loanhead bilston & roslin parish church news

Winter 2026



A Message from Keith Mack

Interim Moderator

As we approach the season of Advent, we find ourselves in a time of waiting. For Loanhead, Roslin and Bilston, this waiting has a particular significance as we continue through our vacancy. Vacancies can sometimes feel like a season of uncertainty, with questions about the future, the shape of ministry and the direction God is leading. Yet Advent reminds us that waiting is not wasted time. It can be a season in which God prepares us, strengthens us and renews our hope.

The prophet Isaiah writes:

"Those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles."
(Isaiah 40:31)

These words are a wonderful encouragement to us. They remind us that our strength does not ultimately come from our circumstances, our plans or even our own efforts. Our strength comes from the Lord. As we wait, we can continue to trust that God is at work among us, even when we cannot yet see the full picture.

Advent is, of course, the season in which we remember the coming of Jesus Christ. The people of God waited generations for the promised Messiah. There were times when the promise must have seemed distant, and yet God remained faithful. At just the right time, Jesus came into the world, bringing light into darkness, hope into despair and salvation to all who would receive him.

That same hope belongs to us today.

It is easy to think that a vacancy is simply a period in which we wait for the next minister to arrive. But I believe God has much more for us than simply waiting. These are days in which we can deepen our faith, strengthen our relationships and rediscover what it means to be the church together. We are not simply three congregations waiting for someone to lead us; we are the people of God, called to worship him, serve our communities and share the good news of Jesus Christ.

The words of the apostle Paul are particularly appropriate:

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer."
(Romans 12:12)

May these words shape our life together in the months ahead. Let us be joyful in hope, remembering that Christ is our future. Let us be patient in affliction, recognising that change and uncertainty are part of the journey. And let us be faithful in prayer, seeking God's wisdom and guidance as we discern the way forward.

As we approach Advent, I encourage you to look for the signs of God's presence among us. They may be found in the faithful worship of our congregations, in the kindness shown to one another, in the service offered within our communities, or in the quiet prayers of those who continue to hold our churches before the Lord.

The promise of Advent is that darkness will not have the final word.

"The light of Christ shines, and the darkness has not overcome it."
(John 1:5).

May the coming weeks be a time of renewed hope, deeper faith and fresh expectation. And may we discover afresh that, even in a season of waiting, we are held securely in the hands of the God who has promised never to leave us or forsake us.

I wish you and your families every blessing as we journey together towards Christmas.

With every blessing,

Keith Mack
Interim Moderator



Session Clerk's Update

Advent marks the start of the Church year – a time of waiting and preparing as we look forward to celebrating the birth of the Christ Child, Immanuel, God with us.

On each of the 4 Sundays in Advent, starting on 29th November, we will be lighting the candles on the Advent wreath and reflecting in turn on the traditional themes of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love and then on Christmas Day we will light the final and tallest candle to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

I do hope you are able to join us for our services through Advent and Christmas, (details elsewhere in this newsletter), and take the time in the midst of all the hectic preparations and celebrations, to reflect on the greatest gift of all; the birth of a baby, the Saviour of the World, bringing light in the darkness and the message of God's enduring love and forgiveness for all people.

As we continue our search for our new minister, just as in this season of Advent, we as a local church are also in a season of waiting and preparing, trusting in God's faithfulness and promises. Please continue to pray for our Nominating Committee and pray for the minister whom God has chosen for us, yet to be revealed to us, but whose heart is being prepared to come among us and lead us into our next chapter of sharing the Good News of Jesus here in the communities we seek to serve.

2026 has been a year of much change and challenge for us as a newly formed parish and searching for a new minister. Many of you have taken on additional responsibilities, often requiring significant amounts of your time and energy. As well as the "up front" roles, there are so many people working away behind the scenes, without whom we simply would not be able to function as a congregation. My heartfelt thanks to you all for all you do. It is deeply appreciated.

With love and prayers for a joyous Christmas and a good New Year.

Audrey McLaren

Penicuik North Kirk Foodstore

Roslin congregation has continued to support the Foodstore and 6 bags of groceries, donated at the Harvest Service, were given to the Foodstore. The decision was made, after consultation with those who refer families, that Farmfoods vouchers would now completely replace food parcels. This gives the families autonomy over the food choices.

Until the store cupboards are empty there will be a transition period, during which one or two bags of groceries will be given with the voucher. Going forward we will be collecting financial donations only to fund the buying of the vouchers.

Please note that Farmfoods has been chosen as they do not sell alcohol or cigarettes.

Thank you to all of you who have donated so generously throughout the year.

Volunteers needed for Alpha 2027

Alpha in the UK

Alpha is a space to unpack the Christian faith together. No pressure. No strings. Just space for good food, interesting talks, and open conversations.

We would love to be able to run Alpha again in 2027 but we are currently low on volunteers. If you think you could help run Alpha over 11 weeks - each week a different big question around the Christian faith is unpacked and explored together - then please get in touch with either Kirsteen Rawcliffe or Amy Pickering. It would be great to have you along.

Sssshhhhh.....the BB's are raising money for Movember.

MOVEMBER® FOUNDATION

1st Loanhead BB's are raising money for Movember this month.

The Juniors are holding a sponsored silence for one night while the Company Section will be holding a sponsored silence for two nights.

Alongside this, the adults will be growing out their moustaches.

We wish everyone well and will let you know how much money was raised in the next issue of the magazine.

Update on the Monthly Women's Group



In the hustle and bustle of life, it can be hard to see the unique purpose God has for each of us. It's all too easy to forget that, together, "we are God's masterpiece" – each with a unique part to play in his grand plan and story.

We're so grateful for everyone who has come along to the Women's group so far. Our first two sessions have been really well received and we've cherished having the opportunity to connect with others and God through worship, prayer, crafts, and Ephesians. We're looking forward to the next meeting on Friday 20th November at 7:30 pm in Loanhead Church Hall. We will be exploring Ephesians Chapter 2 together and it's never too late to come along - no need to have been to a previous session to join in.

Let's be women of purpose!

Blythswood Shoebox Appeal – Loanhead

The Blythswood Shoebox Appeal is one which is always well supported in Loanhead, and this year we tried something a bit different. By requesting different items each month we were able to build up a stock and also identify gaps, especially of some of the essential items, such as soap, toothpaste, underwear and socks.

Feedback has told us that this was appreciated with people being able to pop something extra in their shopping basket throughout the year rather than a big spend in September so we aim to repeat that next year.

Thanks to our amazing knitters, heads and necks will be kept warm this winter too. It's never too early to start knitting for next year and patterns are available!



In September, our elves got busy filling the boxes (mainly but not exclusively for adults this year) and thanks to very generous donations over the year, 120 shoeboxes left here in October to begin their journey to destinations in Eastern Europe. Blythswood will be distributing the boxes in Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine this year.

Having coordinated the shoebox appeal at Loanhead for the past decade, I'm delighted to be able to hand the reins to Rhona Guest.

Thank you for your help and support over the past 10 years and I'm sure you'll continue to support Rhona in the same way.

Mary Millan



Christmas Fair and Santa's Grotto
Saturday, 05 December - 10.00am to 12noon

Loanhead Church will once again be hosting their Christmas fair on the morning of Saturday 05 December between 10.00am and 12.00pm. There will be many stalls to browse and shop (including Church, Boys Brigade and Girl Guiding fundraising stalls)

Entry is priced at £3 per adult with kids free and includes tea / coffee and a mince pie or apple pie for the adults and juice and biscuits for kids.

Entry to Santa's Grotto is priced £3 per child and includes and small gift from Santa and time to take your own photos.

We are appealing for donations of home baking for this event so please get in touch if you can help.

Christmas Afternoon Teas
Sunday, 06 December - from 2.30pm

Join us on the afternoon of Sunday, 06 December for our Christmas afternoon tea. Priced at £15 per person it includes tea (or coffee), fresh sandwiches, sausage rolls, scones and sweet treats.

BYOB - wine glasses and fizz flutes supplied. WhatsApp or Text 07961 098208 to book in

Christmas Gift Service
Sunday, 13 December - 10.30am

This is our annual appeal for gifts and monetary donations for our Christmas Toy Shop - where parents of children who otherwise may not have many gifts to open on Christmas morning, can come and chose gifts for their child(ren).

As Caroline mentioned a few weeks ago, we are asking our church family to consider donating a main present. You could club together with a friend. Or make a monetary gift to:

Loanhead Parish Church Community Action Fund
Account no: 10027465
Sort code: 80-22-60
Reference: Christmas Gift

Roslin Flower Calendar

Thank you to all who have contributed in any way to brighten our church with flowers. We cannot believe we are nearly at the end of 2026.

The flowers are much appreciated by people in the community who have recently been bereaved, lonely or simply just needing a bit of cheer!

Please look out for 2027 Flower Calendar at the front of church.

Thank you.

Roslin 'Coffee and Blethers'

Roslin host their 'Coffee and Blether' every Wednesday Weekly in the Church hall between 10.30am and 12.00pm. We would be delighted to see you if you feel like a Cuppa and a Blether.

It's been lovely to see some new faces joining us. Why not bring along a friend when we next meet?

We finish up on Wednesday December 9th and start up on Wednesday January 6th 2027. We look forward to catching up with you all then.

A word of thanks to our Roslin Church volunteers

Roslin Church is fortunate to have people who give of their time and talents so generously. Small in numbers, you all warmly welcome people on a Sunday morning, serve teas and coffees, help with technology, pastoral care, fundraising, enhance our services with music, flowers and carry out countless other tasks. Thank you all.

Wishing you all a Peaceful Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2027

Roslin Monthly Coffee Mornings

A huge thanks to those regular bakers who have given us some delicious, tasty bites for our home baking stalls throughout the year and to the folks who supported us by popping in and enjoying a coffee and chat.

Let's not forget our amazing volunteers who make these mornings such a treat.

Thank you all.

Roslin Pastoral Care

Please remember we are always here for church members and anyone in the community. You can telephone either Ros McLeish on 07900887185 or Nan Cairns on 01968 672757 for a chat, or to arrange a visit.

May God's blessing surround you each day

Roslin Community Lunch

After last year's very successful community lunch, we will be hosting another one in January. All are welcome.

The date for your diary is Wednesday, 27 January at 12.30pm at the Original Hotel, Roslin.

More details to follow.

MumCo Evening Group Update

We would love to see more Mums coming along to our MumCo Evening Group on Wednesday's between 7.15pm and 8.45pm. We have a small but lovely group of Mum's who currently attend. It's a really welcoming, vulnerable, open, and supportive group.

Each session starts with a hot drink, cake, and a catch-up. We then have a quick activity before watching a video or hearing from a speaker on a particular topic. This year our overarching theme is Good Company and we've really enjoyed thinking about how we can be better friends by "being interruptible". We've also been thinking about having time for "making things beautiful" so we have some paint by numbers that we hope to complete together by the end of the year. We'll soon be hearing from a Language and Speech therapist and in the New Year we are planning sessions on "Motherhood is Leadership" and "True Self Care". There's something for everyone!

After the video/talk there is an activity to complete while we discuss the topic and provide space for people to share their experiences in a non-judgemental environment that builds and encourages. It's always well spent time with other Mum's where you can truly relax and be yourself.

Please keep your eye on the intimations or join the Facebook page (search for The MumCo Loanhead). We can also add you to the WhatsApp group so you can be part of our Mum Community all week long.

If you have any questions about joining us then please do speak to either Caroline Brownsell or Amy Pickering. We would love to be able to welcome you at a session soon.

Rwanda Update

Funds were sent out to Rwanda in time for our sponsored children to receive books and jotters and have school fees paid prior to the new session starting on 7 September. Our photograph shows some of the children in Marie-Therese's garden.



Jessica, who is sponsored by the church, was not available on this occasion. She has gone to a boarding school further away.

Our soup lunch in September raised £347.

In November, we will be transferring funds to cover rents for two families and provide food to share with our sponsored children and their families.

Marie-Therese would also like to visit some of the local street children, share food with them and tell them about Jesus.

Bilston Coffee Mornings.

The last coffee morning at Bilston before Christmas will be on 15th December at 10.30am and we will resume again on 5th January at 10.30am. All are welcome.

Bilston Shoebox Appeal

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Bilston Shoebox Appeal. Thanks to your generosity we were able to make up 37 shoeboxes and also donate £150 towards the costs of them being transported to eastern Europe.

Flowers at Bilston

Thank you to everyone who gifted flowers and plants for Bilston Church, and to Jacqueline who supplied the flower cards. Your kindness has been uplifting to many and greatly appreciated.

I wish you a peaceful Christmas and every blessing for 2027.

Isabella

Christmas Hampers

Bilston Church will once again be taking hampers out to people in the village again over the Christmas period. Hopefully they will be enjoyed over the festive season.

Bilston Christingle Service

Bilston Church will hold their Christingle Service on Sunday 20th December at 4.00pm, after which we will be serving tea and coffee and mince pies. Please join us if you are able.

The MumCo

We're really enjoying our Good Company theme this year, taking a nostalgic step back to 90s friendship - calling in unannounced, picking up the phone instead of sending a WhatsApp, and meeting up rather than relying on group chats!

Our four sub-themes - Make Something Beautiful, Word Over Worry, Be Interruptible and Stay True - are giving us lots of great things to explore, with messages that really resonate with the mums and everyday life.

We're also creating something beautiful together, working on a large paint-by-numbers artwork which, once complete, will be displayed in the church building. Our numbers are growing with 22 mums registered this year! Catriona is enjoying two full tables every Monday morning, while Caroline and Amy are leading a Wednesday evening group alongside the Boys' Brigade Junior session. This gives some of the boys' mums the opportunity to come along at a time that works well for them.

There's always room for more mums to join us, and Catriona would particularly love to welcome a few more volunteers to help out on Monday mornings. It's a great way to be part of what's happening and help us make The MumCo a place where mums feel welcomed, connected and valued.

CHRISTMAS WITH Origin SCOTLAND

TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS CAROLS

ORIGIN CHOIR & ORCHESTRA

5, 6 December

7.30pm

Usher Hall | Edinburgh
Findlay Church | Glasgow

Tickets (donation) from
originscotland.org
or call 0131 541 0117

Registered in Scotland No: 228298
Scottish Charity No: SC032754



CHRISTMAS DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 29th November - 10.30am
Joint Service - Loanhead Church
Youth Dedication Service and
1st Sunday of Advent

Sunday 29th November - 2.00pm
Loanhead Church
Memorial Service for the Bereaved

Saturday 5th December - 10.00am
Loanhead Church
Christmas Fair and Santa's Grotto

Sunday 6th December - 10.30am
Loanhead Church
Communion Service and
2nd Sunday of Advent

Sunday 6th December - 2.30pm
Loanhead Church
Christmas Afternoon Teas

Sunday 13th December - 10.30am
Loanhead Church
Gift Service, Reading and Carols with
MacTaggart Scott Band and
3rd Sunday of Advent

Sunday 20th December - 9.45am
Roslin Church
Christmas Carol Service

Sunday 20th December - 10.30am
Loanhead Church
Scratch Nativity and
4th Sunday of Advent, followed by
Christmas Party and Santa visit.

Sunday 20th December - 4.00pm
Bilston Church
Christingle Service followed by tea or
coffee and mince pies

Thursday 24th December - 4.00pm
Loanhead Church
Christingle Service
(arrive early to get a seat)

Thursday 24th December - 11.30pm
Loanhead Church
Watchnight Service

Friday 25th December - 10.30am
Loanhead Church
Christmas Day Service

Weekly Pattern of Services

Loanhead
Weekly Sunday service starting at
10.30am

Roslin
Weekly Sunday Service starting at
9.45am

Bilston
Sunday Service on the 2nd and 4th
Sunday of the month starting at
11.30am