

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church

Autumn 2010



Jim Currie, our Session Clerk for 25 years

2nd September 1985 - 5th September 2010

Sunday the 5th September was the day that ended my term as session clerk a day that was to take the wind out of my sails. I had a suspicion something was afoot but the kindness and generosity shown by everyone took me completely by surprise. To be presented with monetary gifts and two framed cartoons was too much to take in at the time.

The cartoons are priceless, every time I look at them I see something different. They are indeed a treasure. I am humbled by the amount of the monetary gifts to know they were direct from the members makes me appreciate it all the more.

I wish to thank each and every one of you who have supported the church over the years. To elders past and present for their support and encouragement, when I was the new kid on the block any words of encouragement were more than welcome.

To Barbara for her unselfish support, to the ministers whom I have had the good fortune to work with my undying gratitude. The Rev John Patterson who had the most difficult task of being my mentor in the early years, Rev Andrew McMullin who was there to lead us through the lean years and the Rev Jim Drysdale who also had

the chaplaincy at Polmont Young Offenders all played a part in maintaining a church in this parish.

And then a wind of change Who would have thought -. a woman. The Rev Louise McClements a new ministry a new beginning.

It is much easier to take a back seat when you know that everything is in a safe pair of hands. Our finances at the moment are sound as is the fabric. The ministry under Louise is refreshing and realistic we know the road she is travelling and we want to be with her on that journey.

To Lorna and Rena I wish them well in their respective posts and although I am taking a back seat I will still be in the second row!!

ONCE AGAIN THANK YOU

Jim Currie

**From the Manse
September 2010**



Jesus said, 'And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church.' Matthew Ch16, v18a.

Dear friends,

Summer is now over, and the Autumn leaves are starting to fall, and we are starting a new and exciting session at Blackbraes and Shieldhill and Muiravonside. But as a minister, my joy has been blighted recently by the current financial crisis of the Church of Scotland, and the ministerial posts that will be lost as a result. A recent documentary on the television entitled, 'Church in Crisis' described the Church of Scotland's future as pretty bleak with the last church closing its doors in less than thirty years time. The Church is in the midst of a financial crisis at the moment and Falkirk Presbytery is to lose six ministerial posts by 2013.

Membership continues to decline nationally at an alarming rate and the programme asked the question, 'If the church disappeared tomorrow, would anyone notice?'

As the church has now reached this crisis point, the basic question that we must ask ourselves as members is- 'how much does the church mean to me?' Do we believe that the church can make a difference in our nation? Do we believe that the words of Jesus Christ still have something important to say to people? Do we believe that the Church of Scotland and other Christian denominations are God's hands, arms, legs, feet, voice in our world?

And if we conclude that the Church is still important to us, then we need to do something about it. We need to continue to give generously, to offer our help in whatever way, to worship regularly. If for whatever reason you are unable to worship with us then please join us in worship in the comfort of your home. A CD of the service can be delivered to your home if you phone Mr Bill McKinnon tel. 636639.

We also as a Church, need more than ever, to pray. So if you are unable to attend worship, then

please support the church by praying regularly for it. If you wish you can pray the prayer on the other side of this page. God can move through our prayers and enlighten us through his Spirit as to his will for the Church of the future. If we want a Church in the future, if we want our children's children to have the opportunity to attend Sunday School, if we want people to know the love of God which has touched our hearts and transformed our lives, if we want people to be able to come in and enjoy our building and share in fellowship then we need to do something about it now.

The Church of Scotland is the largest social care provider in Scotland. A proportion of our income is used to look after the vulnerable and weak in society. What a tragedy it would be if the Church was no longer able to afford to run its care homes, its Bluebell Project helping those with post-natal depression, its work with the homeless to name but a few.

This is not an easy letter for me, as I am a naturally optimistic person, and despite the current financial crisis of the church, I am full of hope for the future. Our faith is one of resurrection and there is no greater hope than that. But at the same time, I have a duty as your minister to keep you informed as to what is happening to the Church both locally and nationally. I know that God is with us in this crisis, but at the same time I know that God needs us to work with him, just as our Lord Jesus himself couldn't do it on his own, he needed his disciples. We as members of the church are Jesus' disciples. Jesus is asking each one of us to do what we can, and as I said earlier, prayer is the most important and most powerful thing that we can do at this time.

In conclusion, if the church disappeared tomorrow- would anyone notice?

Yes, because the 'Church in Crisis', programme naturally focused in on the negative rather than the positive.

CROSSREACH
providing a caring future

Many vulnerable people in villages, towns and cities throughout Scotland are cared for and

looked after by members and elders of the local church because of their faith in Jesus. The Spirit of God is experienced by thousands of people throughout our country who attend worship services and hear God's word in Scripture, and it is this Spirit which empowers, strengthens and transforms. People often unknowingly are blessed by the sincere prayers of members and elders who quietly pray regularly for them. And as we share the bread and wine together, we catch a glimpse of the way the world should be. In those intimate moments heaven touches earth and we catch a glimpse of God's kingdom of love, justice and peace.

I cannot even comprehend a society where there was no church. Can you?

Please join with me in saying the following prayer:

Loving God,
We pray for your Church of Scotland,
Especially as it is going through financial crisis at the moment,
And dwindling membership.....

Grant wisdom and insight to all church members,
And give them a sense of hope and joy,
Amidst all the fear and uncertainty.....

We pray for our local church here at Blackbraes and Shieldhill,
And pray that you would strengthen and empower the congregation,
And may it be a living presence of your love within this parish....

Grant us vision for the Church of the future,
And give us the power,
Through your Holy Spirit,
To make it a reality....

We ask all this in Jesus name,
AMEN

**God bless,
Your minister and friend
Louise**

Deaths

"The Lord will protect you as you come and go, both now and forevermore." Psalm 121

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Mr David Scobbie

Mr John Smith

Mr William McClung

Mr William Hughes

Mr John Connell

God's Love

People rush around hither and thither,
immersed in their hectic busy lives
Never do they stop to see and consider,
the beauty that their soul imbibes.
So many things are missed for ever,
God's love within them that survives.

Love that is in us if only we could see,
the ultimate gift of love to give.
His only Son so we could be sin free,
died on the cross so that we could live.
The ultimate sacrifice for you and me,
salvation for us all our sins to forgive.

You or I may feel the forgotten one,
but this assuredly is never the case.
God gave us all his only begotten Son,
who paid the price in mankind's place.
Through him, eternal life was won,
a Saviour for the whole human race.

By Andrew Robertson

**"I am just a
Golfer"**



**Drew's
view**

I must confess I have never played a round of golf in my life. It's not that I don't like the sport or have any reason that I can think of why I shouldn't take part in it. It's probably that I've just not been introduced to this fine and ancient game. I don't have any friends who play it. So I'm one of these people who neither like nor dislike it. I know it is there, but simply haven't taken much notice of it.

The ironic thing about all this is that I used to drive past the "Home of Golf" every day – The Royal and Ancient Course at St.Andrews. I have even been in the superb little restaurant there that is open to the public - or more accurately - non golf players like I. It was two friends, who being local people, knew of this restaurant that introduced me to this really fine place. After lectures at St.Andrews, we would sometimes retreat there for a really good cup of strong coffee. You would probably think that this would at least give me the smallest urge to at least try the sport out. We even used to sit at the window which looked out over these world renowned and absolutely sacred fairways and bunkers, which people come from all over the world to play on. One time, we even had a Christmas dinner at the restaurant!

But, alas, no. It didn't make the slightest bit of difference.

I used to commit, what would be the utmost sacrilege and disrespect to the hallowed place and its renowned golfers, by sometimes suggesting casually to my friends,

"Let's go down to the golf place. We haven't been there for quite a while!"

After I finished at St.Andrews, golf remained even more invisible to me once more until a few weeks ago. I happened to be at home all day, as a computer course I was studying had finished. I was a little bored and decided to switch on the t.v. although I didn't hold much hope of being entertained. Some of the programmes that were on during this part of the day were either

repeats, or talk shows, or just plain terrible! I used the remote control to run through the programme guide. The only thing that caught my eye was that the Open Golf was on and it was being televised live from St.Andrews.

There was absolutely nothing else on that was remotely entertaining or interesting, so reluctantly, I selected this particular broadcast, which was being shown on BBC2 for the whole day it seemed. It was a lovely sunny day, so I thought at least they might show some nice aerial shots of the town or the sea. I might even see the little restaurant that was such a favourite with us during my time there! As a result, I perked up a little, thinking I could play a game of "Spot the Familiar Places" with no thought whatsoever about the golf!

I wasn't disappointed. I did see some lovely shots of the town, as well as the sea and to my delight, spotted the little restaurant, which brought back so many nice memories. I must confess I didn't even know how long it would take for the golfers to go round the course. (I later discovered that it took about 4 hours, sometimes a bit longer.) But as I watched the golf unfold and the cameras followed the many participants, who seemed to be playing in groups of three, there was one thing that stood out which absolutely impressed me. The competitors looked so happy. In addition to this, they also looked as if they were really enjoying themselves. There was no grim determination that you see on the faces of some participants in other sports, just pleasure and a sense that they were on a great adventure. What really touched me though was that they were so courteous to each other and the watching crowds. Whenever a player got a round of applause, he would immediately touch his cap in acknowledgement.

Each small group of golfers would also patiently wait until the group ahead had cleared the next hole. There were no tantrums like you witness regularly in other sports. There was no arrogance or impatience when they were held up. I do happen to know the names of one or two of the top players like everybody does and they acted in exactly the same way with humility and courtesy. There was no fanfare of trumpets when they arrived. They didn't play on their own or in an elite group. They simply got on with the job in

hand as they systematically worked their way around the course.

Even when the rounds were completed this politeness and humility was still visible. Each man was interviewed and although a few looked really exhausted, they patiently took time to tell us where they went wrong in some cases and where they went right in others. Even the highest ranked players were very self effacing and vowed to improve their strategy the next day.

I sat there in awe, thinking what great ambassadors these men were, not only for their sport, but their countries as well.

I was to be even more impressed however. At one point in the proceedings the BBC showed us footage of some of the top golfers who were participating this year, receiving honorary degrees from St.Andrews University, at the Younger Hall which was just up the road. Again, the humbleness and humility of these men, who were, in effect, champions at their sport was amazing. One of the recipients there was an older man, whom I hadn't seen before. He was being awarded a Doctor of Laws degree.

He happened to remark when he was delivering his acceptance speech,

"I am just a golfer."

He went on to praise one of his own golfing heroes who was also at the ceremony and was obviously profoundly moved and touched that the University had chosen him to be honoured in this way.

I was profoundly moved too, not only by the modesty and humility of this man, but his obvious love and dedication for his sport and his fellow competitors. Intrigued, I decided to do some research on him. I found out that over the last thirty years or so, in the span of his brilliant career, he has won the Open Championship that I was watching no less than *five* times. In addition to this, he has won the Masters' Championship twice, as well as also winning the P.G.A. Championship once. I realised almost immediately that this man was of course not "just a golfer." He is a wonderful ambassador, not only for his sport, but for humankind as well.

Recently I have been reading a lot of the Synoptic Gospels in the New Testament – Mathew, Mark, Luke and John. Witnessing these events at St.Andrews caused me to stop and think. It made me realise that some of the Lord's greatest ambassadors and people connected with him in the Bible, who were in effect great and famous men, were also in many cases the humblest and most modest of people.

John the Baptist is one example. He was a major religious and historical figure who baptized Jesus, but felt he was not even worthy of untying Jesus' sandals. (John chapter 1, verse 27.)

There was also the Roman Officer in Matthew chapter 8, verses 1-17, whose slave was very ill and close to death. This Officer was a kindly man who treated his servants well and was fond of them. He was a very important man, used to giving out orders and being obeyed without question. He would normally expect people to follow out his commands instantly. But when Jesus said he would come to the Officer's house to save the slave, the officer answered,

"Oh no, sir, I do not deserve to have you come into my house. Just give the order and my servant will get well." (Matthew chapter 8, verse 8.)

This Officer had the utmost faith in the Lord and knew that Jesus would only have to say the word and his slave would be healed. Jesus not only healed the slave, but was so touched by the Officer's faith in him, as well as his humility and compassion for his fellow man that he declared,

"I tell you, I have never found anyone in Israel with faith like this!" (Matthew 8:10)

Jesus must have also thought what a great ambassador this Officer was for his teachings, with the compassion and kindness he showed to his servant.

But there is in the Bible the ultimate example of a very great man with the greatest of humility. That of course, is Jesus himself. He is the King of kings, Lord of all lords. But when he was with us on this earth, he didn't sit on a throne in a lofty tower, surrounded by jewels and servants. He was born in a humble stable and worked as a carpenter. You would be most likely to find him amongst the people who needed him most – the poor, the

sick, the needy, the forgotten, whom he loved and cared for.

Sometimes we can be influenced, completely unexpectedly, by a chance event, or read of someone, like these people in the Bible, or encounter someone like this golfer, who give us new hope, not only in the whole of mankind, but in ourselves as well. I was so glad I turned on the t.v. that day to watch something I thought at first would be quite boring. I realised watching this golfer, that if I, or anyone else could be an ambassador for the Lord and his church with the same dedication, humility and devotion that this golfer displayed for his sport and his fellow man, both I and anyone else would feel so blessed and privileged.

I am still immensely touched by this and thrilled that a guy who has never played golf in his life was influenced so much by a man who is "just a golfer."



This year's Christmas production by Falkirk Children's & Youth Theatre is "Alice in Wonderland".

The show runs from Friday 3rd to Saturday 11th December, in Falkirk Town Hall at 7.30pm, with Saturday matinees 2.30pm (no performance on Sunday).

Signed performances are on 6th & 7th December

Tickets: £7.50/ £5.50 for concessions & groups from The Steeple, tel 01324 506850

The U in Jesus

Before U were thought of or time had begun,
God stuck U in the name of His Son.
And each time U pray, you'll see it's true,
You can't spell out JesUs and not include U.
You're a pretty big part of His wonderful name,
For U, He was born; that's why He came
And His great love for U is the reason He died.
It even takes U to spell crucified.
Isn't it thrilling and splendidly grand
He rose from the dead, with U in His plan?
The stones split away, the gold trumpet blew,
And this word resurrection is spelled with a U.
When JesUs left earth at His upward ascension,
He felt there was one thing He just had to mention.
"Go into the world and tell them it's true
That I love them all –just like I love U"
So many great people are spelled with a U,
Don't they have a right to know JesUs too?
It all depends now on what you will do,
He'd like them to know,
But it all starts with U.

Guild Diary

Guild theme "What does the Lord require of you?" Called to Love mercy.

6 October	Rev Louise McClement
20 October	Anderson Singers Concert
3 November	"A Place of Restoration" Mrs Monica Mc Donald
17 November	"The Good Life " Mrs Rena Moore
1 December	Party Night
December	Christmas Outing

Rendezvous Dates

13 October, 10 November and 15 December

We hope to meet you there.



**Notes from a Shieldhill
Garden.**

Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it." Genesis 1 v11

The rowan and holly trees that are in the garden are turning red, heralding autumn that is just around the corner. Goldfinches can be seen feasting on thistle seeds, adding charm to wilder areas around the village.

Flowers are forming seed heads and dead-heading can prolong the flowering time of some species. Vegetable crops are ripening and so this is one family that is meeting the '5 a day target'.

Weeding is the main gardening task and some have been beheaded and added to the compost heap. I would like to say a word about putting weeds into the compost bins and heaps. Someone added an article taken from Waste Aware Scotland's composting literature. Home composting is a cold composting system and weed seeds and certain roots will not die in the home system with the result that you will spread these weeds around your garden when you use your compost. There are three weeds that are not even allowed into the Council's system which is a hot system. They are Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed. These plants are out in the countryside, causing problems, and are very difficult to get rid of. Plant Life, the plant charity, suggests that we dead-head non native plants such as buddleia to prevent their further spread into the countryside. Some of these non-native species are putting our native plants in danger. If anyone would like help with composting making or more information about compost bins, speak to me.

The visitors to my garden have been bird, insect and animal. We have been blessed by several young birds: robins, great tits, greenfinches, sparrows and a song thrush.

A morning or two ago there was an elephant moth caterpillar crawling across the hard area. Its preferred food is rosebay willow herb and so it

Tea, coffee and a chat are
always available in the
Church Hall after services.
Please join us if you can.

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& Brunch

On Saturday
20 November
from
11am till 2pm
in aid of
church funds



was some way away from home. Later on in the evening, we have been visited by hedgehogs, the occasional badger and more regularly, a fox.

We are in custody of all these plants and animals.
We must make sure that they are still here for
our children and grand children to enjoy.

Rena Moore