

Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Parish Church
linked with
Muiravonside Parish Church
Easter 2017



www.bsandm-church.org.uk

Locum Minister: Philip Hacking

Tel 01324 337936

phil.hacking@gmail.com

Registered Charity

Blackbraes and Shieldhill SC 002512

Muiravonside SC 007571

Locum Minister's letter

Easter means there is hope.



'The angel spoke to the women. "You must not be afraid", he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has been raised, just as he said. Come here and see the place where he was lying. Go quickly, now, and tell the disciples, 'He has been raised from death, and now he is going to Galilee ahead of you, there you will see him.' Remember what I have told you." (Matthew 28: 5-7)

Dear Friends

If we were to ask the vast majority of people what comes into their mind at the mention of Easter and I am sure that very near to the top of the list will be "Eggs". In so far as they represent new life, there is something positive about that. But Easter is so much more than that. Have you ever wondered what a chick understands of the world outside its shell before it hatches or even a baby while still in its mother's womb? They cannot even begin to imagine the wonders of the world outside even if they are capable of thinking about it. However, the wonder still exists even though they cannot imagine it.

Easter is about the Resurrection of Jesus, the fact that even beyond his death on the cross his followers became aware that Jesus still existed. To them he was still alive- well, he certainly was not dead. So profoundly were they aware of his presence, despite it being humanly beyond all likelihood and understanding, that some stood in front of religious and political leaders to bear testimony to it. Others later were killed rather than deny what they knew. They could believe of something beyond the "shell" or outside the womb and they were not shy about telling others.

In recent years, the phrase "One life- live it!" has seen increasing prominence. Surely life is bigger than just the human, physical bit we so easily see and that is part of

something beyond our imagining.

The promise of Easter is about hope and the promise of the Resurrection of Jesus- that death is not the end, but only the end of our physical lives. Outside physical life is something we struggle to comprehend, let alone try and imagine. Just because we cannot imagine it, there is hope that we must not close our minds to the fullness of the whole of life which is offered us by faith in Jesus Christ. That is something special.

The Braes Churches Holy Week services start on Monday 10 April at 7pm and you can find the details elsewhere in this church magazine. We are having an Easter morning breakfast at 9am on Sunday 16 April in Shieldhill so please come and join us!

I take this opportunity to wish you all in Blackbraes and Shieldhill linked with Muiravonside a very happy Easter!

Love from Philip

Baptism

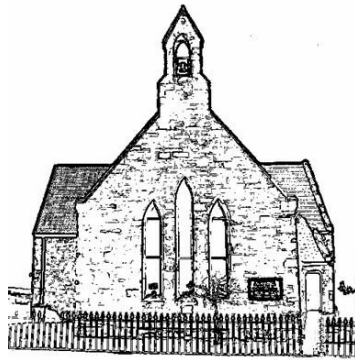
***'Whoever welcomes a little child like this
in my name, welcomes me.'***

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Brodie Andrew Davidson
Infant son of Ruth and Ross Davidson
on 26 February 2017

Funerals

‘The Lord will protect you as you come and go, both now and forevermore’.



Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Agnes Martin

Alistair Chisholm

Janette Montgomery

Margaret Graham

William Brookes

Patricia McKay

Alan Tait

Alexander Main

Sarah Churchill

Funerals

‘The Lord will protect you as you come and go, both now and forevermore’.



Muiravonside Parish

John Hamilton
Lorna Kennedy
Kevin Clarke
Humphrey Williams
Alexander Arneil
Helen Thomson
Marion Brodie
John Webster
Christina McDermott



South Africa Link



Editor's Note— The South Africa Link letter had arrived too late for the December Magazine—hence the December date and Christmas wishes contained within, but there are still lots of updates in it from Graham and Sandra.

December, 2016

Dear Friends,

It is now just over a year since the FEES MUST FALL campaign began. Universities opened a little late and have been dogged by problems throughout the year. By September almost all were closed. In Pretoria we moved on to online learning for which a contact university is ill-equipped. As always the poor students suffer and those without computers and access to wifi are totally disabled. The basic problem seems to be the inability of government and university authorities to grasp the message that the students will not pay fees when they were promised free education. Some university vice-chancellors have engaged with students; ours has disappeared from sight. This was followed by the ZUMA MUST FALL campaign and the formation of SAVE SOUTH AFRICA in attempts to bring the African National Congress government to book following disastrous election results for the ANC in August.

This followed the President having been found guilty of disregarding the constitution and various corrupt acts. The ANC has failed to take control of the situation and the ship of state is adrift in stormy waters. Already plans are in effect not to reopen universities next year. At Pretoria, the situation is especially ironic. The Faculty of Theology celebrates its centenary. Our motto is 'Gateway to ... the future'. The original gates of the university have been reinstalled in a permanently open position at the front of the Theology building; yet the gates of the university are firmly locked against its own students.

At the beginning of the year we will face a new crisis due to the increased number of failed students looking for places in addition to the new intake for 2017. In the midst of this, Graham still manages to maintain his research output mainly focussing on the history of Presbyterianism in South Africa. For the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, he has written an article on John Knox and education with special reference to the critical education crisis in South Africa. He has also prepared another article on the recent history of the faculty with a focus on the future of theological education in South Africa as an African experience.

He has not given up teaching as St Augustine's College in Johannesburg asked him to teach Church history during the past semester with students who are mainly Anglican and Roman Catholic.

Other than that, he remains busy with work for the Council on Higher Education (CHE) and the National Research Foundation where he will convene the Theology and Religion panel in 2017. The CHE work has been intense as he has been part of a panel to investigate private theological education colleges since the government is closing all colleges which do not meet the requirements of the South African Department of Education. Many have been operating without accreditation.

Other than that, church work continues at St Andrew's on a regular basis. Last weekend the congregation honoured its senior members with a lunch provided by one of our elders Edna, a general in the South African Defence force, with catering provided by the Defence force catering Corps. Yesterday (11 December) our organist, Neil, and choir master, Chris, prepared a wonderful performance of Karl Jenkins' 'The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace'.

We had two unplanned visits to the UK this year due to Sandra's aunt slipping into Alzheimer's Disease. This began with a fall in January and slow deterioration which kept her hospitalised until a care home could be arranged in July. Other than that, Sandra has been kept busy with proof-reading and language editing.

Recently she has also been busy with our Session Clerk at Mamelodi, Violet Mashao, arranging the annual Christmas Party (18 December) for the AIDS orphans in our congregation, supported by donations from congregations in Scotland. It is gratifying to hear that some of the students who have been supported in their studies have completed successfully.

At the close of this year we are particularly conscious that we are not alone in facing severe problems in our nation. Chaos seems to be characteristic of post-Brexit 'United' Kingdom, Trump's election victory in the USA, and continuing strife in the Middle East. Yesterday's 'Mass for Peace' brought all these and many other life struggles throughout the world to the fore of our minds and hearts as we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace!

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

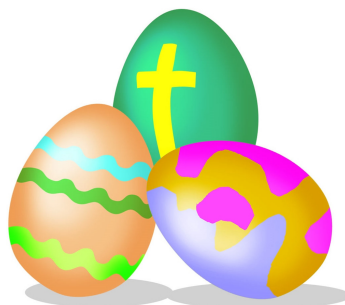
Lots of love!

Sandra and Graham



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.

As well as saving paper, and trees, you would receive the magazine in colour. It could also be enlarged if you need to see it in large print.



Guild Annual Report March 2017

This session marked the second in the three year strategy “Be Bold Be Strong”, the theme being “Go in Joy”. Guild numbers total 22 and there has been regular attendance at the Wednesday evening meetings. Welcome –in and Guild teams meet to plan the varied syllabus and co-ordinate church events.

We welcomed Philip Hacking, locum to our first meeting in October. On 19 November we joined other Guild groups at a Guild week event in Grahamston United Church when we enjoyed the singing of the Methodist Choir. Visits were also made to Laurieston and Brightons Guilds as well as attending Presbyterial Council events.

Liz MacGowan assisted by Rena Moore took us on an exciting journey across Canada to Alaska. An evening at Falkirk Town hall to see “Sister Act” was a popular evening out. Our annual fundraising event is on Wednesday 29 March at 7.30pm in the church. Tickets, which include a light supper, are £6 and are available from Guild members. The Columban male voice singers are our guests.

An important date for our Guild is Thursday 8 June when we will host the annual Guild Summer Rally, a Presbyterial Council evening. The speaker will be the Very Rev. John Chalmers. A planned May outing is a visit to the Royal Yacht Britannia docked at Leith.

Janet Hunter still keeps a keen eye on our project. This year we chose “Let’s Stick Together”. This is a charity which offers help to improve parenting skills and gives support to families. Barbara Currie balances our finances. Christine and Liz make a refreshing cup of tea. Our men are always on hand to do anything asked of them. We are proud to have our honorary member attend church and Guild regularly. This year she celebrated her 99th Birthday.

The support of locum Philip Hacking and the Kirk Session are much appreciated.

Our syllabus will be prepared for September 2017. We meet fortnightly on Wednesdays in the church hall from 7.30pm to 9pm. A warm welcome, a chat with friends an interesting topic and tasty refreshments are always on offer. Male and female, feel free to join us.

Be it members, tea ladies or technicians, we all share our different gifts, and work together always remembering



Whose we are and Whom we serve

Lorna Coulter



"Tales From a Shieldhill Garden."



Jesus knew all about seeds. Matthew, Chapter 13, begins with "The Parable of the Sower". Some seeds land on good land and some on dry land and some amongst more vigorous plants and get choked. He, of course, was teaching the assembled crowd about 'people'.

The days are getting longer and some days are feeling spring like. My thoughts are turning to the flowers and vegetables that I wish to grow during the coming summer. Usually I fill some hanging baskets and some of the plants that I put in my baskets, I will have grown myself, from seed. In order to allow enough time for the plants to grow, I begin my seed sowing in March.

When I lay out the plants that will go into a basket, I will have: Lobelia, Bacopa, Tagetes, Surfinia Petunias and perhaps a Geranium or an Osteospermum. I also may have Nepeta, Ipomoea and lysimachia for their foliage.

Petunias are native to South America and, in those countries the plants will spread their seed before dying. In this country, they are classed as half-hardy annuals. That means, they don't like frost and will last for just one year. Petunias are members of the solanaceae family. A petunia is a member of the same family as tomatoes, potatoes, tobacco plants, strawberries and deadly nightshade. I grow Surfinia Petunias as they will be bushy, other petunias trail and will grow over the side of tubs and baskets.

Petunias have tiny seeds. In fact they are so small that I add a tiny drop of silver sand to the packet, give it a shake and then sow the seeds. I don't cover them but pop them into the propagator. The seedlings when they appear are tiny but soon grow into little plants and are soon ready to be given more growing space. Over the next two months, this plant will increase in size. I snip off the middle growth spike and this makes the plant bushier. A bushier plant will have more flowers. By the end of May, the petunia plants are big enough to go into the hanging baskets.

Bacopa is another bedding plant that has tiny seeds. In fact these seeds are so small that the seed company coats them in stuff that dissolves in the compost. This is a pretty little trailing plant that has white, pink or blue flowers. I prefer the white varieties because they

appear to grow better and are stronger plants. The pinched out shoots of these plants will grow roots and make more plants if stuck into compost.

Tagetes belong to the Asteraceae family and grow in North and South America. They are marigolds and this variety grows well in a basket. They have big seeds that have umbrellas, and so the seeds fly. If children are helping you, they could sow tagetes because the seeds are easy to handle. Germination is quick and the little plants are fairly tough. I choose single flowered varieties, as the bumblebees will visit them to collect nectar. The leaves have smell a bit like disinfectant and if tagete plants are planted at the base of tomatoes and cucumbers they will help to keep green fly and such like things away.

A honing basket must have plants that trail over the side. Trailing lobelia is one of the favourites. I buy lobelia as little plug plants because there is not enough seed in the packets of lobelia seed to fill the number of baskets that I usually fill. Lobelia is usually blue, light and dark, white or mixed colours. For this season, I have chosen dark blue lobelia that has a white centre.

I have taken cuttings of nepeta, dead nettle, and lysimachia. These are often sold in pots and can be more expensive than the other basket plants. One pot will be enough for one basket as these little plants can be split up or little pinched out sprigs will root if pushed into compost. These green plants will also live from one year to the next if you plant them out in the garden.

Fuchsias also make nice hanging baskets but these don't flower until much later in the summer. Fuchsia plants also grow very easily in the springtime and, should you pinch growing tips out of plants and stick them into compost, they will root very easily. In order to keep your baskets looking good throughout the summer, it is worthwhile to snip the dead heads off the flowers.

In Matthew chapter 13, we also hear about the mustard seed. Mustard seeds are tiny that grow very quickly into a large plants that will support the birds of the air. Most of the basket plants grow quickly and provide nectar for bees and butterflies. I often see a wren and members of the tit family visiting my baskets and so I suppose there must be spiders and other bugs among the blooms.

Jesus likened the mustard seed to the Kingdom of Heaven, It is the wonder of creation that gives us all the wonderful, summer colours.

Rena

Betty at the Party

“ When I was at the party ,”
Said Betty just aged four,
“A little girl fell off her chair
Right down upon the floor;
And all the other little girls
Began to laugh but me-
I didn’t laugh a single bit,”
Said Betty seriously.



“Why not ?” her mother
asked her,
Full of delight to find
That Betty –bless her little heart!-
Had been so sweetly kind.
“Why didn’t you laugh my darling?
Or don’t you like to tell?”
“ I didn’t laugh,” said Betty
“ ’Cause it was me that fell.”



Anon

“Life isn’t about waiting for the storm to pass
but learning to dance in the rain.” - Vivian Greene

-Submitted by Lorna Coulter



**Drew's
view**

Please do not Worry – Your Soul is Safe!

Isn't it amazing just how fast loose change accumulates in your pockets? All these pound coins, fifty pence pieces and even worse – smaller coins such as one pence and two pence pieces. Even more of a problem, they will fall out your pockets and some will end up under the seats of the car. Others will end up down the side of sofas and in the most unlikely places you can imagine and would never believe, all around the house!

I am exactly the same. For some reason, when I go shopping I tend to always pay in notes just for the sake of handiness and instead of using the loose change I've gotten at the last shop, to save scrabbling about in my pocket, I will produce another note. Soon, people can hear me coming along the street or shopping mall before they see me, as the money jingles merrily in my pockets which have developed into a bulge on both sides, giving me a rather portly appearance!

Sometimes when out and about, you occasionally pass an old building or castle which has been officially designated as an "Ancient Monument." I often think I should be officially designated as "A National Depository for British Coins." (And a few foreign ones as well!)

I used to find too that once I was in the car, gradually coins would fall out of each pocket as described above without my knowledge, while I was concentrating on my driving. One good thing though, was that when I eventually got round to vacuuming the car, which wasn't too frequently, I would move the front seat forward. Then lo and behold, there was a small treasure trove waiting to be unearthed! I realised then that I had unwittingly developed quite a lucrative "Personal Savings Scheme!"

Once I was visiting a captain on one of the ships while at work. I don't know how we managed to do this, being out in the middle of the river, but our conversation somehow got round to this very topic of loose change falling out of pockets in cars! He told me a great story about how his two children used to sit in the back of the car and await a wonderful windfall of pound coins dropping their way during their many journeys while he was on leave! He added with a smile that he only recently discovered what had been happening. He now realised why the children were always asking to go for a run in the car!

Quite touchingly, he added that sometimes funny little happenings like these are such great memories that you cherish when you are far

away from home, or when the children get older. Rather than making him annoyed, this memory would always cheer him up when he was feeling sad. He did add though that he had told the children if they were ever in someone else's car and the same thing happened, they were to tell the driver what had happened and give him or her the money immediately!

On one occasion, a few years back, I realised that after about four months of accumulating all this loose change, I could have kept the "Penny Waterfall" in an amusement arcade going for several months! Instead, after much prevaricating I finally got round to sorting the money out into those neat little bags that the banks provide and surrendered it all to them in exchange for some notes!

I used to make my little trip to my local bank four times a year on roughly the same dates. There was only one problem though. I never seemed to be able to master the art of putting the correct coins into the dinky little plastic bags they provide! It wasn't the bank's fault. They had procedures to follow and everything has to be right. It was just me!

I knew that I couldn't mix silver and bronze. The bag would say "No mixed coins, please!" But did this refer to different types only like silver and bronze? Was it possible to mix two different value bronze coins or two different value silver coins if they were the same type? I would ask and then promptly forget the correct sequences long before the four months had elapsed before I went back!

I began to work out different permutations with the seriousness of a mathematics student revising for his or her final exam! Each time, I would think I'd got it right. However, on entering the bank, a familiar one - act play would be acted out. This would have a very predictable script, worthy of the many repeats currently on tv which are always aired at Christmas, or on holiday weekends! The opening line in this play would be:

"You've put them in the wrong bags, Mr Robertson!"

The customer assistants – bless them – couldn't be more helpful. They would patiently empty the tremendous amount of coins from the bags and reshuffle everything around. While they were doing this, the coins would clatter and jingle away merrily. This produced a lot of noise! Everyone would probably think I was paying in the takings for the local bus company!

I went to the same bank each time. I imagined the staff must have had charts in their staffroom with even more complicated permutations on them, working out when I would be back. On these days, there would

be a massive increase in holiday applications!

I thought this little four monthly charade would probably go on for eternity.

However, a few years ago, it all dramatically changed!

I happened to be visiting my local supermarket. When I was entering, at first I didn't see the new machine they had just taken delivery of. Later, when I was going through the checkout, I suddenly heard an extremely all too familiar clatter which was very loud. Then, the jingly sound followed in rapid succession! Someone was emptying coins into this machine and they were emptying them out from a carrier bag - no less!

I happened to be at a checkout which was quite close to this new machine. While I was waiting in the queue, I peered with all my might and realised I was seeing not only silver coins being swallowed up - but bronze as well - and even pound coins!

All were being dumped willy - nilly in no particular order!

I knew I was not only witnessing a miracle, but the answer to my prayers!

I couldn't wait to inspect this machine. After what seemed like an eternity going through the checkout, I finally got a chance to have a closer look! The advertising blurb on the machine boasted that you could get rid of all your unwanted coins. Then a receipt would be printed out which you could take to the adjacent counter, after which, you would be given notes with a small fee deducted. It was permissible to mix all your coins in any order that took your fancy. The machine would process them.

I almost hugged this beautiful device. Later that day, I returned with a couple of carrier bags full of coins. As I emptied the first carrier bag, I almost expected the machine to be somehow connected to the bank and braced myself for a message displayed in electric blue writing advising:

"You've put them in the wrong bags, Mr Robertson!"

But instead, the message that did appear simply said:

"Good Afternoon! Please place your coins in the tray below. Thank you for using 'Coinchanger'"

It didn't argue with me or tell me what I had done wrong. Instead, I had been greeted like an old friend! As I emptied the carrier bag I shouted:

“Eat your heart out, little plastic bank bags!” (Luckily no one was around at the time!)

As you can imagine, from then on, I was its best customer!

When the time had come around to visit the local bank after four months, they must have thought I was ill but would be back soon. After eight months had elapsed and the day that I would have been due to visit had come to an end, they must have thrown a really spectacular party that evening!

I used my trusty coin machine for years, (I considered it my own,) until very recently when disaster struck. I had just emptied about £40 worth of coins into it. All of a sudden there was a loud splutter. Then something that sounded like a loud **“PHUT!”** (Machines really do make that noise!) Then the screen went blank.

“Oh, No!” I thought.

But glad to say, a few seconds later, a short message appeared on the screen. It said:

“Please do not worry. Your money is safe.”

I was absolutely touched by this. Despite being in the throws of an electronic nervous breakdown, ever reassuring, the machine was trying to tell me not to worry. My money was safe. It wasn’t lost. All will be well. Have faith!

Then a few seconds later it added:

“Please urgently contact a store colleague!”

I did just that! At first I was frightened to leave the machine in case someone could somehow access my money. However, after pressing a few buttons, I knew it had locked itself up. Have faith! After a bit of toing and froing, and asking around, the staff finally found someone who was trained in fixing the machine. Within a few moments, I was given a receipt for all the money I had put in and was paid in full with notes.

“Have faith!” How often have we heard that phrase in all sorts of situations? Sometimes too, faith can be such an elusive thing. Most of us have faith in ourselves because we know ourselves better than any other person and trust every aspect of our character. But it can be so difficult to just let go and put your faith in other people.

You would think too that it would be even more difficult to have faith in God. After all, he is unseen although often felt. It was just as difficult in

Biblical times even when Jesus was among us. He would often say “What little faith you have!” or more old fashionedly “Oh ye of little faith!” I got really curious and counted how many times he uses this phrase in the Good News Version (Four times in the Gospel of Matthew and once in the Gospel of Luke.) And this was happening whilst miracles were taking place right before the folks’ very eyes!

However, there is also something wonderful about the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke.) They are filled with heart warming and very moving stories of faith. My favourite is the Roman Officer’s servant being healed in Luke Chapter 7, verses 1-10. He has so much faith in Jesus he knows his servant will be healed without Jesus ever entering his house. He only has to give the word. Jesus is touched by this man’s faith and says:

“I tell you, I have never found faith like this, not even in Israel!” (Luke 7:9)

Who can forget the woman in Matthew 9:20-22 who touched Jesus’ cloak. Her faith was so great that she knew she only had to touch his cloak and she would be well. Years of suffering would be ended. Jesus turns around and tells her “Courage my daughter! Your faith has made you well” (Verse 22.)

There is one person though in the Bible who has the greatest faith of all – and that is Jesus himself. You would probably say “That isn’t surprising. After all, nobody could have more faith than Jesus!” However, the amazing thing is that all over the world, we are the people he has faith in. He has faith in us.

He loves us, even when we let him down. He listens to us, even though we often don’t listen to him. He never ever leaves us, even though we sometimes forget about him.

Even although there are often days when I don’t have faith in myself, I am comforted and take great delight from my faith in God. There is not a day goes by that I don’t thank God for entering my life and gifting me with the faith I have in him and even more so, the faith he has in me. I have let him down so many times by promising to help him and then following my own will rather than his. And yet, still he is in my life, never giving up and gently guiding me in the right direction, often with a real sense of humour thrown in, despite the fact I sometimes don’t listen.

“Please do not worry – your money is safe!”

In my prayers and in my mind, I often imagine what it must be like to

walk with Jesus, even if it was just for a few minutes, enjoying his gentle wisdom. Ever reassuring, he would take me to one side and say eight words remarkably similar to the message I received in a busy supermarket, but which would be more valuable than not just £40, but all the money in the world.

“Please do not worry – your soul is safe!”

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

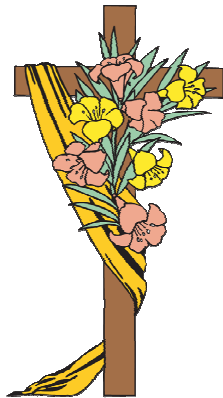


The Greatest Price Ever Paid

What was the greatest price ever paid?
Not for the largest diamond ever found.
Not for the finest gold dust ever assayed.
Not for the best footballer ever around.
Not for the most expensive car ever made.
Not for the greatest mind ever renowned.

No, the answer when all is surveyed.
Presents a solution completely sound.
Even with all the theories portrayed.
The plain facts just resound and resound.
Jesus died on a cross for us to be saved.
So from sin we could be unbound.
That was the greatest price ever paid.

By Andrew Robertson



**BRAES CHURCHES
JOINT HOLY WEEK
SERVICES 2017**



**Monday 10th April
BRIGHTONS**

**Tuesday 11th April
MUIRAYONside**

**Wednesday 12th April
SLAMANNAN**

**Thursday 13th April
WALLACESTONE METHODIST**

**Friday 14th April
POLMONT OLD**

All at 7 p.m.

