

# ***NESS BANK CHURCH***

***Congregational Newsletter***

***Summer 2026 - No 1029***



***Congregation Formed 1787***

***Present Church Opened 1901***

## *Minister's letter*

It is a privilege to share in the work and witness of Ness Bank Church.

In March we welcomed guests from Uganda – the Watoto choir who told their stories of hurt and hope, bringing colour, life and joy to our church in a way that many will remember for years. We trust that God will continue to bless those young people through that project.

Then we welcomed hundreds of guests to Easter Alive, walking them through a Holy Week of celebration, teaching, suffering, death and resurrection. Some stood back, and others took part, sharing in reflection and prayer. Who knows what the lasting impact of that will be.

And we celebrated commitment, marking 438 years of service on the Kirk Session by a group of ten Elders – just part of the team that leads our church with skill, commitment, experience and prayer. Some of those leaders have now stepped down, trusting that God will guide those who remain to continue what others began.

Looking forward, we have much to do. By the time you read this, I will have been back to Luwero, Uganda for a week of Bible teaching with our friend Bishop Gabriel Kijjambu. Then we will be into a summer flurry of decision making as we finalise plans for our Sanctuary Project. As that work begins – hopefully in the Autumn – we will look forward to the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our building, which opened on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1901 (costing £8,500!)

A few years later the organ was installed, for another £590. Like some of us, it is now highly valued but declining with age! Pipes are distorting, motors breaking down, and leather wearing thin. Some bits no longer work at all, and others don't do what they used to. We are surveying the cost of a repair that will last for another 50 years – perhaps our next major project.

Meanwhile the work goes on, and the bills are paid, through the faithful service of many followers of Jesus. Neither are easy, and both require us all to keep reassessing our commitment in the light of our resources. Our Giving and Sharing programme last summer produced a generous response that, together with some stringent financial cuts,



turned a significant annual deficit into a small surplus. But inflation does not stand still, and we need to pull together to keep meeting the rising costs.

And as new people join the congregation, others retire from a lifetime of service. Sometimes they are replaced, and at others things change, as God guides his people into the work he wants us to do.

The world does not stand still, and neither must we. But in the words of one of our favourite hymns, there is a time to stop and trust:

*Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place;*

*he comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace:*

*no work too hard for him – in faith, receive from him.*

*Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.*

***Blessings  
Stuart***

## ***Congregational Register***

**Deaths:** 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2026 Jim Fulton (adherent)  
5<sup>th</sup> March 2026 Isobel Paterson

## ***Next Issue***

Contributions for the Autumn 26 Newsletter can be sent to me at any time, but no later than Monday 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2026. The Newsletter will be available for collection by Elders and Visitors on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> August, 2026.

***Elspeth Smith***

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Copies of the Newsletter are available in the vestibule.

Ness Bank church is online at [www.nessbankchurch.org.uk](http://www.nessbankchurch.org.uk)

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## *Wait, just how long did you say?!*



On Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April, the congregation was privileged to witness the presentation of Long Service Certificates to 10 members of the Kirk Session, and to give thanks for many years of faithful service to the members of Ness Bank and to the work of God in and through the church. The total number of years represented was an astonishing 438, and it was very good to celebrate and recognise the patient and persevering commitment behind those numbers. The certificates were presented by Eva, Danny and Harley, who represented those whom our elders are called to serve – the whole family of Ness Bank, young and old, sharing together in living for Jesus.

Richard Cliff (ordained 1991); David Bain (1990); Donald MacDonald(1986); Willie Proudfoot(1986); Billy Thompson(1985); Christine MacKintosh(1981); Jack McDonald(1981); David Abbot(1979); Jim Anderson(1975); Wym Simpson(1968)

Of these 10, 6 remain active within the Kirk Session, and 4 plan to retire – Wym, Jim, David and Willie – and are looking forward to freedom from meetings!

Let's continue to pray for our elders as they lead by example, and both individually and as a team, help all of us to grow in faith and to serve our Lord Jesus, day by day.

## *The Guild*



We are now finished for this latest Guild session, having looked at the second theme - 'Living Stones' of our 3 year strategy of Let's Build a House. We move on to our final theme, 'Beyond the Walls' when we start again in September. We have our Guilds Together Spring Rally on 23rd April in Trinity and Dalneigh Church. As always, we welcome anyone who would like to join us in September for fellowship, friendship and fun.

**Anne Sutherland**

## *A tale of two choirs..*



On Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> March, the pews of Ness Bank were filled with the fans, friends and families of two very different choirs, performing as part of one evening's entertainment.

First on stage came the People's Show choir, Black Isle, which was set up around 3 years ago, and forms the northernmost branch of a UK wide network of community choirs. Over 100 people from across the Black Isle sing regularly with the choir – although not all could be present that night – and we were treated to a varied and lively programme, with many beloved familiar numbers from musicals and film, and some less well known. Director Ula Weber introduced the numbers, encouraging our participation and exuding enthusiasm and love of music-making. The songs included 'Dancing Queen' from the ABBA musical, 'The Hills are Alive' from the Sound of Music, the quirky 'Grace Kelly' by Mika, and finishing off with a lovely arrangement of 'Follow the Heron' by Karine Polwart, the Scottish folk singer.

Next up came Laura Kelly, directing the Orangewood High School choir, from Maitland, Florida, who were concluding a short 3-concert tour of Scotland with this event in Ness Bank. The 19 singers, some of whom will leave school this year, treated us to a beautiful medley of music, starting with a lively rendition of 'The Battle of Jericho', and including a number of beautiful modern praise songs. It was a delight to hear the young voices of the soloists, and to see the joy in their faces as they sang.

As a grand finale, the two choirs squeezed together into the chancel, and gave us a marvellous performance of the classic 'Make Your Own Kind of Music' by Mama Cass – a golden oldie indeed! It was a fitting conclusion to a concert of widely varying genres, but where the sheer joy of singing with others was clearly on display.

## ***Choir Notes***

*“For many years there was no regular choir and the singing – mainly psalms – was led by a Precentor. In 1875 the entire choir resigned because they were not supported by the congregation. In 1894 an American organ was purchased and when the present church was built a pipe organ was installed.”* Extract from The Jubilee Book 1901-1951



But times change, and the Ness Bank choir was reinstated, and for several years took part in the Inverness Music Festival, always receiving good adjudications and various trophies. This picture shows then minister, Archie Black, the choir, and the organist David Hardie, who presided from 1978-1984

Now we have a regular and very faithful choir, though of course we would always welcome more voices in all parts. Currently there are 2 basses, 3 tenors, 4 altos and 5 sopranos – a well balanced choir! Choir practices take place on Thursday evenings with a break for tea and catch-ups in the middle, when we also enjoy David Abbot’s baking. We had a Choir Dinner in January, and another in March to celebrate(?) my retirement.



Ness Bank is so fortunate to have Ian Livingstone who has taken over as organist, and now leads the choir. I know they will support him as they supported me.

Thank you all! With love and keep singing!

### ***Thank you!***

On Easter Day it was suggested that I should stay for coffee after the service. I should have been suspicious...

Stuart spoke so kindly about my time as organist and leader of the church music and presented me with a beautiful basket of flowers.

Of course, I had to reply and after all these years I am still not very good at speaking off the cuff! I gave a short summary of our time in Inverness, but realised later that of course I had missed out so much, especially in relation to Ness Bank Church.

Our children were 5, 7 and 10 when we arrived, and apart from schooling at Central Primary and then the High School, both boys joined the Boys' Brigade and Catriona the Girls' Brigade. Stuart wrote about his BB achievements in the last Newsletter, but Iain is immortalised on the Juniors' trophy as being the Best Recruit, and Catriona gained the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award. She also ran the Anchor Boys for some years. So all 3 of them were involved in church activities. I took my turn as Guild President and was also Secretary and Chairman of the Scottish Federation of Organists. The Choir took part in the Triennial Festival with St Andrew's Cathedral choir, learning music we would not usually have sung, and travelling to Oban, Motherwell and Paisley. Our expeditions invariably ended with fish and chips...

Archie's mother moved to Inverness when she was widowed, and that was a happy time for her and our family. My only sadness now is that Archie cannot really appreciate his growing family, although they are all very good at visiting Grandad – and now Great-Grandad!

When we moved from Carstairs to Inverness in 1974, I had no idea that we would still be here in 2026, but we have had years of blessing here, for which I am eternally grateful.



***Bridget Black***

***Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I shall not be shaken. My salvation and my honour depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge.***

***(Ps 62.5-8)***

***This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: "In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, yet you would have none of it..... Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him!***

***(Isa 30.15&18)***

***At that time Jesus said, "I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father for this is what you were pleased to do..... Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden light.***

***(Matt 11.25&26,28-30)***

Rest... what does that word say to you today? Is it something positive? Or an admission of failure? From what we read in scripture, 'rest' should be a good thing, a sign of active trust in and dependence on God – both his provision for our needs, and his faithfulness to his own character, trusting God to BE God and therefore able to take and bear control of all things.

As I grow older, I find myself – like the people whom God rebukes through Isaiah – having 'none of it'! My anxious thoughts, and fretful attitudes all speak clearly of a lack of trust in God and a failure to rest in him. I want to achieve, to know that I am ticking all the right boxes which are required to be a 'good' christian. I fall easy prey to the comparison trap – looking at the lives of other believers and rebuking myself for not being like them in terms of bible knowledge, wisdom and serenity – and jump for solutions, more things that I ought to be not doing/reading/practising in order to be what God wants me to be.

There is an ugly restlessness in my life which robs me of joy and of the rest which comes when I fully accept God's grace as the only possible grounds of my identity and hope. That restlessness tells me that I am letting the reality of the sin which will cling about me until I die have too much power over me. I am right to be sensitive to it, but wrong to let it colour and distort my understanding of God's love and acceptance – his actual delight – in me. My Father is not sitting with a clipboard, waiting for me to measure up! He is holding out his arms to me, calling to me to join him in the daily adventure of sharing life with him, joining in his work and enjoying all his good gifts.

Jesus speaks in the prayer which I quoted above, of how his Father has revealed as to little children the mystery of life in the kingdom – the reality which our children know full well... they are loved, they belong, they matter not because they continually strive to be worthy of their place in the family, but because they ARE family! If such security is possible even in the families of flawed human beings, then how much deeper and more secure is the sense of rest which should be mine as a child of the perfectly loving and ever-compassionate God.

*Merciful and loving Father, how I long to be at rest in this life to which you call me day by day; to be delivered from fretfulness and to trust and depend on you to be who you say you are – my loving and good God.*

*Deliver me from the tyranny of performance-measurement and comparison with others; let me learn to accept that each of your children is learning in their own way and time, and that you delight in each one of us equally!*

*Aforgetfulsoul.com*



## *Messy Church is on the move!*

Lord I lift your name on high



The March event was scheduled during Easter Alive week and fortunately for us, we were able to use the activities displayed in the sanctuary as our main focus. It worked really well - leaders were assigned to each station and led the children through the Easter events using the relevant activities. It was the perfect way for us all to feel the impact of the story and the song 'Lord I lift your name on high', highlighted these stages.

March 29th marked the end of our Sunday events as the team has made the decision to move the meeting day to a Saturday with the new time of 4-6pm. This new arrangement, we believe, will be more practical for families. We have a strong team of leaders and we're looking forward to giving it a go on May 23rd! Please be praying for us, and for families to join us on the day.

### *Baby and Toddler group*

We started up again on Wednesday 22nd April after a break, at the new time of 10am - 12 noon, and would be delighted to welcome any pre-school child with a parent/ carer. Contact Anne Sutherland on the number at the back of the newsletter.

Baby & Toddler  
**GROUP**



# **Ness Bank Church**

## **Bible Readings and**

### **Prayer Prompts for Summer 2026**

***This mini-booklet is designed for you to pull out of the church newsletter and keep, so that you can use it in the coming weeks to assist you in bible reading and in prayer.***

*There's nothing like the written word of God for showing you the way to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Every part of scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another – showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God's way. Through the word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.*

*(2 Timothy 3.15-17, the Message paraphrase)*

*'Here's what I want you to do: Find a quiet, secluded place so you won't be tempted to role-play before God. Just be there as simply and honestly as you can manage. The focus will shift from you to God, and you will begin to sense his grace.*

*The world is full of so-called prayer warriors who are prayer-ignorant. They're full of formulas and programmes and advice, peddling techniques for getting what you want from God. Don't fall for that nonsense. This is your Father you are dealing with, and he knows better than you what you need.*

*With a God like this loving you, you can pray very simply. Like this:*

*Our Father in heaven, reveal who you are, set the world right; do what's best – as above, so below. Keep us alive with three square meals. Keep us forgiven with you and forgiving others. Keep us safe from ourselves and the Devil. You're in charge: You can do anything You want! You're ablaze in beauty!*

*(Matthew 6.6-13, the Message paraphrase)*

## ***June 2026***

1<sup>st</sup> 1 Kings 11:1-13

2<sup>nd</sup> 1 Kings 11:26-43

3<sup>rd</sup> 1 Kings 12:1-24

4<sup>th</sup> 1 Kings 12:25-33

5<sup>th</sup> 1 Kings 15:9-24

6<sup>th</sup> 1 Kings 16:23-33

7<sup>th</sup> Psalm 88

8<sup>th</sup> 1 Kings 17:1-24

9<sup>th</sup> 1 Kings 18:1-15

10<sup>th</sup> 1 Kings 18:16-46

11<sup>th</sup> 1 Kings 19:1-21

12<sup>th</sup> 1 Kings 21:1-29

13<sup>th</sup> 1 Kings 22:1-5,29-53

14<sup>th</sup> Psalm 89

15<sup>th</sup> Acts 21:1-16

16<sup>th</sup> Acts 21:17-26

17<sup>th</sup> Acts 21:27-36

18<sup>th</sup> Acts 21:37-22:11

19<sup>th</sup> Acts 22:12-29

20<sup>th</sup> Acts 22:30-23:11

21<sup>st</sup> Psalm 90

22<sup>nd</sup> Acts 23:12-22

23<sup>rd</sup> Acts 23:23-35

24<sup>th</sup> Acts 24:1-21

25<sup>th</sup> Acts 24:22-27

26<sup>th</sup> Acts 25:1-12

27<sup>th</sup> Acts 25:13-27

28<sup>th</sup> Psalm 91

29<sup>th</sup> Acts 26:1-18

30<sup>th</sup> Acts 26:19-32

*Make the book live to me, O Lord, Show me Yourself within Your word,  
Show me myself, and show me my Saviour, And make the book live to me.*

*(H.Pope, 1879-1967)*

## **July 2026**

1<sup>st</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:1-11  
2<sup>nd</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:12-22  
3<sup>rd</sup> 2 Corinthians 1:23-2:11  
4<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6

5<sup>th</sup> Psalm 92  
6<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 3:7-18  
7<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:1-18  
8<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:1-10  
9<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2  
10<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 6:3-18  
11<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 7:1-16

12<sup>th</sup> Psalm 93  
13<sup>th</sup> Numbers 3:1-13  
14<sup>th</sup> Numbers 9:1-14  
15<sup>th</sup> Numbers 9:15-23  
16<sup>th</sup> Numbers 11:1-15  
17<sup>th</sup> Numbers 11:16-35  
18<sup>th</sup> Numbers 12:1-16

19<sup>th</sup> Psalm 94  
20<sup>th</sup> Numbers 13:1-3,17-33  
21<sup>st</sup> Numbers 14:1-25  
22<sup>nd</sup> Numbers 14:26-45  
23<sup>rd</sup> Numbers 20:1-13  
24<sup>th</sup> Numbers 21:1-9  
25<sup>th</sup> Numbers 21:1-9

26<sup>th</sup> Psalm 95  
27<sup>th</sup> Matthew 13:1-9  
28<sup>th</sup> Matthew 13:10-23  
29<sup>th</sup> Matthew 13:24-30  
30<sup>th</sup> Matthew 13:31-43  
31<sup>st</sup> Matthew 13:44-52

These daily readings are a programme designed by Scripture Union. SU publishes explanatory notes to accompany the readings – called Daily Bread – or you can sign up to the Word Live service to receive the notes and readings online each day at :-

## ***August 2026***

1<sup>st</sup> Matthew 13:53-58

2<sup>nd</sup> Psalm 96

3<sup>rd</sup> 2 Kings 2:1-22

4<sup>th</sup> 2 Kings 4:1-7

5<sup>th</sup> 2 Kings 4:8-37

6<sup>th</sup> 2 Kings 5:1-14

7<sup>th</sup> 2 Kings 5:15-27

8<sup>th</sup> 2 Kings 12:1-12

9<sup>th</sup> Psalm 97

10<sup>th</sup> 2 Kings 17:1-23

11<sup>th</sup> 2 Kings 18:1-16

12<sup>th</sup> 2 Kings 18:17-37

13<sup>th</sup> 2 Kings 19:1-19

14<sup>th</sup> 2 Kings 19:20-37

15<sup>th</sup> 2 Kings 20:1-21

16<sup>th</sup> Psalm 99

17<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

18<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 8:16-9:5

19<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 9:6-15

20<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 10:1-18

21<sup>st</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:1-15

22<sup>nd</sup> 2 Corinthians 11:16-33

23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm 100

25<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:1-10

26<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 12:11-21

27<sup>th</sup> 2 Corinthians 13:1-14

28<sup>th</sup> Titus 1:1-16

29<sup>th</sup> Titus 2:1-15

30<sup>th</sup> Titus 3:1-15

There are other sources for bible reading programmes, such as the Lectio 365 app, which takes users through readings, prayers and prompts for meditation each day.

***Praying for ourselves, our community, our world  
- and for God's kingdom to come!***

*O Thou the reflection of whose transcendent glory did once appear unbroken in the face of Jesus Christ, give me today a heart like His – a brave heart, a true heart, a tender heart, a heart with great room in it, a heart fixed on Thyself; for His name's sake.*

*Amen.*

(John Baillie: A diary of private prayer, OUP London, 1972)

These headings and suggestions are to help you pray for our church, our family, our world, and above all, to pray that God will build his kingdom. Please use them in any way that suits. There are significant spaces between each section in case you want to note particular items for prayer.

The Psalms are the song-, and prayer-book of God's children, where we find words for our deepest need. We can learn from them how to pray for ourselves.. in this example, we learn how prayer can be a simple expression of thanksgiving and delight – a sharing with God of our deep awareness of his love.

***The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.***

When we take time to consider just who it is that we are praying to, lifting our minds to contemplate His greatness, His goodness, His eternal love, then we gain a good perspective on ourselves and our situation, and are reminded that He can be trusted.

***He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he restores my soul.***

This God, the One who appoints himself as our shepherd, has all the resources to meet our needs and knows exactly what they are. As we deliberately recall his goodness and abundant grace toward us, we are encouraged to trust him for our current situation, whatever it may be.

***He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.***

God's care for me depends not on my deserving of it, but on the character of God himself – he will not be dishonoured by failing to provide for his own beloved, but will be glorified and exalted when it is seen just how faithful He is to keep his promises. We can utterly depend upon them, and can rejoice in how tightly we are held in his love.

***Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.***

The psalmist has moved from talking about God ('He'), to talking directly to God ('You).. did you notice? There is a profound relationship of trust here, a trust grounded in God's past faithfulness and unfailing love for the writer. In his time of crisis, the truth about God which the writer has been recounting becomes the basis for his personal appeal and dependence. I come in prayer, not to someone who is merely a name to me, but to the One who knows and loves me best of all, and who invites me to trust utterly in his constant presence. Because of my saviour, Jesus, I am the beloved child of God, and I am invited – even in the darkest shadows - to rest, to delight in my Father's love and care for me.

***You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.***

I am invited, with the psalmist, to revel in God's goodness and to believe that even the presence of my enemies is no bar to his work in me and for me. I can pray with serene confidence in all circumstances, because God has abundantly provided for me, and promised good to me through Jesus.

***Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.***

The Lord who is our shepherd is also the master of the house wherein we are promised a home. In this life, that home is the fellowship of God's people and the free access which we have as believers into God's presence. There is so much to give thanks for here! Because of Jesus, God makes his home even now among us and we dwell with him today. That in itself is cause for rejoicing, but we know that when this life is past, we enter a nearer and new life in God's presence, where nothing can come between us and our Loving Shepherd, and all the troubles and grief of this life are past. Thanks be to God, for He is good, and His love endures for ever!

## **Prayer prompts – The teaspoon!**

Many of you may recall the very simple and effective T.S.P. model of prayer – perhaps from hearing someone use it in a children's talk at church, or through using it yourself as a teaching tool. It works well for everyone at every stage of life, and forms the basis for this series of prayer prompts.

### **Thank You!**

The process of recognising and articulating our blessings is a powerful tool for followers of Jesus, because it focuses our attention on the loving God from whom all good things come. We are reminded that he is great and awesome, that he is faithful and just, and that we can trust him with all the details of our lives, as well as with all the burdens of our world. And so we give thanks:-

- For God’s revelation of himself in Jesus, and for the salvation which we receive by faith in him.
- For God’s defeat of sin and death through Jesus, because that work sets us free to live in God’s love and to know him.
- For God’s good purposes throughout history, in building his kingdom and in completing that work (even though we can’t often see how it is going to happen!).
- For our own homes, our health and strength, our families and friends, and especially for the rule of law in our land and the peace which underpins our lives.
- For the power of beauty to speak to our hearts, lifting us up to praise our creator and to enjoy all he has made, including one another.
- For God’s daily loving care for us – in forgiving us and lifting the burden of shame; in loving us so that we might love others freely and forgive them; in all the day-to-day gifts of joy which we receive from him.
- For the peace which God gives to us as we trust him for the future, and for our day-to-day existence, believing that as we do so, he is at work for our good and the building of his kingdom.
- What else do you want to thank God for today?....

### **Sorry!**

When we have reflected on all God’s goodness to us, our natural response is to recognise all the ways that we have fallen short of his holiness and perfection. This is good, because when we recognise our failings, God’s spirit calls us to respond by turning towards him to receive the forgiveness that was won for us by Jesus. Our loving Father does not desire that we wallow in regret, or condemn ourselves, but longs for us to come for his loving, cleansing care. James tells us in his letter that “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (James 1.9). Every pang of conscience is an opportunity to run to our loving Father and to receive his forgiveness, to start afresh and to live in renewed hope. So we say sorry:-

- For the ways that we hurt other people by ignoring, rejecting or actively doing something that injures them, we fail in love.
- For the ways that we get so absorbed in our own concerns that we ignore God’s invitation to enjoy life with him, we fail in presence.
- For the ways that humanity continues to cause so much distress across the world – all the seeds of those public and large-scale actions lie within our own hearts, and we do well to recognise our own greed, laziness, self-centredness, and to repent of them.
- Our Father is waiting to forgive; what particular thing do you want to say sorry for today?

## **Please!**

As forgiven children of the Almighty God, we have so many reasons to rejoice! Paul says in his letter to the Philippians that we can “rejoice in the Lord always... the Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything 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 4.4-7). Our petitions, and requests thus arise out of our deep trust in our heavenly Father, and so even as we ask, we can give thanks because he hears us and loves us. Nothing is impossible with our God, so let us ask boldly and often! So we say please:-

- Grant us today the strength we need to live as Jesus’ followers in our world, sharing his love and showing his goodness.
- Give favour to all those who seek to make peace in our troubled world, and direct those with power to restrain violence and destruction – whether by war or by exploitation of natural resources.
- Grant the nations peace, that suffering in war might cease, and lives may be lived without fear of destruction.
- Grant help and healing to those in need – through all possible means, and if I can be of use by giving of my own resources, then let me respond generously.
- Build your church across the nations, heart by heart and home by home, transforming lives and families by the power of Jesus.
- Pour out your spirit upon our communities in Inverness, so that people will become hungry to know the love and forgiveness which is offered only in Jesus. Let us and all your children in the city be willing and eager to share our faith and the hope which you give us in him.
- What specific thing do you want to pray for today?

*Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn't a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-seek game we're in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing. You're at least decent to your own children. So don't you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better?*

*(Matthew 7.7-11. The Message)*

# Girls' Brigade News



This year's Annual Divisional Service was held on 22 March at Trinity Life Church. Following the lively and encouraging service, girls and leaders enjoyed lunch together and then an afternoon of activities with an Easter theme. It was lovely to see girls from four companies come together, especially those who travelled from Dornoch and Dingwall.

At Riverside, the session will draw to a close with our Parents' Evening on Monday 18 May at 6.45 pm. Families and friends will hear about the year's activities and girls will receive their awards. A warm invitation is extended to anyone who would like to join us for this happy occasion. 4B Company's Parents' Evening will be on 19 May at Hilton School.

I've had the daunting task of emptying the GB cupboards in the Ness Bank Hall, and I'm very grateful to all who helped! We tried to recycle as much as possible with resources going to other companies or being donated to charity. I'm left with lots of interesting photos and paperwork, including registers dating back to the 1960s and parents' evening programmes from the 1980s onwards, some of which we hope to archive. I'm grateful to Rob Gourlay who recently passed me some slides from the 1970s.

It's struck me how many girls have passed through Ness Bank Company and had wonderful experiences on the way. The organisation today is much smaller and the opportunities more limited but as leaders we are privileged to share the message of God's love with the girls. In a time when fewer families attend church together, this is a wonderful opportunity.

Many of the photos are of smiling girls at camp or on Duke of Edinburgh expeditions. I've read many reports the girls produced as part of the DoE Award. They express their gratitude for the opportunities they were given and their delight in achieving their



awards. I'm sure many still have fond memories of their time at 4A Inverness Girls' Brigade.

The photo this time is one I have come across. There are some familiar faces in it! It would be lovely to hear when and where it was taken. Hopefully, I can share the answers in the next newsletter.

**Hazel MacDonald**

## ***Familiar Faces in Ness Bank***

### **This month we hear from – Sheila Kerr**

Although I have been in the Inverness area for many years, I was born and brought up at the family home, near Oban, and educated in Dunkeld & Edinburgh. My two qualifications after leaving school were Domestic Science and Secretarial, both of which have stood me in good stead over the years, having successfully run two businesses with my husband before he passed away in 2011, just six months after our daughter got married.

While living in Edinburgh after finishing college, I worked with the National Trust for Scotland, working up from general office typing & shorthand to being PA to one of the Directors. My boss used to go away for a week at a time visiting properties, making copious notes which I had to try and decipher when he got back to the office – he had the worst handwriting I have ever seen. He wouldn't use the Dictaphone I carefully packed in his work satchel each time he went away, as it was apparently too modern.

We moved up to Muir of Ord in 1974, to run a Shell Filling Station there, then needing a change, we bought the Cnoc Hotel at Struy in 1980 which we ran till 1985 – however, running a small family hotel and raising an infant is not for the faint-hearted, and quite often I had to ask a customer to feed the baby if they wanted me to cook their dinner - I don't think we would get away with that nowadays!

After we sold the hotel, we remained living in Struy, and in 1989 I started to work with Hantel Victorian Miniatures in Kiltarlity, firstly painting the miniatures (the company was at its height then, and there were over 80 outworkers), then moving on to the Secretarial side when we started a Collector's Club. In 2003 I started to work at Aigas Field Centre, outside Beauly, as book-keeper then becoming the Field Centre Secretary until I retired in 2020 at the start of COVID.

While at school I was confirmed into the Episcopal Church at St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, but after moving north, I moved to the Church of Scotland, and regularly attended the Kilmorack & Erchless parish in either Struy or Beauly, and my daughter attended Sunday School there. Sadly, as a sign of the times, Struy Church has now closed, and Beauly is joining with Kirkhill & Kiltarlity in June this year. It was time to move on and find a church nearer to home, and I joined Ness Bank last year.

I moved into Inverness in July 2023 to be nearer the family and have a smaller house & garden to look after, and I was lucky to find a small bungalow in Lochardil, although after over 40 years, it was a wrench to leave Strathglass.

Since retiring, I have become very involved with the Scottish Women's Institute on both local (I am President of both Kiltarlity and Inverness institutes, & a member of North Kessock) and Federation level, doing admin for the local branch of Scotland's Gardens

Scheme, Treasurer for the Inverness Fuchsia Society, and volunteering at parkrun most weekends.

When I am at home, I can be found 90% of my time in my craftroom, and always have several works in progress of different shapes, sizes and mediums. I have been a member of the Ness Bank Crafties for several years, and enjoy the friendship as much as the crafts. I used to bring my grand-daughter Chloe to Ness Bank Mothers & Toddlers group, before she started school and we frequently popped into the room to see what Crafties were up to when we were heading home, and I am delighted that she enjoys crafting as much as I do, so we are always learning something new together!

Sheila and Chloe, with their Parkrun mascot, which Sheila made for them out of the high-vis jackets the volunteers wear. (Special thanks to Chloe for allowing us to share this picture!)



# Watoto Wow!

## Ness Bank concert



It was thrilling to join with several hundred others on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March to welcome the young people of Watoto Children's choir from Uganda, who are touring the UK for 6 months, during which time they will perform 150 times!

Around 40 years ago, Watoto was founded to address the issues of abandoned and orphaned children in Uganda, and the ministry now works from a church community in Kampala to support 3 large villages, each caring for 1000 children with schools, churches, medical care, and crucially, 'family' homes where the children are cared for by 'mothers' and can know stability, peace, love and compassion. The issues remain, and are truly heart-breaking, but this transformative ministry brings the light of Christ into that darkness, and offers hope. It was such a privilege to hear from the children and young people for whom Watoto is home, to see their health and confidence, and to share with them in worshipping our great and faithful God. In addition to supporting the work in prayer, and by donations at the concert, we heard about the sponsorship programme which is central to the ministry, and you can find about it at their website

[www.watoto.com](http://www.watoto.com)

While on tour, the children continue their education and their schedule is carefully organised with rest days each week. Some of the congregation were able to offer hospitality to the choir, and to welcome the children and their adult carers into their homes – it is this ministry which supports the long tours, which would otherwise be prohibitively expensive.

As I looked round the packed church that night, seeing so many new faces, many families and young people, I was full of thankfulness that the church of God in Inverness is so full of life, and that Ness Bank was able to bring everyone together for such a special celebration of the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

*Elsbeth Smith*



*P.S. If you use the music app Spotify, you can listen again to the music of Watoto, just ask the app to find them for you, and then enjoy singing along and worshipping with them!*

# SANCTUARY

**Welcome**

**Worship**

**Witness**

Ness Bank is a busy building, with the halls housing work with the homeless, young people, music groups, the Guild, the Crafties and others. Meanwhile the Sanctuary upstairs is a place of peace for prayer and reflection, and then for noise as we bring our praise to God. The two parts of the building together reflect God at work in the whole of our lives.

Our Sanctuary Project seeks to share that blessing – which is the essence of Christian mission: to go to all people, and make them Disciples of Jesus. We hope to multiply the numbers who can experience what we have received.

Part of that is a new stair case and lift to make it easier to enter the building. Part of it is a new layout at the front, and some redecoration, to make the space more flexible and attractive. And part of it is opening the doors every day of every week so that people can come in. We want to welcome them, tell them our story, and guide their response to God.

Our church website has a short video and detailed description of all that is planned.  
[[www.nessbankchurch.org.uk/sanctuary-project](http://www.nessbankchurch.org.uk/sanctuary-project)]

**Planning** – our Architect (LDN) hopes to complete the detailed design work by the start of May and submit an application for Building Control. After that the contract will go out to tender, allowing us to see who is willing to do the work, and at what price.

**Funding** – the current cost estimate is £1,165,000. Towards that we now have £991,000 – from local gifts (£125,000), reserves (£50,000), legacies (£371,000), and grants (£340,000 from the General Trustees and £105,000 so far from others). Other applications are still being processed.

**Timing** – if all goes to plan, the work will start in October and continue until June 2027. During that time, Sunday services will be in the hall. But details of design, permission and funding could still affect the programme.

**Operation** – once the building work is done, the real work begins. Our Sanctuary Mission Team is working on a Business Plan to employ a manager and staff to operate the Sanctuary Café and exhibition space on a regular basis, opening the doors, paying the bills, and sharing Good News.

Behind the scenes there is a busy programme of planning meetings, emails and detailed conversations. Please pray for those involved, ask about anything that concerns you, offer any help you can give, and trust that the Spirit will combine all our efforts for God's glory.

## ***Stated Annual Meeting of Ness Bank congregation, Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2026***

A short business meeting was held immediately after the morning service on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2026, at which the Annual Accounts for the congregation were presented by Stewart McFarlane, who convenes the Finance Group.

In addition to the accounts for 2025/26, Stewart explained that the 2024/25 accounts had been re-structured, to accord with current guidance from the church of Scotland for congregations whose income – like that of Ness Bank – exceeds a certain threshold. This has resulted in a significantly increased burden of work for Joyce Muir, the treasurer, and her support team, but the outcome is worthwhile, and produces a more realistic picture of the financial situation. Future annual accounting should be less burdensome for all concerned! Copies of the accounts are available to any member who wishes to see them – contact Stewart or Joyce through the church office.

The accounts indicate that the current expenditure is balanced by income, but only just. It is clear that the congregation will need to remain alert to rising costs, and to be willing to give accordingly to keep ahead of inflation, and to build up a sensible reserve. Special mention and thanks were made also to Bill Paterson, who deals with gift aid, and to Gordon Leitch who is another member of the Finance team.

The congregation is indebted to all members of this team for their labour on our behalf, fulfilling the exacting requirements of Charity accounting practice, and being wise stewards of our resources.

Stuart Smith then made a short presentation about the Sanctuary Project, explaining that the timetable for the work is to begin in October 2026, lasting until June 2027. Documentation will go to the local Building control department soon, and contractors will be invited to tender for the work on the basis of detailed drawings and specifications.

A fresh set of drawings to illustrate the proposed works is now on view in the entrance vestibule at Ness Bank. The current estimated costs of the entire project – including fees and VAT – are £1.165M, and to date (27<sup>th</sup> April, 2026), just under £1M is already provided for. Grant applications continue to be made to make up the shortfall.

We are encouraged by the steady progress of this project, and pray on for the various teams involved. Let's pray especially for a growing vision of how the new layout and facilities might be used in sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with our neighbours, wider community and visitors to Inverness. God has given us this terrific resource, let's be willing to be bold and expect great things from him as we use it for his glory!

## ***Freewheeling?***

The recent presentation at our Stated Annual Meeting has prompted me to finally make good on a promise to write another article for the newsletter, with some observations on our plans for the future as they develop with the exciting Sanctuary project.

Ness Bank church building will still be here in 20 years time, but what about the church family that meets inside it? I hope that I will still be here, but who knows!! It is great to see the plans to update the church, with much-needed new stairs and especially the lift. I believe our building will be considerably brightened by the insertion of the commemorative glass 'window' into the wall between the vestibule and the sanctuary space, and the introduction of glazing to the front doors.

The Sanctuary itself will get a badly needed overhaul to deal with crumbling plaster and tired, flaking paintwork – good housekeeping, and another visual boost. While the majority of the pews will remain, I am excited about the potential of the cleared space at the front of the church for our visiting musicians and for other events – so much more spacious for them!

The kitchen and café are another key part of the plan, ambitious, but also worthwhile, as we will be able to cater for after-church teas and coffees, the Guild, and other events so much better. There is every reason to expect that the café will generate sufficient income to pay for itself, and to support having the building open much more regularly.

Obviously this all costs money, and the congregation continues to amaze me with their commitment and generosity. We all want a practical, attractive and welcoming building, where the church can grow and thrive. The success of our grant applications is another sign that our plans are practical and worthwhile, providing a good base from which to engage and serve our community. It is this shared financial input which will enable the vision to be realised. The plans may be a simplified version of the grander scheme we had before COVID, but still I believe they give us the best possible chance for NBC to be a vibrant, thriving community, welcoming and bringing people to meet Jesus. Is that not what we are meant to be all about?

At the end of the day, if nothing changes, nothing changes and we are not moving forward. Maybe our church has been free-wheeling for a while, but you can only free-wheel if you are going downhill!

Finally, you will be glad to hear, at the end of the day we are all just message-boys and -girls, and no single congregation member, minister or indeed church will determine our future. There is only one God, and he is the one who determines and guides the future – and we are following him. So, here's to a great future as we walk the road with him, with its blessings, and bright future, as well as challenges and set-backs. Wishing you all health and happiness as we go on together in the NBC family,

***Billy Irvine***

## ***“Just Giving” Online Donations***

“Just Giving” is an online donation scheme which allows people to donate to charities. In Ness Bank we have now joined Just Giving and have a charity page which will accept donations using a debit/credit card, Apple Pay, Google Pay, PayPal and bank transfer. It is a very easy system to access, especially if the QR code below is used:



All that is needed is to follow these straightforward instructions:

Point your mobile phone camera on the QR code and click on the Just Giving box which will transfer you to the Ness Bank Church charity page.

Click on Give Now and you will be asked to enter the amount of your donation, agree and confirm to continue.

The system also supports Gift Aid and if your postcode is entered then Just Giving will automatically collect this.

You can donate anonymously so that your name will not be included.

When you are ready just click on donate and enter your card details, or follow the instructions for other payment methods.

### **Why don't you try it in the comfort of your home?**

The Ness Bank website now has a 'Donate' facility and again this is very easy to use – just access **[nessbankchurch.org.uk](https://nessbankchurch.org.uk)** and click on Donate, you will then be transferred to our charity page. The Order of Service and the Magazine will include the QR code which will also appear on other leaflets and publicity.

This is a great way of donating to Ness Bank not just for members but for friends, including those who access our services on the livestream and recordings. Also people attending events in the church can donate if they wish to do so. Please advertise this new facility as widely as possible. Many thanks.

***Finance Team***