The Outlook

magazine of Inverleith St Serf's Church

February 2025

Inverleith St Serf's Contacts

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Next Issue

Copy for the March 2025 issue of *The Outlook* should be with the editor no later than Wednesday, 19 February. The distribution date will be Sunday 23 February.

This month's cover: photo courtesy of Bing
Scottish charity No: SC015442

Roll on February 14!

Well, we have just about made it through 'Divorce January'.

I used to work in the legal department of a large insurance company and a big part of our job was splitting people's pensions on divorce. We averaged over 100 cases a week normally – but January…? Well, I don't know whether the festive season was the last straw for folk or whether people pushed through so as not to spoil the family Christmas – but in January we were inundated with divorce work. And I know that many other professions: law firms, counselling services, etc have reported the same phenomenon.

In September my husband and I celebrated our Golden Wedding. 1974 - so young, so bright, so optimistic – but also somewhat innocent and naïve.

Nowadays, I cry at weddings. If it is a young couple starting out, I am always incredibly glad for them and truly revel in their joy and commitment but I know, as many of you also know, that 'happily ever after' is a fairy tale. As well as the joys, there will be trials and tribulations – financial, emotional and medical. There will be losses, disappointments, grief and, tragically, sometimes, violence. I cry because I am so moved by their optimism and I pray that life will be as joyful as possible for them.

I cry at second (and subsequent) weddings – I am totally lost in admiration that people, having gone through the unhappiness (and sometimes worse) of a breakdown or widowhood, still have the courage and resilience to give it another go.

(Just in case there is any doubt, I feel the same about civil

partnerships and same sex marriages.)

I know that for many people nowadays marriage is regarded as irrelevant, old-fashioned. Some are put off by the cost of a 'big' wedding. Others point to soaring divorce rates to try to prove that it is just pointless.

And yet, people still go and tie the knot – perhaps on a shoestring, in a registry office, perhaps with a same sex partner.

But each time a couple stands up and makes that public and legal commitment, they are acknowledging the gift of marriage – the honest desire to make a go of things with another human being. Perhaps they want to create a stable environment for children. Perhaps they seek emotional or financial security. Perhaps they just feel their relationship needs a something extra to honour it, the opportunity to take their relationship to a new level.

I had a colleague who, after many years of cohabiting with his

significant other and, indeed, bringing up their 18-year old son, went off together on holiday to the States – and came back having got married in Vegas! He had planned it all but had not told her or anyone else. 'Bring a nice frock', he had said. Just as well she said 'yes'.

Marriage in church where the service is truly meaningful to the parties is a wonderful gift from God. It is quite overwhelming that we can stand before God and commit to each other, asking for His grace and blessing on the years to come. What a truly blessed sacrament.

Bring on Valentine's Day!

Lorna Pratt

Flowers in church

For the next few weeks or so Lorna Pratt is acting as Flower Convener.

If you would like

- to donate flowers for the sanctuary, whether for a specific date or not—and there are a few gaps in the calendar; or
- to make your donation and give any instructions about the flowers you would like;

please contact her. Lorna is in church most Sundays.

Sunday 2

February 6.30pm

Through the Eye of a Needle: Exploring the Bible in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney

A talk by Alison Jack, Professor of Bible and Literature, New College, Edinburgh

If you cannot be there, then we are going to try out using Zoom to record the talk, so you could see it live or look at it later on.

If you have received *The Outlook* magazine electronically, then you should be able to just click on the link below and that should allow you into the talk. This link will be 'live' from 6.15pm so we can then let you in from that time ready for the start at 6.30pm.

Here is the link for her talk:

https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86835574459?pwd=6bDaT6aBUAHp5OhEvfwlGB3xbHlmZc.1

Meeting ID: 868 3557 4459
Passcode: 921689

We also plan to put the recording onto our Inverleith St Serf's website pages at a later date. We are looking forward to seeing you at the event and chatting with you over refreshments afterwards.

Worship in February

The Rev Dorothy U Anderson will conduct the services in the sanctuary at 10.30am unless stated otherwise. Everyone is welcome.

2 February	10.30am worship in the sanctuary Fresh Start collection of household goods
3 February	10.30am Pram Service in the small hall
9 February	10.30am worship in the sanctuary
16 February	9.30am Early Birds meet in the small hall 10.30am worship in the sanctuary
19 February	2pm mid-week service. Enter from Clark Road. Followed by refreshments
23 February	10.30am worship in the sanctuary. Guest preacher.

Congregational Who's Who

With this issue of *The Outlook*, you will get an updated copy of the congregation's Who's Who. This is a useful list when you need to contact an office-bearer or one of the church groups.

Lorna Pratt

Church Family

Deaths

'There is nothing in death or life, in the world as it is, or the world as it shall be, nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord'

Mr Jim Witcomb

Miss Agnes (Nancy) White

Mrs Joyce Duncan

Mr Arthur Main

Mrs Elizabeth Petrie

Our thoughts and prayers are with their families and friends.

Pastoral arrangements

Please contact Kate Walker or Helen Hannan regarding pastoral issues such as illness.

The local undertakers are aware of arrangements if a member dies.

Christmas round-up

The Christmas Toy Collection - 'bringing smiles to little faces'

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the Christmas Toy Collection. This year we were again overwhelmed by the generosity of, not just the congregation, but of the Early Bird and Pram Service

families, the Guides, Brownies and Rainbows and the Toddler Group. The photograph shows some of the Early Bird children helping with the Toy Collection in church before Christmas. Once again, we had to

take two cars to get all the toys to the Circle building in Pilton.

As you know, the Early Bird and Pram Service Team has worked for many years with the local charity, Circle, to help them ensure that children and teenagers get a gift at Christmas. This year some of the congregation learned more about Circle and its work with families throughout the year, when one of their staff came to speak to the Guild.

We have received a letter of thanks from the Senior Family Outreach Worker at Circle:

'Once again, the toys your members have donated to our project are so appreciated. It highlights the thoughtfulness and kindness from people at this time of year.

These gifts help reduce stress and anxiety for families who experience financial and emotional difficulties and most of all bring smiles to little faces on Christmas morning.

Thank you for your continued support and donations.'

We are so grateful to you all for making this outreach project such a success again this year!

Margaret Colquhoun and Fiona Hughes

Early Birds at Christmas – and in 2025

At Early Birds in December, we watched the retelling of the Nativity story cleverly done as a Lego animation and each family received a book that accompanied it. We thought about the reasons why the shepherds were the first to hear the good news of Jesus's birth. Our prayer time involved hanging ornaments with prayers attached on a small Christmas tree which was then displayed in the church. The children had great fun with nativity themed crafts, decorating shaped biscuits (and eating them!) and helping Frances to hang fir cone decorations in the garden.

The theme for January will be 'Jesus is the Light of the World'.

Christmas goodies

The next Early Birds will be on 16 February and 16 March.

Although the worship is mainly aimed at young families, it is open to everyone and we are always very pleased to have anyone join us to see what we do and to get to know the families. We would love to see you there!

The Early Birds Team

Garden decorations

Christmas services well attended

Congregations at our three special Christmas services totalled nearly 300 – the Christmas Eve 6pm family service (120 worshippers), the 11.30pm Watchnight service (100) and the 10.30am Christmas morning service (around 70).

Worshippers gave generously. £880 was donated at the retiring collections. This amount was supplemented by donations from the church golfers' Christmas Lunch. The donations will be split approximately 50/50 between church funds and our chosen charity partner: the Thistle Foundation.

Our thanks go to our locum minister, The Rev Dorothy U Anderson for the thought and work put in to make the services engaging yet meaningful. Our thanks also go to our stand-in organists, Graeme Brownlee and Bruce Anderson.

Inverleith St Serf's Guild

Our first meeting of the new year was very well attended. Postponed from November, the talk by Allan Shaw held the attention of all present. He spoke movingly about servicemen from both World Wars listed on our memorials - excellent research resulting in a beautifully produced illustrated booklet – do speak to Lorna Pratt if you would like a copy.

While this issue of the magazine is in production, we will be introduced to one of the new Projects that Guild members throughout Scotland will support over the next three years, **Bibles for Bairns**. Leaflets about this will be at the entrance to the church

Bibles for Bairns—illustration for a leaflet produced by The Scottish Bible Society. It is available in the church centre vestibule.

centre if you would like to find out more.

We have two meetings in February:
February 4 2pm 'A Funny Thing Happened' - Matthew Bicket

February 18 2pm Operation Hope - James Fraser
Another new Guild Project

And in the first week of March:
March 4 2pm Shrove Tuesday Pancake Party
Members of the congregation and friends are invited to join us. This is a fundraiser – entry by donation.

Fiona Davies

February 18—talk by Release International's Engagement Manager for Scotland. Operation Hope serves Christians in Upper Egypt who are marginalised and who face extreme poverty as a result.

News from the ECO Group

Paraffin power to solar power

Recycling collection going well

Over the last few months, there has been the opportunity to give unwanted recyclable items to the Recycling for Good Causes which raises money for the congregation. The items were sorted out at the beginning of the year and 24.4kg of material was sent off. That's 3 stone 12 pounds in old money!!

This comprised coins, watches, jewellery, cameras, phones and stamps. This suggests to the ECO Group, that having a collection box available throughout the year is a very worthwhile exercise. Thanks to everyone who has donated. Keep up the good work!

Paraffin lamp problems

Recent articles have concentrated on what the group is doing locally – this

Photo courtesy of Church of Scotland, Moderator's Challenge. See next page.

article expands our horizons. But let me take you back to my experiences in Bangladesh 47 years ago. A lot of my work was based in the villages where at the time, there was no electricity supply. Night fell around 6pm each day, and from 5.30pm the only illumination was by paraffin lamps. This made reading and writing letters very difficult as no matter how well the wicks were trimmed, there was always dirty smoke coming from the lamp which was most unpleasant. It was also very difficult for the boys in the Hostel to study in the evening. Even in those areas where there was electricity, regular power cuts necessitated the use of oil lamps.

Moderator's solar light challenge

The Moderator of the General Assembly, Rev Dr Shaw Paterson, following a visit to Malawi, has issued a challenge to congregations. He noticed during his visit that there were barriers for students who were keen to learn. For children, without lights in their homes, they could not study after it became dark. And for PhD students at Zomba Theological University they were frequently dealing with power outages, something Shaw witnessed first-hand.

His challenge aims to help students at both ends of the academic spectrum – primary school learners and PhD students. He believes 'light libraries' could hold the answer. It is lighting up homes to allow children to do homework by funding a 'light library' at their school, allowing them to borrow small solar lights to take home, potentially making a difference to their whole future.

The headteacher told how the simple solar lights are allowing extra time for children to learn in villages where there is no electricity and so it is dark at 6.30pm. She has seen academic improvement in her pupils since this initiative has been in place. The light also becomes a resource for others in the household as even one small light radiates a beam which allows others to see also. Before children were studying by using candles or kerosene lamps, which are both expensive, or indeed not studying at all.

Solar lights are changing lives. Solar lights for light libraries cost around £10 per light and can be bought locally in Malawi. Solar lights are eco-friendly.

If you want to know more, please access "Moderator's Challenge" on the Church of Scotland website. The challenge will run until May 2025.

Matthew (on behalf of the ECO Group)

World Day of Prayer Service

"I made you wonderful"

Granton Parish Church at 2.30pm on Friday 7 March

There are refreshments in their hall afterwards, giving us a chance to meet and chat with our neighbours from local congregations.

A group of Christian women from the Cook Islands have worked collectively over the last four years to pray and reflect on the theme and they invite us to join them as they pray:-

- for peace
- for justice
- love and unity

'Lord, teach us to pray'

The World Day of Prayer is for everyone - men, women and young people. A warm welcome awaits you at the service, and you are invited to share your faith, joy and hopes.

Frances Bicket

Date for your diary - Saturday 5 April Lent Event

The Mission and Discipleship group are planning a Lent Event on 5 April.

We are preparing a 'Pilgrimage' around the Church and Garden.

This will be a journey moving through activity, reflection, prayer as we travel towards Palm Sunday and the events of Easter Week.

Further details will be posted. If you want a text or email notification of times, etc as plans evolve (in the same way as many health appointments these days) then please let Frances Bicket know (0131 552 8781; email: frances.bicket@gmail.com).

Frances Bicket for Mission and Discipleship team

New large hall curtains

At the beginning of January new curtains, (complete with blackout linings for shows) were hung in the large hall.

Thanks go to Peter and Helen Hannan who spent a lot of time sourcing, choosing and ordering the curtains to match the new décor —and to the team that hung all five sets in one morning.

Close up of curtain fabric

Coffee House

Friday 14 February

in the Church Centre

Anytime from 10.00-11.45am

All welcome to come for a cup of coffee or tea, a treat and a chat with friends or arrange to meet friends for a social morning. We look forward to seeing everyone on 14 February

Next Coffee House —14 March

Pram Service

3 February 10.30am

3 March 10.30am

Nostalgia Cafe

Thursday 27 February

at 2pm

All welcome

Let us pray…

God of the turning years, in Your Creator hands all time is held,
The past, the present, the future.
We have each minute, day and month, ahead of us.
We look ahead to what will be,
what might be and what we hope will not be.

Christ be our light! Shine on we pray
into our hearts, into our world today.

We ask for Hope, Peace, Joy and Love:-
For us and for our loved ones; in all the joys and challenges of life.
For our country; as we encounter troubled economic times, uncertainty about the future.
For our world; we pray for the places of continuing war and conflict, for the continuing impact of climate change everywhere but especially on poorer nations; may those able to bring change have the will to do so.
And for Your Church in these times of change, and uncertainty.

Christ be our joy; your glory let us see,
as your disciples did in Galilee.

Lord of the turning years,
Hear all our prayers this day in the Name of Jesus.
Amen

The hand of God encircles us:

God of our beginnings holding us firm

The feet of Christ walk before us:

God of our journeying showing us the way

The wings of the Spirit lift us up

God who is our company, our energy, our joy.

Dorothy McRae-McMahon, DMM's book, Liturgies for the Journey of Life, published by SPCK in 2000