

**Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church
linked with
Muiravonside Parish Church
Autumn 2013**



**From the Manse
August 2013**



Dear friends,

We have many things to look forward to as a new session starts in both our churches.

In September Mrs Amanda MacQuarrie, a graduate candidate training for full time ministry will commence her final probationary placement with us. Amanda will be with us for fifteen months. This is a great privilege for both our congregations and I know that you will warmly welcome her and her family and help her feel quickly at home. There is a letter further on in the magazine specially compiled by the ministries council for congregations who are about to welcome a full-time probation minister.

At the end of August our new banner group will start to meet with the goal of having a banner in each church for Advent. The idea for this group came from folks in our congregations and I am thrilled to be able to encourage this venture which will add beauty to our sanctuaries and provide a visual focus for worship.

In Blackbraes and Shieldhill, we hope to have several film nights in the church over the autumn/winter. Again this idea came from several members and I am delighted to encourage this. It is wonderful that the screen can now be used not only for worship but also for fun and fellowship events within our community.

We also will be welcoming new members to both churches in the Autumn which is very encouraging and will be a great joy to us all. Before the summer I heard someone say that I was the kind of minister who 'allowed people to get on and do things.' I realised fairly quickly when I came to our linked charge that it would be physically impossible to be at every single event and to be fully involved in all the committees that met. This was difficult for me at first, but then when I saw members managing perfectly fine without me, I realised that I need not worry. I am there to assist if problems arise, I am there to encourage, give ideas, provide inspiration, but one of the most satisfying aspects of my ministry is when I see people getting on and

doing ministry themselves. This is the ministry of the whole people of God, each person exercising their God-given gift for the benefit of the church as they feel moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit.

And so I encourage you to continue to grow and develop your own ministry and thus experience the deep peace and blessing that I so often feel as I lead Sunday worship and Communion, conduct a funeral, or marry a couple. God called me to ministry of Word and Sacrament, to be your spiritual leader, but there are so many other ministries within our church which are just as vital and important. The ministry of caring, visiting, delivering flowers, maintaining our buildings and grounds, leading groups/committees, administration, handicraft, prayer, Sunday School teaching, singing....to name but a few.

Being minister of Word and Sacrament to our two congregations is a great joy and privilege for me. I am proud of the way you look after your buildings, manage the administration and care for both members and non-members within our communities. I take great delight in your own individual ministries, inspired by the Holy Spirit, which are such a blessing to our congregations and the wider community.

And so let us journey into this next session with greater confidence, knowing that we do not exercise our ministries alone, but we work together, always helping, encouraging and strengthening each other. Each one of us an important and precious part of the body of Christ himself, called to show his love, in our world.

**Your minister and friend,
Louise**

‘Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.’ 1 Corinthians Ch12, v27



Website

Our magazines are now available on our website www.bsandm-church.org.uk. If anyone would prefer to access them this way, instead of paper format, please let your Church Elder know.

You can also find photos, news, and the **Minister's Blog** on our website.

Weddings

**'Meanwhile these three remain -
faith, hope and love.
But the greatest of these is love.'**

Muiravonside Parish

Kirsty Mathieson to Mark Snedden
on 8 August 2013
at the Park Hotel, Falkirk



**Sunday School
Picnic**

Funerals

***'The Lord will protect you
as you come and go,
both now and forevermore.'***

Muiravonside Parish

Mr Jimmy Shanks
Mrs Isabel Scobbie
Mrs Jean Anderson
Mrs Una Wright
Mrs Alexa McPherson
Mrs Agnes Irvine
Mrs Cathie Binnie

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Mrs Betty Carson
Baby Sophie Wilma Yvonne Paterson
Mrs Linda Newlove
Mrs Josie Watmore
Mrs Peggy Headon
Mr Jimmy McLay
Mrs Janet Dick

Tea, coffee and a
chat are always
available in the hall
after services.
Please stay if you
can.



Finances

'Let him give generously.' Romans Ch12, v8

God calls us to give generously of our time, talents, commitment and money to the work of his church. Our buildings are enjoyed and treasured within our communities and provide an important space for worship, weddings, funerals and other services and activities.

But our buildings require constant maintenance and upkeep. Please consider reviewing what you give to the church and if you can afford an increase then that would make such a difference.

We have almost four hundred members in both our churches. If every member gave an increase of just £1 per week, less than the cost of a daily newspaper, then we would have an increased income of £10,000 for each church. This would allow us to do essential maintenance work and also allow us to do more mission and outreach.

Please prayerfully consider this.



Releasing Children from Poverty

Compassion - ref no 212977-2

Thank you for your continuing support for our sponsored child, Romain.

We have been able to give the family a little extra as we had some extra money. The family have bought a sheep, a goat, hens, corn and lots of other articles of food and clothing - things we take for granted.

Please continue to support Romain and his family. We are doing God's work in our time on Earth.

***Love and God's blessing to you all,
Carolyn***



Drew's
view

When I'm Sixty Five

Did you know it is possible to go to the hairdresser's and then emerge from the premises fifteen minutes later looking approximately fifteen years older?

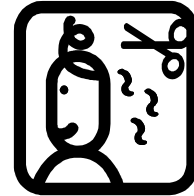
I first discovered this rather dramatic and somewhat alarming development about six months ago! I tend to only visit the barber's (or unisex hairdressers as they prefer to be known in these more politically correct times,) twice a year. This is because when I do go, I get a really stark "short back and sides," which even the fiercest Sergeant Major would be proud of! As a result, my hair grows in very slowly and for quite a time, you really can feel the draught at the back, even when it's not a windy day, (probably due to the shock to the system!)

However, steadily, the repair process begins and it all grows back in - usually by Christmas time. After that, for some strange reason, things seem to accelerate rapidly and gradually I begin to realise that there is a shadow forming just on the edge of my vision. This process seems to happen faster each year and I know then that the time has come to finally go back to the hairdresser's.

I don't have a favourite hairdresser that I regularly frequent. I tend to just choose one at random, as the haircut I require needs no finesse. So about six months ago I found myself in a new establishment. At first, I thought it was just for women, because there were lots of photographs on the wall depicting glamorous women with fly-away hair, just like the ones in the shampoo ads who seem to be unable to stop shaking their heads to emphasise just how fly-away their hair is. However, as soon as I peered through the door, the lady assistant beckoned me in and with a welcoming smile, assured me that they catered for men as well.

So as I gazed at the pictures of the glamorous women with the fly-away hair, I soon felt the familiar draft again on the back of my head as the lady deftly worked her scissors and immediately I began to feel more like my old self again! Ten minutes later, everything was

complete and I was at the pay desk, still chatting about how impressed I was with the haircut and that I would certainly be back again in six months.



As I got my money ready, the lady asked me in a perfectly earnest and sincere way, "Are you over sixty five, sir? We have a really good discount for senior citizens today." (It was a Monday.)

Sometimes when an unexpected thing like this happens it is possible to be too flabbergasted to be angry. Instead, I was quite fascinated.

"Err....no," I answered trying not to laugh.

The lady had been totally serious when she asked her question. There wasn't a trace of mischief in her face like a person has when they are playing a joke on someone. She obviously meant well and was trying to help me out by giving me a big discount. She genuinely seemed to think I was over sixty five.

I laughed and told her I still had a few years to go yet, but thanked her for her concern and added that I appreciated that she was taking the trouble to let me know I would have got a discount if I qualified. After that I hurriedly left!

There was a department store next door with a large full size window and instead of staring at the nice furniture on display; I was peering with all my might to see my reflection which showed up as a ghostly image in the glass.

Did I really look over sixty five?

The ghost didn't comment. It also didn't exactly give me confidence. The image was just too faint and disappeared when the sun went briefly behind a cloud. When I got home, every time I passed a mirror, I paused for a moment rather like *Dorian Gray* did with his portrait, peering intently each time to see if I had visibly aged or changed in any way. But unlike him I had the advantage of being able to contemplate if an investment in *Grecian 2000* would be a good idea – just for good measure. However, after a few days, I gradually forgot about my rapid aging transformation at the hairdressers. I got caught up in all the usual events of daily life and never gave it any more

thought until last week when the six months had finally gone by and I was due to go back!

Should I go to a different hairdresser?
No way. This was just too irresistible!

Would they do the same thing again? Was the same lady still there? I hoped I would be allocated someone else; just to see what would happen. I was very curious to see if I would be asked the same question when the moment came to pay for the haircut.

This time I went on a Tuesday (hopefully no senior citizen discounts on this day!) I opened the door a few inches and peered in rather cautiously, casing the joint, just like they do in the old movies. The ladies in the pictures with the fly-away hair were still there, caught on camera in various states of vigorous head shaking. I was spotted immediately and welcomed in, but this time by a different lady from the one I had encountered six months ago.

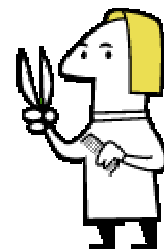
“Phew....!” I thought. “Thank goodness. It’ll all be routine and hopefully, I’ll leave the building about ten minutes later, still the same age rather than approximately fifteen years older as a pensioner.”
And.... of course.... I was wrong!

The lady chatted away as she deftly worked her magic with the small neat scissors and time seemed to go in very fast. The moment of truth soon arrived, much quicker than I honestly would have wanted and as I got my money ready to pay for the haircut, not a word had been said about discounts.

So far...so good!

Then, the lady started to press the buttons on the cash register and without even looking up, cheerfully said,
“That’ll be £4.50, sir.”

“Oh no!” I thought with fascination and amazement as well as some inner laughter that was at the same time tinged with dismay. “That’s the pensioner rate. I’m supposed to be paying £9”



The four definitive beeps from the buttons on the cash register echoed round the shop as if they were in wholehearted agreement with the lower figure and that this transaction was final. No arguments. What made it even worse was that the lady hadn't even bothered to ask if I was over sixty five. She had just automatically taken it as read and was so sure, she even had keyed in the £4.50 as a matter of routine!

"Err...I'm under sixty five." I advised with what I hoped was my most diplomatic and earnest smile. I didn't want to embarrass the woman. She was only trying to help me out. "I think I really should be paying £9."

To further emphasis this, I quickly handed her a five pound note, together with four one pound coins. I couldn't help but feeling that the extra £4.50 seemed to be worth much more than its face value, (probably fifteen years of life!) and as a result, I handed the extra money over with a certain urgency.

"Oh no sir, not at all," she said with genuine concern. "It's nice of you wanting to pay the full amount, but all senior citizens are entitled to a discount. I'll get into trouble if I charge you the full price."

Oh dear. I realised then that the lady either thought I was joking about being under sixty five, or maybe she thought I was unaware or perhaps too polite to ask for the discount. While I was trying to convince her that I was not as old as I seemed, the surreal events that were happening around me regarding the perception of age and getting older actually reminded me of something I was meaning to research further. I have been always fascinated with the early chapters of the Old Testament, where certain biblical figures lived an incredibly long time, at least up until the time of the flood.

Compared to our modern standards where people are living longer than before, we still pale in comparison. There is Adam in Genesis Chapter 5, verse 5, who lived to the ripe old age of 930. In Genesis Chapter 9, verse 29 we are told that Noah was 950 years old when he died. But of course, the oldest man in the Bible, Methuselah lived to the incredible age of 969. (Genesis chapter 5, verse 27.)

There are many interesting theories as to how such longevity was possible. Some people are of the opinion that back in those early

days, people were much closer to the absolute perfection that God had created in both health and physique. They were also untainted by modern problems such as pollution, the effects of substances such as pesticides, as well as drug or alcohol abuse.

It has also been theorized that there was much less cosmic and solar radiation entering the earth at the time before the Flood, due to the firmament, or dome referred to in Genesis Chapter 1, verse 6. It has been said that the oxygen levels before the flood would have been much better as well. I have always found this aspect of longevity fascinating and often read Genesis, trying to imagine what it must have been like for these early biblical figures.

Returning back to my experiences at the hairdresser's, you must be wondering, did I manage to finally convince the lady there that I was under 65?

I did in the end! I remembered that I had a small medical appointment card in my pocket which had my date of birth on it and finally I was able to convince her to accept the full £9 to which she was entitled. She was so apologetic and embarrassed, but I simply laughed and told her not to worry. In fact I added that I was very impressed with the respect and consideration they give to their older clients as I now had "firsthand" experience of it. I had learned that day just how special our older generation are and in this era where everybody is trying to look younger, I instead look forward to the day when I can come in and legally claim my senior citizen discount. In fact I embrace it.

I hoped this had put her at ease. I think it did.

As I walked back along the street, I thought of those early biblical figures such as Noah and Methuselah. They didn't have to visit hairdressers or qualify for discounts, but I'm sure they must have encountered an odd well meaning person, who exclaimed on meeting them, "You don't look a day over 500!"

I know how they feel!



Poetry Corner

Nice memories to treasure.
News and greetings exchanged.
Unanimously enjoyed.
A chance to reunite.
Linked by worshipping together.

Journeying together through faith.
Old friendships renewed.
Invitations to fellowship arise.
New chances to serve God with joy.
Taken by worshipping together.

Singing joyful hymns of praise.
Enriched by our choirs.
Reading God's Word as well.
Voices bringing Scripture to life.
Intercession prayers for the world.
Consolidating our faith.
Enriched by worshipping together.

By Drew Robertson

A little girl was caught telling lies. Her mother was shocked, so she told her daughter the consequences of lying, to teach her a lesson. "A tall man with red fiery eyes and two sharp horns grabs little boys and girls who tell lies, and carries them off at night," she said "He takes them to Mars where they have to work hard in a dark canyon for 50 years. Now, you won't tell any more lies, will you?" I certainly won't said the girl, "You tell them much better than I can.."

Submitted by Andrew McDermott

Muiravonside Parish Church
Treasurer Report 01/01/2013 – 31/07/2013

Now that I have retired from full time paid employment with the DWP I will hopefully now have more time to dedicate to other things in my life such as looking after grandchildren, and running after my ninety five year old mother who really does not need much looking after as is in fantastic health for her age and who has three other off spring at her beck and call.

The work of the Church should take priority but sadly it cannot always be the case. However with whatever spare time I have left I have promised Miss Rita Braes that we will get out there and do some visits.

This report is not about me it is more of an appeal to all members of Muiravonside Parish Church.

Muiravonside Parish Church main source of income is from Weekly Free Will Offerings (WFO), Gift Aid (GA) contributions and the Open Plate (OP). For the period 01/01/2013-31/07/2013 the income from the above three sources was:

WFO 3,866.00 , GA 11,209.00, OP 1,011.00 = 16086.00

The Churches main expenditure comes from Ministry and Mission (M&M) contributions to the Church of Scotland, Heating and Lighting (H&L) and Rates Taxes and Insurance (R.T.I.). For the period 01.01.2013-31/07/13 the expenditure for these alone was:

M&M 14,710.00, H & L 518.00, R.T.I 3,416.00 = 18,644.00

The deficit is £2558.00. We would not run our household budgets like this,. If this were a business it would soon go into bankruptcy.

Comments have been made to me that the Church ie Muiravonside has plenty of money. Yes we have a good amount in our bank account but I can assure you when I reconcile the accounts at the end of every month the money we hold reduces. We do have other sources of income which have not been mentioned but we also have other costs which have not been highlighted.

What I would ask is the next time you fill your envelope please try and put in a little more. And to those members who do not contribute financially to the Church, the next time your Elder calls with your newsletter please think about the figures above and have an envelope ready to hand over or better still come along to church on a Sunday and place it in the plate yourself. It would be lovely to see you and you would be made most welcome.

Best Wishes to All
Moir Sharp

Me Again

It's me again, Lord, I hope you don't mind.
It's just as well you're loving and kind.
Having to deal with people like me,
not only some times but constantly.

It's me again, Lord, don't turn me away.
Graciously listen and hear me I pray.
I'm back once again, the same as before,
poor and needy and seeking more.

It's me again, Lord, will You take the time
to read the words on this heart of mine.
Rub out what's displeasing and rewrite it until
it's in accordance with your mind and will.

It's me again, Lord, where better to seek,
pardon for sin and strength when weak,
Than the throne of grace, where I can come,
in times of need to the forgiving one.

It's me again, Lord, I'm thankful You're there.
Grateful too for your bounty and care
It's not just when in prayer I'm dependent on You
but moment by moment, all the day through.

Robert Thompson

Poetry Corner



Letter to congregations with a probationer minister



The Candidate Task Group of the Ministries Council is delighted that you are going to provide a training placement for a candidate on probationary placement. Most congregations find this a stimulating, enriching and enjoyable experience, but it also means change. The Committee thought it might be helpful to outline its hopes for the placement, and the thinking that underlies it.

The background

The placement is made by the Task Group in careful consultation with the probationer. The aim is to ensure that the probationer receives the best possible training, and is given ample opportunity to receive constructive criticism, and to reflect on the relationship between their theological education and parish life. All salary costs and travelling expenses are met centrally. The placement is normally for 15 months.

Changes for your minister

It might seem that your minister will be having an easier time with a probationer to share the load. The task of training, however, is a major one, and will occupy a great deal of your minister's time, energy and imagination. This work is largely unseen, but it is vital for the probationer to receive a well planned range of experiences, good critical feedback on the work that has been done, and time to discuss, reflect and ask questions.

Changes for the congregation

There will be a new face, a new voice, perhaps a new approach to some areas of parish life. On occasions where in the past you would have seen only your minister, now you may see minister and probationer together, or perhaps the probationer on his/her own. Please understand that if the probationer visits you at home or in hospital, or is asked to conduct a funeral, this does not mean that your minister is not interested in you. These are important areas of work for the probationer to experience before going to his/her own parish.

The Task Group hopes that you will warmly welcome the probationer, and offer to him/her (and where appropriate spouse and family), support and encouragement. Each probationer brings a unique blend of skills and gifts, and these need to be used to the full; at the same time, however, it is important to remember that there is no guarantee that a replacement probationer will be allocated, so it is unwise for the probationer to develop too many new initiatives which cannot be sustained when he/she has gone.

Changes for the probationer

For most probationers this is an exciting time; it is full-time ministry, an opportunity to get to know a congregation well, the challenge of fulfilling their calling. Parish life is very difficult from university life, and time is needed to adjust. Every probationer makes mistakes; so please be patient and understanding!

Conference programme

The Task Group arranges a series of four residential compulsory conferences for all probationers to enable them to work together on issues relating to ministry.

If things go wrong

Thankfully this is a rare occurrence; if there are problems, the Task Group will seek to deal with them in a caring and pastoral way.

Finally

The church's probationers represent the next generation of ministers, and this final stage of their pre-ordination training is an exciting and vital task. The Task Group hopes that you will enjoy sharing in it. At the end of the placement, your probationer will go to his/her first charge. That congregation as well as the Task Group and indeed the whole church looks to you to prepare them as fully as possible.

We wish you God's blessing as you undertake this task.

*Yours sincerely Convener
Training Task Group
Ministries Council*

* * * * *

Ingredients:

- 4 tbsp. flour
- 4 tbsp. sugar
- 2 tbsp. cocoa
- 1 egg
- 3 tbsp. milk
- 3 tbsp. oil
- A small splash of vanilla extract
- 1 large coffee mug
- 3 tablespoons chocolate chips (optional)



M e t h o d :

Add dry ingredients to mug, and mix well. Add the egg and mix thoroughly. Pour in the milk and oil and mix well. Add the chocolate chips (if using) and vanilla extract, and mix again.

Put your mug in the microwave and cook for 3 minutes at 1000 watts (high). The cake will rise over the top of the mug, but don't be alarmed! Allow to cool a little, and tip out onto a plate if desired.



Guild



In June, I attended, as Falkirk Presbyterial Council Representative, an overnight conference in Edinburgh. I did not recognise many on the list of those attending and I was unsure of the location of the venue so I arrived at the conference centre early. A few Guild members had the same idea and we met at the coffee shop. Within half an hour of meeting and as strangers introducing ourselves, we were chatting, laughing, relating experiences and exchanging ideas. Next day at the end of the conference, we had made many new friends and we are all looking forward to the next get together in September. The reason why as strangers Guild members quickly adopt a friendship mode is the organisation has as its core fellowship.

The theme for 2013-2014 is "A Fellowship to Build". What an opportunity this offers! Fellowship means more than friendship. It is more than just being together. Our fellowship is founded on Christian beliefs and nurtured through the sharing of worship, prayer and action.

The support and encouragement given to Shieldhill Guild by our minister and the Kirk Session is much appreciated. Throughout this session, we want to build on our own fellowship and reach out into our community. We want to share this fellowship with others.

To promote this theme and begin our Guild session, we will present a "Songs of Praise" at the morning service on 22 September. Afternoon tea from 2pm until 4pm will be on offer at Church Road California.

All are welcome. Please join us.

Lorna Coulter

Dates for your diary

Songs of Praise	Sunday 22 September 10am
Afternoon Tea	Sunday 22 September 2-4pm
First Guild Meeting	Wednesday 6 October



Christian Aid Week 2013



The door-to-door collection which took place in Shieldhill and California during Christian Aid Week in May raised £1657 – a reflection of the generosity shown by so many people in the villages. Thanks are due to everyone who donated and also to the volunteers who helped with the collection.

A further £95 was raised by a number of people who collected small change in the Christian Aid money boxes or in their own jars. Thanks to all concerned!

A snack lunch held at the beginning of Christian Aid Week raised a further £75. Thanks to all who supported this event.

The breakdown of this year's Christian Aid Week total for Shieldhill and California was, therefore, as follows:

	£
Door-to-door collection	1657.00
Money boxes/jars	95.00
Snack lunch	<u>75.00</u>
Total:	£ <u>1827.00</u>

Thanks are due to everyone who contributed towards this total and also to the volunteers who helped to collect, count and bank the money. We trust and pray that through our involvement in Christian Aid Week this year, we are helping to offer the hope of a future without hunger to many people.

Marion Zacks
Christian Aid Organiser

THE BIG NIGHT OUT!
Michael Buble and Robbie Williams
7 Nov 2014
The Three Kings

Introducing ... Alastair Waddell

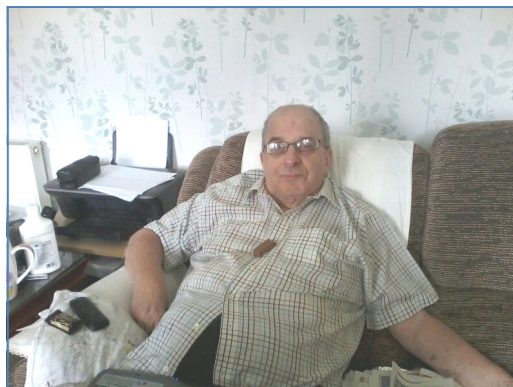
My earliest memories of Church is of attending services on a Sunday morning with my parents and brother at Muiravonside Church in the mid 1950's. It was shortly after the Church had undergone a major renovation in around 1953 of which I'm afraid I have no recollection of but would have loved to have seen.

The minister at this time was the Rev. James Downie who was minister in our parish from 1952 – 1966 and whose remains were interred just inside the Church gates as he always regarded Muiravonside as having a special place in his heart.

The Church at that time was always very busy and we children got our attendance card stamped as we went in the door and if my memory serves me well we had a prize giving once a year. I joined the 'Anchor Boys' again I hope my memory serves me well as far as the name is concerned at the age of five and was there till I was eight when I moved up to the 'Life Boys'. This was ran by a lady called Miss Jean Johnstone who did her best to prepare us for moving up to the 'Boys Brigade' where I spent six very happy years in what was the best and most successful company in the Falkirk Battalion - that was 1st Muiravonside Company under the leadership of Capt. Alex Mitchell.

We won lots of trophies including 'THE COLOURS' which were THE PRIZE and won in the marching completion. Taking part in these competitions and other activities helped to give us a pride and great satisfaction in our achievements which I hope helped us on our journey through life.

I reached the rank of sergeant before being discharged on my joining the Merchant Navy. On returning home I again became involved in Church life by helping to run the Junior Section which was previously known as the



Life Boys and also took charge of the Sunday School at Cairneymount.

In later years I fell away from the Church for no good reason but returned a few years ago and am thoroughly enjoying my life within the Church.

In the last few years I have been privileged to attend the Spring Harvest celebrations with various friends from both Shieldhill and Muiravonside Churches. This has given me a greater insight and lots of food for thought at the different perspectives and view points put forward at these festivals as well as fellowship with my fellow travellers.

A slight health scare a few years ago really brought home to me a sense of my own mortality and made me remember just how important my faith and Church is in my life.

The friends I have in both our Churches I consider a great Blessing and strength in my everyday life and would hope I give some measure of friendship in return.

Alastair Waddell (Muiravonside)

* * * * *

National Stewardship Programme

Here are the latest free will offerings for Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church:

	2012	2013
April	£1976	£2140
May	£1675	£1694
June	£1479	£2035

Christine Jones

Notes from a Shieldhill Garden



“Even birds and animals have much they could teach you; ask the creatures of earth and sea for their wisdom”.
Job Chapter 12; verse s 7 and 8

Recently the state of British wildlife was in the news. A committee that Sir Richard Atteborough had chaired had published their report. Some fifty bodies were represented, twenty five of which were representatives of wildlife charities. The report concluded that our native wildlife is in decline, some species being on the brink of extinction. More than 3000 species were monitored; birds, butterflies, moths, bees, beetles, flowering plants, and mosses; the sort of things that can be easily studied and it was found that nearly two thirds of them have declined, one third having declined strongly. Over the past few years I have felt that there was a decline in certain species; this decline being noticed in butterflies in particular. It was sobering to be presented with the official confirmation of this decline..

The reasons for this loss of wildlife are many and complicated but the opportunity exists for us to something to help, in our small corner, nature. Gardens take up 4% of all land use in Britain and there is the scope for gardeners to help nature by providing a home for wildlife. It doesn't matter how small your garden is, taking a few simple steps can make a difference.

Gardening with wildlife in mind can be rewarding and many of you possibly have a wild life friendly garden already. Grow plants, plants and more plants. The more that you grow, the more homes you will provide. Choose something to flower at different times of the year. Try to choose nectar rich flowers and single flowers are usually preferred to double blooms. Bumblebees like the spring flowers; butterflies and honeybees prefer single flatter blooms. Bumblebees like a lot of the same flower in the one patch so that they can easily flit from bloom to bloom. Purely by accident, I had an expanse of borage, much of it between the rows of potatoes. This borage blended in with the oregano that was flowering in the nearby herb bed. It buzzed with at least four types of bumblebee and fifteen or so small tortoiseshell butterflies for several weeks. Time will tell whether Borage is a good companion plant to grow alongside potatoes.

If you have room for a shrub, bumblebees love hebes. Hebes come from New Zealand; grow well in Shieldhill gardens and are loved, when they flower, by bumblebees.

Providing water can open up a whole range of possible wildlife. A birdbath or an upturned dustbin lid will provide water for creatures to drink. You may also be treated to the starlings or sparrows bath time. Sparrows also like dusty places as they enjoy dust baths. Small ponds provide a home for frogs and, if you are lucky, tadpoles in the springtime. Garden ponds can also provide breeding places for dragonflies and mayflies.

Pots on the patio provide cover for insects. If you can leave a pot or a hanging basket to die back, birds will enjoy the seed heads and the dry stems will provide a wintering place for insects. I usually leave one hanging basket at the end of the season and wrens in midwinter often visit it. I guess it must be rich in spiders as that is their favourite food. Like us, wildlife likes a choice. If possible provide places to hide, and plants at different levels. If it is possible, join in with a neighbour and you may be able to swap plants and this widens your scope to have different habitats.

Your wildlife garden does not need to be messy. A well tended garden and a productive vegetable patch is also good for wildlife. Tidiness is only a problem for wildlife when every insect is zapped and every leaf and stick picked up, and every seed head is speedily removed and is immediately put into the bin. There are some plants that I deadhead quickly because the seed spreading causes a problem but I try to leave some dry stems. Insects will overwinter inside hollow stems. The Plantlife people dislike buddleia, much loved by bumblebees and butterflies. This is a non-native species that grows quite happily in the wild and so I always deadhead this.

We live in a wonderful land; we have been put in custody of it.
Enjoy your garden. You may be surprised just what is living in it.

Rena Moore



My garden grows courgettes vey well and over the years I have collected and devised many recipes to use them up. Some recipes are better than others. We like this soup and as I thought today felt a little chilly I have included its recipe.

Courgette and Brie Soup.

Ingredients

450g (1lb) courgettes, sliced
2 medium potatoes, about 350g(12oz) peeled and chopped
1 onion, chopped
1.2litres (2 pints) chicken or vegetable stock
225g (8oz) Brie (Somerset Brie is nice) remove the end rind and cut into pieces
salt and pepper



Method

Put all the ingredients except for the brie in a pot and cook until the vegetables are tender.

Add the brie and stir until melted.

Let the soup cool a little and then whiz in a blender. Add salt and pepper to taste.

* * * * *

Eco-Congregations

Blackbraes and Shieldhill are now registered as being a congregation on the eco pathway. There is a nice welcome on the Eco-Congregation web site and there is a picture of our church on it.

We have to meet certain criteria to gain our first award and I hope to get this up and running in the new church year. The flier included with his magazine gives you an overview of the Eco-Congregation pathway.



Why God made dogs

When God had made the Earth and Sky, the flowers and the trees,
He then made all the animals, and all the birds and bees.
And when His work was finished, not one was quite the same,
He said, "I'll walk this Earth of mine, and give each one a name."
And so He travelled land and sea, and everywhere He went,
a little creature followed Him, until it's strength was spent.
When all were named upon the Earth,
and in the sky and sea, the little creature said,
"Dear Lord, there's not one left for me."
The Father smiled and softly said, "I've left you 'til the end,
I've turned my name from back to front, and called you DOG, my friend."

Author unknown.

Submitted by TJ Westie.



Minister's book recommendation



Love beyond reason by John Ortberg

I have used illustrations from this book recently in sermons and I would highly recommend this book to you for your personal devotion. You can order it from Falkirk Christian Bookshop or download it onto your Kindle from Amazon.

One reviewer 'Lewis Smedes' says:

'Every once in a great while, a new author dares to write of divine love, and shapes it into forms more vivid, more human, more beautiful, and more powerful than we have ever seen.

John Ortberg does this rare thing for us in **Love Beyond Reason**. Its rag doll stories alone could turn this book into a classic.'

PS - If any members have read a Christian book which they would like to recommend to others, then please feel free to write a short review and recommendation for this new column in the next magazine.

FRIDAY FILM NIGHT



7PM

BLACKBRAES AND SHIELDHILL PARISH CHURCH

COMING SOON:

Disney's Hercules mythology meets Danny DeVito for kids of all ages	6 September
Doris Day Double Bill to be decided on the night	11 October
Disney's Enchanted set in modern day Manhattan for kids of all ages	1 November
It's a Wonderful Life the Christmas Classic	6 December

**REFRESHMENTS
WILL BE SERVED**



**NO ADMISSION CHARGE
DONATIONS ARE WELCOME**