

Park Pages



the magazine of Uddingston: Park United Free Church of Scotland



Letter from the Minister

Winter 2025

Dear Friends,

Here we are approaching another Christmas. How are we feeling about it? Do you look forward with anticipation towards the festivities? Or a sense of weariness? Here we go again, with the same round of activities...or...this year is going to be different!

Can I suggest that for Christians there is an alternative way of thinking about Christmas which doesn't depend on the outward celebrations, or the lack of them? Surely the reason for this coming season is Jesus Christ, the One who is Immanuel, God with us? As He becomes the focus of our activities and thinking, then we all can have a *bumper* Christmas. It begins and ends with unpacking who this gift really is; the Child in the Manger, Infant of Mary. To help you do this, then reflect on these words that I recently read whilst on holiday.



Jesus is the true and better Adam who passed the test in the garden, and in a much tougher garden.

Jesus is the true and better Abel who, though innocently slain, has blood that cries out for our acquittal.

Jesus is the true and better Abraham who answered the call of God to leave all the comfortable and familiar and go into the chaos of a fallen world.

Jesus is the true and better Isaac who was not just offered up by his father on the Mount of Crucifixion, but was truly sacrificed for us all.

Jesus is the true and better Jacob who wrestled and took the blow of justice we deserve to bear so that we, like Jacob, can receive the wounds of grace in our lives.

Jesus is the true and better Joseph who sits at the right hand of the King and forgives those who betrayed and sold him.

Jesus is the true and better Moses who stands in the gap between us and a Holy God and who mediates a new covenant of grace, not law.

Jesus is the true and better Job who became a truly innocent sufferer and now intercedes for and saves his stupid friends.

Jesus is the true and better David whose victory becomes his people's victory, though they never lifted a stone to accomplish it themselves.

Jesus is the true and better Esther who didn't just say, "If I perish, I perish" but also "When I perish, I'll perish to save my people."

Jesus is the true and better Jonah who was cast out into the storm so we could be rescued and brought home.

Jesus is the real Passover Lamb.

Jesus is the True Temple, the True Prophet, the True Priest, the True King, the True Sacrifice, the True Lamb, the True Light, the True Lover!

Taken from Tim Keller, What is Gospel Centered Ministry? (Lecture, The Gospel Coalition National Conference, Deerfield, IL, May 2007)

Some of the words of the carol that I mentioned earlier come to mind:

**Child in the Manger, Infant of Mary;
Outcast and stranger, Lord of All;
Child who inherits all our transgressions,
All our demerits on Him fall.**

**Prophets foretold Him, infant of wonder;
Angels behold Him on His throne;
Worthy our Saviour of all our praises;
Happy forever are His own.**



As we view Christmas through this lens, then perhaps we can understand more the reason for the angelic, ecstatic singing over the shepherds of Bethlehem.

Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth, peace to those on whom His favour rests. Luke 2 v 14

Likewise, the Angel of the Lord who came to Joseph gave clear instructions about what Joseph was to do with the baby. This Child has a God-given mission to undertake and so:

Mary will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. Matthew 1 v 21

As the chorus of a more modern carol states:

**This Child, heaven come down now to be with us here,
Heavenly love and mercy appear,
Softly in awe and wonder come near
To this heavenly Child.**

If the Jesus born of Mary is the fulfilment of these Old Testament figures, then this is really an amazing reason to celebrate! In a very real sense, there was party time in heaven when Jesus was born.

Even angels long to look into these things. 1 Peter 1 v 12

Perhaps we can remember the excitement of opening our presents when we were children. The sense of anticipation and looking at the gifts and seeing them as tokens of the love of family and friends. Well, as we unpack the wonder of the Christ Child, we can rediscover that sense of excitement and wonder that perhaps we have long lost in other areas of life.

Let us sing the well-known carols and hear the well-known Gospel story with a renewed appreciation of what Christmas really means. As the great Hymn of the Magnificat puts it:

**Tell out my soul the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings give my spirit voice...**

With warm Festive Greetings

Wm B. D. D. D.



Advent and Christmas at Park

<p>Sunday 7 December</p> 	<p>10.30am Advent Communion The Birth of Jesus Foretold</p> <p>Village Christmas Tea Room will be open in the Hall 12.30pm—3pm School choirs at 1.30pm</p>	 
<p>Sunday 14 December</p>	<p>10.30am The Song of Mary and Zechariah</p>	
<p>Tuesday 16 December</p>	<p>7.30pm Christmas Concert with Il Coro (Community Choir)</p>	
<p>Friday 19 December</p>	<p>7pm Kirkintilloch Youth Brass Band</p>	
<p>Sunday 21 December</p> 	<p>10.30am Nativity Play In those Days—Luke 2</p> <p>7pm Bield Housing Carol Service</p>	
	<p>11.30pm Watchnight Service</p>	
<p>CHRISTMAS DAY</p> 	<p>10.30am Celebration and Communion</p>	
<p>Christmas Sunday 28 December</p>	<p>10.30am Carols and Reflections</p>	
<p>Epiphany Sunday 4 January</p>	<p>10.30am Wise people still seek him? Matthew 2</p>	

Just a Moment

It all happened in a moment, a most remarkable moment.

As moments go, that one appeared no different than any other. If you could somehow pick it up off the timeline and examine it, it would look exactly like the ones that have passed while you have read these words. It came and it went. It was preceded and succeeded by others just like it. It was one of the countless moments that have marked time since eternity became measurable.



But in reality, that particular moment was like none other. For through that segment of time a spectacular thing occurred. God became a man. While the creatures of earth walked unaware, Divinity arrived. Heaven opened herself and placed her most precious one in a human womb.

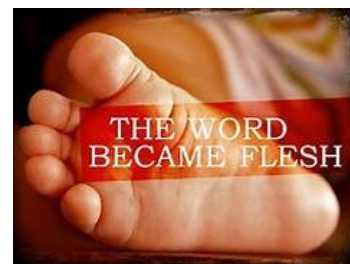
The Omnipotent, in one instant, made himself breakable. He who had been spirit became pierceable. He who was larger than the universe became an embryo. And he who sustains the world with a word chose to be dependent upon the nourishment of a young girl.

God as a fetus.

Holiness sleeping in a womb.

The creator of life being created.

God was given eyebrows, elbows, two kidneys, and a spleen. He stretched against the walls and floated in the amniotic fluids of his mother.



God had come near.

He came, not as a flash of light or as an unapproachable conqueror, but as one whose first cries were heard by a peasant girl and a sleepy carpenter. The hands that first held him were unmanicured, calloused, and dirty.

No silk. No ivory. No hype. No party. No hoopla.

Were it not for the shepherds, there would have been no reception. And were it not for a group of stargazers, there would have been no gifts.

Angels watched as Mary changed God's diaper. The universe watched with wonder as The Almighty learned to walk. Children played in the street with him. And had the synagogue leader in Nazareth known who was listening to his sermons...



Jesus may have had pimples. He may have been tone-deaf. Perhaps a girl down the street had a crush on him or vice versa. It could be that his knees were bony. One thing's for sure: He was, while completely divine, completely human.

For thirty-three years he would feel everything you and I have ever felt.

He felt weak. He grew weary.

He was afraid of failure. He was susceptible to wooing women.

He got colds, burped, and had body odour. His feelings got hurt. His feet got tired. And his head ached.



To think of Jesus in such a light is—well, it seems almost irreverent, doesn't it? It's not something we like to do; it's uncomfortable. It is much easier to keep the humanity out of the incarnation. Clean the manure from around the manger. Wipe the sweat out of his eyes. Pretend he never snored or blew his nose or hit his thumb with a hammer.

He's easier to stomach that way. There is something about keeping him divine that keeps him distant, packaged, predictable.

But don't do it. For heaven's sake, don't. Let him be as human as he intended to be. Let him into the mire and muck of our world.

For only if we let him in can he pull us out.

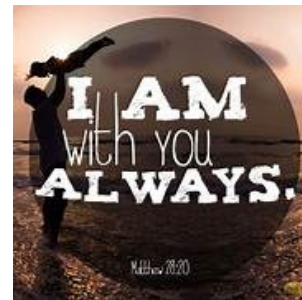
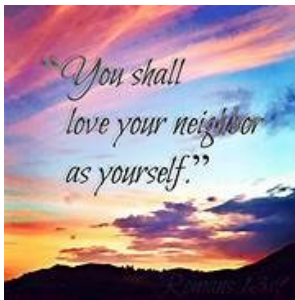
Listen to him.

"Love your neighbour" was spoken by a man whose neighbours tried to kill him.

The challenge to leave family for the gospel was issued by one who kissed his mother goodbye in the doorway.

"Pray for those who persecute you" came from the lips that would soon be begging God to forgive his murderers.

"I am with you always" are the words of a God who in one instant did the impossible to make it all possible for you and me.



It all happened in a moment. In one moment...a most remarkable moment.

The Word became flesh.

There will be another. The world will see another instantaneous transformation. You see, in becoming man, God made it possible for man to see God. When Jesus went home he left the back door open. As a result, "we will all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."



The first moment of transformation went unnoticed by the world. But you can bet your sweet September that the second one won't. The next time you use the phrase "just a moment," ...remember that's all the time it will take to change this world.

Just a Moment Published by Word Publishing © 1987 by Max Lucado

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Pressing On

I think we were all moved by Bruce's sermon on Pressing On inspired by Paul's words in Philippians Chapter 3 a few Sundays ago. The poem below encourages us to keep moving forwards and to leave our past behind. This is a challenge for all of us and a daily struggle, but we know that Christ has gone before us and He is the prize that awaits.



Keep pressing on



Forget what is behind you,
no need to look back . . .
for Jesus has forgiven you
your past He doesn't track.

Don't think about the past,
or what you have done wrong
let go of your weaknesses
keep pressing on and be strong.

Don't let your past losses,
cause you anguish or pain
count them all as victories
for your Savior's gain.



Press on and move forward,
the goal is quite clear
give the past to Jesus
without doubt or fear.

Forget what is behind you,
keep pressing for the prize
by keeping the goal . . .
always in your eyes!

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Father God

We thank you for the example of the apostle Paul who pressed on towards the goal for the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Help us too to press on towards the goal of our calling and to trust in You when we face the disappointments, challenges and trials that confront us in this world. Thank you that Your grace is sufficient no matter what we face. Help us not to look backwards but to look forwards to the goal of our calling.

In Jesus' name, Amen

The End of an Era

It was with great sadness that we learned of the passing of our oldest member, Elizabeth Thomson, on Friday 28 November but we rejoice that she is no longer suffering and has gone home to be with Jesus. Elizabeth was 99 last June and celebrated her birthday with a surprise party which many members of the congregation attended. I carried out an interview with her on her 90th birthday and I include some excerpts below to highlight her mischievous nature but also her deep faith in God.

Main Childhood Memories

My primary schooling was done at The Grange which was where the Redstones is today. It was a private school run by two sisters...there could only have been about 12 pupils in the whole school. In those days I had long blonde hair, so long that I could actually sit on it. I'm afraid I was a bit of a mischievous child and we used to stand in a circle with the teacher in the middle. Now this teacher used to put her hair up using hairpins and I used to creep up on her, magnet in hand, and remove the pins much to the poor teacher's confusion and consternation!

When I was about nine years old I moved to the High School for Girls in Glasgow. At that time the school was situated at the top of a steep hill, near where St Aloysius is today, and I remember sliding down the hill sitting on my satchel in which I had stuffed my school hat, made from felt, the minute the bell went! It wasn't so easy to do that with the Panama hat we had to wear in the summer term! I remember my school days as happy days and I graduated with a Diploma in Nonsense!

Memories of Park and Matters of Faith

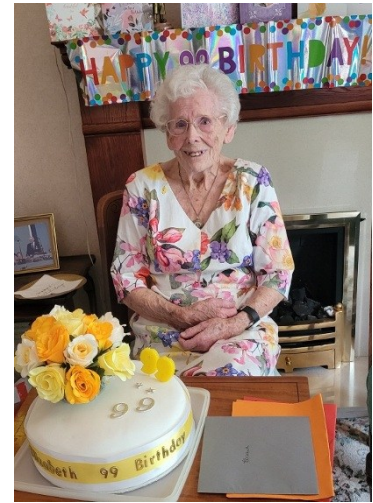
I have been going to Park Church all my life, since the tender age of three...I have memories of my mother wearing a grey squirrel coat with a collar which I used to snuggle up to...and pulled out individual hairs from it with my mouth! I also remember one day my brother, Jimmy, who went on to become Sir Jimmy Highgate and Preses of Park Church until his death, forgetting to put the seat down before putting the cushion back on the same seat and landing wedged in between the seat and the floor. I could not stop laughing the whole service.

However, in case you are thinking I didn't take things seriously, I was a member of the Young Worshippers' League and had 11 years of perfect attendance. I was also a member of the Youth Fellowship.

I have always had a faith, it's always been part of my life...I have suffered hardship in my life. My second husband, Norrie, died of cancer soon after we were married and I lost my son through an asthma attack, but God has been there for me, He has never let me down. He has given me the strength to get through it all without breaking down and I have never asked, "Why me?" I like to read Psalm 23 and I like most hymns—as long as they are not miserable! I want my own funeral to be a happy occasion as heaven is definitely better than here!

Elizabeth was what you call a *character* with an incorrigible sense of humour; she was also a lady who suffered much hardship in her life but her faith and indomitable spirit got her through. She was a pleasure to visit, never complaining, and in her latter years loved to relive the happy days of her youth in Kylespark Drive with "mummy, daddy and her beloved brother, Jimmy".

We will miss her as she defiantly climbed those spiral stairs to her seat in the gallery which she had occupied since the age of three, and she could still dissolve into giggles at anything that amused her at the age of 99! As she said herself, she would want her funeral to be a celebration of her life as "heaven is definitely better than here"! We will certainly make sure that her last wishes are carried out and that we celebrate a life well lived.



Come let us sing for joy to the Lord!

Manger Throne is the title of Phil Wickham's Christmas song but it was also the original title of the poem that 'What Child is This?' took its inspiration from. Both speak of Christ's birth and the paradox of a King being born in a humble manger. They are very different in musical style—Wickham's has a big worshipful feel with orchestral backing whereas *What Child is this?* is set to the hauntingly beautiful Greensleeves melody. However, both songs help us reflect on the Christ Child's birth and the eternal hope this gives us.



What Child is This?

This 19th century carol contrasts the lowly manger with a king's throne. Its lyrics are taken from a poem written by **William Chatterton Dix** in 1865. The poem was called **The Manger Throne**. Dix was inspired to write the poem after a spiritual awakening prompted by a serious illness when he was only 29 years old. The words were later set to the haunting and beautiful tune of Greensleeves.

The carol juxtaposes the humble surroundings of the lowly stable with the profound reality of Christ's divine kingship. The lyrics contrast Christ's meek human birth in the stable with his eternal, divine nature,

The first verse describes the traditional nativity scene that we are familiar with. The baby Jesus is being held in his mother Mary's lap while being serenaded by angels and watched over by the shepherds. The imagery highlights the humble setting that contrasts with the reverence shown to him. The first line poses a rhetorical question, *What child is this?* We know the answer but it is almost too wonderful to be true.

The second verse questions why the Christ child is to be found in such "mean estate" i.e. in humble surroundings not worthy of the Messiah. The first verse had angels singing anthems as we would expect but here he is lying *where ox and ass are feeding*. Why is he not in a palace? Here we see God turned into the form of a man through this baby. He is the *silent Word* - an oxymoron - that pleads the case of sinners and is part of God's plan to save humanity.

1. **What child is this, who, laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping?
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet,
While shepherds watch are keeping?**

Chorus
**This, this is Christ the King
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him praise,
The babe, the Son of Mary!**

2. **Why lies He in such mean estate,
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Good Christian, fear: for sinners here
The silent Word is pleading.**

Chorus

3. **So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh,
Come, peasant, king to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings,
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.**

Chorus



The final stanza concentrates on the fact that everyone can come to Jesus and be accepted, whether you are a peasant or a king, whether you are weak or strong, rich or poor. The low and despised in society kneel side by side with kings. Jesus has come to bring salvation to all who accept Him as their saviour. The Gospel doesn't discriminate. So this Christmas let us "haste, haste to bring Him praise" and worship Him, not only in song, but more importantly with our lives.

To listen to the carol, click [here](#)

Manger Throne

This song was written by **Phil Wickham, Jonathan Smith and Tony Wood** in 2023. The juxtaposition of the words in the title contrast the meekness and majesty of Jesus. He could have arrived on earth in a pillar of fire, he had all the power and authority at his disposal, but he chose to enter the world meekly and humbly, embracing our humanity by being born as a baby in the squalor of a borrowed stable in Bethlehem.

Or, He could have marched into Rome as a conquering king, bringing the rulers to their knees in submission as one day everyone will have to do. But again we see he chose the path of humility, not because he was weak but because he wanted to connect with the people He had created and through the cross, restore them to the Father.

Wickham writes: **But you wrote a better story in humble Bethlehem...** This is the story of the Incarnation!

The creator of the world came into this world through the arms of common people. His purpose was clear—to die for our redemption and to rise so that we might live. Jesus was born with an eye on the cross and we see here the connection between the Christmas story, The Incarnation, and Christ's death and resurrection. Even in His humble entrance into the world, Jesus is the true king. His kingship is not of this world, it is eternal and spiritual and we are encouraged to surrender our lives, our praise, everything we own to Him. By overcoming the grave, He offers us the hope of eternal life



...at the name of Jesus
every knee should bow
in heaven and on earth and
under the earth...
Philippians 2 v 10

1. **You could have stepped into creation
With fire for all to see
Brought every tribe and nation to their knees
Arriving with the host of heaven
in royal robe and crown
The rulers of the earth all bowing down**

**But You chose meekness over majesty
Wrapped your power in humanity**

Chorus

**Glory be to You alone
King who reigns from a manger throne
My life, my praise, everything I own
To Jesus the King on a manger throne**

2. **You could have marched in all Your glory
Into the heart of Rome
Showed them splendour like they'd never known
But You wrote a better story
In humble Bethlehem
Creator in the arms of common men**

**You will die for our redemption
And You'll rise so we can live**

Chorus

3. **From heaven to the cradle
From cradle to the cross
Let heaven and nature sing
This is our King
But the grave couldn't hold Him
Our God has overcome
Let heaven and nature sing
This is our King x 2**

The chorus reminds us that God alone is holy, worthy of our praise and it is right that His name is glorified. We should offer him our lives and our possessions and surrender totally to Him.

The song links Christ's birth to His death, the resurrection and ultimately His eternal reign. It is full of biblical truths and helps us to worship The Creator of the world.

Let Heaven and Nature sing, This is our King!



As we reflect on the message of the song, may we remember Jesus' humility and love for us this Christmas season. Just as His birth in that stable in Bethlehem changed the world, so too may our hearts be transformed as we worship the King of the Manger Throne.

To listen to the song click [here](#)

Hebridean Revival 1949-52

We are having a Day of Prayer for the needs of our church on Wednesday 7 January 2026 so I thought it would be helpful to look back at a time when the power of prayer initiated probably the most famous revival Scotland has ever known. Hopefully this story will inspire us to come together in January and present our petitions to God.



The Isle of Lewis is the largest island in the Outer Hebrides and is known for its strong Presbyterian tradition. The Sabbath is generally observed with most shops and licensed premises closed although there is now an air and ferry service to the island and recently in 2024 Tesco won a battle to open on a Sunday despite significant opposition from the locals.

It might therefore come as a surprise to learn that in 1949 many people felt there was a spiritual drought in the church, especially among the younger generation. Legalism prevailed and though the people had a form of godliness it was more out of duty and tradition than belief. In most houses, even of non church attendees, the bible was read and a prayer said in the morning but there was no spiritual life.

Two spinster sisters, Peggy and Christine Smith, felt burdened by the depressed spiritual state of the church in their village of Barvas. Peggy was blind and aged 84 and Christine was bent double with arthritis and aged 82 but God used these two old ladies to bring about revival. In November 1949 they felt God directing them to Isaiah 44 v 3.

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground.

The two spinsters prayed in their small cottage two to three times a week from 10pm to 3am. After several weeks of praying, Peggy had a vision of their church crowded with young people and an unknown minister preaching.



Peggy spoke to their minister, the Rev James Murray MacKay. She told him she sensed God was going to send a revival and to get the church leaders praying. The minister knew the sisters well and trusted their spiritual judgment and so the call to prayer was made. Seven elders of the church met in a barn twice a week on Tuesday and Friday evenings to pray and the two sisters continued their prayer ministry at the same times in their cottage.

This continued for six weeks until one evening a young man stood up and declared that the prayers were wasted until they themselves were right with God. He lifted up both hands and prayed from **Psalm 24**:

God, are my hands clean? Is my heart pure?

He got no further as he fell to his knees and then into a trance. At that point, 3am, the minister and the other office bearers in attendance were convicted that a God-sent revival must always be related to holiness and godliness. Are my hands clean? Is my heart pure?

An awareness of God gripped the whole community and little work was done as people turned their thoughts to eternal things. God seemed to be everywhere. The two sisters knew that God had kept his promise and asked their minister to send a missionary to help.

Duncan Campbell, who was in the midst of an evangelical campaign in Skye at the time, was sent for. As soon as he arrived on the evening steamer, he was asked to preach at the 9pm meeting in Barvas Church. The meeting ended at 10.45pm and nothing exceptional had happened. Everyone had departed from the meeting except Campbell and one deacon. This deacon was convinced that something was going to happen that night. He said, *"Don't be discouraged. God is hovering over us and He'll break through at any minute. I can already hear the rumbling of heaven's chariot wheels!"*

He lifted his hands and started to pray, calling out to God:



God, you made a promise to pour water on the thirsty and floods upon the dry ground and you are not doing it!

He then began interceding in prayer for a considerable time before collapsing on the floor.

At 11pm the blacksmith appeared at the back door of the church and said to Duncan Campbell:

We were praying that God would pour water on the thirsty and floods upon the dry ground and He's done it!

Many hundreds of people entered the church. No one had invited them. They were drawn there by God. That evening there had been a dance at the village hall. At the same time the deacon had been praying, the music had stopped and the young people, overcome by conviction of sin, fled the dance hall and made their way to the church. Hundreds more who had already gone to bed, got up, dressed and ran to the church. Over 800 people crowded into the church and started singing psalms and many fell to their knees crying out to God for mercy. Another 300 people had gathered at the police station, many coming in buses from 12 miles away. When asked why they had come, they had no answer! They just had an overwhelming hunger in their heart to go to Barvas.

This continued for five weeks and then spread to other parishes. Campbell would preach four to eight times a day, in churches, in fields and along the shore. There was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit across great swathes of the island over a two-and-a-half year period and the overwhelming presence of God rested on people. There are so many stories that we don't have time to recount here but what can we take away from this revival that will focus our minds on our own day of prayer in the New Year?

- **God listens to His people's petitions and prayers if we are persistent in prayer**
- **We must be holy and godly ourselves before we come before Him—Are our hands clean, our hearts pure?**
- **God can use anybody to further His kingdom—this revival was sparked by the prayers of two elderly spinsters**
- **We must have a sense of expectancy that God will answer our prayers**
- **Prayer is the catalyst—God does the rest**

Don't worry about having the right words; worry more about having the right heart. It's not eloquence He seeks, just honesty. Max Lucado



A Word from the Minister

In the light of a suggestion from **Jessica Beecroft**, our Children and Families' Worker, that we should set aside time to pray for this coming year, the Kirk Session has decided to take up this idea. Whilst detailed planning for this day is yet to be clarified, it is only right that we commit ourselves to having a designated period when we can corporately bring before God the needs of our congregation. Facing the retirement of our minister with Bruce and Elizabeth moving away, we will enter into a period of vacancy. There are very few potential candidates to fill this post. A number of serious building challenges are going to be attended to in the year ahead with obvious expenditure involved. We all recognise the ageing nature of our congregation and the need for a new generation of leaders to guide our Fellowship forward.

These issues, along with the wider concerns for our society, provide plenty of reasons why we should attend to prayer. Yet, we could easily be somewhat overwhelmed by the uncertainties of the new year. This is why we need to heed words from the Apostle Paul which we will use when we gather for prayer on 7 January 2026.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

The Lord is near.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4 v 4-7



Details of how this day will be held, and opportunities for ALL to be part of it, will be announced in due course.

Church News

Shoebox Appeal

This is a hands-on way to bless children in need across the world. This year Park has sent around 60 boxes to the local distribution centre. A big **THANK YOU** to everyone who contributed to this appeal.



Ladies' Association Coffee Morning

The Ladies' Association ran a very successful coffee morning on Saturday 4 October which raised over £1,300. Both the church family and the local community supported it in good numbers despite the bad weather. There were stalls of gifts and cards, handmade crafts, bric-a-brac and home baking. Proceeds from the coffee morning will be distributed among several Christian charities.

Film Night

We had a lovely time of fellowship on the evening of 2 November. We met to have our fish and chips in the church hall before going through to the church to watch the film, **Jesus Revolution**. The film tells the inspiring story of revival and the establishment of the Calvary Chapel Movement. This heralded a national spiritual awakening in the US in the 1970s with its origin being among a group of teenage hippies in South California.



Thursday Coffee and Chat

The inaugural meeting of this group took place on 20 November and by all accounts it was a resounding success. People got together over a cup of tea to chat while others played games such as scrabble. This afternoon will run once a month and is open to all members of the congregation.



CPR and Defibrillator Training

A group of managers and Park Kids' staff participated in a very enjoyable training session run by [St John Scotland](#) on 4 September. Three trainers put us through our paces, teaching us basic CPR as well as instruction in how to use a defibrillator. A new defibrillator was installed in the hall on 13 October which can be used for both adults and children. Again, training was given with one or two new people joining the group. In total we now have 14 members of the congregation trained in this life-saving technique. Survival rates are much higher (50-70%) for a cardiac arrest if a defibrillator is used within 3-5 minutes. We hope that we never have to put our new skills into practice but it's better to be prepared! The defibrillator is situated on the back wall of the hall near the entrance to the kitchen.



Passed to Glory

The funeral service of **Lily Gregory** took place on Friday 31 October. Lily was a faithful member of the congregation until ill health prevented her from attending. She is now at home with the Lord and we extend our prayers and sympathy to her husband John and the wider family.



In this Time, in this Place

On Sunday 19 October, Oksana, from Ukraine's branch of Scripture Union, came to talk to us. Ukraine has been under attack from Russia since February 2022 and the people, including the children, have had to get used to a world of air raid sirens, missile strikes and running to the bomb shelters.



Oksana read from **Acts 17 v 22-27**, which finds Paul speaking to the Athenians. He mentions all their shrines and that they even have an altar which has the inscription, "To an unknown God". Oksana explained that v 26b had special relevance for her: **"And he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands."**

When the war started, despite many offers from friends to leave Ukraine, Oksana felt God wanted her in Ukraine so that she could draw people to Jesus. SU Ukraine set about building a bomb shelter for their camps. These camps have grown during the war, both residential and day camps; the children feel the camps bring some normality to their lives and they particularly like being able to have games outside. Most of the children are from non-Christian homes. The team is able to share Jesus' love for them and the eternal hope that knowing Him brings. Sadly, despite the war, God is still unknown to many, both in Ukraine and the UK. Oksana finished her talk with a quote from Eugene Peterson to emphasise that God is near if only we would look for Him.

"...so we could seek after God, and not just grope around in the dark but actually find Him. He doesn't play hide-and-seek with us, He's not remote; He's near." The Message Acts 17 v 27

OMF in Vietnam

On Sunday 2 November we heard from a family serving God with OMF in Hanoi, Vietnam. Ten million people live in this ever-growing city which has a rich culture with south-east Asian, Chinese and French influences. North Vietnam has been under Communist rule since 1975 so Christians need to be careful to comply with government restrictions. There has been growth among ethnic groups such as the Kinh people. OMF focuses its work on student ministry and community projects that demonstrate the love of Christ through practical work. However, many people in the north are still unreached and Vietnam needs our prayers.



Christmas for the Kids

Jessica has lots of fun activities prepared for the kids in December. On **Sunday 7 December** during the **Village Christmas** event you will be able to find posters on various lampposts in the village. If you scan the QR code you will be able to watch part of the Christmas Story in our **Lego Christmas Story Trail**. This is a fun, family-friendly way to explore the village event, discover the true meaning of Christmas and enjoy creative story-telling as you make your way through the village.

On **Sunday 14 December** we are hosting a free Family Film night when we will be showing **The King of Kings** followed by a fun Family Quiz with prizes! It will take place between **3.45-6pm** so tell your friends and neighbours with children or grandchildren to come along. You can book via the Eventbrite link on our Facebook page or let Jessica know if you are coming. This helps with the catering.

We thank Jessica for coming up with new and exciting ideas to bring the Christmas story to the community.

The Christmas Spider and Tinsel

Many of our Advent traditions have their roots in different cultures and customs. People use tinsel to make their Christmas tree look sparkly and shiny! Its origins go back to Germany in 1610. It was originally made of silver but the lighted candles on the tree made it turn black (a fire hazard if ever there was one!) and so manufacturers sought to make it out of different materials until it finally evolved into the metallic plastic we know today. The story behind the decoration has its roots in either Germany or Ukraine.



The Legend of the Christmas Spider and Tinsel

Once upon a time, there was a poor widow who lived in her tiny home with her young children. One day, the children found a fallen tree and pulled it home for the holidays. They were so excited to have their very own Christmas tree! However, they were upset when their mother explained that she could barely afford to feed them let alone buy decorations for a tree. Although sad, the kids understood and wiped away their tears as they went to bed that Christmas Eve.



The tree stood in the corner, bare and without a single decoration. The widow was very sad that she couldn't afford to decorate the tree for her children and went to bed with a heavy heart. However, the household spiders had seen how sad both the children and the mother were and they spread themselves all over the tree that evening, leaving intricate webs in their wake. When the children got up early on Christmas morning and saw the tree, they shouted to their mother, "Mother, mother, come and see what has happened to the tree! It is beautiful!"

The mother rushed into the living room to find that during the bitter cold night while they slept, the spiders had spun magical glittery garlands all across the bare branches of the tree. As the little family looked at the tree in wonder, they realised they had everything they needed. They had each other, and that was more than enough. As God heard their prayers of gratitude, He reached down and touched the tree, turning the dusty spider webs into magical strands of gold and silver. The grateful family never wanted for their needs again.



From that day forward, it became a tradition for many families to add tinsel to their trees as a way to show their gratitude to God for the many gifts He had bestowed upon them.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. James 1 v 17

Awards! Awards!

Although there is not an "Awards Season" in the world of Community Volunteer Groups, we have recently been involved in receiving awards over the last couple of weeks.

First and foremost, on Friday 14 November, it was officially announced that **Grow Uddingston** had been granted the **King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAWS)**.

Although we were made aware of this award in advance, we were "sworn to secrecy" until this date in order to coincide with the official announcement in "The Gazette" (a Crown publication with a 350 year old history that carries announcements of Honours and Royal appointments). This is the highest award given to UK voluntary groups, being equivalent to an MBE.

This honour was awarded for work done over many years and is a testament to all volunteers, helpers, supporters and sponsors, both past and present, in what is our 25th anniversary year. As such, it is an award for the whole community of Uddingston. In due course the **Lord Lieutenant of Lanarkshire** will make a presentation of a certificate and commemorative crystal, on behalf of the King.

Grow Uddingston (at that time Uddingston Pride) was one of the first groups to be involved in Scotrail's "Adopt a Station" programme back in 2005 when we adopted Uddingston Station. At the recent **Scotrail in the Community Awards**, we were shortlisted for, and won, the **Most Improved Station of the Year Award** for the significant work undertaken over the last year in bringing the station back to a high standard after the major construction works of installing two new lifts and bridge, that was completed in September 2024. Thanks to all of our "Train Gang" for all of their hard work.

Although Grow Uddingston won the **Best Urban Community** award at the Keep Scotland Beautiful's "Beautiful Scotland" Awards back in September, as the ceremony was online we were only recently presented with the Silver Rosebowl by Katie O'Donnell from KSB.

Christmas Fayre



Although we are very grateful and honoured to receive awards, it is not why local people volunteer; it is to do what they can to help and improve their community. As such, we are now "*back to the day job*" and we are currently organising our annual **Christmas Fayre**, which is on **Sunday 7 December, 12 noon - 3pm** at Uddingston Cross.

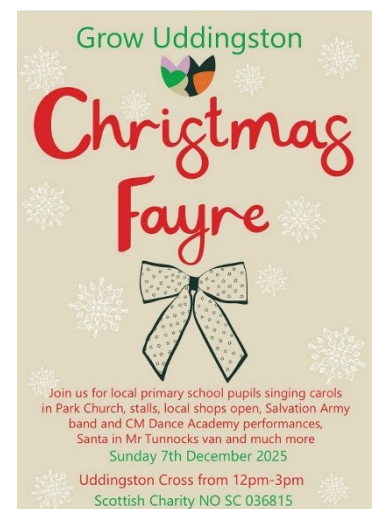


There will be lots of attractions such as music from the Bellshill Salvation Army Band, Dancing, Choirs, Stalls, Mulled Wine and much more. The local primary school choirs will be singing in **Park Church** at 1.30pm and we hope to see a good turnout of the community to support our youngsters. Santa will also be present on the afternoon so watch out for him! Many shops will also open on the day so there's something for everyone.

As usual, we hope for a dry day so that as many people as possible can come along and enjoy the festive festivities in what is one of our main fundraising events of the year. The money raised helps fund our beautiful planters and other flower displays throughout the year.



The King's Award
for Voluntary Service





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