

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church

linked
with



Muiravonside Parish Church

Spring 2011

**From the Manse
February 2011**



Dear Friends,

How time flies!!! I am now aware that I have been minister of Blackbraes and Shieldhill linked with Muiravonside for three years now and I want to thank you all for the warmth, support and encouragement you have given to myself, David and the girls in what has been a new venture and a new chapter for both churches.

During my training I never experienced ministry in a linked charge and so it was with fear, trepidation and a sense of excitement that I first felt the call to apply for Blackbraes/Shieldhill and Muiravonside. Now having served the two congregations and two parishes for three years I feel that I am now in a position to look back and reflect on the highs and the lows, the joys and the stresses.

The linkage has meant that we have been able to have a Bible Study and prayer group with healthy numbers. The newly formed Muiravonside Choral Society enjoys members from both churches. Office bearers in each congregation have been able to support each other and offer advice when required. Fund raising events are supported by both churches and of course financially the churches have been relieved of the cost of a full time minister each. I am also aware that friendships have been formed between both congregations and a sense of support and concern has developed for each other.

As a minister I have had to be realistic in what I am able to do and achieve as I have to share my time between two congregations and two parishes both with quite different needs, and who hold different groups, activities and meetings. Sunday worship is a joy to me and therefore much of my time is spent planning and preparing the services on a Sunday and as the services are now being recorded in both churches I am delighted that the housebound can now share in Sunday worship in the comfort of their own home. One of the privileges of ministry is being asked to conduct funerals of members and also those who live within our parishes so much of my time is spent visiting the bereaved, preparing and conducting funeral services and offering comfort and hope at such a difficult and sad time. I have been blessed and enriched by bereavement visits and the many wonderful people I have met in the villages and I enjoy hearing about the life of their loved one.

Another privilege is Baptisms and weddings and I enjoy meeting with

couples who wish to have their baby or child baptised or who wish to be married.

The four Primary Schools Whitecross, Maddiston, Shieldhill and California have been very welcoming to me and Rev David Archer of Wallacestone Methodist Church kindly agreed to assist me by being chaplain of California Primary School and the children are a joy and always eager to listen to my stories and answer any questions.

Pastoral care is shared by myself, elders and members and I know how caring both congregations are at checking in on elderly neighbours and visiting the sick in hospital, and assisting me in Home Communion and the monthly Haining Nursing Home services. This magazine of course is now shared with Muiravonside - another blessing of the linkage and I hope that members in both churches enjoy sharing news and learning more about each other.

There have been many joys over these past few years but from time to time I have felt overwhelmed being minister to two different churches and parishes, but when I feel weak, God often speaks to me through the encouraging words of a colleague or church member, and I find the strength to continue.

When I first felt God call me to ministry when I was in my mid-twenties, I heard him say to me very clearly, 'just tell them that I love them.' This therefore is why I do what I do. I believe that God has called me to tell people how much he loves them and through my leading of worship and the Sacraments - to sense that love.

But love is a two way thing and so I thank you all for loving me, David and the girls. For being patient, encouraging, offering wise advice and for your little acts of kindness and generosity often so hidden and unseen.

May God continue to bless our linked charge, and to help us show more and more people in the parishes of Blackbraes, Shieldhill and Muiravonside, his wonderful love.....

'And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God....'
Ephesians Ch3, v17b-19

**Your minister and friend,
Louise**

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



Baptisms

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

Blackbraes and Shieldhill

Baby Alesha Smith
7th November 2010

Muiravonside

Scott James Queen (Adult baptism)
12th December 2010

Baby Miley Snedden
30th January 2011

Holy Week Services

All services start at 7pm and refreshments will be served afterwards.



Mon 18 April	Brightons Parish Church
Tue 19 April	Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church
Wed 20 April	Slamannan Parish Church
Thu 21 April	Wallacestone Methodist Church, Reddingmuirhead.
Fri 22 April	Polmont Old Parish Church
Sun 24 April	Blackbraes and Shieldhill - Easter Family Service at 10am
Sun 24 April	Muiravonside Parish Church - Easter Family Service at 11:30am including admittance of new members and the Sacrament of Communion.

Deaths – Winter 2010/2011

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

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Mr James Higgins

Mr William Baillie

Mr Robert Paton

Mr David Small

Mr James Colston

Mr John Thomson

Muiravonside Parish

Mrs Margaret Taylor

Mrs Buntly Robertson

Mrs Irene Hardie

Mrs Mima Maxwell

Mrs Annie Elliott

Mr William Meek

Miss Jean Stevenson

Mr Thomas McMillan



Drew's
view

The Ultimate Telephone Line

I hate to say this, but I have sort of missed out as far as the mobile phone era is concerned!

Give me a computer and that's a different story. But hand me a mobile phone, especially one of these really modern ones, complete with cameras, satellite navigators and what seems to be everything except the kitchen sink inside them and I fumble away with them for ages. What makes matters worse, is that I have quite large fingers and seem to always press two of the delicate little buttons at the same time. This causes all sorts of rather strangled beeps, as well as other, much more exotic noises, which the phone was probably never designed by the manufacturers to make. At this stage, the poor unfortunate phone, probably on the verge of an electronic nervous breakdown, almost sounds like it is crying and usually switches itself off very hastily!

I do own a mobile phone, but in comparison with modern times, I've been reliably informed that it is a dinosaur. I bought it back in 2003 and thought it would be a great thing just to keep in the car to call out the A.A. if the car broke down. The phone is very bulky and quite clumsy looking. It is also the largest mobile phone that you have ever seen. I managed one time to just about fit it in one of my larger coat pockets and the bulge looked like one of those concealed weapons that Private Eyes carry about with them on these American t.v. shows.

The phone has been almost permanently switched off and as a result, on the outside at least, has remained in near enough pristine condition. It is a very basic model, which actually is - believe it or not - just a phone, with no extra enhancements. As a result, it doesn't make my morning coffee, but it is possible, somehow, if you press the right sequence of buttons and have enough patience, to suddenly enter the amazing world of sending texts.

I produced it one time, in the presence of some young people whom I knew. They gasped in wonder and regarded it with awe, like you would with some ancient relic that had just been unearthed and hadn't been seen for thousands of years. One of them asked me if she could examine a thing called the sim card, (or maybe it was the test card) and I said, "Be my guest," as I was curious to see what this thing would be.

With a loud and very disturbing screech, that is probably only heard when ancient Egyptian tombs are being opened, she managed to prise the phone

open, then screamed as a large cloud of dust shot up which then made her sneeze. I don't know if she found the sim card, but I do know that she hastily snapped the phone back together again and gave it back to me very quickly.

I sent a text one time from it about six years ago and that is a story in itself. I happened to have it switched on that day while I was in St. Andrews, because one of my friends there was very brave and sometimes tried to phone me. This lady had lots of patience and would wait while I fumbled about with all the buttons, as well as dropping the phone two or three times before finally answering. On some occasions, I cut her off accidentally, and after these false starts, she must have either laughed, or more likely, cried, then simply phoned me back. This lady had the benefit of having a daughter who had shown her how to operate every little device that was on her mobile phone. She had also been a secretary so, as a result, was very accomplished at sending out texts with fantastic punctuation and even capital letters when they were required.

She even seemed to know the ancient and mysterious abbreviated language that seems to resemble a cross between Egyptian hieroglyphics and shorthand which appears in texts on mobile phones and which seems to have been innately handed down to everyone except myself. I would receive wonderful but totally cryptic messages like,

"c u b4 I go 4 t."

I often felt a bit like Sherlock Holmes must have felt like when he was trying to decipher the mystery of *The Matchstick Men*, which had mysteriously appeared on someone's wall. One lunchtime, I was right in the centre of town, sitting in the really picturesque quadrangle at St. Salvators, enjoying a cup of coffee, when I received a text from this lady:

"c u 45 mins @ St Sally's 4 t. GB, Ann"

I had a sudden revelation and realized that it is only when you read these things out loud that they actually begin to make sense. I think what she was trying to say was that she was meaning to meet me at this very place in three quarters of an hour, to go for some tea. I thought to myself, "Let's be a bit adventurous," and tried to send her a quick text back along the lines of:

"ok that is fine see you then from drew"

There would be no such luxuries as punctuation or capital letters. The button for that was located somewhere near the bottom, but it had to be pressed in a certain sequence. To make matters worse, the phone had some kind of

feature on it which attempted to try and second guess what I was going to write, (I suppose it was its way of trying to be helpful) and it kept putting in the wrong words which I had no idea how to delete. After much fumbling, frustration, guessing, several aborted attempts, and dropping the mobile phone twice, my friend actually arrived 45 minutes later, while I was still trying to send her this little reply!

But I am glad to say I am not alone. I was delighted to discover that in the “Rebus” detective novels, Ian Rankin’s brilliant main character is exactly the same as I am. I was reading one of the novels and Rebus was desperately trying to send a text to his colleague Siobhan. He seemed to be having just as much problems as I had and couldn’t find the capital letters either.

So it is reassuring to know that it is not just me and that I share this in common with someone, even if it is a fictional character in a detective novel. No doubt in the real world, there are lots of other folks out there too who are just the same. Communication nowadays is a wonderful thing, but because it has advanced so much over the years, it has also become rather complicated. When we think on how much the ability and speed to spread news around the world has changed since the time Jesus was on this earth we can only marvel at the knowledge we have been given in science and technology, entirely by the grace of God.

However there is one form of communication that absolutely delights me. The thing that absolutely thrills me about it, is that it has been with us since ancient times and is just as effective now as it was then. It doesn’t require any form of electronics or radio masts. No texts are required! There is never a breakdown in communications and the signal is never lost, no matter where you are. This wonderful communications system is the communication with our Lord through prayer.

From the time Jesus was on this earth and taught us to pray right up until the present moment, all through the ages we have found comfort in being able to talk with our Lord through prayer to seek guidance, comfort and help. We can share with him our joy. We can be comforted by him in our sadness. We can give thanks for being able to come into his presence each Sunday when we worship him.

In the very first century, Paul prayed daily and sometimes hourly for help and guidance, just like we do in the twenty-first century. He would kneel down and seek the Lord’s guidance and strength, not just for himself, but for others. The methods he used are no different from today. Communication with the Lord through prayer is so simple to do, but can be life changingly effective.

The wonderful thing about this sacred form of communication is that it can be done at any time. No matter where a person is, he or she can pray for guidance, whether they find themselves at the top of Mount Everest, or in a submarine at the bottom of the deepest ocean, where no mobile telephone would ever work. The Lord can hear us just as clearly no matter where we find ourselves. We are also never alone, no matter where we may be. He is with us from the furthest outposts of space, to the deepest parts of the earth.

The Apollo 13 Astronauts, back in 1970, prayed to our Lord for guidance and protection when an explosion occurred in one of the module tanks of their spacecraft. The whole world prayed with them. Their prayers were answered.

The commemorative medallion that was issued soon after the three men returned safely back to earth has a pair of praying hands with the inscription, "And the whole world prayed."

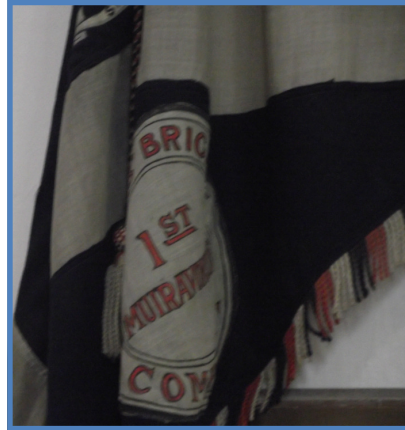
Just last year, the Chilean miners prayed to our Lord continually, without ever losing faith, seeking comfort and protection throughout the first month when they were trapped so far underground and no-one knew exactly where they were and if they were even still alive. Jesus, when he was with us said "Always pray and don't lose heart." (Luke Ch18 verses 1-8). When they were rescued, with each one travelling up the narrow shaft in the small lift, the first thing that many of the men did, when they set foot on the surface and experienced freedom, was that they got down on their knees and gave thanks to our Lord.

It was such a touching sight to see.

I rejoice so much that I can pray to our Lord just like people did in ancient times without the aid of mobile phones or modern gadgets. I don't need them when it comes to communicating with the Lord because he hears me just as he did when Paul was praying to him so long ago. But he hears you too just as clearly. He hears all of us, no matter when we talk to him and no matter where we are. He watches vigilantly and lovingly over everyone on this earth like a shepherd watching his flock. Everyone is special to him. He knows each and every one of us by name. We only have to pray to him and he will listen. We are never alone.

We have the ultimate telephone line to a King of kings who is also our friend.
The line is never engaged.
The signal is never lost.
Nor is it ever out of commission.
He is always at the other end.

Brasso and Buckles
My memories of
1st Muiravonside BBs



As a child who grew up in Maddiston, I had known of the Boys Brigade from an early age. As a child whose mum, and many neighbours, attended church, I was always going to join!

My next door neighbour was Richard Smith, his wife Ena was my primary school teacher. One evening after chatting to my mum, he asked me if I would be interested in attending The Life Boys, a new section of the boys brigade, for younger boys.

Now my memory might distort the details but I think we met on a Friday evening, possibly just before the junior section. We met in the church hall, now long gone, it was at the top of Vellore road, now the last house on the way up on the left. An old and musty building, we played games and I can remember making things out of cardboard boxes and painting them. As I grew older I was admitted to the bigger boys junior section. I can't really remember much about this time, but it seemed always night time and raining. All through this time I was attending Sunday school and remember Anne Mitchell and Elaine Galloway as being in both the Sunday school and in charge of the BB's. In fact I recall one day heading to Elaine's mum's house and making scones, about a dozen of us in the small kitchen in Bellevue. With a Rayburn stove!

After a while I was old enough to join the real brigade, the seniors. 1st Muiravonside. Almost as soon as I became a senior, the meetings, and I think it was twice a week, Monday and Thursday nights, moved to Cairnmount, the church at the very top of Maddiston, again, now very expensive homes! Thursday was parade night and Monday was loosely called "band practice", on account of some boys that could blow a bugle quite well and others could mummy daddy, mummy daddy on the snare drum. Again through most of this time I was attending Bible classes at Muiravonside Church.

As part of our uniform we wore a dark brown leather belt with a large brass buckle, obviously we had to have it gleaming! My belt was brand new, much to my dismay, no one else had done the hard work of "bulling" the leather and no matter how much polish or spit I applied I never got that dark shiny finish so beloved of

our inspecting officers! You know who you are! On Thursday evening the smell in our house was dinner mixed with leather polish and brasso. Our shoes, for we only wore boots to school, were gleaming with little spots of black shoe polish deposited on many surfaces in the kitchen, much to my mums annoyance! One brush for on and the other for off! I still know how to do it.

We walked to Cairnymount , no matter what the weather, about 4 of us from our street. Up the steel houses as we called them, inevitably getting into the burn for a wee play! We would get there early as the bigger boys had MOPEDS! Bright yellow things that almost went 30mph! As smaller boys we were allowed to stand close and dream!

Into the hall and line up, tallest to the right and shortest to the left, to your teams, fall out!

Many games were played and enjoyed, including crab football, the medicine ball, an evil leather ball that weighed about 40 tonnes, or so it felt! Best of all was the horse or buck as we called it! A wooden thing built in sections, so the height could be changed, painted blue. We would run down the hall, from the front door it seemed as fast as we could, hit the spring board and soar gracefully over the horse, performing delicate turns and twists, or so it was supposed to be, more often we / I would lumber up jump off the springboard and clatter across the top, ankles just managing to find the least padded parts!

Then a short break in proceedings and we found our way to the long gone Harold's shop, a bag of boiled sweets, cola cubes, wine gums and back to the hall to try and stand to attention with a bag of boiled sugar slowly gelling in your best school trouser pockets!

I think I can remember some staff members standing in the church pulpit addressing us all. We sung the BB song, sure and steadfast, prayed and sung other hymns there too.

On the first Sunday of every month we were on church parade, uniform needed the addition of our white haversack, a great colour for small boys! Again the brass button involved copious amounts of brasso. We met in a barn on Gordon Taylors farm, we all as far as I can remember walked there, no matter the weather, because the bus that did run on a Sunday was too late for us, although it normally managed to get in time for the service. We formed up and marched in perfect unison (!) along the road, across the "ministers brig" and along to the Kirk. We had a bugle and snare drum band and carried a flag, our own standard, 1st Muiravonside. We formed up next to the church entrance and fell out, but we weren't allowed in the main entrance, we came in via the side entrance and sat on the first 3 rows of pews. Our flags, there must have been another, perhaps the Queens colours and ours, were placed against the wall.

Perhaps it's just my imagination but the church always seemed full. After the service, we remained seated until again the side door was opened, we reformed and I think we marched back to the farm but to be honest my memory is a bit hazy there. Perhaps we just fell out at the church car park.

At Remembrance services we paraded to the cemetery and watched ever dwindling numbers of men stand rigidly, proudly to attention to the last post. An image that I still remember to this day.

After service we again walked home, en mass, sometimes with parents but more often not. The mere thought of this today would have health and safety professionals running scared! It wasn't just children but other parishioners who would walk to and fro the church, like I said there was a bus, an Alexander's double decker, Sunday service that if you missed you had to wait an hour for! So few cars then that it could turn in the car park without bother. Sometimes a group of boys would walk into the cemetery and look at names and find their relatives graves, or just look.

At Graeme High School I wore my lapel badge with a certain pride and it was common for boys from other areas who also wore it to ask where you came from and which company you belonged to.

Badges, the mainstay of any movement, were prolific, although perhaps not always available. I can remember however, how to tie a triangular bandage, to hold a suspected broken arm, with the knot tied so that it fits into the soft bit of your shoulder so as not to cause discomfort. In fact I think the first aid manual might still be in my dad's kitchen! We marched, and marched and marched until some of us got not too bad at it! We could left wheel, right wheel, slow march, quick march, by the left, eyes right, eyes left and do a fancy round the hall and kriss kross, figure of eight in the middle!

Sports, now I never really got into football, not then not now so I was a weirdo. But, I am sure that we had a team that went and played somewhere else, many names are coming flooding back now as I remember all of this. I won't mention these names incase they have all become multi millionaires and ticked the no publicity box! We made air fix kits, we painted by numbers and we played in the band. Oh and once a year we went on camp!

The year I went, we went to Berwick upon Tweed, another country! We travelled down on a bus to England and sung all the songs that only Scottish boys heading for England sing. We were staying in the local church hall. We were given a space on the floor for our sleeping bag and belongings and that was it! Toilets along there, kitchen along there. Both were equally important, we had to make our own food! Well not quite but it felt like I personally peeled enough potatoes to feed the entire British army! We sat at huge long tables with numbers and ate our actually pretty good meals with our metal camping knives and forks, of our enamel plates and bowls and drunk tea or

juice from enamel mugs! After each course we were called forward via our table numbers for the next. At the end each table was given its turn to wash its dishes and stuff .

We paraded through the streets on the Sunday to the local church, we played cricket on a green, well it was England! We bathed in the swimming pool, a brand new semi circular pool that we queued up to be first into and broke the smooth surface. We went to Lindesfarne or the holy isle, via a cause way, in an ancient bus. A truly stunning island that I remember as being almost all sandy beaches with a great castle sticking out! I really must take my family there. Berwick seemed as far a way then as Australia does now, no mobile phones in fact I don't think that my mum and dad even had a land line! I think I sent a postcard! It never rained there and the beaches were endless, we walked along the town walls singing Scotland The Brave. Others used to ask us, where is Muiravonside We all proudly knew exactly where it was and why we were called 1st Muiravonside company.

Rose tinted specs? Maybe, but that's what the boys brigade meant to me.

I've mentioned staff, and officers but haven't mentioned their names, they know who they are and how much pleasure they all gave to me and as I grow and have my own son to entertain I know how hard it can be, to do it on a grand scale, for lots of very different boys some in difficult situations, to be there every week, to still work and have a family, to manage to get a wee bit in the local paper, BB notes every week, to take 20 odd boys away from home for a fortnight or so and make it so great that almost 40 years later I remember it as if it were last year, takes just that wee bit more than is expected.

I didn't stay with the BB's, I became the same as too many young men, a bit silly! But, the BB's never really left me. In later life when I ended up working in Steins brickwork, who should be there riding the kiln transfer cars but our old Captain Mitchell. I hadn't seen him for many years but as soon as he saw me "Hiya son, how you doing Scott?" I only had one Captain to remember but he had many boys!

It is not until later you can understand how much these men and women, for there were some, actually gave to 1st Muiravonside Company Boys Brigade.

Scott Queen
Muiravonside Parish Church





South Africa Link



I am pleased to be able to tell you that Sandra & Graham made it safely back to South Africa after an all-too-brief (or so it appeared) visit to the UK. Unfortunately, a combination of the severe bad weather and Graham feeling unwell for some of his time here meant that they didn't manage to do as many things, go as many places or see as many people as they would have liked.

Graham has asked me to pass on his apologies to those people he didn't get to see or contact while he was here. Maybe next year! On that note, the good news is that the Duncans' hope that future visits will take place earlier in the year - perhaps September or October - which should make things easier for all concerned.

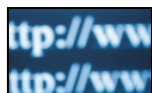
Ivar Struthers



A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake and their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson.

'If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.'

Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, ' Ryan, you be Jesus!'



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, an advantage of using the internet is that you would receive the magazine in colour. It could also be enlarged if you need to see it in large print.



The Muiravonside Choral Society had its first practice in September 2008. A programme of modern, old favourites and secular hymns and songs was compiled. Due to unforeseen circumstances our accompanist was unable to play for our first concert and the Reverend Glendon Macaulay stepped in and the inaugural concert went ahead. The weather was not in our favour, snow although suitable for the season caused some problems, but we had a very successful evening raising funds for the Church which we have done since this concert.

It was then time to prepare for our Spring Concert and Glendon very kindly agreed to be our accompanist but he was caught by the Icelandic Ash in Spain just before the performance. We began to think we were jinxed but Jacqueline Dignan stepped in and we had another good concert.

By now new members from our linked Parish, Blackbraes and Shieldhill joined us and our numbers swelled. Jacqueline is now our accompanist to whom we are eternally grateful; she has so much experience and knowledge of choirs. The Christmas Concert was upon us and with the extra voices sung in parts and were therefore able to be much more adventurous with our repertoire. There was snow on the ground again but we had another great concert even with the water frozen in the vestry and the logistical issues that entailed.

As the saying goes 'onwards and upwards' we are preparing for our next concert on the 31st March 2011. With more new members we are branching out to sing Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat. Practice is well underway.

Thanks go to Jacqueline and the members of the choir for their enthusiasm and dedication.

Jan Strudwick

Introduction



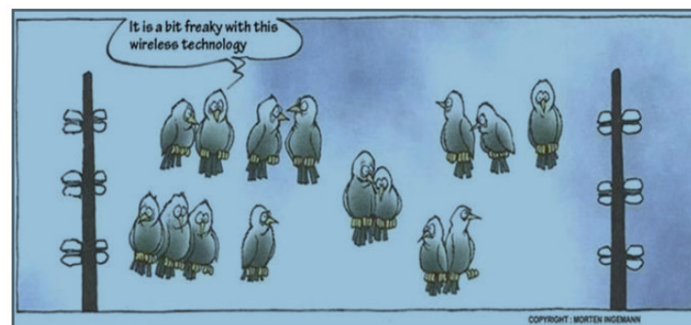
Hello, let me introduce myself. My name is Mrs Elizabeth Orr, but everyone calls me Liz. I live in Bathgate; am married and have two daughters aged 32 and 29. I worship at Bathgate High Parish Church. I have been an elder for almost 22 years and keep active in Board and Session; Choir; Monthly Prayer Meeting and Coffee Morning; Church Link for "Bathgate Churches Together" events. Within the community I help out in the Bathgate Christian Bookshop and The Fairtrade Steering Group.

I was Convenor of the Nominating Committee during the 2 year vacancy in Bathgate High and am grateful to God for calling the Rev Murdo Macdonald to be our new minister, his induction having taken place on 15th January 2011.

Over the last few years, I have sensed God calling me to serve him in some form of ministry and I am exploring that call through my placement at Blackbraes and Shieldhill and Muiravonside churches. I started on Sunday 14th November 2010 and will be with you until early July. From day one it has been such a joy, for I have been shown warmth and friendship and that has made such a difference to me. Over the weeks I have been worshipping with you, I am getting to know you and trying to remember names.

During my placement I will be doing some pastoral visits within the community and hopefully a visit to the hospital. I have been with Louise to The Haining Nursing home for a short service and hope to do this again. I will also look forward to going with Louise at some point when she is visiting Whitecross Primary School. I am very grateful to Louise for her help and encouragement and enjoy our regular meetings. I know my time will pass quickly and I trust The Lord will confirm my calling. Meanwhile I am blessed where he has placed me.

Liz Orr



Notes From a Shieldhill Garden



"Some seeds fell in good soil, and the plants produced corn; some produced a hundred grains, others sixty, and others thirty." Mat. Ch13 v1

Like all Shieldhill gardens, this garden is muddily squelchy. There is the hope of spring being around the corner with the bravest of bulbs poking through the ground.

Spring is the time for sowing seeds, especially if you grow vegetables or bedding plants. Many of the plants that are in my garden have been grown from seeds. I collect seeds, and have increased some of the flowers in the garden this way. Recently I found an eggcup with some tiny black seeds in it – the label missing. I have sown them and tiny shoots have appeared. I am expecting them to grow into Meconopsis – tall Himalayan poppies.

These tiny seeds have always held a fascination for me. A seed is a package that has everything that a plant will need to begin life. Some of the biggest plants begin with the smallest of seeds.

In recent weeks The Guild has been focussing on the global Aids/HIV epidemic and the problem that this causing in some of the poorest corners of the world. Both Sandra Mathers and Monica MacDonald have told of their first hand experience of this disease. As a congregation we heard how Monica's charity gives a better life and hope to young people who are affected by this disease – a little seed that has flourished.

Sandra painted a very strong picture of how this disease was spreading. In some cases, misguided belief of how the disease could be cured and the low regard that men have for children and women in some societies was making the problem worse. However, she went on to tell us about some of the Church of Scotland projects that were making a difference to some communities, helping these people to help themselves. Little seeds.

Meconopsis seeds were collected in the foothills of The Himalayans by intrepid Victorian plant collectors and some of the first seed to arrive in Britain ended up in The Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. They have a stunning display of them in the May and June.

This blue poppy is the emblem for Gardening Scotland, the gardening show that is held at Ingleston at the Beginning of June and there are always lots of them for sale.

They grow well in Shieldhill. The most common one is a biennial plant and so collecting some seed insures that there is a supply of replacement plants. I tried to propagate this plant from a packet of seed but without success. Fresh seed works best. This is a plant that produces lots of tiny black seeds a little of which goes a long way.

The cold weather always brings a variety of birds into gardens, especially if food is available. We have been visited by a few bramblings, they usually accompany chaffinches and look quite like male chaffinches, some bull finches and a few redpolls.

So happy garden watching
Rena

Poetry Corner

Not So Cautious Optimism

I most certainly don't want to tempt fate,
perhaps this should be said in a hushed tone.
Or even safer still not to engage in this debate,
if it comes back we will certainly be forlorn.
Also much sadder than we have been off late,
but I think all the snow may finally have gone!

"Oh no!" you may shout, "Don't say this out loud!"
you know what will certainly happen now.
Clouds will rush in covering like a shroud,
and orders will be issued, "Standby snowplough!"
Grit stocks will be hastily debated out loud,
to see how much coverage they can allow.

I certainly don't want to do anything rash,
as last traces of ice cling tenaciously here.
And I certainly don't want to make a hash,
by sabotaging any future Christmas cheer.
But white Christmases I can say with panache,
are absolutely definitely not dreamt of this year!

God in his wisdom has other plans in store,
so do not despair because it's not all forlorn.
Spring is almost here with us and what's more,
until sunshine comes to visit it will not be long.
So I think I can say throwing caution out the door,
that all the snow may have finally gone!

By Drew Robertson, Blackbraes & Shieldhill

If only

If only I'd been able,
to dictate my way of life.

If only I had courage,
to run away from strife.

If only I was capable
to right the wrongs of 'Man',

If only I was leader,
not an 'also ran'.

If only I could rule the World,
And guide the human race.

If only I could guarantee,
It would be a better place.

If only I had patience,
To count all grains of sand.

If only I could stop a while,
And try to understand.

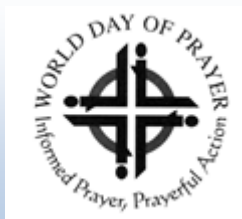
If only I'd been by your side,
When you cried out in pain.

If only now, you could return,
I wouldn't feel inane.

If only I could ponder,
Allay my senseless fears.

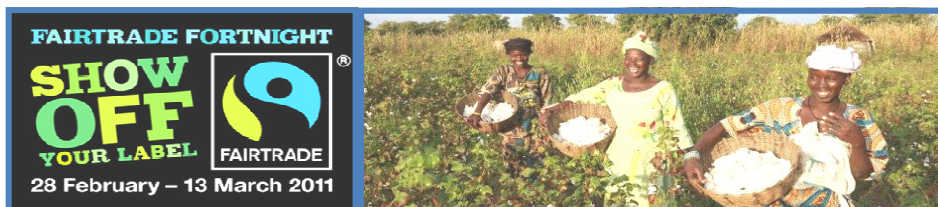
If only I would trust in God.
He's had it planned for years.....

Written by Andrew McDermott
Muiravonside Parish Church



World Day of Prayer Service

Friday 4 March at 7pm
Laurieston Parish Church



Trade Justice for Cotton Farmers

Conventional trade just isn't working for the world's poor. Despite international trade being worth \$10 million a minute, poor countries account for only 0.4% of this trade. Cotton is a stark example of the effect of unequal trade rules in global trade on people's lives. For many poor people in West and Central Africa, cotton is the only viable way to earn an income so even small price declines can mean families struggle to meet basic needs like food, medicines, schoolbooks and tools.

Despite ups and downs, over the last 40 years, the real price of cotton has fallen significantly. Recent falls can be directly attributed to huge subsidies granted by rich governments to their own cotton farmers. The US in particular has a big impact on global prices as the world's second largest cotton producer and is by far the largest exporter. US producers currently receive about \$4.2bn in subsidies, equivalent to the total value of their crop.

Subsidies mean farmers in developing countries – despite having lower production costs than their American counterparts – are not able to compete with the artificially lowered prices. Experts estimate global cotton prices would be 15% higher if all subsidies were eliminated. In the meantime Fairtrade offers shoppers a chance to choose an alternative vision of how trade can work and what it can achieve.

In the run up to the likely World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Meeting in late 2011, join us in calling for cuts to unfair, trade-distorting cotton subsidies. Watch out for campaign updates and actions throughout 2011, including our cotton trade report, The Great Cotton Stitch-Up, from www.fairtrade.org.uk/cotton

'Fairtrade is a great example of the power of ordinary people to be 'good news to the poor'. Last year I visited a brand new health centre built by a local co-operative in Ivory Coast on the strength of the extra money they receive because of Fairtrade. The co-op members were rightly proud of their achievement, which is already saving lives.'

Most Revd and Rt Hon Dr John Sentamu Archbishop of York



Church Guild



December was a very disappointing month for the Guild. The traditional Christmas party with Santa Clause and the Christmas outing to the panto were cancelled because of the severe weather conditions. Many were stressed trying to battle the ice and snow on the roads and pavements.

On reflection however, there were positives during that bad spell. Snow brought a beautiful quietness all around. Winter trees, fields, gardens and houses were picturesque. Our church services on Sundays always took place. We had more opportunities to enjoy reading or to make the effort to write these long overdue letters. More time could be given to hobbies or we could just relax and watch a favourite film on the box.

However, we were happy to return to some normality and on 19 January members and friends enjoyed a Scots evening led by a very capable MC David Mc Clements.

As the session nears its end our March meetings are as follows:-

2 March	Dr Mary Henderson
16 March	ABM/ Topic Night
30 March	Music with Peter McQuade

"Where we goin' I aint certain" but what is certain is that the summer outing is planned for Saturday 30 May. The outing is open to members and friends. Watch this space for further information.

Although this session is drawing to a close, our thoughts are already turning to next session. Being positive as we plan, we know that God is always with us. We listen to him, we talk to him and he helps us. We are ever mindful of "Whose we are and Whom we serve"

Lorna

Rendezvous Diary

9 March	An entertainment by Shieldhill school children
27 April	Zetland Entertainers



Pastor's business card

A new pastor was visiting in the homes of his parishioners. At one house, it seemed obvious that someone was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks at the door. Therefore, he took out a business card and wrote, '**Revelation 3:20**' on the back of it and stuck it on the door.

When the 'Offering' was processed the following Sunday, he found that his card had been returned. Added to it was this cryptic message, '**Genesis 3:10.**' Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he broke up in gales of laughter.

Revelation 3:20 begins, 'Behold I stand at the door and knock.'

Genesis 3:10 reads, 'I heard your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, for I was naked.'

Submitted by Andrew McDermott, Muiravonside Parish Church

Emergency Telephone Numbers (These are more effective than 999)

When-

You are sad, phone **John 14**

You have sinned, phone **Psalms 51**

You are facing danger, phone **Psalms 91**

People have failed you, phone **Psalms 27**

It feels as though God is far from you, phone **Psalms 139**

Your faith needs stimulation, phone **Hebrews 11**

You are alone and scared, phone **Psalms 23**

You are worried, phone **Matthew 8: 19-23**

You are hurt and critical, phone **1 Corinthians 13**

You wonder about Christianity, phone **2 Corinthians 5: 15-18**

You feel like an outcast, phone **Romans 8: 31-39**

You are seeking peace, phone **Matthew 11: 25-30**

It feels as if the world is bigger than God, phone **Psalms 90**

You need Christ like insurance, phone **Romans 8: 1-30**

You are leaving home for a trip, phone **Psalms 121**

You are praying for yourself, phone **Psalms 87**

All these numbers may be phoned directly.

No operator assistance is necessary.

All lines to heaven are available 24 hours a day,

Feed your faith, and doubt will starve to death.

Submitted by Rita Braes, Muiravonside Parish Church

Egg Decorating Ideas

Here are some ideas that will help you to decorate your Easter eggs.

First of all, you will have to boil an egg until it is hard.
If you want a brown egg, you can put either a tea bag or some onionskins in the pan to boil with the egg.

Once the egg is cool you can decorate it. Here are some ideas.

Striped and Checkered Eggs

Put rubber bands or masking tape around your egg, to make patterns. Dip your egg into food dye and allow to dry. When completely dry, take off the rubber bands or tape and see your striped or checkered egg.

Marbled Eggs

Dab different colors of dye or paint with cotton balls or cotton buds onto your boiled eggs. Let dry.

Egg Heads

Decorate with wool for hair, by gluing into place. Draw a face on your egg with markers or crayons.

Fingerprints

Using finger-paint, dip your fingers in paint and thumbprint or fingerprint your egg.

If you dye eggs at your house for Easter, save the shells after peeling them. You can make an egg shell mosaics with them. Draw a shape, design or animal on a white sheet of heavy paper. Glue the eggshells onto your picture, creating an artistic mosaic.

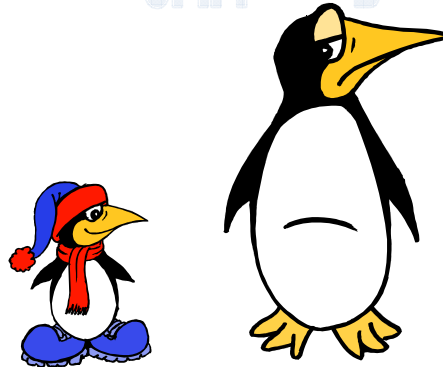
Boys and girls this is your page.
Give your stories and poems to Yvonne if you
want to put them in the magazine.
Happy egg rolling!

Penguin Pancakes

Prep time: 10 mins
Cook time: 15 mins
Amount made: 4-6 servings

Ingredients

125g of flour
1 egg
3 tablespoons of white sugar
300ml of semi-skimmed milk
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
¼ teaspoon salt



Directions

We recommend having a more experienced master of the kitchen (a parent or guardian) help you with the instructions below.

Preheat a frying pan to medium heat. When it warms, gather these items: a bowl, a whisk, scales, measuring spoons, and a pancake flipper.

Measure all the ingredients carefully and mix them together in a bowl with a whisk.

Pour batter into the frying pan in the shape of a penguin. When bubbles stop appearing on top, use your pancake flipper to flip it over. Cook until pancake is golden brown, and then remove it from the pan.

Now it's time to serve them up! Once your pancakes have cooled enough to eat, add your favourite toppings and dig in. Or if you want to be adventurous you could butter your pancakes whilst they're warm and let the butter melt.

Recipe by Kevin Allison who is a member of Muiravonside Church Sunday Club.

**It's nice to be important
but it's more important to be nice
*John Cassis***