



loanhead & bilston parish church news

creating a place for everyone

DECEMBER 2025





Dear Friends,

The last few months have been particularly poignant for Jane and I with my imminent retiral from Parish ministry. So often people have said, “that will be your last Remembrance Service/Youth service/ Gala Day,” but in many ways I think that has only fully hit me in the last few weeks as Christmas fast approaches. I hesitate to write it. My last Christmas with you and this, my last letter for a church magazine!

The other thing that people have said to me is, “I can’t believe you are retiring!” I have been keen to explain that while I will be retiring from parish ministry I will continue to be involved in different ways in church life through other work that I do. It is, for me, a step into a new season of ministry and while I am not quite sure what the shape of that will be I am looking forward to it.

We are also looking forward to moving into our new home in Bonnyrigg, which we are in the process of refurbishing. We intend to move there mid-January and my last Sunday will be Sunday 1st February.

Things have also been busy behind the scenes as we have been working towards the potential union with Roslin Church. You’ll find news about that later in the magazine but the elders from both churches have voted unanimously in favour of the union.

A congregational vote will take place after the service on Sunday 30th November.

These two things - my retiral and the union with Roslin - open up new possibilities and opportunities for the future that I believe are exciting, even if they bring with them a deal of uncertainty. The one thing I would say is this: Trust in God through all that lies ahead and keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. This will be crucial if you are to step into all that God has for you.

Before this though we have Christmas to look forward to and I look forward to sharing with you in our celebrations. Praying that our faith may be stirred in new ways as we celebrate the birth of Christ. Emmanuel – God with us.

Yours in Christ
Graham Duffin

Vacancy Process and Appointment of a New Minister

Rev Keith Mack, minister at Dalkeith: St John's & Newton has been appointed as Interim Moderator and he will guide the congregation through the vacancy.

Step 1

Complete a parish profile which details a bit about the parish, church life and aspirations for the future. A small group is being set up to do this.

Step 2

Form a Nominating committee. This will be done after a joint Service on Sunday 22nd March at Loanhead. There are 13 places on the nominating committee, which should include representatives from Bilston and Roslin as well as Loanhead.

Step 3

The nominating committee consider applicants. They would usually hear them lead worship as well as interview them.

Step 4

The committee choose what is called a "sole nominee." The person they believe God is calling to be the first minister of Loanhead, Bilston & Roslin Parish Church.

Step 5

The sole nominee preaches and leads worship at a joint service. All members get a vote for or against the sole nominee becoming the new minister.

Step 6

If elected by the congregation a service of induction is arranged by Presbytery. It is hard to put a definite time on this. The shortest time frame is around six months but it can take longer.

Sunday Services during the vacancy

Rev Allan Eaglesham has agreed to serve as Locum during the vacancy. Allan is a retired minister who worships at Gorebridge Parish Church. The current plan is for him to preach and lead worship on the first and third Sundays of the month. Laura McIntosh, Paul Anderson, Mary Millan and Norman Smith will all be involved in leading worship and preaching on the other Sundays.

We hope to keep the pattern of monthly communion services on the first Sunday of the month and Family Services on the 4th Sunday of the month. On a five Sunday month there will be a Joint Service.

Pastoral Work during the vacancy

Pastoral work, including funerals, will be covered by Mary Millan and Allan Eaglesham.



CELEBRATE

Christmas

with Origin Scotland

Join the Origin Band, Choir, Orchestra, Big Band and guests for a spectacular evening of Christmas cheer

Saturday 6th December 7.30pm

Usher Hall, Edinburgh

Sunday 7th December 7.30pm

Findlay Church, Glasgow

*tickets from originscotland.org
or call 0131 541 0117*



Scratch Nativity
Sunday 21st December



Over the last few years we have had a script for a Nativity Service and invited people of all ages to come to the service dressed up to take part. This year we are planning to do the same thing all over again – so come along and join us dressed up as a shepherd, wise man, angel, inn keeper, Mary or Joseph. Or push the boat out and come as a sheep or donkey. It gave us a great way of reminding everyone about the story that lies at the heart of Christmas.

Christmas Party
Sunday 21st December

Following our Nativity service we are planning a Christmas Party for all ages. Join us for something to eat and then some party games – with a visit from Santa to round things off.

Christingle Service – Bilston
Sunday 21st December

Our first Christingle service at Bilston was well attended and we are repeating this on the Sunday before Christmas.

Christingle and Watchnight services
Sunday 24th December

Both of these services have been popular over the years but with a very different flavour.

Our Watchnight service quiet and reflective, our Christingle service busy and poignant. Both give us time to stop and remember the joy that ours as we celebrate the birth of Christ. We hope you will join us for these if you can.

Office Bearers in the Union

Office bearers will be appointed or confirmed at the first Kirk Session meeting after the union.

Session Clerk

Audrey McLaren has agreed to be nominated as Session Clerk in the new union, serving a 3 year term. She will be supported by a team of three Assistant Session Clerks, one for each of the worship centres (Loanhead, Roslin and Bilston.)

Treasurer

Jackie Easton has agreed to be treasurer in the new union, supported by a team which includes Ian Gillespie, who will head up the Finance Workgroup along with Jeanette Millican (Currently treasurer at Roslin) and Liz Bain (Treasurer at Bilston.)

Fabric Convener

Campbell Chalmers will continue as Fabric Convener but with others appointed to look after the property matters at Roslin, Donald Bain doing this at Bilston.

Other Workgroup conveners from the Loanhead & Bilston workgroups will continue and we will look to develop work across all three parts of the new parish.



News from Bilston Mission Church



Sunday Services

Sunday services are held at 11.30am on the second and fourth Sunday's of the month.

The next Sunday services are:

23rd November - David Hogg

14th December - Mary Millan

28th December - David Hogg

Christingle Service

Bilston's Christingle Service will take place on Sunday, 21st December at 4pm followed by tea/coffee and mince pies. Please join us if you can.

Christmas Hampers

Christmas hampers are being put together for families or individuals in the community of Bilston who would appreciate these. Contributions for these can be brought along to Loanhead as well as Bilston. Church members will also be supporting the toy appeal organised by the local school to support families.

Positive Relationships

A few members continue to support the school in Bilston by going in to read with the children and positive relationships are being developed.

Thank-you

Thanks to all who supported the Soup Lunch on Saturday 4th October

Rwanda Update

Thank you to everyone who supported the Harvest Thanksgiving Soup Lunch. Just over £600 was raised for the church's work in Rwanda. This money is sufficient to pay a year's rent on a plot of land along with all the necessary tools, seeds and wages to cultivate it. The cooperative are planning to grow onions, green beans and cabbages among other vegetables which they will be able to sell at the local market. They have recently planted beans and maize on another plot they rent. These are basic foodstuff in Rwanda and will be shared out among the workers and poor families in the village before any surplus is sold.

Due to your generosity we will also be able to provide rice, maize flour beans and cooking oil for Jessica and her family who live in Kigali city, too far away from the cooperative to benefit from the produce grown there. Meat will also be bought for them to enjoy at Christmas. Jessica and her brother Dennis are both sponsored through the Rwanda Group. Mama Devine, who also finds it very difficult to make ends meet and feed the family will also receive a food parcel.

The remainder of the money will be used to provide food for the Saturday daycare project run by Inkuru Nziza Rugende church. Twenty five pre school children from poor families in the area meet for bible stories, basic life skills training and homework support. I visited this church when I was in Rwanda earlier in the year and was able to take some teaching resources for the project.

Both Josue, the pastor at Rugende and Marie Therese who oversees our work with the sponsored families send their sincere thanks and blessings to all at Loanhead Parish Church.

Thank you for your contribution to the 2025 Blythswood Shoebox Appeal



Blythswood is a Christian charity with a mission to show God's love, and offer the compassion, relief and hope that can change lives for good and forever.

This year, Loanhead Parish Church filled 104 shoeboxes for the Blythswood Appeal. (26 more than last year!!) and at least £100 has also been donated to help with onward transport costs.

But this didn't happen without a lot of hard work, without people giving their time to come and fill boxes at the planned sessions and without very generous donations of cash and goods. Not forgetting an amazing team of knitters who helped make sure we were able to include warm scarves in the boxes too.

Although the majority of the boxes we fill are for children, many adults in the Eastern Europe destination countries have experienced war, food shortages, poverty and much more for many years and still scavenge and look for bottles and cans to recycle to generate income to feed their families.

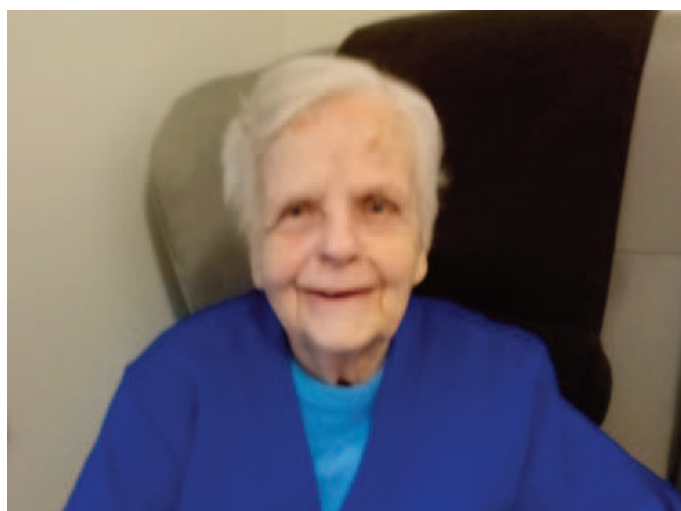
I hope we will be able to do something next year to address this and support some of the vulnerable adults.

We are always on the lookout for discounted items in sales and empty shoeboxes!!!!

Further information on the work of Blythswood Care can be found at blythswood.org

Thanks again for your continued support. If you would like to join our team please speak to me.

Mary Millan



Happy 100th Birthday Jessie!

In September, Mary Millan and Ann Saunderson visited Jessie Hogg taking a card from the church on the occasion of her 100th birthday.

Jessie was happy and looking well and was looking forward to an afternoon tea party with her family later in the afternoon. Congratulations from all of us, Jessie!!



CHRISTMAS DECORATING WORDSEARCH

**ANSWERS
TO BOTH
PUZZLES
ARE ON
THE NEXT
PAGE**

ADVENT CALENDAR

ANGEL

BALLS

CANDLE

CHRISTMAS TREE

FAKE SNOW

FIGURINES

GARLAND

HOLIDAY LINENS

LIGHTS

MINI TREE

MISTLETOE

NATIVITY SCENE

NUTCRACKER

ORNAMENT

PINECONE

POINSETTIA

RED BOW

REINDEER

SNOWFLAKE

STAR

STOCKINGS

TINSEL

TREE SKIRT

TREE STAND

WREATH





CHRISTMAS CRYPTOGRAM

Here is a list of 18 Christmas carols whose titles have all been written in the same secret code. Can you figure out what the titles are? (Hint: replace the letter P with a C.)

1. Q PQOR WYY VR JWFNSJBY
2. AFYRUN UFTSN, SQYV UFTSN
3. IRPZ NSR SWYYA DFNS MQBTSA QJ SQYYV
4. SWXZ! NSR WUTRYA AFUT
5. NSR JFXAN UQRY
6. DR DFAS VQB W ORXXV PSXFANOWA
7. FN PWOR BLQU NSR OFIUFTSN PYRWX
8. F'Ø IXRWOFUT QJ W DSFNR PSXFANOWA
9. WDWV FU NSR OWUTRX
10. AWUNW PYWBA FA PQOFUT NQ NQDU
11. AFYERX MRYYA
12. YFNNYR IXBOORX MQV
13. TQI XRAN VR ORXXV TRUNYRORU
14. XBIQYLS NSR XRI UQARI XRFUIRRX
15. F AWD ØØØØV ZFAAFUT AWUNW PYWBA
16. KFUTYR MRYYA
17. SWER VQBXARYJ W ORXXV YFNNYR PSXFANOWA
18. Q PSXFANOWA NXRR



Finances

There are no major developments in the finances of the church, with income and expenditure on budget for the first part of the year.

We would like to say a huge THANK YOU for your ongoing financial support. It is deeply appreciated.

Gift Aid

Gift Aid is a UK government scheme that allows charities to claim 25p of basic rate tax for every £1 donated by a UK taxpayer. This means that the donation is effectively increased by 25% at no extra cost to the donor. For example, a donation of £10 becomes £12.50 with Gift Aid.

As a church, this makes a huge difference – last year alone we were able to claim almost £14,000 through this scheme.

If you are a tax payer and haven't signed up to this yet, please do. You can pick up a form in the vestibule of the church – or email iangillespie77@gmail.com It doesn't cost you anything but significantly impacts on our income.

Church Cookbook

Thank you to everyone who submitted recipes for the Church Cookbook. There was a fantastic response.

We will now work on putting the cookbook together and hope this will be available in the Spring.

Quiz Night

Thanks to all who attended our latest quiz night in October. We hope you had a great time.

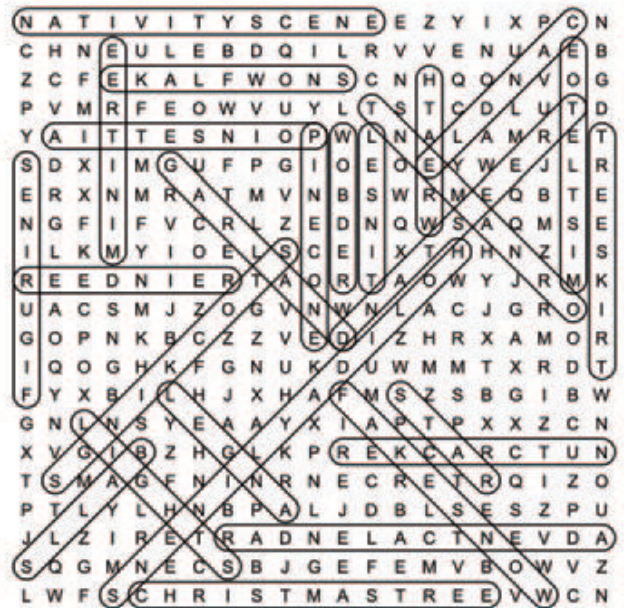
Preparations for the next quiz, which will be "A Quiz Show of Quiz Shows" and will take place in March 2026 are already underway and we will confirm the date in the New Year.

PUZZLE ANSWERS

CHRISTMAS DECORATING

Word Search

SOLUTION



Christmas Carols Cryptogram

SOLUTION

1. COME ALL YE FAITHFUL
2. SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT
3. DECK THE HALLS WITH BOUGHS OF HOLLY
4. HARK! THE ANGELS SING
5. THE FIRST NOEL
6. WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
7. IT CAME UPON THE MIDNIGHT CLEAR
8. I'M DREAMING OF A WHITE CHRISTMAS
9. AWAY IN THE MANGER
10. SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN
11. SILVER BELLS
12. LITTLE DRUMMER BOY
13. GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN
14. RUDOLPH THE RED NOSED REINDEER
15. I SAW MOMMY KISSING SANTA CLAUS
16. JINGLE BELLS
17. HAVE YOURSELF A MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS
18. CHRISTMAS TREE

<http://www.printablechristmaspuzzles.com>

<http://www.printablechristmaspuzzles.com/christmas-puzzles/index.shtml>

Pastoral Care



At the end of September we held our Autumn Afternoon Tea at which we were entertained by our very own home-grown talent in the form of Jim Fleming! Before she moved to Norfolk, we wanted to pay tribute to Ann Saunderson, a life-long member of the Loanhead community and of our church and a cherished friend. The celebration began with a compilation of on-screen photos depicting Ann's connections to Loanhead but the real treat was listening to the music Jim had written, played and dedicated to Ann to accompany them. Jim then entertained us on his accordion. It was brilliant! Ann then shared a few memories before being presented with a card, flowers and good wishes from everyone.

We have also started doing "in the home" afternoon teas for those who are finding it more difficult to get to the ones in the church. Diane and Norah prepared a special afternoon tea box for John and Sheena McMillan and had a lovely time sharing it and a chat with them.

Jean and I did a box for Muriel McLaren which she was able to share with her long-time friend, Margaret Elrick. They, too, enjoyed the treat and the "catch-up".

We now hope to arrange our annual Christmas visit from some of the children of Paradykes Primary School. Everyone enjoys this event - the choir is amazing and to be a part of the fellowship afterwards is lovely.

As always, please tell us about anyone to whom you think we could offer pastoral care.

Alison Chalmers

Christmas Fair and Santa's Grotto Saturday 29th November 10am-12noon



This will be a traditional Christmas Fair with Santa's grotto, tea/coffee and mince pies, gift and food stalls and fundraising stalls for BBs and Girl Guiding.

Entry fee is £3 for adults payable on the door, no entry fee for kids. Entry includes tea or coffee and a mince pie (or alternative), and juice and biscuits for kids (free of charge), and of course the opportunity to browse and shop at our amazing local stalls.

Our magical Santa's Grotto will cost £3 per child, which includes a small gift from the man himself, and you may take your time in the grotto and take your own photos. No need to book in, just come along! We look forward to seeing you there.

Church Flowers - a Thank-you



Thanks are due to Shelagh Jenkins who has been responsible for many years for the flowers in the church on a Sunday morning. We have been so blessed to have had Shelagh involved in this way. Her displays have always been so thoughtful and we deeply appreciate this. Shelagh is shortly moving from Loanhead and we want to record our grateful thanks.

If you would like to help out with arranging the flowers on a Sunday morning please speak to the minister or Margaret Hurst. Even if you can only do this once a month, or less, we can put together a rota for this.

LSTN Suicide Memorial Quilt



Lothians Speak Their Name (LSTN) is a project that was set up to create a quilt in memory of people who have died by suicide in Edinburgh and the Lothians and we will have it on display in Loanhead Church for a week beginning 24th November.

49 people have made squares in memory of their loved ones, which hold the stories of their loves and lives. LSTN ran workshops last year for people to come together and make their squares, and to make connections with each other. These were safe spaces where everyone was similarly bereaved by suicide; and so everyone in the room understood how everyone else was feeling. For people who have never wanted to join a support group, the chance to be creative alongside others offered them a different way of addressing their grief. So as well as creating this beautiful memorial, LSTN brought people together as a community, where they've found support and friendship.

Read more at <https://www.loanheadparishchurch.co.uk/suicide-memorial-quilt/>

The church will be open at the following times and there will be church members and Lothians Speak Their Name representatives there. We will have home baking and hot drinks available too if you want to sit for a while. You can choose to spend time alone in quiet reflection, chat to those there, or ask them to pray with or for you.

Monday 24th November - Friday 28th November 11am-12.30pm

Saturday 29th November 2pm - 3.30pm

The quilt will also be on display at both our services on Sunday 30th November, our morning service at 10.30am and our Memorial Service for the Bereaved at 2pm

We are also, along with Lothians Speak Their Name, hosting a drop-in event from 6pm to 8pm on Wednesday 26th November, where we will have representatives from Andy's Man Club, SAMH (Scottish Action for Mental Health), SoBs (Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide) as well as some of the quilt makers. We will be serving refreshments and there will be a space for quiet reflection available along with prayer support from church members. The story of the quilt will be screened at 6.45pm. Everyone is welcome.
<https://fb.me/e/3TE6Bx3PK>



The Presbytery Plan for the area includes a union between Roslin, Loanhead and Bilston and allows for the retention of all three sets of buildings. A formal “Basis of Union” has been drafted and approved by the elders at Loanhead and Bilston along with the office bearers at Roslin.

A vote by the congregation will take place on Sunday 30th November after morning worship. Those eligible to vote are members and adherents whose names are on the church roll. **Please put this date in your diary.**

The pattern for Sunday services is set out in the table below.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Roslin 9.45	Minister	Minister + stay after	Reader/Retired Minister	Reader/Retired Minister	Joint Service
Loanhead 10.30	Minister from 10.45	Others preach & lead service	Minister	Minister	Joint Service
Bilston 11.30	No service	Minister	No service	Reader/Retired Minister	Joint Service

The union will be called Loanhead, Bilston and Roslin Parish Church (Church of Scotland) but when referring to activities and events taking place in the 3 worship centres, the intention is to refer to Loanhead Church, Bilston Church and Roslin Church, believing this to be the most unambiguous way of communicating in our respective communities.

SCAN ME



Copies of the Basis of union are available at the church as well as on the church website - or use the QR code opposite.

The service of union is being planned for Sunday 1st March at Roslin Church.

Session Clerk's Update

November again already! Autumn is upon us after the lovely long summer and church life starts to build up again with all the groups starting back and we start to think about all that happens in the build up to celebrating the birth of our Lord.

We had our fourth Quiz Night back in October. Always a popular social event and as ever we must thank Paul for all the work he puts in to organising and running these.

Sadly, we have lost a few members of Session over the last year but it was very heartening to have ordained six new elders earlier this month. I am sure they will all be a great asset to Session and to church life in general.

2026 will see some big changes for us all. Graham retires at the end of January. He will conduct his last service with us on 1 February 2026. We will then have to start the process of finding a new minister.

We also hope to finalise our Union with Roslin in March. A team have been working towards this over the last few months.

Graham has served as minister with us for almost 25 years and as this will be his last magazine in that capacity I wanted to pass on some early thanks to him for all the work he has put in bringing our church forward and introducing new ideas. We are now working hard to become an intergenerational church caring for each other and for the wider community.

Thanks to him, in working on our unions with Bilston and soon to be Roslin, we have done our best to take into consideration the needs of the individual communities and hopefully we will all work closely together as we join into one big parish.

There will be much more to add to this when the day comes but for now I am sure you would all like to join me in extending a very big THANK YOU to Graham and wish both Graham and Jane all the best for the future. We will miss you both.

As always, I would like to thank you, the congregation, for your continued support and I send you best wishes for the Christmas season.

Blessings to you all,
Margaret Hurst

Offering Envelopes /Standing Orders

If you would like a set of envelopes to set aside an offering each week to bring to church, please speak to Margaret Hurst.

Alternatively, you might consider giving through your bank. Standing Order forms are in the vestibule at the church – or you can set one up through your online banking app. Email jackieeastonlpc@gmail.com for details.



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Saturday 29th November - 10.00am
Christmas Fayre & Santa's Grotto

Sunday 30th November - 10.30am
First Sunday in Advent

Sunday 30th November - 2.00pm
Memorial Service for the Bereaved

Sunday 07th December - 10.30am
Second Sunday in Advent & Communion

Sunday 14th December - 10.30am
Third Sunday in Advent
Readings and Carols with MacTaggart Scott Brass Band

Sunday 21st December - 10.30am
Fourth Sunday in Advent
Scratch Nativity followed by Christmas Party

Sunday 21st December - 4.00pm
Bilston Church Christingle Service

Wednesday 24th December - 4.00pm
Christingle Service

Wednesday 24th December - 11.30pm
Watchnight Service

Thursday 25th December - 10.30am
Christmas Day Service

Sunday 28th December - 10.30am
Morning Service

