

We have come to worship him

Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Parish Church
linked with
Muiravonside Parish Church
Winter 2011

From the Manse November 2011

'This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point out an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again.'

John Ch3, v16,17

The Message/Remix - The Bible in Contemporary Language

Dear friends.

Over these last few months, all of the churches in the Braes area have been meeting to discuss the ministry reduction and the way forward for the future. This is not an easy task as a reduction in ministry will have an effect upon us all. I am very aware that Traditional Parish Ministry where the minister lived in the village/town and served the one congregation is fast becoming a thing of the past. The church no longer has the finances to sustain this model of ministry. I believe that by the time I retire my role as a full-time ordained minister will be foreseeing multiple churches and parishes, and providing spiritual and pastoral support to the staff who will serve these churches which will include the new non-stipendiary part-time Ordained Local Ministers and Readers.

The future is uncertain, but meantime amidst all of this uncertainty, the Spirit continues to move. Perhaps it will be in our weakness that we will really become strong? Perhaps it will be in our diminished size, that we will become more distinctive? Perhaps through this time of change a form of church will evolve, beyond our wildest dreams, which will be exciting and dynamic and better serve the needs of 21st century Scotland.

I know that God has called me to serve his church as a minister in a difficult but exciting time, and I have no doubt at all, that he is very much with us in all of this change, uncertainty and worry. Meantime I want to thank you all for your continued support to our two churches. Thank you for your monetary offering which allows us to maintain our beautiful buildings and pay for the ministry provision that we presently have. The Church of Scotland is the largest social care provider in Scotland supporting people with Dementia, drug addiction, post-natal depression, those who are victims of human trafficking to name but a few. Your offering also ensures that the Church can continue to provide help for the weak and vulnerable within Scotland and overseas.

As a minister I am never comfortable raising the issue of money, as I know how generous many of you are and how difficult it is for everybody at the

moment in a recession, but just a small rise of 50p per week from each member would give each church an extra £3-4000 per year which would make such a difference to our income and allow us to do more fellowship and outreach projects and activities, work with the children and young people, and also help to keep our sanctuaries windproof and watertight.

I also thank our elders and members for giving of their time and talents, many of whom give of their time and talents sacrificially,

for the benefit of our churches and the wider community. There are fewer folks available now to fulfil the key roles within churches, therefore please remember all those who take on extra responsibility in our churches in your prayers, as the work that they do is priceless and precious.

Finally I urge all of you to continue to pray for our churches, please remember Blackbraes and Shieldhill and Muiravonside in your daily prayers, and to ask God to continue to lead us on and guide us in his way and will. As we approach Christmas, if you are able, please try and come along to one or some of our special services. Your presence within church is a great encouragement both to myself and the congregations. If you have not been for a few months or even several years, then please do not worry. You will receive the warmest of welcomes and your presence will bless and enrich our congregations and feel free to bring along a family member or a friend. There are many beautiful services taking place over Christmas, the Christingle which the children adore, the Carol Services, and the Christmas Family Services. Come and make space for some time of quiet and reflection amidst all of the busyness and hear God's voice speak to you within your heart.

The Gospel is such good news. Hope for this life and the life to come, strength to cope with daily living, and just knowing that we are loved by a God who will never let us go. So if you can, please come and experience that amazing love for yourself this Christmas. I can promise you that once you experience God's love, life is never the same again. Nothing in this world can ever match it. God's love, so perfectly heard in the cry of the new born baby Jesus. God with us, Emmanuel, the light of the world.

So if you are able, please come along to our services, and be amazed that God would do such a wonderful thing.

Every blessing to you all this special Christmas season. Your minister and friend.

Louise



Please note:

All the services will be recorded so if you are unable to get to Church, then you can receive a recording of the service in CD format and enjoy it in the comfort of your own home by telephoning Mr Bill McKinnon - 636639 for Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church and by telephoning Mr Jackie Napier - 713258 for Muiravonside Parish Church.

If you do not have a CD player please let us know and we can provide one.

Weddings

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

Muiravonside Parish

Elaine Kidd and Cameron Findlay on Saturday 10th September

Fiona Gunton and Andy Stark on Sunday 16th October

New Members

'Jesus said to Peter 'Feed my sheep, take care of my lambs.'

Muiravonside Parish

Mr John Jones on Sunday 30th October

Funerals

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

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Mrs Gwen McArthur Mrs Robina Frew Mrs Linda Muirhead Mr David MacKay

Muiravonside Parish

Mrs Margaret Storrar
Mr George Bryson
Mr William Roberts
Mrs Christine Davies
Mrs Isabelle Arneil





23rd Psalm - Shepherds Version Submitted by Rita Braes - Muiravonside

Wha is ma shepherd, weel I ken, The Lord Himself is he, He leads me whaur the girse is green, And burnies quate that be.

Aft times I fain as tray wad gang, An wanner far awa, He fin's me oot, He pits me richt, An brings me hame an a.

Tho I pass through the gruesome cleuch, Fine I ken he is near, His muckle crook will be defen, Sae I hae nocht tae fear.

Ilk comfort whi ilka sheep could need, His thochfu' care provides, Tho wolves an dogs may prowl aboot, In safety me he hides.

Hi s guidness and his mercy baith, Nae doot will bide wi me, While faulded on the fields o time, O'r a' eternity.

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.

Blackbraes and Shieldhill and Muiravonside Diary

Sun 12 Nov, 10am	Brownie coffee morning at Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish church hall
Sat 12 Nov, 7pm	McRoberts Male Voice Choir at Blackbraes and Shieldhill - proceeds to Monica MacDonald's charity - Friends of Place of Restoration
Sun 13 Nov, 9:45am	Short service at Shieldhill War Memorial
Sun 13 Nov, 10am	Blackbraes and Shieldhill Remembrance Service
Sun 13 Nov, 11:30am	Muiravonside Remembrance Service in church
Sun 13 Nov, 2:30pm	Wedding of Gayle Campbell and Steven Wilson - Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church
Tue 15 Nov, 11am	Prayer meeting at Louise Park's house
Wed 16 Nov, 7:30pm	Blackbraes and Shieldhill Guild - speaker- Street Pastors
Sun 20 Nov, 10am	Service at Blackbraes and Shieldhill conducted by elders
Sun 20 Nov, 3pm	Annual Memorial Service at Muiravonside Parish Church for those who have lost a loved one
Sat 26 Nov, 11-2pm	Blackbraes and Shieldhill Christmas Brunch in the church hall
Sat 26 Nov, 2:30pm	Christmas Pantomime for young people, Dobbie Hall, Larbert
Wed 30 Nov, 7:30pm	St Andrew's concert featuring 4 th Bridges Accordian Band in Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church
Thu 1 Dec, 7pm	Santa Drive at Maddiston Community Centre
Sat 3 Dec, 11-1pm	Muiravonside Christmas Fayre at Whitecross Primary School
Sun 4 Dec, 10am	Communion Service at Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Wed 7 Dec, 1:30pm	Rendez-Vouz Christmas Party in Blackbraes and Shieldhill Church Hall

Wed 7 Dec, 7:30pm	Congregational Board and Kirk Session Meeting in Blackbraes and Shieldhill Church Hall
Sun 11 Dec, 3:30pm	Muiravonside Choral Society Christmas Concert in Muiravonside Parish Church
Mon 12 Dec, 2pm	Short Carol Service in Muiravonside Parish Church for those unable to sit for the duration of a normal service
Tue 13 Dec, 11am	Prayer group meeting and Christmas lunch
Tue 13 Dec, 7:30pm	Muiravonside Kirk Session meeting held in the Session House
Wed 14 Dec, 7:30pm	Blackbraes and Shieldhill Guild Christmas Party in Church hall
Sun 18 Dec, 10am	Family Nativity Service at Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Sun 18 Dec 11:30am	Family Christmas Service at Muiravonside
Sun 18 Dec, 4pm	Christingle Service at Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Sat 24 Dec, 7pm	Christingle Service at Muiravonside
Sat 24 Dec, 11pm	Watchnight Service at Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Sat 24 Dec, 11pm	Watchnight Service at Muiravonside
Sun 25 Dec, 10am	Family Christmas Service at Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Sun 25 Dec, 11:30am	Family Christmas Service at Muiravonside
Sun 1 Jan, 10am	Service of lessons and carols at Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church
Sun 1 Jan, 11:30am	Service of lessons and carols at Muiravonside Parish Church

prews view

The Last Person in Scotland

When I was seven years old, I came home after a holiday in Arbroath, totally convinced that while I was there, looking far out to sea, I had seen the coast of Denmark!

This amazing event happened on an extremely clear day whilst I was walking along the sandy beach and gazing out to sea. Once I got back home, I announced this remarkable piece of news to my best friend with an air of complete sincerity and in the hushed tones of someone divulging a great secret of earth shattering proportions. This was a secret that I was simply dying to tell him and just couldn't hold it in any longer! My friend had known me since we were three. He also was aware that I had never played a trick on anyone in my life and wasn't prone to practical jokes or telling tall tales. As a result, he was totally fascinated by my piece of news.

Of course, at this early stage of our lives, neither of us knew anything about scientific matters, such as the curvature of the earth, or technical things like the maximum line of sight. This meant we were both totally wowed. We weren't in the least bit aware about the impossibility of sighting land which is near enough four hundred miles from Scotland. My friend was dying to know more, so this called for a special conference! There was an old shed at the bottom of his garden which was a sort of den, where we could talk about really cool events like this. Suitably kitted out with a couple of bottles of juice and some bars of chocolate, we retreated there for a briefing.

After he pressed me further, I told my friend that I had been looking out to sea, hoping to catch sight of any fishing boats that happened to be there at that time. I did indeed spot a few small craft a good bit out on the horizon. They looked as if they were stationary and had cast their nets. From what I can remember, it was at that point I had happened to look slightly further over to the right and saw what I perceived as a glimmer of land, on the extreme edge of my vision, very far out and almost over the horizon. I was totally intrigued and like any inquisitive little boy, I screwed up my eyes and peered with all my might, hoping that this action would make the land appear closer. I also tried closing my eyes, then opening them again, just like they do in those films set in the desert, when people think they have seen a mirage. But no – the barely visible land was still there.

I probably didn't express this to my friend at the time in quite the same words, because as an adult, I am most likely remembering my description in a more complex way and unconsciously translating it into more complicated terms.

However, the gist of it was that the piece of distant coastland seemed shiny, as if in a sort of haze. It also somehow gave me an impression of being rocky, rather like a small cliff or promontory that was jutting out from the rest of the land. This lead me towards the conclusion that because the land was sticking out a bit so to speak, it provided me with the opportunity to be able just to make it out, tantalisingly far out to sea beyond the fishing boats.

A piece of evidence that convinced us even more, was when my friend suddenly had a brainwave and dashed indoors to get his globe of the world. We discovered that Scotland and Denmark looked very close to one another, with a very small piece of sea separating the two countries! This provided the definitive evidence! In our minds, we now had scientific proof - no less - that I had indeed spotted what was to us, an impossibly distant land from the shores of Arbroath!

Of course, once I was a little older, I realised the impossibility of all of this and what I had really seen was probably the Bell Rock which lies quite a distance off the east coast and is sometimes visible from that part of the world when the conditions are right. However, the experience did leave me with a fascination about just how far it is possible to view distant objects with the naked eye, such as being able to see Goat Fell on the Isle of Arran, over sixty miles away, from the top of Ben Cleuch in the Ochils – a feat which is genuinely possible on a very clear day.

I had long forgotten this childhood memory about "seeing Denmark" until a few years ago, when due to my job, I found myself once more beside the North Sea. This time, I was further north at Peterhead. I had a couple of days stopover there and was walking along the harbour and shoreline at Keith Inch, very early on a beautifully crystal clear morning and gazing out to an unusually calm, cornflower blue sea again. I didn't see Denmark, but smiled as I remembered that long ago day.

When my memory faded and was stored away again, my mind returned back to the present and as I walked across the rocks towards the sound of the gently lapping waves, that seemed so soothing and almost somnolent, one thing did strike me which was just as thrilling. I remembered that Peterhead happens to be on the most easterly point on the Scottish mainland and here I was, standing right on the very edge of the land, practically stepping in the water.

It occurred to me, that as far as the mainland was concerned, I was the very last person in Scotland!

The shore was deserted at this early time of day and as I looked over the sea towards the horizon, I realised that the first person I would encounter on land

would be almost four hundred miles away. As I pondered on this thought, I was struck as always about just how vast this world is and the absolute beauty of what God created for us. I wondered if at that moment over in Denmark, someone was walking along a similar beach, looking over towards Scotland and contemplating the same thought — a person who speaks a different language, comes from a different culture, yet is absolutely the same, created in God's own image just like all of us.

As I was thinking about that and enjoying this unusually calm and sunny morning, the sort of morning which brings a smile to everyone's face and brings out the best in everyone, another thing struck me that was quite thrilling because it would give me a challenge. Just as anyone walking along at Keith Inch would be the last person in Scotland (on the mainland anyway,) the town of Peterhead would also have the accolade of having the very last church on the Scottish mainland as well! You'll be able to guess what I did next.

I set out to find it!

I love a challenge like this and was dying to see which church it would be. Would it be a Church of Scotland? I was secretly hoping it would! Or would it be another denomination whose congregation could boast of having this unusual nugget of information that they could add to their Welcome Pack? After a quick search around town and a consultation with the town's directory, I eventually found it on Merchant Street, just a short distance from the harbour.

And the winner was..... St. Peter's Episcopal Church!

What a nice wee church it was too, neatly sandwiched between a long row of terraced houses in the narrow street. The feature that enchanted me most was the beautiful stained glass windows. I stood for a few moments in the quiet sleepy street just soaking in the peace and tranquillity that the little church emanated. I then turned round to my left and looked towards the end of the street and the sea beyond. I thought again of a little boy, looking out to sea, screwing up his eyes, peering with all his might and somehow, for that magical moment, in his mind anyway, being granted the chance to see an enchanted and faraway land that he later found would be absolutely impossible to see from where he was standing.

I was again humbled by the hundreds of miles separating the last church in Scotland from the first church in Denmark. I whispered silently to God,

"How I wish I could see it."

It was at that moment I remembered something from the Scriptures that Jesus had said to his disciples in the book of Mark, Chapter 10 about a different matter, but could easily apply to my own situation,

"This is impossible for human beings but not for God; everything is possible for God." (Mark Ch10, verse 27.)

I delighted in the fact that God would be able to see Denmark from Scotland in the blink of an eye, even though I never could. He would be able to look across the vast sea in a twinkle and observe the church I so wanted to see. He would know exactly where it was. God's ability to see things knows no boundaries. His love knows no boundaries as well. The North Sea may seem large to me, but to him, it is just a tiny part of a world where he watches over every one of his creatures whom he loves and knows by name.

Each year, as Christmas approaches I often think that when people from all over the world unite to celebrate the birth of Jesus, for a time, sometimes the distance between countries and people doesn't seem so vast. It is as if for a short period of time, the world does become a smaller place and we can catch a glimpse of lands and people which normally are so far away, through unity in Christ. I find this thought greatly comforting.

You may be wondering, did I ever get to see the first church in Denmark?

God granted my wish.

Almost four hundred miles from Peterhead, at the most westerly point of Denmark, not far from the sea, lies this first church - the Oksby Gamle Kirke. It is a beautiful little church, not dissimilar in size to both Shieldhill and Muiravonside and lies in the village of Blåvand, near Esbjerg. It was so wonderful to see it. The little church looked very welcoming and is loved and cared for by the people in Blåvand, just as our two churches are loved and

cared for here. God didn't grant my wish by letting me look across the sea to Denmark. It is still impossible for human beings, although that would have been *really* exciting! Instead, through his grace, I was able to explore the coastline of Denmark by the use of the latest computerised satellite imagery that we now have.

I still felt very honoured and privileged to be able to "see Denmark" again and view its first church in this manner.



I would like to thank every member of this church for the warm welcome I have received since I started attending Muiravonside Parish.

I originally chose to come to Muiravonside Parish Church because I knew Margaret Grant. Margaret has always been a special person in my life and I thank her for sharing this experience with me.

In coming along to this church, I never could have imagined that I would meet so many more lovely people. People who would make me feel so relaxed and welcome. I have felt an immediate and wonderful sense of belonging since the first time I set foot in this church.

For this I thank every single person in the church today. I look forward to strengthening my faith in God now, and getting to know you all better.

Thank you for your kindness and may God bless you all. Nicola Hay

Christmas carols you've never heard before

No one can misinterpret a Christmas carol better than a child! Sing along with these new versions, if you can work out what they were meant to be in the first place!

- Deck the halls with Buddy Holly
- We three kings of porridge and tar
- * On the first day of Christmas, my tulip gave to me
- * He's makin' a list, chicken and rice
- Noel, Noel, Barney's the King of Israel
- * Frosty the Snowman is a ferret elf, I say
- Sleep in heavenly peas
- * You'll go down in Listerine
- * Oh, what fun it is to ride with one horse, soap and hay

Poetry Corner

Forgiveness

Forgiveness can be such a healing thing.

Old friendships saved and renewed.

Relationships restored with healing words.

God's presence and love within our hearts.

Infinite joy at being granted another chance.

Viewed afresh, compromises can be reached.

Endings which are happy rather than sad.

New beginnings and an exciting fresh start.

Exceptional peace of mind and relief.

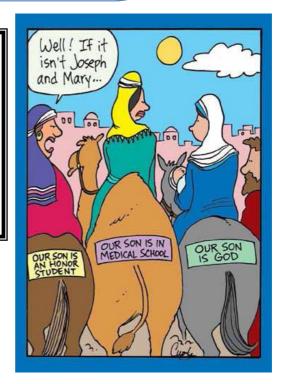
So much satisfaction in the life we lead.

Simply because we were able to forgive.

Margaret and George Brown would like to thank the minister and church members for the lovely flowers they received.

The knowledge that their son Don, who has been ill recently, was mentioned at the prayer meeting was much appreciated.

Ceilidh 16 March 2012 in the Welfare Hall, Shieldhill



Happy Birthday KJB!

Last Christmas, I received a delightful book. It was the 400th Anniversary Edition of the 1611 King James Bible. This set me thinking.

For four centuries, it has been an inspiration to people from all walks of life, poor, slaves and philanthropists alike. Although it was designed to be read aloud in 17 century churches, it is today the most often quoted book in existence and its influence has been incalculable. It has been updated several times since 1611 and has been the standard version of the bible used by the English speaking world for 400 years. Over the centuries generations of young people learned to read from the words and passages found in KJB as in the first verses of Genesis

"In the beginning God created the heaven and earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light and there was light."

For many of us, we became familiar with its poetic words at Sunday School. The first bible texts we learned and the stories we loved were written in the KJB. It means much to many today.

Melvin Bragg says it all

"The King James Bible is more than a religious text. It is a pillar of our language and literature and underpins our most cherished ideas. Such notions as democracy and human rights are firmly rooted in the great King James Bible"

Lorna Coulter



Guild Diary 2012



18 Jan	Hearing Dogs
1 Feb	Terrify No More Guild Project
5 Feb	Mary's Meals
29 Feb	Scots Night
14 Mar	Salvation Army Falkirk
28 Mar	ABM

Spot the Beadles!

In this photograph, which featured in the "Falkirk Herald" of 8th September 2011, are the Beadles from Blackbraes and Shieldhill, as well as Muiravonside Church. See if you can spot them before reading the names below the photo!



The Sunday School celebrate after climbing to the top of a big hill at Beecraigs Country Park



This year, The Fairtrade Foundation is asking everyone to take a step for Fairtrade.

It can be a simple step, like swapping your tea to Fairtrade, or a bigger step, like asking everyone in your office to do it too. You'll be joining thousands of others all over the UK when you take a step for Fairtrade. Make it as inventive, daring, funny or messy as you like. Every step counts for millions of farmers, workers and their communities in developing countries who urgently need a better deal from trade.



Take a step in 2012 begins in Fairtrade Fortnight from 27 February – 11 March 2012.



Compassion

'Compassion' is about releasing children from poverty in Jesus' name.

When I attended Spring Harvest in April 2011 with my family and my Church family I was moved by the plight of the children, children who have nothing at all. In my head a voice told me I must do something. This voice attached itself to me like glue. I came up with the idea that the church could sponsor a child.

I organised this project and 'Compassion' sent me a little boy to sponsor: Romain Wendla Sida Nana from Burkina Faso, born on 1st September 2005. In this little boy there is hope for him and his family.

I thank each and every one of you for sponsoring this child in Jesus' name.

Love Carolyn Marshall



Notes From a Shieldhill Garden

S.

'Let the water be filled with many kinds of living beings, and let the air be filled with birds." Genises chapter 1, verse 20

As quite a few of you know, I spend some of my time counting birds. For the last 15 years or so I have been counting the birds that come into the garden and sending the results to The British Trust For Ornithology under their Garden Bird Count scheme. Many doors have opened from this and I now regularly count birds as part of a BTO survey. When I go bird watching nowadays, I always count the birds that I see because I can add the birds that I see as a roving counter.

Well, as I said, one thing leads to another.

Since 1971, the number of house sparrows has declined by 71%. Quite a lot was known about what was happening on farmland and so the BTO were asked to help with surveying urban areas. It came as a bit of surprise to me that sparrows were becoming scarce but this appears to be more of a problem in England than it is here.

The BTO contacted their garden bird counters because they considered them to be the best people to count sparrows. They were particularly keen to engage Scottish residents because we still have plenty of house sparrows. I was asked to count sparrows in a corner of Shieldhill. My patch was the west end of the village, from Mr and Mrs Smith's house out to the old swing park, along the bing track as far as the farm and down past the clinic and along the streets behind the swing park. This survey lasted from 2003 to 2005.

The report has been published and I was interested to note that the findings matched up to my observations. I found most of my sparrows in gardens, in particular, gardens that were not too tidy. They liked gardens that had bushes, to hide in, and, as they are seedeaters, plants that had seed heads. The conclusion was that habitat is important to house sparrows and gardens play a big part in keeping sparrows happy. In urban areas waste patches and gardens play a part in the life of a happy sparrow.



Regularly there are about two dozen house sparrows in my garden. They are the only birds that are spunky enough to continue feeding after the starling flock arrive.

We are now well into the winter and putting out bird food will help all birds and seed will help the sparrows. It is important to keep all feeders clean. The tubes that birdseed goes into will come completely apart. Unlike what I have seen on some television programmes, the little bars that stick out will, with the help of a screw driver, will come off and this enables you to completely clean in all the spaces. I use warm water that has a spot of bleach in it and then rinse the feeder before drying and assembling.

The full house sparrow report can be seen on the BTO web site: bto.org.uk. The house sparrow is one of our common birds, one that is British enough to be part of folklore. After all, was it not the sparrow that killed cock robin?

Happy Christmas to you all from the inhabitants of this garden.

Rena Moore



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







Gourmet Bird Cake

You need:

Some lard or dripping a plastic pot
Breadcrumbs a piece of string
Handful of oats some bird seed

Chopped apple raisins

Cheese

You must have lard or dripping and breadcrumbs. You can add as many of the other things as you want and you may think of other things that can go into your bird cake.

This is what you do:

You may need an adult to help you.

Prepare your pot first. Make two holes, side by side, in the bottom of it. Feed the string through the holes so that there are two tails sticking out of the bottom of it. You will use this to hang your cake up.

Melt the fat in a pan on the cooker.

Mix all the things that you are putting into your bird cake into the fat and mix it

Press the mixture inside the pot and put it in the fridge until the fat in the cake is set.

Hang it up outside and see which birds visit it.

Merry Christmas from the Sunday School