

THE PARISH PUBLICATION

EDINBURGH PENTLANDS PARISH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

Issue 11 . February / March 2026 . Distributed free



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If you would like to submit an article for consideration for inclusion in the magazine, please provide an unformatted Word document (**not PDF**) together with hi-resolution JPEG image(s) which should be attached separately.

Article: 500 words**Notice: 150 words****Please note:**

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Articles can be sent to the Editor at the email address above, or contact the Church Office. Please note that all articles are subject to editing.

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Linda Sharp

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Messy Church

Alison Downie

Open Door Baby & Toddlers

Karen Barry & Linda Johnston

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WELCOME to the February-March edition

Once again, many congregational colleagues have sent in stories for inclusion in this issue of the magazine and I really appreciate their involvement.

You can read all about the fun and games at Messy Church, catch up on Christmas celebrations held by a couple of our local societies, and discover the history of an event that takes place in the beautiful Shetland Isles. I am especially delighted that Callum Macfarlane-Grieve has provided some cobweb-free background information

about his family and leisure activities and I am sure we shall find out lots more in the weeks and months to come.

The proposed Holy Week Services are listed on page 5. If there are any changes, information will be included in the weekly office email.

There is certainly much to absorb, so I hope you can sit back and enjoy reading this issue of *The Parish Publication*.



Kath Hay
Editor

Felice Editrice

DEAR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST

In the last edition of the church magazine I had the opportunity to say 'hello' and now I am already preparing to say 'goodbye' to Edinburgh Pentlands Parish Church.

It has been a very busy, if short, time – the Advent and Christmas services were all such a delight. From thinking about the meaning of the Kingdom of Heaven and hearing about the Grumpy Owl, to making drinking straw stars. Then Watchnight and Christmas Day celebrations of the coming of Christ our Saviour here with us, and now looking towards what 2026 will have to offer for us as individuals and also as members of the congregation.

I am really enjoying my time with you, although it is a shame that I have not had more opportunities to get to know folk, due to the limited hours in the locum contract and the need to travel between the two services, instead of enjoying a coffee and chat with either congregation.

For me, it has been a very different ministry from my usual role at Holy Trinity. Leading worship and preaching every week has given me a wonderful



Rev. Rita Welsh

opportunity to experience God's presence in planning and structuring teaching throughout the months – as opposed to the great blessing of working as part of a team delivering a series of sermons at Holy Trinity. At my stage in life, this has been an unexpected gift and a challenging, but exciting period. My prayer is that the topics we have explored together, and lessons emerging from our reflection on God's word week by week, have also been beneficial to your faith journey.

It has been a delight to have the practical support of the church officer, office staff, session clerk and deputy clerk, welcome teams, readers, tech teams, the musicians

and those who pray for me before each service – and we should all give thanks to God for their dedication and enthusiasm.

And, of course, now we are eagerly looking forward to Callum starting his ministry here. I know it has been a long time waiting for this, but I encourage you to reflect on this through a positive lens. In these many months of waiting, you have been blessed with time to get to know each other, for the Kirk Session to find common ground and ways to compromise when that has been necessary.

The work of developing the Parish Profile was an opportunity to identify what was really the essence of the new congregation, and this gave the Nominating Committee a solid basis on which to carry out their task of finding your new minister.

The new manse is ready to become a home, church buildings and halls have had necessary fabric issues dealt with, and more members have found roles to fill, duties to take up and pastoral activities in which to engage, often without realising it!

Inevitably, there will be ups and downs as you move forward, but the foundations are now

Rev. Rita Welsh ...continued.

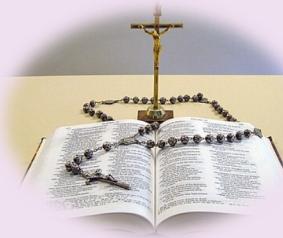
becoming well established and my hope is that you will clearly see the path God has for you and the faith to follow His guiding and call, even though it will bring challenges on the way.

I encourage you to remember the saying 'Rome wasn't built in a day' and, even though it took centuries, in the end their empire crumbled to dust. In stark contrast, God's Kingdom is added to every day, every heart that turns to Christ, every voice that declares him King of Kings and Lord of Lords – and that Kingdom will never fail. What a joy and privilege to be part of that eternal Kingdom, and we are all able, by faith, to declare the words in Psalm 40 on the right.

Praying blessings for you all, wherever God may lead you.

Blessings, Rita Welsh

1. I waited patiently for the Lord;
he turned to me and heard my cry.
2. He lifted me out of the slimy pit,
out of the mud and mire;
he set my feet on a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
3. He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear the Lord
and put their trust in him.
4. Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
who does not look to the proud,
to those who turn aside to false gods.
5. Many, Lord my God, are the wonders
you have done, the things you
planned for us.
None can compare with you;
were I to speak and tell of your deeds,
they would be too many to declare.
6. Sacrifice and offering you did not desire
but my ears you have opened
burnt offerings and sin offerings
you did not require.
7. Then I said, "Here I am, I have come
it is written about me in the scroll.
8. I desire to do your will, my God;
your law is within my heart."



IAN MORRISON
SESSION CLERK

FROM THE SESSION CLERK



were treated to a view of Christmas from the perspective of a Grumpy Owl who ultimately came to share in the Joy of the occasion. Those who came to the 11:30pm service were able to celebrate the arrival of Christmas by sharing the lighting of individual candles.

Gifts for Charities

The special Christmas Eve offerings which totalled £1,608 were split evenly between three charities: CHAS (Children's Hospices Across Scotland), Love from Jamie and Christian Aid.

Juniper Green Church Roof

A number of slates came off the roof of Juniper Green Church during the strong December winds. Rather than simply replacing the slates, a more extensive repair of the relevant area of the roof was undertaken, resulting in scaffolding at Juniper Green Church throughout January.

Ian Morrison

Induction and Ordination of Callum Macfarlane-Grieve

The Service of Ordination and Induction for our new Minister, Callum Macfarlane-Grieve, will take place at Juniper Green Church on Thursday 26th February at 7:00pm. I hope that many of us will be able to be there and welcome Callum to Edinburgh Pentlands Parish.

Christmas Eve Services

There were good attendances at our Christmas Eve Services. Those who came to the 6:30pm service

BLow AWAY THE COBWEBS

On New Year's Day, my wife Amy and I decided to blow away last year's cobwebs and take the dog for a wander up the Pentland Hills along the Capital View path.

The icy wind whistling through, sure was brisk, and the incline steeper than my Christmas dinner-filled self was ready for, but it was certainly worth it.

Taking a moment to catch my breath on the way up, I won't forget the first time I turned around. Eyes lifted from the mud and hill that lay before me, to the sprawling landscape of city and nature that lay behind - just breathtaking, not that I had much breath to take. As I pondered, I was struck by the journey that led me to the side of the hill, plus God's faithfulness in the highs and lows of it. That journey lay ahead. Paths not yet walked, the smudges of buildings, homes and, crucially, people unknown for now. Yet the God who was faithful yesterday will be faithful tomorrow.

As I stand on the threshold of this new chapter with you all, I am aware that first impressions matter. With that in mind, I should note I am dyslexic, so, filled with confidence about the impression my written self makes...if this piece reads smoothly and the grammar is on point, you are either witnessing a minor miracle or, more likely, some very gracious editing!



I share this, partly as a disclaimer, but also to highlight a simple truth: I am far from perfect. I am sure that, as you read this, you may have in your mind the perfect minister. They may even take the rose-tinted shape of one you have had before. I'm not them. I'm sure my imperfections will become apparent in time. What I am, however, is eager to journey and learn alongside you, to seek growth, flourish together, explore the outrageous assertion that we are called and loved by God, who in turn, calls us to love others.

As many of you will already know, I have spent most of my life on the West Coast, except for a brief stint in Bolivia for a year or so, which was a blessing in many ways, not least the sermon anecdotes that you will hear in time! My small family includes my incredible wife Amy, Oban the cat and Islay the dog.

Before ministry training, I was a Youth Pastor for nearly a decade.

Few things give me more joy than seeing young people find confidence in being whom God made them to be. In my free time, you may find me at the theatre or cinema, around a table playing board games or strolling the Scottish countryside (in the fairer weather at least).

If I could offer you one word, which is my hope and prayer for all that lies ahead, it is 'partnership'. The future of the church is not found in just one eloquent and immaculate minister. It's found in people, mess and all, as together we aspire to live the love shown to us through God, in Jesus.

I hold fast to a hope of what God can do through all of us together. A congregation is so much more than its minister, but I hope to be a minister who enables us, together, to be the full, loved community we are called to be.

Callum Macfarlane-Grieve

CHURCH SERVICES

- Sunday 8th and 15th February:
9:45am Colinton and 11:15am Juniper Green
- Sunday 22nd February:
11:15am joint Communion Service at Juniper Green
- Thursday 26th February:
7:00pm Service of Ordination and Induction of Callum Macfarlane-Grieve at Juniper Green
- Sunday 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd March:
9:45am Colinton and 11:15am Juniper Green
- Sunday 29th March:
9:45am joint Palm Sunday Service at Colinton

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

- Monday 30th March and Tuesday 31st March:
7:00pm at Colinton
- Wednesday 1st April:
7:00pm at Juniper Green
- Thursday 2nd April:
7:00pm Joint Communion Service at Colinton
- Friday 3rd April:
7:00pm at Juniper Green
- Easter Day, Sunday 5th April:
9:45am Colinton and 11:15am Juniper Green





THE LOST SHEEP

Herding sheep, participating in a fitness challenge and drawing pictures of migrating geese were all part of Messy Church on Saturday 10th January.

We got the new year off to a great start learning all about **Cecil the Lost Sheep**. The children used pastels to colour in some pictures and, if you didn't know, working with pastels is great fun, but very messy!

There was a point to all this fun. We told the story of **Cecil the Lost Sheep** based on Luke 15. Jesus told us that a shepherd had 100 sheep, but still really cared when one got lost. The shepherd went on a long hard journey to find Cecil and bring him home. When they got back, everyone was delighted and had a big party. Jesus told this story to remind us that God loves all of us, even if we are sometimes naughty.

We also considered that the shepherd had to try hard to find Cecil – he had to keep looking even although it was difficult. Lots of animals have to keep going, even when it is hard work for them and their stories can inspire us too.

Many animals migrate thousands of miles a year, travelling across oceans, through storms and have nowhere to rest until they reach their destination. Dark-bellied Brent Geese travel about 6,000 miles from Siberia to spend winter in the UK, yet



they are no bigger than a Mallard Duck.

We tried a fitness challenge to see how many times we could stand up from sitting in 30 seconds, how many hoops we could throw on cones and how good we were at hopscotch. Fitness for all sports requires lots of training sessions and sometimes we don't feel like training, but we know that if we don't, we won't get better. It takes 'perseverance' to keep going – a big word that means to continue to try to achieve something, even although it is difficult. We all try, fail, try again, get help from parents, teachers or friends and then with practice can master a new skill.

Following Jesus can take perseverance too. Jesus does ask

us to do things that can be difficult. He reminds us to be kind, to help people even if we don't like

them much and to share, even when we don't want to. We learned that ants are very good at sharing to make sure everyone in their colony is looked after. In fact, ants have two stomachs. One for their own food and one for food to take back to their colony to share. By working together and looking after each other, they achieve so much more than they could on their own.

Church helps us too. By coming together, we can all help each other grow and develop our Faith. Do come and join us on 7th February if you'd like to.

Alison Downie



CAN YOU HELP?

Colinton Church will be installing a new stairlift at **Dreghorn Loan Hall**.

If anyone would like to make a donation to help cover the extensive costs, please get in touch with

Property Convener Ian Lochhead
via the Church office.

Thank you.

office@edinburghpentlands.church

THE SILENT NIGHT, THE HOLY NIGHT

STEVEN LEUNG, PASTORAL CARE

The season of Christmas is multifaceted. For some, it is joyful and restful, but for others, it is more dreadful and painful than at any other time.

Recently, some churches have started to reflect on the theme, 'Blue Christmas'. They want to reclaim the space for mourning and spiritual dormancy during Winter and Christmas.

While many commercial company advertisements try to persuade us to engage in exciting events with a whirlwind of bright festivities, the Nativity stands in the hush of a challenging reality, reminding us that Christ was born into the heart of a hurting world.

In the shadow of the first Christmas, Matthew 2 tells us that there was an immediate threat and grief for the people in Jerusalem. They "were troubled" as was Herod (2:3); the ancient Greek word **phobeō** describing an emotion of 'hearts being stirred up from the inside'.

Yes, it was a silent night, but the

ongoing fear and threat forced Jesus' family to then flee into Egypt for refuge.

*Silent night, holy night...
Christ the Saviour is born,
into the hurting world the
Son of God is born.
Radiant beams from
Thy holy face; With the
dawn of redeeming grace.
For this hurting world
He deliberately came.*

Our silent nights can be our holy nights. The starry nights remind us of Jesus, the True Light.

*The light shines in the
darkness, and the darkness
has not overcome it...the
true light that gives light to
everyone was coming into
the world... the Word became
flesh and made his dwelling
among us. (John 1:5,9,14).*

Jesus, the True Light, has made our silent night, our darkest night, his home with us since that Christmas night.

Our silent nights can be our holy nights. These are the moments to which we are gently invited. The True Light is right there through the long nights, silently abiding, willing to hold us tight. It is all right to take refuge, just as Jesus and His family did.

Indeed, 'withdrawing' is a repeated theme throughout Matthew's Gospel. "Join me in my refuge" He says, "here is space for the weight of



every complicated emotion you face." To this hurting world, He has deliberately come to hold you in His embrace.

Even a single candle shines most brilliantly in the darkest night. At His cross, Jesus, the True Light, shines steadily and most gloriously in the darkness of death. From now on, by His death, He has triumphed over death, turning graves into gardens, death into life. He is the one who heals, repairs and renews all things.

God did not meet us on a mountain top. He came to meet us at the bottom of the heap, in our brokenness and grief. After all, the message of Emmanuel, "God with us" stands as the final words of the Gospel (Matthew 28:20).

In the journey of our spiritual night, the True Light is always there, shining toward us. Like the Magi, let us look up to that light. Let the True Light guide us through this journey, until we reach our heavenly home.

Steven Leung



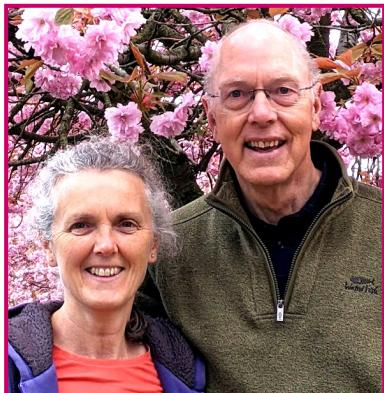
The photograph above was taken on the shore of Loch Leven one evening during Christmas 2025



The 'Lit'

Colinton Literary Society

The 113th season of Colinton Literary Society is well underway with a number of superb talks already presented. Our 2026 meetings re-commenced on Wednesday 14th January and the remaining events are listed on the right. **History, poetry, mystery and art** are just some of the topics that feature in the selection of presentations by our guest speakers. Meetings are held in Dreghorn Loan Hall, Colinton, EH13 0DE. **Coffee, tea and wine** are served from 7:30pm and the talk or event commences at 8pm. The evening ends at around 9pm. Do come along and find out more - and everyone will be made welcome.



The 'Lit' Secretary & Programme Coordinator, Sally & Colin Fischbacher, are pictured above, together with a pictorial reminder of the wonderful members' **Buffet Supper** which took place in December. Music and songs were provided by **The Glencairn Ensemble**, pictured below.



04 February: The Queen's Funeral:

Tim Purves tells the story of the most important British funeral this century

11 February: The Burrell Collection -

Renaissance of a Museum: Duncan Dornan describes the riches to be found in Glasgow's Burrell Collection

18 February: French Royalty and Scotland:

Odile Hughson talks about the famous connection between Scotland and France

25 February: The Vanishing Earth:

Jamie Crawford discusses the content of his latest book

04 March: AGM / Harvie's Dyke - The People, their Liberty and the Banks of the Clyde:

After a brief AGM, Christopher Whatley tells the remarkable story of one of the country's earliest right-of-way campaigns



ST CUTHBERT AND THE ISLAND OF INNER FARNE

The image on the right shows Saint Cuthbert on Inner Farne, which is a remote island off the Northumberland coast. He lived there as a hermit for eight years and was surrounded by seabirds the whole time.

At times, the birds on Inner Farne were audacious and Cuthbert had to show them his edge. But they also gave Cuthbert much. In fact he didn't just benefit from their presence in his life, he actually depended on it. I think we can learn a lot from how Cuthbert related to the birds, so here's a bit about Cuthbert's time with the birds on Inner Farne.

Sometimes the birds took too much from Cuthbert. For example, some ravens were taking the straw off the roof. He asked them to stop, but they didn't...so Cuthbert banned them from the island.

Other birds were eating some of the barley Cuthbert was growing. He said to them "if you think God wants you to eat all this barley, keep going" - and then they stopped. But birds also *gave* to Cuthbert. After he had sent the ravens off, they came back to apologise and gave him some lard. An eagle gave him a fish, and the seabirds gave him company throughout his time on Inner Farne.

Cuthbert also gave to the birds. For example, fishermen were overhunting Eider Ducks. So, when Cuthbert became a bishop, he used his authority to make laws to protect the ducks. He was a bishop for less than two years, so he clearly made the ducks a priority.

Cuthbert also gave back half of the fish the eagle gave to him. And when the ravens said "Sorry"



in their own way (by giving him pig fat), he forgave them and accepted them back onto Inner Farne. He made use of their peace offering too, by waterproofing his shoes with it.

Cuthbert's experiences show that birds and humans can both be greedy. They can take, and keep taking, in an unsustainable way. They see something and think "I'll have that, and I'll have it all!"

But is it all ours for the taking? No! In fact, *none* of it is ours, because the earth and everything in it belongs to God (Psalm 24:1). We are mere caretakers. Yes, God gave people authority over nature, but to look after it, not to take, take, take until there is nothing left.

Cuthbert acted peaceably with birds when they took and kept taking. He *talked* to them. He *asked* them to stop. When they didn't, he *told* them to go away. He *signposted* them to God. It worked.

Cuthbert lived an ascetic life as a hermit on Inner Farne. He slept in a stone cell. Birds were part of his very survival there and he appreciated their presence. They felt so at home with him, they nested next to the altar in his chapel!

I suppose the salient point is that Cuthbert did all of this through relationships, not just with the birds, but also with God. Cuthbert's relationship with the birds wasn't just about giving, receiving and sharing. It was about respect, appreciation and care too.

How can we give birds a home in our church buildings? How about fitting some swift boxes, like **Ss Ninian & Triduana RC Church** in Restalrig has done?

As a bishop, Cuthbert had the power to protect the Eider Ducks of Inner Farne. It's easy to shirk responsibility for protecting nature when you are not in a leadership role. But as Christians we all have the power to ask each other "do you think God would want you to keep doing this?"

For further information about Ss Ninian and Triduana Church, the link is: <https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/news/ss-ninian-and-triduana-bronze-award/>

Image and article provided by a member of the congregation

ORDAINED LOCAL MINISTRY - WHAT IS ROUND THE CORNER ?

Dear Friends,

I wrote my last update on my progression towards Ordained Local Ministry just before the start of Advent. Every Sunday through Advent had a special focus, with the first Sunday in Advent including the launch of the church's Advent appeal to support the work of Space@Broomhouse. Just check their website to learn more about this at <https://spacescot.org>.

After the service, there was an Advent lunch, with many of the congregation staying on to enjoy a bowl of hot soup, some goodies and a chat.

Sadly, I missed the Community Carol Service when the young people helped to lead the singing and the wider community was present. At this service, gifts were collected for the children of those who are serving prison sentences at HMP Edinburgh. The Nativity Service on the following Sunday was great fun, with more than 30 young children involved. Does it matter if there is more than one Mary? Of course not - the kids enjoying themselves in church is far more important.

On the last Friday of term, the two local primary schools held their Christmas services in the church. Carrick Knowe was first with the church almost full, followed by Broomhouse...not so many children, but the same joy at singing and the wee ones sharing a song from the school nativity.

On Christmas Eve, there was a Christingle Service at 6:30pm with some rather different elements. The minister led us in a Christmas rap song, then later, the *Wheels on the bus* tune was used! Mini glowsticks in oranges served as candles to represent the Light of Christ. The Watchnight Service at 11:30pm was more conventional. Carols, readings, prayers and the welcoming of Christmas morning and the new-born King.

I led the service on Sunday 28th December, focusing on the hope and faith that Joseph had as he listened to God telling him

to move for the safety of his young wife and child. I drew parallels with the hope that the churches in Palestine have expressed in their recent Kairos document.

One of the aspects I was to focus on during my probation was pastoral care, and I was privileged to meet with several of the more elderly members of the congregation in their homes, as some of them find it difficult to get to church these days.

I felt all was going well, so I was surprised to receive a telephone call just the day before I prepared this update, to advise me that I was being "released from my placement". Thankfully, this was not through any misdemeanour on my part, but because my supervisor felt that she could not give the time needed to support me in my probation period due to other pressures.

I am not yet clear as to the next steps, but have been assured another placement will be found and that I shall continue on my learning journey with my fellow probationers. This means that I will be able to join in worship at Edinburgh Pentland Parish Church for a period, which I look forward to, but I shall also explore other churches and the options for my next steps.

I would be grateful for your prayerful support as I reflect on the situation and identify the best place to be that will allow me to grow into the ministry which I believe God has called me to.

*Many blessings to you all
Janet Shepherd*



HELLO AGAIN FROM THE SWING CAFÉ

We had a lovely festive period which started off with a party and quiz night for all the hard-working volunteers. A great time was had by everyone and it was really nice for us to be together.

For those of you who perhaps are not familiar with us, we are a volunteer -run café. We are located in Edinburgh Pentlands Parish Church, at the foot of Dell Road in Colinton, and are open each week from 10am - 2pm, Tuesday to Saturday. While you are here, you can find out about our Robert Louis Stevenson connection, enjoy a view of the Dell or even have a go at one of our jigsaw puzzles, which are laid out on a table. We also hold monthly Seniors' Tea Afternoons, which continue to be as popular as ever, and it's great to see some familiar faces catching up and enjoying delicious bakes made by our team.

Do drop in and visit us if you are in the village or walking along the river-bank, and enjoy our freshly-made soup and scones, a tea or coffee, or a tasty baked tattie! We have both a full breakfast and lunch menu, including vegetarian, vegan and gluten free options.

We are always on the lookout for more help, so if you fancy getting involved, please drop in and let us know, or send me a message via the email below.

Hope to see you all soon!

*Lynn Leslie,
The Swing Café Catering Manager
catering@edinburghpentlands.church*



*Guess the weight of the tattie!
Yes - that's a potato
in Murdo's hand*



Colinton Garden Club enjoyed a great Christmas Party and is now gearing up for Spring

The programme includes the popular **Members' Evening** which will take place on Monday 23rd February, from 8pm to 9:30pm, with three guest speakers who are:

- ◆ Fiona Stevenson, a local artist, and the title of her talk is **Drawn to Gardens**
- ◆ Kath Hay will take us on a journey of discovery with her intriguing talk about **Royal Secrets**
- ◆ Bob Jones will present information and no doubt wonderful images of **Orchids**

The next meeting will then be on 23rd March when John Marshall will be giving his **Tattie Talk**. A trip to **Greenbank Garden** is planned for later in the Spring, and we will travel there using a car-share scheme. Greenbank is a National Trust Garden on the southside of Glasgow and was started in 1760. It showcases a very large collection of plants, including 545 varieties of daffodil, which is sure to be quite spectacular.

Mary Davey





EDINBURGH PENTLANDS PARISH CHURCH GUILD OF FRIENDSHIP

The Guild meets on alternate Thursday afternoons at 2pm in Hall 2 at Juniper Green Church. We invite anyone - ladies or gentlemen - to join us and enjoy an afternoon of fellowship, entertainment and friendship. It's a chance to catch up with friends and meet new people and, of course, enjoy a cup of tea!

We held a lovely meeting before Christmas and sang favourite carols and listened to readings and poems. Then in January, there was a Tartan Tea Party with music. Our programme through to April 2026 is listed on the right and, hopefully, some or all events will appeal to you. Looking forward to seeing you soon. You will be made very welcome.

Margaret Woodrow

05th Feb: Photography with music

19th Feb: A talk about the Museum of Childhood

05th Mar: Policing in Edinburgh in the 1940s

19th Mar: Live Music Now Scotland

02nd April: Easter Crafts

30th April: A.G.M.

the *colinton & merchiston* community choir

We are delighted to say that the Choir continues to thrive and grow.

Our Christmas Concert was very successful and enjoyable with a record number of people in the audience - approximately 225. On the right is a photograph of the Choir, which was taken at the Christmas Concert.

We received very good feedback after the concert and appreciate the excellent support we have received, and continue to receive, from your church community.

This term, the Choir is really looking forward to singing the *Mozart Requiem*, which we will perform at our Spring Concert on Monday 23rd March at 7:30pm in the Memorial Hall at Merchiston Castle School (pictured on the right). Please note the time is yet to be confirmed. We are very grateful to the School for allowing us the use of the Memorial Hall.

Please **Save the Date**. Further details about our Spring Concert will be given in local publicity and on our website www.colintonchoir.org and Facebook page.



*Margaret Kieran
on behalf of the Choir*

I have just returned from a visit to family and friends in Shetland and was thrilled to experience the exhilarating Up Helly Aa festival. My Shetland family ties go back to the 1700s, but this was the first time I have attended the special event.

Up Helly Aa means 'Up Holy Day All' or 'End of the Holidays' combining Old Norse 'helly' for holy/festival, 'up' for finished and Scots 'aa' for all, and refers to the big Viking fire festival in Shetland which marks the end of Yule.

And it is no wonder that Vikings are linked to these northern isles. Some readers may not know that Shetland belonged to the Danish/Norwegian/Swedish King Christian I until 1469. That year, he handed the Shetland Isles to King James III of Scotland when he married King Christian's daughter, Margaret. By some accounts, King Christian was short of money, so the islands were part of the wedding dowry. Then, in 1472, the Orkney Isles were also gifted. But the Vikings who lived in Shetland at the time were not marauding or warring raiders, as in other parts of the UK. They were fishermen and farmers who had lived and thrived there for years and years.

With the celebration of Christmas banned in Scotland for the best part of 400 years, people held onto the ancient, Nordic traditions and New Year became an important time for celebration.



CELEBRATING UP HELLY AA



I can remember that, as a young girl, if Christmas Day fell on a weekday, my father would go to work and I would be out doing my paper rounds. But that all changed in 1958 when Christmas was once again celebrated in Scotland.

In Nordic lands in winter, the sun is rarely seen for some 40 nights and many Yule celebrations take place 20 days or so after the winter solstice, when the sun begins to appear again. In Lerwick, the capital of Shetland, Up Helly Aa takes place on the last Tuesday of January each year, but celebrations happen all over the islands as well.

In around 1870 -1880 a couple of new ideas were introduced into the proceedings. Blazing tar barrels were rolled down the streets (this doesn't happen now as they are too dangerous), the elaborately dressed guizers and the long-ship or 'Galley' started up, the torchlight procession got underway and then the Guizer Jarl, or chief guizer, arrived on the scene. My father is one of the Viking-helmeted guizers in the image on the left. This photograph was taken in the 1920s.

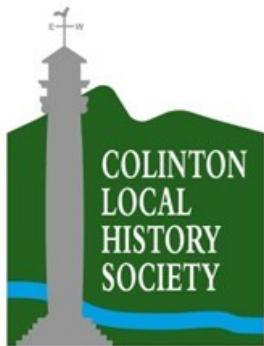
As the years have passed, interest in Up Helly Aa has grown and the number of people participating in the festival has become much greater. Back in the 19th century, individuals kept 'open house' in order to welcome in the guizers for drinks or to make music, but now teams of locals co-operate to open most of the halls throughout the town. And, for the first time, in 2023 Up Helly Aa guizers were able to manage who became members of their squads and ladies were invited to join in.

Another key element of the festival that I was not expecting was that the entire celebration of marching, torchlit processions, galley burning and music, starts at 10am and goes on, non-stop, for 24 hours!!

My cousins bought me a ticket for the Town Hall event in Lerwick, as it was one of the halls open for the squads of guizers to visit. After the Galley had been burnt in the public park, each squad came into the Town Hall one after the other, and sang or played instruments, then moved on to a different hall. Members of the audience could bring in something to drink and Town Hall staff provided snacks of food for the duration.

And no, I did not stay up for 24 hours! But what a wonderful experience.

Felice Editrice
Kath Hay



Since the last edition of *The Parish Publication*, during December, we have enjoyed several excellent talks.

The first one was *The Mystery of the Stone of Destiny* which explored whether today's Stone is, or is not, the original.... and the jury is still out

on that one! Then we enjoyed Fraser Hunter from the Royal Museum, not only telling us about his subject, *Roman Arm Armour*, but in doing so, gave us a good history of the Romans in Scotland. Then, just before our Society's Christmas Social, we heard about *Edinburgh's Medieval Churches*, many of which were unknown to several of our members.

Moving into January, we have been holding **Open Days** at our archives in the Colinton Library on every Saturday from 10am to 2pm, giving any member of our community the

opportunity to either just glance through them or research any subject relating to the area. They started off well and I propose to extend them into the first two Saturdays in February. So remember it is Saturday 7th and 14th of February. Then, looking forward, we have a few more very diverse talks:

- 16th February: 80 years of The Edinburgh Festival / Mike Lewis
- 2nd March: The Story of Edinburgh Printmakers / Ilaria Caslio
- 16th March: The Tumbling Lassie / Alan McLean KC

Remember... we meet at Drehorn Loan Hall, Colinton, EH13 0DE, on Mondays at 8pm. Should you wish further information about our Society, please have a look at our website www.colintonhistory.org.uk

And oh! ...keep a look out...we may be publishing our 5th book later this year !!

Derek Douglas
Archivist

Hello again, and I'm now back home in Juniper Green. Since I last wrote, I returned to Edinburgh to attend my Dad's funeral, which took place before I had finished my work in Hannover.

An unexpected blessing was an extra night in Hannover, which meant that I could go to a really lovely Lessons and Carols Service in Petrikirche and say goodbye to my Hannover friends, before catching my flight back home. My friends in both Hannover and Scotland were a real blessing in those weeks leading up to Christmas.

Once I was home in Scotland, on Christmas Eve I enjoyed a lovely walk all the way from Dunfermline to Auchterderran, along the route of the Fife Pilgrim Way, with my friend Simon who is the Pilgrim Pastor.



The Fife Pilgrim Way is a historic 103 km (64 mile) walking route across Fife, from the Firth of Forth (Culross/North Queensferry) to

St Andrews, and links medieval sites. It was great getting out to walk more of the route, as I have now been

TIMES OF CHANGE

appointed Secretary of the Fife Pilgrim Pastorate Steering Group.

This year, New Year has felt even more of a time of change than it normally does for me. It has been a time of restoration and rest, recovering from the incredible busyness of my work in Germany and moving back home and grieving the loss of my Dad.

But it has also been a time of excitement, starting with researching the history of the **Baird Trust** which is a trust that was set up in 1873 to fund church building and Christian education projects.

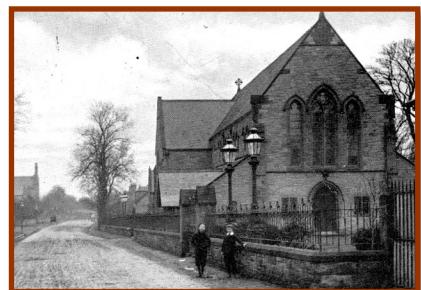
In the very short time since I started working through their minutes, I came across an Edinburgh Pentlands connection. Back in 1895, the Baird Trust gave Juniper Green funding for a church building and, if I am correct, I believe it was the St Margaret Church building, pictured on the right.

I think my feeling of being in a time of change is amplified by the



fact that we are very much in a time of change as a congregation. Having voted in favour of Callum Macfarlane-Grieve's Call to be our new minister... waiting for his ordination and induction at the end of February... waiting for his arrival and all the ideas and changes he will bring us.

Gemma King





Following more than 60 years of dedicated service as Organist and Choir Director at Juniper Green Church, Florence Kinnear passed peacefully away, aged 94, on Tuesday 16th December 2025.

Florence was born in 1931 and attended primary school in Burntisland and then high school in Kirkcaldy. In due course she studied at Edinburgh University and, after gaining her degree, she taught maths in Fife and Edinburgh.

Florence also studied part-time for a music diploma and then gave piano and organ lessons, both in schools and also to private pupils. As a talented musician, she became organist in churches in Burntisland and Glenrothes and then in Edinburgh, at Juniper Green Church.

She was a woman of amazing talent, energy and determination.

PARISH REGISTER

FUNERALS HAVE TAKEN PLACE FOR THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE

Ilean Alexander

George Anderson,
former Beadle at
Juniper Green Church

Kathleen Barron

James Hall

Stewart Halliday

Florence Kinnear

Jessie McMahon

Glenn Pearce

Judith Rogers

THE GREEN STROLLERS

It has been a fairly quiet time for The Strollers during the holiday season. However, as the lighter nights approach, we shall be putting together a calendar of walks for 2026.

We are always looking for new suggestions for walks so, if any Stroller, or potential Stroller, has any ideas or suggestions, please call me on 07732 988 976.

We are also looking for new volunteer leaders. If you are prepared to lead - even just one walk - again, please just call me.

Once finalised, all walks will be listed on the Edinburgh Pentlands Parish Church website and in the weekly intimations list. New members are always welcome. Do come and join us. Happy Strolling!

Jeanette Campbell



THE OPEN DOOR CAFÉ AND TODDLER GROUP

All activities take place from 10am to 11:30am on Tuesday mornings during school term time.

The group meets in Hall 1 at Juniper Green Church, 496a Lanark Road.

The group aims to provide a safe, friendly environment for babies and pre-schoolers and also for the big people who look after them!

This is a free service which is run by volunteers who organise toys and play areas for the children. Tea, coffee, water, juice and biscuits are also provided free of charge. We greatly appreciate any donations which are given, as this enables us to keep the group open.

Please note that the entrance used is on Woodhall Avenue, which is at the rear of the church building.

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