needles have been emptied out of the Hoover, Lindsay Florey reflects both on the festival itself and what came out of it; the Rev Ann Wren describes this year's World Day of Prayer and Christopher Pierson-Harvey, Assistant to the Treasurer, has a timely reminder. We finish, as ever, with a News Roundup. We hope you enjoy it.

# The Rector writes...

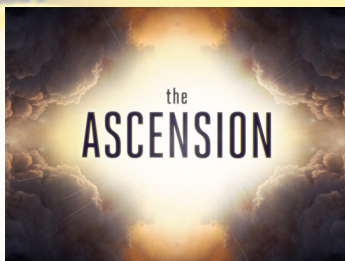
**"He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight."**



There are some moments in our lives that we remember so vividly because of their profound impact. 23rd March 2020 was one such moment for me! Boris Johnson made a televised announcement that there was to be a national lockdown to combat the coronavirus. Our churches were to close-my mind was on overdrive. No church! Oh, my goodness! As if that was not catastrophic enough, then we were denied freedom of movement. You were only allowed to shop for groceries and essentials; any medical need; one form of exercise a day; and travel to work if you could not work from home. Our lives were turned upside down, with many suffering all sorts of challenges from loneliness and separation to loss and bereavement. We had to rapidly adjust to a different form of life, which suited some people, but not the majority. I struggled during Covid as I missed greatly face to face contact. When the restrictions were

lifted, life did not return to normal; it never would, we were all changed, and we had to press a reset button on our lives and adjust.

The Ascension I believe was such a moment for the disciples. It was vividly etched into their memories and



marked a great change in their lives. They too had to press the reset button and adjust- but how? Until now they had Jesus physically beside them, instructing, guiding, and leading. They were now on their own and they had to grasp the reins of Christ's mission. They had first to learn how to prioritise their time. Time is our most precious commodity. You can get more money, but you can never get more time.

In the Scripture reading from Acts, we see the disciples are nudged into using their time wisely. "Why do you stand looking up toward heaven?" In other words, get on with life. The disciples are gently nudged into action- instead of being passive and reacting to things, they are being nudged into action. In our lives do we need nudged into action? The disciples on that first Ascension Day were encouraged to live with purpose. It says in Scripture in Proverbs that an intelligent person aims at wise actions, but a fool starts in many directions. It is so tempting to fill our lives with things that don't matter and to go in all directions. We need to use our time wisely and like the disciples on that Ascension Day we are encouraged to be pro-active and live with purpose.



On Ascension Day, we are given a reminder that all our action as a church begins with Jesus. In the Ascension we see a powerful image of Jesus received into glory. All that Jesus taught is true; his promises are

real; and his resurrection and ascension show his victory over death. Ascension Day reminds us that all we see here is not all that there is. There is an invisible realm to the human eye, that is real and lasting. Jesus' Ascension marks the beginning of the church, and the church needs to begin with Jesus as its authority and head. To say that the church begins with Jesus might be obvious, but I wonder if at times we are tempted to do church without Jesus. To follow our own agendas rather than his. To ask him to bless our endeavours instead of joining in his

endeavours. To talk about church, rather than Jesus. To be more of a club, rather than salt and light in our society. The earliest statement of faith in the church was "Jesus is Lord" and that is where the church starts, it starts with Jesus.



Ascension Day also shows us that the church begins with waiting. The disciples are encouraged to wait for the Holy Spirit. We are encouraged not to rush into things but to wait for God's prompting. We are called as a church to wait- to wait upon the Holy Spirit. Waiting is something that we might not be so good at in our own lives and in our church lives. We want to push ahead but Jesus says wait. Waiting reminds us that we are not the ones in control- God is. We are to wait for God's timing, for God's wisdom-we are to wait before we act. We need to be ready to embrace the new things that God is doing. In Isaiah it says: "Forget the former things—look at the new things I am going to do." So, like the disciples that Ascension Day we need to wait for God's Spirit.

Ascension Day reminds us that firstly the church begins with Jesus, secondly that the church needs to wait for the Holy Spirit and thirdly we are reminded that we have a commission, that we are to be witnesses in the world. We as a church are commissioned to point to Jesus, to speak and act for him in a way that shows love and mercy to the world. The church is to point to Jesus in our locality. It is not always easy to witness among the people we know. In addition, the church is to point to Jesus more widely through our involvement in other countries, in Ukraine, in Palestine, Gaza, Israel, Syria and Afghanistan. How do we do that- by prayer and giving? In May it is Christian Aid Week, and it is an ideal opportunity to help other people who are struggling for medicine, food, water, and stability. Our giving helps them and lets them know in different parts of the world that we care and that our brothers and sisters far away truly matter. It is a way of showing our Christian witness.



All in all, Ascension Day marked the ending for the disciples of what they had previously known, respected and loved but it also marked for them a new beginning.

They had work and ministry to do. They were energised by purpose and meaning. For us there are some situations that invite us to embark on new beginnings and be energised afresh by Christ's priorities and purposes.

His priorities and purposes are about love and salvation. It falls to us to share God's love with others and speak of the good news. We are to bear witness to Christ. About this time of year, I pick up usually the challenge from "Thy kingdom come" where it invites us from Ascension to Pentecost to pray for five people that they might know God's love and salvation. Who are you praying for? How are you sharing God's love? For this vital task of witnessing, we receive God's blessing. Did you notice the final physical earthly action of Jesus was one of blessing? Jesus blessed his disciples in their lives and ministry. We can build huge buildings and have thousands of people flocking to our church, but if we lack Jesus' blessing, it's all just wood, hay, and stubble that will be consumed by the fire of His judgment. "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it."



God blesses us in our lives and ministry- he trusts us to continue his work and to do so well. A beautiful old story tells of how Jesus, after his Ascension into Heaven, was

surrounded by the Holy Angels who began to enquire about his work on earth. Jesus told them about His birth, life, preaching, death and resurrection, and how he had accomplished the salvation of the world. The angel Gabriel asked, "Well, now that you are back in Heaven, who will continue your work on earth?" Jesus said, "While I was on earth, I gathered a group of people around me who believed in me and loved me. They will continue to spread the Gospel and carry on the work of the Church." Gabriel was perplexed. "You mean Peter, who denied you thrice and all the rest who ran away when you were

crucified? You mean to tell us that you left them to carry on your work? Hmm! What is plan B? And what will you do if this plan doesn't work?" Jesus said, "I have no other plan — it must work."

Truly, Jesus has no other plan than to depend on the efforts of his followers, of you and me! So that is the plan – it's a plan that depends on you and me – a plan that depends on each of us – each of us using our talents and gifts and time and resources for the good of the Gospel. But often we sit back and say ah sure someone else will do it. Maybe at times we have acted a bit like this: Four people named "Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have." We are to live as active followers. There is no plan B, because we are plan A.



The first disciples knew they were plan A. Did you also notice how those disciples were feeling after this farewell encounter with Jesus? They were joyous. It is not what I expected. I thought this farewell would have made them sad. So why joyous, because it marks the fulfilment of Jesus' physical ministry on earth. He did all that he came to do-to show God's love and power on the cross and in the resurrection. They were joyous for it meant the beginning of Jesus' heavenly ministry. Jesus' Ascension meant that he took his rightful place of glory beside the Father. Jesus' Ascension meant the launch of his intercessory ministry for us and others.

The ascended Lord Jesus Christ is our connection into the very presence of God! Through Him we have access in the Spirit to the Father. Jesus' Ascension began his preparation of a place

for his people. He told His disciples that He went to prepare a place for them and that He would come again and receive them to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also. Jesus' Ascension began his present and future dominion over heaven and earth. Peter tells us that Jesus is now "at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to him." Jesus' Ascension resulted in the pouring out of his Holy Spirit on his people. He told the disciples, "It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you"

# Ambassadors FOR CHRIST



Ascension marks the beginning of the first disciples and us as Christ's earthly ambassadors. Yes, there are many reasons for the disciples being joyous, and there are many reasons too for us to be joyous. So, be encouraged for we have great work to do, and we have God's blessing on our gifts and talents. All we are asked to do is put God first, wait upon his Holy Spirit, reset our priorities and purposes, move into action, and make a positive difference in our locality and in the world.

**Wishing you rich blessings  
this Eastertide and Ascension Day.**

Janice

# Burns Night

St. John's Burns Supper - Carolynne Sorrell



January is such a dreich month that to have something to look forward to is very appealing. So when the announcement came that a Burns Supper

was being arranged, I immediately signed up my friends and reserved tickets.

The hall looked marvellous, tartan runners, flowers and candles with tables all arranged in a fan shape looking at the top table. We took our places and enjoyed the supplied beverage. A swell of chatter filled the room full of anticipation until we heard the piper tuning up. We stood and clapped as the young piper led out the top table, and with everyone in their place, our MC Dougie Byers introduced the principals.



Very quickly a bevy of tartan sashed young waitresses appeared and served us the first course of Scotch Broth, thick, hot and tasty, it went down well. And then the main course, the piper entered followed by a pair of waitresses bearing the steaming haggis, again we rose and clapped the procession; it was placed on the top table in front of Fiona

Seagrave who then recited the Address to the Haggis with much fervour and great expression. The dirk was plunged, and she earned a great round of applause.

Beautiful plates of haggis, neeps and tatties appeared and were quickly demolished. Cheese, biscuits and grapes were on the table and were washed down with copious tea and coffee and then the meal completed with traditional shortbread. The food, supplied by Snaq (Caterers to Queen of the South Arena) was excellent and much enjoyed.

Dougie Byers came into his own with jokes and comments creating a relaxed family atmosphere and then the formal part began with toasts for the King and the Immortal Memory following a splendid proposal given by Ann Beaton.

And then it was time for the address to the lassies given by Simon Lidwell which was replied to by his wife, Kate. Both of them looked far and wide for their inspiration which made for interesting and learned presentations, much appreciated by the company and rewarded by enthusiastic applause.

The entertainment then began with Dougie introducing our Rector, Janice, who recited the favourite poem "To a Mouse" and she was followed by an excellent recitation by Aanaunthee, telling the story of a Glasgow tenement that had trouble with its midden, not by Burns, I think!

Then it was the turn of the musicians and Raymond Budd accompanied Gloria Brooke as she sang two Burns songs with the music reinvented by Beethoven, very pretty but difficult to understand, and then a couple of traditional tunes from the St. John's musicians which we could also sing,

The evening was passing quickly and soon it was time to

have the wonderful raffle and the answers to the quiz. Then the traditional end to a Scottish social event: we sang "Auld Lang Syne" standing in a circle and so ended a very successful evening organised by a team headed by Annette Beagrie.

People were slow to disperse, reluctant to end this happy time but with the chairs being put away we got the message and reluctantly wrapped up and braved the cold night air.

Rabbie Burns' birthday had once again been celebrated well by the members and friends of St. John's congregation.



# Lent Lunches

*Various Ladies Who...*

We understand that the Lent Lunches started before 1972 as a St John's Event for Christian Aid. At some point before 1995 other churches were invited to help with the catering and sales table. By 1998 12 churches were involved - an ecumenical approach that continues to this day. We would be interested to know more! One of the joys of the event is seeing people getting to know each other across different churches and denominations. For this article we have asked Heather Johnson from Maxwelltown West to tell us about soup making and Shirley Parker from Irongray, Lochrutton and Terregles to share about the sales table.

Alison Wright and Margaret Morton

## The Soup Maker's Tale

My great grandmother, who died long before my birth, was known for her culinary skills, providing refreshments for racegoers at Derby Racecourse. I never thought of following her footsteps, so was surprised to find myself organising a team

from Maxwelltown West Church to provide and serve a Lent Lunch in support of Christian Aid.

Some years later, the first stirrings of Spring: no, not the snowdrops nor the lovely daffs, but the meeting of Lent Lunches organisers, some old friends now, some new faces. In the



able hands of Margaret and Alison decisions are taken, rotas agreed. We leave with the task of encouraging and enthusing willing volunteers from our respective congregations. Kitchen experience? No problem-training is provided. No experience of preparing extra large quantities of soup? We have recipes to hand. You don't like washing up? St John's have everything provided including a fast and furious dishwasher (No! I don't mean my husband) and help is always at hand.

After a period of nobody wanting to catch my eye on a Sunday morning, everything begins to fall into place - the list of helpers filled, soup promises made, and donations of cheese offered. Sighs of relief, another small miracle.

Soup day can be a little tense, call offs, coughs and colds, frosts and heavy snow, gales and storms, surprisingly there are always people at the door for a bowl of delicious homemade soup in support of a worthy cause. I'm not suggesting that the church teams are competitive, but the range of soups is always interesting from old favourites to the exotic, my all-time favourite the late and lovely Betty Walker's Goan Potato -warm and aromatic. Of course, we have to adhere to all current food preparation standards, but not even Covid fazed us managing

to continue until lockdown in March 2020. I hope Great Granny would agree feeding people is a labour of love, and we welcome the opportunity to share in a warm and welcoming atmosphere.

*Heather Johnson.*



### **The Sales Table**

Irongray Lochrutton & Terregles Church have participated in Lent Lunches for a few years now. We are a small congregation and are happy we can contribute to Lent Lunches at St John's Church.

Our Church has a Social/ Fundraising Group who organise events and social gatherings for our Church and local community. After the Lent Lunches planning meeting held in January, when a representative of the church will attend, we know what date we will provide a sales table. Then it's just a case of asking our congregation for donations of baking. Gary Peacock, our minster, is very good at publicising the Lent Lunches. We are very lucky to have talented bakers in our Church, with different skills, which helps provide us with a varied selection of baking and preserves for our table. We also have excellent tablet makers. Tablet always sells well. On the day of Lent Lunches, we arrive early at the Hall to set up the sales table and accept baking that is being dropped off. Allergy check lists are completed for all food items. If baking is not already priced it will be priced. We have 3-4 volunteers on the stall.

Our Church treasurer is present with a float for the stall and helps with counting monies at the end.

As the lunch opens that's usually the busiest time on the stall. By the end of the lunches it's rare to have anything left to sell.

There is always a lovely atmosphere at Lent Lunches at St John's Church and Irongray, Lochrutton & Terregles Church are pleased to be involved in this annual event in aid of Christian Aid.

*Shirley Parker.*



# <sup>10</sup> *Lent Cross - Through Glass Darkly*

*Andy Brooke*



My latest glass commission is to create two crosses for the Lent/ Easter festivals at St John's. One for the period leading up to Passion Week, culminating in Good Friday, and a second one to celebrate the Resurrection of Easter Day.

### 1. The Lent Cross – to hang in the main nave from the start of Lent (14 February – 28 March)

*He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Isaiah 53:3*

Symbolism in the design:

The design for the cross is based on three elements of the passion of Christ: nails, thorns and rope. There are three nails running across the cross-beam, one for each part of the Trinity present at the crucifixion. Each nail is hand-painted with a tangle of lines. There are four thorns running down the upright post, representing the mock crown of thorns thrust onto Jesus' head in the events leading up to the crucifixion. There is a representation of ropes that bound Christ to the cross, seen in the lead lines descending the full length of the cross-beam. The whip or scourge that was used to torture Jesus can also be seen in the rope and jagged shapes.

*Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. Isaiah 53:4*

The choice of glass was designed to require careful positioning of the viewer to see the colours within the darkened transparency of the Wissmach art glass. The depth of colour is not seen unless the cross is illuminated from behind.

A Roman method of capital punishment

Usually the condemned man, after being whipped, or "scourged", dragged the crossbeam of his cross to the place of punishment, where the upright shaft was already fixed in the ground. Stripped of his clothing either then or earlier at his scourging, he was bound fast with outstretched arms to the crossbeam or nailed firmly to it through the wrists. The crossbeam was then raised high against the upright shaft and made fast to it about 9 to 12 feet (approximately 3 metres) from the ground. Next, the feet were tightly bound or nailed to the upright shaft. A ledge inserted about halfway up the upright shaft gave some support to the body; evidence for a similar

ledge for the feet is rare and late. Over the criminal's head was placed a notice stating his name and his crime. Death ultimately occurred through a combination of constrained blood circulation, organ failure, and asphyxiation as the body strained under its own weight. It could be hastened by shattering the legs (crurifragium) with an iron club, which prevented them from supporting the body's weight and made inhalation more difficult, accelerating both asphyxiation and shock.  
[From Britannica website – Crucifixion.]

*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by his stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5*



Backlit to reveal full depth

Cross with no rear illumination - 'darkly'



Installing the cross  
with Simon Lidwell



Completed; ready for delivery'

## 2. Easter Cross

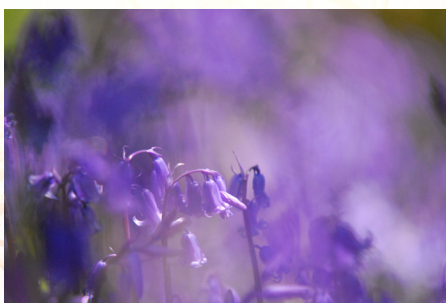
Heaven meets earth in the design of the Easter cross as blues and whites at the top of the upright column turn into greens and reds further down. The crossbeam joins the two parts and represents the glory of God's power in vibrant yellow and pink and streaky orange/reds. The dynamic diagonal shapes represent the upheaval of earth and heaven coming together in the death and resurrection of Jesus as God and man.

Where the Lent cross uses mainly dark transparent glass which remains sombre until light is transmitted through to reveal its colours, the Easter cross makes use of opaque and semi-opaque brightly hued glass to bounce back the joyful colours of resurrection.

See Andy's blog: <https://andyjbrooke.com/2024/03/14/lent-cross-through-glass-shapes-darkly/> for more about this, and his other work.

# Lent: Why Bother?

The Rev Chris Wren



Bluebells tell their own story. They sparkle more effectively in a group than they do alone. They come together into a glorious carpet (community) slowly over many years. As a community they celebrate more

effectively the glory of God in creation. The world around us is constantly evolving. Nothing the same from one minute to the next. We are in constant flux. Change is an integral part of life and the awakening to a new world of 'being': Kingdom of God.

Last week, we had friends visiting. Over dinner, I asked each one of them how close they felt to being the person God made them to be. Did they fulfil their God given potential... are they evolving and where are they heading? It could have been a conversation stopper but, given the nature of the group, it raised an interesting conversation.

So, let me ask you the same question. Are you changing into the person God really called you to be? Have you grown and developed... are you evolving? Do your religious attitudes and spirituality evolve? How, if at all, have you been transformed spiritually during the past 7 weeks of Lent?

God's presence perpetually within us calls us to work as one, to fulfil our life's potential and assist on bringing to completion the whole of evolving creation. We are each part of that plan, having an important part to play in the advancement of its fulfilment.

We are all very different people in skills, temperament, gifts, and attitudes. We wouldn't have it any other way. The beauty of our diversity opens opportunity to reach out for equality, inclusion and justice, in a world which, all too often, focuses on division, difference, apathy and destruction.

We may feel alone, yet we are not isolated individuals. We are part of an evolving community of living beings, humans, trees, flowers, fungi, insects, plants and animals, co-dependent on each other and each with a part to play in maintaining the life

of this orb which floats about the universe. The Kingdom, which we pray for, belongs to the whole evolving cosmos. It isn't a personal gift which we have to attain alone. We ought not to be working to get ourselves into heaven, instead, we should be looking for the salvation of the world. On most counts, we're not doing too well.

We keep Lent to give us space to ask whether we are in any way rising to the challenge of fully using our God given capacities, and recognising God's presence in all around us. How connected are we? Lent should push each one of us to realise we have a responsibility, not to give up. It should make Easter a clearer vision of the glory of God's potential for 'me', and what part I ought to be playing in making the evolving world a better, safer, and more equitable place, celebrating its diversity, and finding ways to bring inclusion into life. To fulfil our calling to create and celebrate "justice" by living out reconciling love.

In Easter we re-affirm our confidence in the promise of Resurrection, the work of Jesus 'the Christ'. Jesus, grew to be 'the perfect human', totally fulfilling God's plan in himself, and in him God was totally fulfilled in humanity: ONE God fulfilled being, 'fully human and fully God', as the Athanasian Creed puts it. That absolute 'oneness' with God is Resurrection, Kingdom, and Glory.



What is it to be human and one with God? What is it to have been baptised? What is it to recognise that God is one with my life? What is it to recognise that I am a small but important part

of the whole of evolving creation and God has put me here for a purpose? What is it to me that I am connected with all evolving life around me? What responsibilities do I carry as 'a word' of God in the world and my community? Have I even started to reach out into the world of my Christian calling?

**Easter is time to get to work! Alleluia!**

# Pastoral Visiting

Linda Scott



I'm not a good writer; I'm more of a doer, a more practical person, but I have been asked to write something for the magazine on pastoral visiting so here goes.

I was pleased, but surprised, when I was asked to join the Pastoral Visitors team because I have more experience with young children, having worked with them in various settings

for my whole working life. My experience of being around and interacting with the older generation is mainly through my parents, both of whom suffered from Alzheimer's in later life. I was fortunate to be able to care for Mum until she died in 2019. [People still remember Elsie Johnson with great affection – Ed]

As well as Janice, our Rector, we are a team of six, all different ages and backgrounds who visit members of St. John's who are no longer able to attend services and social activities. We hope our visits help to maintain a link with the church and keep them feeling part of the family of St John's.



Prayers are very important for those who want to participate. Two of our team offer Holy Communion to the people they visit, and Janice will offer Holy

Communion to everyone else when she makes her regular visits. We enjoy a good old chat about everyday things as well as giving an update on what's going on at St. John's and the wider community.



I think the most important part of the visit is to listen and to care, to give the person a chance to get things off their chest. I feel very privileged listening to stories of their family, their work life, adventures they have had, good times, sad times and lots of funny stories too.

Not all of the people we visit have family or friends nearby and so we understand why they may feel lonely, sad, angry or confused at times, I am often asked for a hug or to hold their hand. I hope our visits bring a little bit of light into their day so that we may comfort them, let them know they are loved and always in our prayers.

Our team meets up several times a year to pray, and to share our thoughts and observations and any concerns with one another. If you know of someone who would like to be visited by one of our team, then please let Janice or myself know. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the pastoral visitors very much for giving up their time to make someone's day brighter.

Linda Scott

# Pilgrimage

Gill Swales



According to Chaucer, it was during April that people's thoughts turned to pilgrimage – ("Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimages.") For our ancestors, pilgrimage was important if not always easy. It could involve hardship and expense, with long distances travelled over land and sea - in the hope of a cure for illness, for personal enlightenment, to atone for sins, or for protection. Their

destinations were the shrines of saints and holy relics, where they could see, touch and be blessed. In recent times there has been a renaissance of pilgrimage.

A modern pilgrim may have different reasons for embarking on a pilgrimage, however, pilgrimage adds a spiritual dimension to a journey which is usually- but not always- made on foot. The rhythms of travel, connecting with the land and the past, time to think, reflecting on our lives and faith, and encountering others are all aspects of modern pilgrimage. Chaucer's pilgrims ("from every shires ende of Engelond") were gathered in the Tabard Inn, Southwark, to set off for Canterbury. Scotland also has a wealth of pilgrim routes and destinations, enriched by its long history of Celtic and medieval Christianity.



The Galloway Regional Council – part of the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway- decided to look at the concept of developing pilgrimage in this region, with the intention of focusing on perhaps lesser known sites with religious/ spiritual connections. It was decided that thinking of the region as a whole was too tall an order. Rather, shorter pilgrimage routes focusing on different parts of the region and linked to each SEC church could be devised and the

details combined in a single brochure so that pilgrims could decide which to follow. Two or three churches in different parts of the region would each start to think about an appropriate pilgrim route in their area including

- the place(s) to be visited and their history/significance
- directions and the distances involved
- details of the local church
- possibly suggesting places to eat or drink (if no Tabard Inn!)



A small group is looking at the options for St John's, and three possible destinations have been initially identified for a pilgrimage from/ to St John's. The most local and accessible one

is Lincluden Abbey, which is a fairly short flat walk on paved surfaces. A mid-distance option is St Queran's well near New Abbey, which is one of the many holy wells in our region. A longer pilgrimage would be to the Ruthwell Cross. The longer options need further investigation to see how viable they are, and what route they would take. The history and spiritual significance of these places also needs some investigation, as well as preparing accurate directions! It will all need to be online too.

We want to offer an option for the less-able, or even to travel by car or bike. We would welcome any input to this ongoing project.



# 'Surprised Delight'

David Kerr has been at a concert

Many of you will remember our one time Associate Rector, Steve Butler, and will also know, or know of the work of, his wife, Anne, who, as well as having founded, and run **Sticky Kids**, the UK's leading provider of pre-school music and movement CDs, songs and actions for toddlers, is also a well-known artist (see [www.annebutlerart.com](http://www.annebutlerart.com)), though she only started painting 'for real' in her forties. Anne's Ferndale Studio, in Durisdeer, has been a popular stop-off on the Spring Fling tour for a number of years. I bought the picture shown opposite, (unnamed, but, when I asked, AB said it might be entitled 'Dusk') there last year, and I love it. And Steve, during his relatively brief stint as Associate Rector at St J's (the experience here made him want to return to full time ministry) was responsible, amongst other things, for the transition of this humble publication from an A5 photocopied booklet to its current, much admired, format.



You will also have seen material at St J's, advertising a concert by the extended Butler family, taking place at the Queen's Hall, Edinburgh, on 4 February this year, to raise money for MND (Motor Neurone Disease) Scotland research, Anne having sadly been diagnosed with this condition a couple of years ago.

The concert itself was a joy: mainly fronted by Steve, wearing his well-known expression of slightly surprised delight (hence the title above), and with his characteristic understatement and self-deprecation. This might have led you to expect a small event with 'turns' by family members whose shortcomings could be overlooked because the event was for a 'good cause.'

But it was not a small event: over 500 people were there (as Anne remarked, when she herself appeared, the last time she'd stood on a stage in front of 500 cheering people, they'd all been under 5), and, although the final total had still to be calculated, the family were confident that over £10,000 had been raised for MND Scotland. (final total £13,500)

So: a bunch of family members with shortcomings to overlook? Emphatically not. Those who remember Steve from St John's will remember his great musical abilities (part of his career, after all, has been as a professional musician and music producer) and his ability to teach, and lead us in, new, or renewed, music (though at St J's this was mostly restricted to the All Age Service and occasions when the St J's





Choir was on holiday). This occasion gave him freer rein to demonstrate his own singing, piano and guitar playing, with compositions of his own, and those of others. These alone made for a beautiful, and varied programme.

Many of them were prefaced by a personal commentary on how the material had come to be written, or why it held a significance. These included *I Will Be With You* – a recent composition for daughter Fay's wedding, and *Hill of the Angels* – inspired by a place which you encounter as you travel from east to west on the Isle of Iona.

And the rest? A collection of Butlers (Sandy, Rory, Fay), Butlers-by-marriage/partnership (Suzanne, Katherine) and Butlers-by-adoption (childhood Leith neighbours Sally Jaquet, Will Jaquet, Ada Grace-Francis), all of whom are highly accomplished musicians in their own right; some professional full time; others holding down jobs in healthcare and the like, as well as raising families (see Suzanne's song, *Seventeen Coats*).

Together and individually, they had put together an evening of diverse and complementary styles and sounds, playing a variety of instruments and all accompanied by the most wonderful, often haunting, singing. Of particular note were Fay's introductory song *One Voice*; Suzanne's *Too Much Company* and Rory's *Tell Me*. There was also the family's cover version of *Glory Bound*, which had been entered, during lockdown, in a competition run by Canadian band The Wailin' Jennies to find the best cover of the song, and which they had won! I wish there were the space to list, and appreciate, each one, but have had to restrict it to a few of the most (for me) stand-out ones.

The whole thing provided an ever changing combination of the various musicians, the different instruments each played with such skill, and the beautiful, beautiful voices; all interspersed with the trademark 'slightly surprised delight' demeanour and commentary, of which Steve, clearly, is not the only exponent.

Anne's most recent canvas, *After the Rain* (opposite) was auctioned as part of the evening; sealed bids had been received beforehand, and the auction closed at the end of the interval of the concert. The final total raised by the painting alone was £3961; a significant part of the overall total. She is still painting, albeit in shorter bursts, and will be exhibiting at Spring Fling again this year (on the Green Route, which will be running, either with Thornhill Community Transport or Cairn Valley Community Transport, departing from Gracefield and offering a brilliant day out – see St J's Magazines past!). Spring Fling 2024 will be 25-27 May: if you haven't sampled this before (our own Andy Brooke is also one of the exhibitors), you really do need to try it: a fantastic experience of varied art in different media, and best enjoyed by means of one of the bus tours that will be operating: more details from Gracefield, the Spring Fling

website ([www.spring-fling.co.uk](http://www.spring-fling.co.uk)), once updated, or, specifically about the bus tours, from me.

But *revenons à nos musiciens*, as the French (nearly) say: this was a fantastic concert and, despite all, a joyous, celebratory occasion. Some of the music performed, as well as other tracks, is obtainable on CD from [bandcamp.com](http://bandcamp.com) and the usual streaming platforms (search for Suzanne Butler, Rory Butler and Steve Butler), and there is talk of a CD/DVD of the actual concert. The Church Office will be happy to source this for you, once available, upon request.



# Christmas Bring & Share Lunch & Secret Santa

*Esther & Kay Solaja*



The Christmas Bring and Share Lunch and Secret Santa were held after our morning worship service on the 17th December 2023. It was a joyful occasion that brought the congregation together to share fellowship with plenty of food to go round.

There were fun activities for everyone, starting with a Snowman Drive game after lunch. This is a great fun Christmas variation of the popular Beetle Drive game that we played in our October event. Each person from each table pairs up with another person. Each person was given 2/3 worksheets, a pen/pencil and a dice for each team. When the game starts, each person

in the team takes turns to throw a dice and draw part of the snowman depending on the dice number and the instruction, for example a 6 thrown allows the player to draw the snowman's body, 5 for the head, and then on to the eyes etc. The first team to complete the snowman picture wins. The game process was repeated 3 times – the competitive nature of each team players aiming to finish first made the game really entertaining and enjoyable.

After everyone cooled down with some refreshment and banter, we played Pass-the-Parcel. Everyone on each table is involved together this time – in this variant of the game, the parcel is passed from one person to another while music plays, when the music stops the person holding the parcel is out. The parcel continues to be passed to music until one person is left on each table as the winner and gets a mystery gift. The game provided a lot of laughter.

Prior to the event it was suggested to the congregation that those staying for the Secret Santa event should bring a present suitable for both male and female at a cost of no more than £10. The distribution of presents was well organised by the Rector – people whose birthday falls on a given month of the year are asked to go and select a present from the pile, starting from January to December. As usual there were enough presents for everyone and extra for visitors and those who forget about the event.

We also sang some favourite Christmas songs including 'Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer' accompanied by Mark Toner, Kate Lidwell and their band. It was an enjoyable event and great fun for everyone.

We are looking forward to this year's event.

# Christmas Tree Festival

*Lindsay Florey is picking out the wood from the...well, you know.*

A Forest of Christmas Trees! It was not JUST a forest of trees in a very beautiful church, it was a wonderful community venture/adventure including many diverse organisations. Conversation flowed and many people said how surrounded by friendship they felt and how supported; feeling able to share happiness, sadness, complex thoughts and anxieties. The event was enhanced by the beautiful lighting in the church and members of the congregation and members of the flower club enjoyed working together and cementing relationships. Old friendships were renewed and new ones forged both by stewards and contributors and by those who came.

There were 73 trees, all decorated in individual style and it would be impossible to pick any individual tree for mention. However...

The 2 trees decorated by the police were a tremendous hit and caused competition between 2 branches of the police service. Which could give away the most freebies, which could host the most lights etc? Who would have believed you could have a tree with hens and eggs? Beautiful embroidery, knitting and crochet, wonderful real and dried flowers, stained glass and afternoon tea at Barbours to mention but a few of the stunning designs. A tree covered in seaweed, a National Trust Threave tree and 2 beautiful trees by the People's Project. The Christmas tree Festival had it all.

The decorations were beautiful, often thought-provoking highlighting common issues of today – domestic violence, mental health issues and environmental issues. Those decorating the trees were asked to be innovative and they most certainly rose to the occasion. The Christmas story was told in a beautiful series of trees. The angel tree was smothered in angels of all colours, sizes and beauty. A real HOST – ‘a multitude of radiant and celestial beings coming together and creating an awe-inspiring sight!’

The event was really two separate events in one. The first was a daytime display with lots to read and see at each tree. The second was an evening event – just stars and tree lights to add to the atmosphere. It was impossible, in the semi-dark, to read the information on and at each tree but the feeling of peace and the true spirit of Christmas shone out. More than a thousand people attended and many came several times. Children were free and on viewing the willow stars hanging down the centre of the church, one child asked where the moon was!

Did you miss any of the trees

mentioned? If so – come to the next Christmas Tree Festival in a few years' time. [We'll hold you to that – Ed] So successful and inspiring did people find the trees and so welcoming the stewards that we have a waiting list of possible participants for the next occasion. As for the mince pies – Thank you to Kerr Little at The Little Bakery. Delicious!

The event made a profit and money has been donated to charity both by the church and the Flower Club. Sincere thanks for a council grant that allowed the planning to go ahead without extreme anxiety over finance.

The Dumfries & District Flower Club celebrates Flowers, Fun and Friendship and with the congregation of St John's this was the essence of the event with true Christmas love at its heart!



# World Day of Prayer

*Bear with One another in Love” – Ann Wren*



The Writing Country and the Biblical Text were chosen by the International Committee in 2017. So, the Committee in Palestine and the text, “Bear with one another in Love” [Eph.3:4] were married together, and the long, dedicated process of writing began. No one at that time foresaw the circumstances that have developed in recent months. In Aramaic, the word “to bear” is *hamel*, more accurately translated as “to carry” and this image of carrying one another in prayer and in love is exactly what we do at the World Day of Prayer Service.

Amidst the current conflict the International Committee, with representatives of all the countries affected, has continued to share the concerns and experience of Palestinian women in prayer. Working as an ecumenical Christian Group this prayer has been made visible by action bringing humanitarian aid and assistance to all people in their need. Similarly Christian witness continues in prayers, with cries for justice and peace ringing out for the World to hear.

An additional prayer has been written, arising from the current situation of conflict to be used at all prayer services on March 1st: This may be a prayer we continue to use in our daily prayers for all countries in conflict and war.

*We pray for women, who even now are losing children and other family members. We pray that their strength be a beacon of resilience, as they endure all challenges and pain with grace.*

*Grant them courage to navigate adversity.*

*And may their aspirations for peace and prosperity shine brightly in the midst of these difficulties. In this time of war, we pray for the healing of hearts and the restoration of peace.*

*May compassion prevail over hatred and may the suffering of all those affected by the war be alleviated. Grant them strength, solace, and hope for a brighter and harmonious future.*



*We pray for all families who have lost members; for the kidnapped, the missing, and all who are still under the rubble. May the spirit of God grant them all patience and strength as they wait to be reunited.*

*Lord Jesus, we pray for the end of all wars, especially in the land you called home. You are our Saviour, the one who taught us the real meaning of peace. Guide us and give us power to practice peace in our daily lives.*

*Katie Reimer WDPIC Executive Director 16.02.24*

Recently, as part of my ministry with families affected by domestic abuse has come the image of survivors forming a community of "Kintsugi Hope." This term comes from a Japanese art of restoring broken pottery using a urushi lacquer mixed with precious metal dust. Reflecting on the prophetic text, this too may be our fervent prayer for any survivors of war and conflict, "See I am doing a new thing! See it springs up, do you not perceive it" Isaiah 43:18



There will be no going back, just a new future, a new understanding, a new being from an impossible past. We have seen this happen in South Africa and Northern Ireland. The road is hard and long but be assured there are people of faith, even now, working hard bringing people together to envision what the future may look like. Let us support those gifted, dedicated people in our prayers, in the words of a song inspired by Kintsugi. Being broken is how, "the light gets in" and you become a new creation of joy and wonder.

Is this not the Way of Resurrection hope for us all?

*Rev'd. Deacon Ann Wren (WDP Organiser and MU Diocesan Leader)*



## Treasurer's Reminder

*Christopher Pierson-Harvey*

### IMPORTANT REMINDER

Believe it or not another year has passed, and it is over 15 months ago that I wrote my "We have a problem" note. I'm pleased to say that the response was very good, but we must not be complacent. As we all know from our household bills, prices are rising and will continue to do so. We're very fortunate in the fact that energy bills for the church are locked into a long fixed-price contract - but this is due to end in December 2024. So we need to be prepared for an increase from January 2025.

*giftaid it*

Those of you who are listed on the Gift Aid register will remember that, towards the end of 2021, David Kerr and I set out set about checking every entry on the register! I would not have managed without the considerable amount of help that I received from David. Nor would I have succeeded without all of you who filled out new forms and returned them. This whole exercise took about 3 months and was carried out at the request of our Treasurer (I am only Assistant to the Treasurer). We do not want to have to check the register again in so time consuming a way. In order to avoid that, the Treasurer has agreed that I will be responsible for keeping the register up to date. In order to achieve this, I will, on an annual basis, respectfully remind you, the Congregation, that, if you are on the register and no longer pay income tax, you must contact me to alert me to the fact that your name must be deleted. If you still pay income tax and are happy to remain on the register you need do nothing.

If you do pay income tax and are not currently on the register but would like to join, please contact me. I am sure that you are aware that the government will increase any donation that you make by 25% at absolutely no additional cost to you.

Thank you for taking the time to read this article.



# News Roundup

David Kerr

- **Lent Groups:** a total of four Lent Groups have been running this Lent, attended by some 25 people; possibly more about this in our next issue. It should be noted, also, that several other churches in the area have expressed some envy (?or jealousy, whichever is not the Deadly Sin) about these, so Advent may provide an opportunity for us to open up such groups to participants from elsewhere, as well as ourselves.

- **Microphones:** a fair bit of work has been carried out by TG Baker, our Sound Engineers. We now have a total of four radio lapel mikes of recent design, as well as a new handheld one that can be used to allow people to speak at AGMs and the like. Various rationalisations and improvements have also been carried out and the system, such as it is, is now pretty much as good as it can be got. This work has been supported by sundry legacies and donations.



- **Bells lighting:** the lighting in the bell chamber (where the bells are, as opposed to the ringing chamber, where the ringers stand) had largely failed, and has now been replaced. The failure was due to the old age of the components and, since this is a Health & Safety matter, we had no option but to replace the units.
- **PIRs (movement sensors) in lobbies:** the back entrance lobby (as you enter the building via the back gate) and the sacristy lobby lights will now come on (and go off again) automatically. This is partly a Health & Safety issue (avoids groping for switches amongst obstacles in the dark) and will also prevent these lights being left on when no-one is around.
- **Light 3a in hall:** a solution has been found to repair the (obsolete) non-working striplight in the hall, without the need for major works. This should be dealt with shortly after Easter, once Lent Lunches are out of the way.
- **Warm air curtain:** again, shortly after Easter, we should have a warm air curtain in the corridor outside the toilets. The hope is that this will mitigate the very rapid loss of heat that occurs when the back door is opened – particularly if the front door (to the car park) is opened at the same time.

- **Photocopier:** Farewell, Olivetti 254, thou good and faithful servant. We had had the machine since 2016, and the finisher (which does the folding & stapling) was a parting gift from the Paisleys. This equipment has performed pretty much faultlessly over the time we have had it, and was still working, but it had outlasted its predicted service life (5 years), and parts are no longer available. There was a temptation to 'stick with it' until it broke down irrevocably, but, as we all know, printers often wait until you have a large, urgent job on (Christmas or Easter, say) and then fail. The new Epson 5000 cost less, overall, than its predecessor, does all that its predecessor did, consumes an alleged 70% less energy, and its per-copy cost (excluding paper) is half what we have been paying to date – the benefits of newer technology. Again, this replacement (which we would have had to do soon, anyway) was made possible by a legacy.



- **Roofs/gutters:** we're all aware of the various leaks, damp patches etc in various parts of the buildings. Active steps are being taken all the time to address these, though it has proved very difficult to pin down the requisite tradesmen. I'm hopeful, though, that, by the time you read this, most of the issues will have been addressed. The Hall roof, however, is another matter. It is nearing the end of its life and we will have to address the question of what we do about it pretty soon.
- A lot of work has gone in to **registering our land and buildings** (unlike many of the churches in this Diocese, they belong to our own Trustees, which, effectively, is the Vestry) in order to comply with new legislation, which requires Trustees who have 'a controlling interest' in heritable property (= land and buildings) to register the fact. The way the legislation was drafted made it potentially hugely complicated for an organisation such as ourselves to comply, but, thanks to help from staff at Registers of Scotland, the Diocesan Solicitors and generous sponsorship, we should have managed to do so by the time you read this. STOP PRESS: Done!





