

NESS BANK CHURCH

Congregational Newsletter

November/December 2024 - No 1024



Congregation Formed 1787

Present Church Opened 1901

Dear Friends,

Respectable or Radical

When you make your way to church on Sunday, do you think of yourself as prim and proper, well-behaved and nice – perhaps even feeling slightly superior to your disobedient neighbours who stay at home? Or do you feel like a secret agent, going in disguise to meet in secret with fellow revolutionaries plotting to overthrow the established world order? Are we radical or respectable?



When Paul went to Ephesus his message was radical: only one God, as the Jews had always believed – not a multitude of Greek idols, each with their own temple, realm and priests; but that one God had become human in Jesus to die on the cross and replace the Jewish Law with God's rule of love. That made everyone equal – no Jews better than Gentiles, or Roman citizens better than peasants, or rich better than poor. All believers were one in Christ Jesus, and the Spirit-filled status of family fellowship with God was the only one that mattered.

At first most people didn't understand. Then many, when they began to get it, felt threatened. Their idol-making businesses could fail. Their temple-based social life could collapse. Their slaves could claim to be their equals. Their dependants could depend on Christ Jesus instead. So they told lies to stir up hatred and start a riot – much like the violence in Southport this summer caused by false accusations against immigrants and asylum seekers. The story is told in Acts chapter 19.

Fortunately Ephesus was under the rule of Roman Law. The city clerk quietened the crowd, listened to the lies, and exposed them. The rioters were told to come up with real evidence, or else go home. The Christians gained a safe place within society to preach the Gospel without breaking the Law. The church was established and began to grow as a respectable alternative to other faiths and lifestyles.

But by the time Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy – which we are now reading in Ness Bank on Sundays – respectability was undermining radical truth. Quoting the

Bible gave people authority. Being a preacher attracted admiration. Where before only true believers in Jesus would risk the wrath of the crowd to preach the Gospel, now ambitious social climbers saw the pulpit as a means of self-advancement.

Others sought to advance not themselves, but their causes. They had radical social agendas the establishment rejected. If the church was for change, why not introduce their own ideas there, disguising them as Christian? New moral values, lifestyles and relationships were trumpeted by people whose radical alternatives had nothing to do with Jesus.

In his letter, Paul says two things to Timothy that we need to hear today:

- First, don't be too tame. The Gospel challenges our self-confidence, social prejudices, wealth distribution, and lack of self-esteem. We need to review it all in the light of Christian faith.
- Second, don't be too hasty. There is much that is wrong with the way the world is, that can't be put right by what is sometimes suggested. Some claims are not true, some desires are not rights, and some changes are not for the better.

As Christians we need to be self-critical, but also to discern the will of God among the options around us, with his Word as our guide.

Paul concludes the letter:

"Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith. Grace be with you". (1st Timothy 6:20-21)

Stuart

Thank you, dear God, for all the good things with which you have blessed us.

Thank you for your love in good times;

thank you for your unfailing love in difficult times.

Thank you for your promise to be with us always.

Amen

Congregational Register

Wedding:

13 September Victoria Oddy and David Grindell

Deaths:

8 September Jean MacRury
Funeral held on 30 September

9 September Jessie Gray
Funeral held on 20 September

27 September Margaret Fieldsend
Funeral held on 15 October



The Baby and Toddler Group meet in the church hall on a Wednesday from 0930 - 1130. We have had good numbers but always have room for anyone with children under school age, where they can join in play, simple craft work and music. A suitable snack is provided for the children and tea/coffee and cake for the adults. There is a charge of £3 per family.

We are looking for a couple of extra helpers with this group, both on the floor with the parents and children, and some weeks to help prepare the snacks and clear up. This wouldn't necessarily require weekly attendance, but any help would be appreciated.

Anne Sutherland
Contact number 07425154715

Copies of the Newsletter are
available in the vestibule

Ness Bank Church is online
at www.nessbankchurch.org.uk

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The Guild

The Guild has had a good start to the new session, with a few new members, but we are always ready to welcome anyone who would like to join us, even on a "now and again" basis! We don't ask for membership money for the first year, only an offering at our meetings.

In November, we have a talk from Ian Whyte, retired eye surgeon, on his work abroad with the Vine Trust, and a guest evening with Laurie Chancellor on our project this year - Release International.

In December, Inverness Hand Bells will join us, and in the New Year, we will have a talk from Blindcraft Sensory Services on equipment to help the visually impaired.

The Guild Work Party meets every second Tuesday at 2pm in Room 1 in the church and this small band of knitters would love for more to join them to produce a huge range of goods, both to sell and donate to various institutions.

There is a syllabus with dates on the noticeboard in the vestibule and on the boards in the downstairs corridor. For any further information please contact me on 07425154715.

Anne Sutherland



Flower Calendar - 2025

The 2025 Flower Calendar will be on the noticeboard in the vestibule on Sunday 15 December. If you wish to donate flowers to the Church please add your name to the date of your choice. Our sincere thanks to all who donated flowers to the 2024 calendar.

Anyone interested in joining our Flower Group will be most welcome. If you would like to help please telephone me on 01463 230155.

Finella Thomson

Bridget Black - 40 Years of Music in Ness Bank

In November 1984, Bridget Black was officially appointed as Organist at Ness Bank. She filled that role faithfully for many years, and continues to serve as the dedicated leader of our excellent Ness Bank Choir, our pianist for monthly services at Ach An Eas, and our Interim Organist when her successor, Ian Livingstone, is unavailable.

On the 40th anniversary of her appointment we thank her again for her continued commitment, and thank God for her great skill, personal enjoyment, and Christian servant heart expressed through the gift of music.

In her article below she shares something of her past and continuing musical career.

Stuart

I have always been surrounded by music of one sort or another. After our evacuation from the Solomon Islands, we lived with my maternal grandfather and we sang! I was raised on hymns and other (mainly) English folk songs such as 'The Lincolnshire Poacher', 'Dashing away with the smoothing iron' and 'Clementine'.

During school days I always sang in choirs, and then for a few years after school, university and marriage, my musical attainments were rather limited to hymns and nursery rhymes, playing for hymns in the remaining jute mills up the Hooghly river outside Calcutta, Guild meetings and services at the State Hospital.

When we moved to Inverness, Ness Bank, in 1974, the scope widened although child minding still rather limited what I could do, but I loved to listen to the church choir and the Inverness Choral Society, and thought 'one day....'

Meantime I thought I would like some organ lessons and began with David Hardie, our church organist. He was a very fine musician but had problems and finally moved to Edinburgh. I continued my lessons with Russell Grant, sitting various exams, and then being appointed organist at Ness Bank. Through Russell I became involved in the Inverness Music Festival, which still goes from strength to strength with a dedicated team of volunteers. I entered the Ness Bank Church Choir every year from March 2000 until March 2020 and have all the adjudication sheets in a folder – and then Covid and lockdown struck and things have never been the same again. Ness Bank is one of the few churches in the town to maintain a choir and I hope it will continue.

My 80th birthday fell on the December Communion in 2020 and I came to the conclusion that it was time to retire. Ness Bank Church was extremely fortunate in that Ian Livingstone, who had deputised for me when necessary and knows the organ well, was willing to take on the post of Organist.

Choral singing has always been a love of mine and I was lucky enough to join Musick Fyne under the leadership of D James Ross. Musick Fyne specialises not only in Renaissance music of composers such as Robert Carver, William Byrd and Giovanni Gabrieli, but also commissions work by contemporary composers, Gordon Tocher being our very local one. With Musick Fyne I sang in Dornoch Cathedral, Pluscarden Abbey, Inverness Cathedral, Portree, Alness with a Russian choir (in Russian!), the Great Hall of Stirling Castle and other venues. Circumstances meant that sadly I had to retire but I had so enjoyed my time with the choir and support my friends when I can.

I have been involved with Sounds Familiar - 'A Singing Group for People with Dementia, their Family Members and Carers' - since its inception, first as pianist, then as helper and now as carer, so I am still singing.....

Bridget



Blythswood Shoeboxes

It has been great to see the wall of filled shoeboxes growing at the front of the Church. After the deadline for returning them (3rd November), they will be taken to the Blythswood depot. The boxes are then taken to Culduthel Christian Centre, where a team of volunteers check all the boxes and add Christian literature to each box between 18 - 21 November. After this, they are packed up and will be delivered to Albania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine.

They will give joy to so many recipients at Christmas.

Thank you to everyone who has supported the Ness Bank contribution to this appeal.

Janet Russell

This year, Tearfund Scotland is launching a new campaign called '***Your Neighbour is Thirsty***'. This campaign highlights the extreme poverty brought on, in part, by the impacts of climate change. It will focus on the people in north-east Ethiopia, whose access to water has been severely reduced due to the changing climate.

Your neighbour is thirsty

Tearfund is committed to following Jesus where the need is greatest. So we are calling on the church to join us. Together we will ease the suffering of those impacted the most by climate change, through providing abundant, safe drinking water for families who struggle every day to get enough.

In Matthew 22:39, Jesus calls us to '**Love your neighbour as yourself.**' As the impacts of climate change intensify globally, it is becoming alarmingly clear that the way in which we live, and have lived in our western society, has contributed greatly towards climate change. It is now having a devastating impact on the lives of our neighbours living in developing countries (the 'global south'), even though they have contributed the least to climate change.

One of the most extreme examples of this is the prevalence of drought – exacerbated and prolonged by climate change – in places like Ethiopia. Many communities are witnessing dependable sources of water drying up, leaving them in a desperate situation, with few options and no idea why this change has happened. When asked '**Who is my neighbour?**' Jesus responded with the story of the Good Samaritan. This showed that our neighbour is anyone in need, even if they live in different countries. Just a few chapters later in Matthew 25:35, Jesus says these words '**...I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in.**'

We are inviting the church in Scotland to join us in loving our neighbour. Not just our close neighbour, but neighbours far away, strangers who share the same planet, and who are suffering because of the damage we have played a part in causing climate change. We are inviting the church to step in and provide fresh, abundant, water for families suffering from thirst and, in doing so, bring hope, opportunities and joy to families in their time of crisis.

Welcome to Afar, Ethiopia

Afar is a vast region in north-east Ethiopia, where 1.4 million people live. The majority are pastoralists, meaning they keep livestock such as camels, goats and cows. Although the land is arid, the people of Afar have, until recent years, relied on it to provide enough to support their livestock and their families. However, the region has seen a dramatic change in rainfall in recent years, with the duration of the rainy season reducing from four months a year, down to around one month. This has led to a situation where river beds and other water sources remain dry for most of the year. This means that around 65% of the population don't have access to safe drinking water.

People in these communities have to go to extreme measures to survive, often walking up to ten hours per day on perilous journeys to collect water. On their way, vulnerable women are at risk of attacks by wild animals such as crocodiles and hyenas. Communities have to stay where their livestock graze, so can't move closer to water.

Even after making such journeys for water, the water that is collected and taken home is not enough to meet household needs, with families often going thirsty as a result. The water they collect is often contaminated, or has a high salt content, leading to an increased risk of water-borne diseases such as cholera, which has broken out in several communities in Afar recently.

This is the main challenge in a region where people are already vulnerable, with more than 92% of the population currently at risk because they don't have enough food, and more than 60% living without access to healthcare.

Introducing Orbisa



Orbisa and her family live in the village of Asbehari in the Afar region of north-east Ethiopia. Climate change has contributed to a massive decrease in rainfall in recent years, and local sources of water have dried up. Now, Orbisa has no choice but to walk up to ten hours each day to collect water for her family – but it's still not enough. They often have to get by with less than half the water they need just to meet their basic needs, and it means Orbisa's children often go to bed thirsty.

A Solution

Tearfund are partnering with an organisation called Friendship Support Association (FSA) who are committed to showing the love of Jesus to the people of Afar by providing safe, abundant drinking water. So far, Tearfund is in the process of providing wells to two communities in the region, but we would like to expand this work to reach many more people in desperate need of water.

These wells – or solar-powered water borehole systems – are large water projects that provide an abundant long-term source of local safe drinking water for up to 3,000 households at each location. The system accesses water from 150 metres below ground, and uses solar power over a two-week period to draw it up to fill a large tank with enough to last six months.

The process then repeats itself.

As this work continues in the Afar region, Tearfund has recommended that a gift of just £12 per month has the potential to provide water for 12 families per year.

Meet the partner

Friendship Support Association is a Christian relief and development organisation focused on providing support to communities in the Afar region of Ethiopia. Their mission is to see communities in Afar become literate, healthy, self-reliant and productive, capable of solving economic, social and environmental problems in the region.

FSA shares Tearfund's vision of showing the love of Jesus to communities in Afar through responding directly to immediate needs in times of crisis, while also empowering communities to become self-sufficient in the longer term.

It is Tearfund's desire to see self-help groups started in the region, a strategy that has seen great success in helping people to be released from poverty in other regions of Ethiopia.

If you would like to donate to this work please contact Tearfund on

tearfund.org

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Angus MacDonald, MP

In September this year Angus MacDonald MP, recently elected to the Westminster constituency of Inverness, Skye and West Ross-shire, accepted an invitation to visit Ness Bank Church. Angus was born in Glencoe, and served with the Queen's Own Highlanders in the Falkland Islands and Northern Ireland. He then enjoyed a successful business career, initially in Financial



Services, later expanding into Waste Management and Renewable Energy. He will soon celebrate his 62nd birthday as a Liberal Democrat MP.

Angus met at Ness Bank with the Minister and Session Clerk, and with Pam Urquhart – Operations Manager of Inverness Foodstuff. He was amazed and delighted to hear of the extensive work being done with the homeless in tackling Food Poverty and Social Exclusion, and went away wondering if a similar scheme could be promoted in his own home town of Fort William. He also learned about the wider activities of the congregation in the local community, and expressed a keen interest in our plans to adapt the building for city centre mission, and perhaps extend our connections with the military.

Angus is a practising Christian, attending his local Roman Catholic Church, and seeing his faith as a primary motive for his political action. When asked what we could be praying for him, he spoke of his determination to present, along with others, a clear Christian perspective on the debates about Assisted Dying which are soon to take place in and around Westminster.

Ness Bank is grateful to Angus for taking the time to visit us, and looks forward to developing a mutually supportive and prayerful relationship with him during his time in office.

Stuart



Girls' Brigade



Our two companies are up and running again and we have been pleased to welcome new members to both companies.

4B (Cauldeen) has thirty-five girls attending Hilton School weekly, which is challenging given the number of leaders. The Explorers have been learning about God's love for them and playing ball games. The older girls have looked at symbols of faith and tried some workout stations. After the holidays, some science experiments are planned.

Riverside has twenty girls attending weekly at Trinity Life Church and we have been delighted to have visits from both Rev Stuart Smith and Janet Russell. Rev Smith led opening worship soon after we started back and he spent time with each section, joining in with their activities. Janet told the girls all about the Blythswood Shoebox Appeal and we look forward to adding to the Ness Bank wall of boxes. Explorers have enjoyed travelling round various countries. Juniors have been learning about parables and playing traditional games. No high tech needed for skipping or conkers! The Brigaders have been looking at self-esteem and making jewellery.

Both companies have special anniversaries this year:

- Cauldeen Company celebrated sixty years in October
and
- Ness Bank celebrates seventy-five years in November

We plan to mark these at our Enrolment Service on 24 November. It would be wonderful to have past members of both companies along at this service to celebrate with our current members, so please spread the word. If anyone has photos they would be willing to lend, it would be great to have a display in the church hall for everyone to view after the service. There may even be some cake! Please speak to me at church or email me on **haze_macd@hotmail.com** if you can provide photos for the display.

We've been blessed to have two Girls' Brigade Companies attached to Ness Bank for so many years and the congregation has played a big part in their success. Thank you for all the support given over the years and we hope you will join in our celebrations.

Hazel MacDonald

Moray Firth Guilds Together

Our annual Afternoon Tea was held on 17th September at the Kingsmills Hotel. It was a lovely day which added to the enjoyment of the afternoon.

One hundred Guild members were in attendance coming from as far afield as Boat of Garten and Carrbridge, Firth of Beauly, Nairn St Ninian's, Crown, Trinity Dalneigh, Strathnairn/Strathdearn and 20 members from Ness Bank.



There was a lot of catching up and fellowship with each other.

Heather MacDonald

Familiar Faces in Ness Bank: This Month's Spotlight is on:

Lydia Lockwood

I was brought up in Fort William, the youngest of 3 children. I have a brother and sister, who both still live there with their respective families.

My dad worked as a telephonist in the local exchange and my mum ran a B&B. They were married in the Duncansburgh Parish Church where I attended Sunday School, and where both my siblings and I were later married.

My childhood memories are of long, hot summers spent playing in Glen Nevis and trips to surrounding areas like Ardnamurchan and Treslaig, which you had to access across Loch Linnhe in a small boat. One of the highlights of summer holidays was the arrival of Scripture Union at our local playpark, although I think these sessions were well attended mainly because they gave out free sweets at the end!

My dad was a keen fly fisherman, and both my parents loved to be out in the countryside which instilled in us a healthy interest in nature.

My primary education was at Inverlochy School where I enjoyed all sports, especially netball, then onto Lochaber High School. My first and best job while at school, was in my friend's dad's ice cream van! After leaving school I worked as a receptionist with the Milton Hotel Group although I had actually wanted to be a joiner – a career path my parents didn't really support!! After some time there I transferred to the Palace Hotel in Inverness, which seemed like a huge city to me coming from a small town. I later moved to the Glen Mhor Hotel on Ness Bank and trained in most aspects of hospitality, as well as learning the accounting ledgers which were at that time still done by hand before computer systems became the norm. I spent the season of 1985 working on the beautiful island of Jersey but returned to the Glen Mhor afterwards as a General Management Assistant.

There I met my husband David, an Invernessian, who was Head Barman, and we married in 1988. Our eldest son Daniel was born in 1990, followed by Blair in 1995,



by which time we had moved to Strathpeffer to run the golf club. We thoroughly enjoyed our time there, making several life-long friends, before moving back to Inverness so Dave could take up a Bar Manager post. In 2000 I went to work for the NHS in the Medical Illustration Department in Raigmore, where I still remain.

My original job was administration for the clinical photographers and head artist but as the photography side moved towards digital the need for admin was reduced so I trained as a graphic artist, completing several online courses through the University of Ulster.

I first attended Ness Bank Church in the 1980s with my wonderful late mother-in-law, Margaret. I found Ness Bank to be friendly and welcoming and the type of church I wanted to be involved with. Both my sons were in the 2nd Ness Bank Boys' Brigade company, following in the footsteps of their dad, and when Daniel was in Juniors and Blair joined Anchor Boys I offered to help out if they needed a hand and very quickly found myself undertaking my Officers' training!! I was with the Anchor Boys section for 10 years, alongside Robert and Joanna MacKay and many other dedicated officers. Daniel also completed his Queen's Badge and Officers' Training before he went off to University.

We had a lot of fun and it's nice to bump into some of the boys, now grown adults, and hear what they're doing with their lives, although it's often difficult to recognise them from the young boys I remember.

My faith has always been important to me and several years ago I became a member of the church. I also joined the Welcome Team for a few years, and the District Visiting Team which I still do today. It's very rewarding meeting and talking to people, some of whom can no longer attend the Sunday services due to ill health.

In my free time I like to keep active, swimming, walking our 8-year old rescue dog Freddie or working in the garden which is definitely my happy place. Daniel and his wife Rachael live in the lovely East Lothian village of Pencaitland and I often end up in their garden when we visit.

Dave and I enjoy travelling and we are hoping to go to the Cayman Islands in the New Year to visit Blair, who has taken a sabbatical from teaching and is working there in his friend's whisky bar.

Lydia



'New beginnings'

Just a few thoughts about 1st September....

Numbers were down as we had to compete with several birthday parties scheduled on that date and glorious beach weather, but in spite of setbacks, it was a happy and relaxed event and a **wonderful introduction to church for the adults and children who attended.** The call to follow Jesus was clear, set out in songs, video and story, and the activities were great!

You may have noticed our Messy Church mural in the downstairs hall that was made during activity time.



Our future events are scheduled for:

- **Sunday 17th November** on the theme of journeys (focussing on the walk to Emmaus)
and
- **Sunday 15th December** themed as a family Christmas party with a buffet, all-age games, music, the Christmas story and a craft competition

Fliers will be available in the vestibule two Sundays before each event.

We have a great team of 14 volunteers who put a lot of effort into preparing and delivering these events as a means of church outreach. Maybe you could support the team by bringing grandchildren along or passing on fliers to families within the parish?

Margaret Livingstone



Christmas Fayre

on

Saturday 23 November 2024

from

10am - 12noon



Donations for all stalls can be handed in to the vestibule on Sundays 3rd/10th/17th November, or the afternoon and evening the day before the fayre.

There will be the usual stalls – books/filled jars/unwanted gifts/crafts/toys/bottle/cake & candy/hamper raffle/knitted goods. We are pleased that L'Arche will also be joining us with a stall of their crafted goods. And after your shopping, you can enjoy a cuppa and mince pie.

A lot of manpower is required before, during and after the event to make it a success, so please get in touch with the Church Office or Janet Russell if you are able to help in any way beforehand or on the day.

We have a variety of positions that may suit you.

Janet Russell

Why I Write

I believe that although some are called to be teachers, we are all called to be students of God's word; to regard, read and meditate on scripture with as much care and intention as we nourish our bodies. To that end, I write regularly as a way of disciplining myself to really think about what I read, putting into my own words what I am learning. When I began, I took the phrase "A forgetful soul" as my blog name, since I am continually forgetting what God has been at pains to teach me! Perhaps others share this experience? It is good to share together as we grow in faith and face the challenges which God permits, trusting that as we depend on him, we can persevere and also bring glory to him. This particular piece, written in August 2024, marks 10 years since I began. I hope that you will be encouraged to read and think for yourself, and to share with others as you do so, that we might grow together and learn from one another.

Elsbeth Smith – aforgetfulsoul.com

Why do I write?

A voice says, "Cry out." And I said, "What shall I cry?"

"All people are like grass, and all their faithfulness is like the flowers of the field. The grass withers and the flowers fall, because the breath of the Lord blows on them. Surely the people are grass. The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God endures for ever." (Isaiah 40: vs 6-8)

Ten years ago, I began to write. I found my voice, as a follower of Jesus and one whose delight it is to know and learn to know him better. I found that writing each week helped me to grasp the truth, as I wrestled with words and found relief in articulating what was encouraging or troubling me. The discipline of weekly writing has been an unmitigated blessing to me, and by God's providence and grace, has proved a blessing to others too. It seems that often my words help others in turn to find their voices - how I thank God for this manifestation of the ministry of all believers, as the gifts of each one finds a place in serving others!

The years have seen changes, in my family and in my circumstances, and the world has known great griefs and upheavals. But through it all, the word of our God stands, and there I place my hope. I have proved the sweet faithfulness of my Saviour, the greatness of my Father's heart, the reviving power of the Spirit. I have not learnt and

put into practice everything that I have written - sadly it seems that very little has changed in my essential nature - but I believe that the process of writing and sharing week by week has been nourishing and correcting, a means by which God has spoken to me and sustained me through these ten years. For the moment then, I commit myself to continuing to write, and trust that as I ask, seek and knock, my gracious and generous God will answer, will direct and will open the doors according to his good purposes for my life within his great and growing kingdom.

These are the words with which this endeavour began. They remain a true statement of my desires in writing, and I share them again with you today. All glory to God, who in Jesus has set us free to know and love him, and to live ever more in his presence!

August 31st, 2014....

So what do I forget, all too often? I forget who I am, and forget what is true about the world I live in and the One who made and sustains it.

I forget that in the end, all human achievement and glory will count for nothing, and that the praise and admiration of men is not where true peace and satisfaction come from.

I forget that it is not my own busyness which dictates my worth as a person, and my possessions are not the source of my identity and security.

I need to take time to remember the truth, the truth that sets me free to live in the light of eternity.

I accept my insignificance and transience, because the word of my God stands for ever, and that word tells me that I am a beloved daughter, one for whose freedom a great price has been paid, and who can never be torn from her Father's side.

I take time to remember that the glory of the grass and flowers is the faintest echo of the glory that awaits God's beloved children in the future he has prepared for us.

I remember that all my longings and desires are known to Him who loves me more than I will ever truly understand, and that He knows best how to fulfil those desires.

In remembering, may we find rest for our souls. May they be anchored in the truth of the word, so that no dazzle or distraction can take our peace away. In Christ, we are now and always, beloved, accepted and sustained. Let us walk the days with him.

Ness Bank Church – Summer Open Days

August/September 2024

This year, our church had been scheduled to open from Monday 5th until Friday 30th August. However, as the installation of the AV system could only be undertaken in the week commencing 5th August, we had to review the dates for opening and agreed Monday 12th August to Friday 6th September.

So, having been advertised and promoted by various means, the blank schedules for the four weeks were pinned up on the noticeboard in the vestibule and thankfully, all filled in!!

I have set out below, some statistics which may be of interest:

- With two sessions per day, the church was open for 40 sessions
- With two members of the congregation overseeing each session, there was a total of 80 ‘member sessions’
- 38 members signed up for our ‘open church’ and therefore, a big thank you to those who signed up for two or more sessions
- There were 1116 visitors over the four weeks and these were from:

17 different countries in Europe, including Sweden,
Hungary, Greece, Spain and England

Two different countries in the Middle East, remarkably,
Israel and Iran

Four different countries from the Americas - Argentina,
Uruguay, the USA and Canada

Two countries from Oceania - Australia and New Zealand

And finally, the very large countries of China, India and
South Africa

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- The highest number of visitors was on 22nd August when 96 visited Ness Bank, and the least number was on 5th September, our second last day, when 30 came to see our Church
 - We received £242 in donations

A note for your diaries, and subject to confirmation, the dates for Ness Bank Open Church 2025 are proposed as Monday 4th August to Friday 29th August.

I would like to thank all those members of the congregation who gave their time and talents for this event. I would encourage those who haven't yet volunteered for this event to 'have a go' next year, as it is very easy, and you will enjoy introducing your Ness Bank Church to many people visiting Scotland, and in particular, Inverness.

Barry Gilbert

Communion

During the 'children's sermon' the minister was talking about Communion and what it is all about.

"The Bible talks of Holy Communion being a 'joyful feast'. What does that mean? Well, 'joyful' means happy, right? And a feast is a meal. So a 'joyful feast' is a happy meal. He paused. And what are the three things we need for a happy meal?"

A little boy put up his hand and said "Hamburger, fries, and a regular soft drink!!!"

Education

A young boy once approached his father to ask,

"Dad, why does the wind blow?"

"I don't know son"

"Dad, where do the clouds come from?"

"I'm not sure, son"

"Dad, what makes a rainbow?"

"No idea, son"

"Dad, do you mind me asking you all these questions?"

"Not at all son. How else are you going to learn!!!"

Footprints in the Sand

One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord.
Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.
In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand.
Sometimes there were two sets of footprints,
other times there was one set of footprints.

This bothered me because I noticed
that during the low periods of my life,
when I was suffering from
anguish, sorrow or defeat,
I could see only one set of footprints.

So I said to the Lord,
'You promised me Lord,
that if I followed you,
you would walk with me always.
But I have noticed that during
the most trying periods of my life
there has only been one
set of footprints in the sand.
Why, when I needed you most,
have you not been there for me?'

The Lord replied,
'The times when you have
seen only one set of footprints in the sand,
is when I carried you.'

There are some things you learn best in calm, and some in storm.

(Anon)



Christian Aid - Gaza Appeal

What's happening in Gaza now?

In the space of a year, civilians in Gaza have seen death and destruction on a scale of unimaginable proportions. More than 40,000 Palestinians have been killed, many of those children. Airstrikes have caused widespread destruction of homes and infrastructure. Nearly 2 million people have been displaced, forced to face extreme hunger and disease in overcrowded shelters.

"We wake up every day to the sound of bombs and rockets, with no safe place to seek refuge...This violent war has taken our homes, schools, families, relatives, friends and classmates." - Mais Abdel Hadi, President of the Palestinian Children's Council, in a letter to the UK Prime Minister.

With fuel for generators all but depleted, hospitals are ceasing to function and virtually all water and sanitation services have collapsed.

No one can forget 7 October 2023 when Hamas launched a devastating attack. 1,200 Israelis were killed and 5,431 injured. Israeli civilians, many of them women and children, were forcibly taken and many have never returned home. The international community has failed to step in, hold all sides to account and work to ensure a peace that secures justice, dignity and prosperity for all.

The UK government must do all it can to work for a just peace. Eight thousand and counting have added their voice. **Add yours.**

What is Christian Aid doing in Gaza?

Our established partners on the ground in Gaza are working tirelessly, under intense and dangerous conditions, to deliver life-saving medical care, food and shelter.

- **£2.2m** Christian Aid supporters have raised £2.2 million to help our partners in Gaza.
- **800,000** Together with our partners, we have helped over 800,000 people.

Meet Bahaa, a Christian Aid humanitarian partner in Gaza:

Bahaa Zaqout, a humanitarian responder with our partner, the Agricultural Development Association (PARC), explains how he's supporting people who've been displaced and are now living in temporary shelters in central Gaza. Despite losing his own home and loved ones, Bahaa's determined to ensure that others have access to food and clean water.

"Our partners are deeply rooted in their communities and have therefore been the first responders to this crisis. Our locally-led approach has meant that people have been supported to help themselves, in the absence of a ceasefire and sufficient aid. However, this must be complemented with an immediate ceasefire to allow a surge in humanitarian aid in Gaza and unfettered access." - Katie Roxburgh, Programme Manager – Israel and occupied Palestinian territory, Christian Aid.

You can help people in urgent need. Our partners are responding the best they can, but they can't do it alone. Supplies are dangerously low, and the need is growing every day. Your donations are urgently needed to keep this critical aid flowing and bring hope. What the people of Gaza are facing is unbearable. With violence now threatening to grow, no one feels safe.

This war is utterly heartbreaking

The people of Gaza are facing unimaginable devastation. Your help is needed. Please give today:

£20 could feed a family for a week by providing a food parcel of essentials such as oil and cheese

£50 could provide a family with vital hygiene and dignity items

£80 could provide a new mother with the essentials she needs to care for her baby

The conflict in Gaza is taking a devastating toll on the lives of people in Gaza, who have seen death and destruction on a scale of unimaginable proportions. With the support and prayers of our supporters, Christian Aid can and will reach more people with the humanitarian aid they need.

Please donate and share hope with people in need - **christianaid.org.uk**

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Pray for a just peace



God, hear our prayers for peace in the Middle East.

May all people in the region be protected, safe from harm.

We pray that this crisis will end now, with no further loss of life.

God, may the injured and distressed know your healing presence.

May the powerful and the decision-makers follow the paths of justice,
mercy and peace.

We pray for recognition of the dignity and value of every life.

May the clamour of violence cease,
replaced by the beating of swords into ploughshares.

God, in your name,

Amen.

©*Christian Aid*

Charity Gifts from Christian Aid and World Vision



Christian Aid

Do you get an actual gift?

When you buy a virtual gift from Christian Aid Charity Gifts, you or your lucky recipient(s) don't get an actual bee-keeping kit or a pair of chickens (although we know it would be pretty cool if you did). What you do get for each gift is a physical, print-at-home card or an ecard. Each card explains a bit more about the gift and tells a story about someone – a real person – who's benefited from a similar contribution.

How does buying a charity gift work?

Choose and buy gift(s) for your loved one(s). Your purchase acts as a donation; this could be anywhere around the world supporting the communities we work with to transform their own lives, wherever the need is greatest. Every gift is represented by a card. You can write a personal message inside it, arrange to have it sent to you, or to whoever you've bought the gift for.

The gift delights them and everybody feels good.

Your kind gift makes a real impact around the world to the lives of people living in poverty, with the help of Christian Aid's trusted partners who respond to wherever the need is greatest. Thank you.

Where does Gift Aid fit in?

Because your purchase of a virtual gift is actually a donation, you can opt in for Gift Aid (if you're a UK taxpayer). There's no VAT due.

To buy gifts access the website **christianaid.org.uk**

World Vision

How it works:

Ordering Must Have Gifts is so easy! Follow these simple steps.

1. Choose your gift
Pick from our selection of meaningful gifts that transform lives
2. Personalise your gift
Choose your favourite e-card and add your personal message
3. Make a difference
Relax knowing you're bringing hope to children when you buy a charity gift

Our Promise:

Every one of our charity gifts is specifically requested by communities to create better futures for their children. To make sure we fulfil our promise to deliver these gifts when and where it is needed most, when you buy a gift that donates to charity your money is pooled together to be used right where the need is greatest. This could be anywhere around the world.

The benefit is real:

A real child benefits because their community has been given the 'must have' help they needed.

The price is real:

Every charity donation gift has been calculated from actual costs to provide the best and most effective support.

The change is real:

Your gift, full of love and compassion, will make a real and lasting difference for children in need – promising them hope for a brighter and happier future, and to become all God intended them to be.

To buy gifts access the website **worldvision.org.uk**



Prayer Diary



**God, be merciful to us and bless us;
look on us with kindness,
so that the whole world may know your will;
so that all nations may know your salvation.
May the peoples praise you, O God;
may all the peoples praise you.
(Psalm 67 vs 1-3)**

It is suggested that this prayer diary should be used as an additional resource for private daily prayers. The prayer points can be used as you choose each day. Give thanks for each topic as you pray and bring the needs of every situation before God.

Week beginning Sunday 17 November

- Heavenly Father, we give thanks for our minister, Stuart, and ask Your blessing on him as he provides spiritual and pastoral care to the congregation and to the wider parish. We pray that he will be well supported by everyone in Ness Bank as he faces the challenges of life in a busy and active city church.
- Gracious God, Messy Church will take place today and we pray that many families will come along for an afternoon of fun, food and fellowship. We give thanks for the volunteers who work so hard to make this a meaningful event for children and adults.
- Lord, we ask Your blessing on all office-bearers in Ness Bank and to all those who volunteer in so many ways. We pray that new volunteers will be forthcoming so that our activities can continue to thrive.
- The Guild will meet this week and we pray that members and visitors will enjoy this time of fellowship. We pray that more new members will come along and enjoy the friendship that the Guild offers.
- The Christmas Fayre will take place on Saturday and we give thanks for all those involved in arranging this. We ask Your blessing on those helping out on stalls and the Guild members who will provide and serve the tea, coffee and mince pies.

Week beginning Sunday 24 November

- We ask Your blessing Lord on our organist, Ian, and Bridget and the choir as they lead praise on Sunday mornings. We give thanks for their musical talents and for their commitment to Your church.
- The Crafties Group continue to meet on Tuesday mornings and we give thanks for their skill in making articles that are then sold for church funds. We pray that the meetings will be productive as well as a time of fun and fellowship.
- The Ladies Discussion Group will meet this week for lunch at the Redcliffe Hotel. This group is for ladies in our congregation who live alone and we pray that they will enjoy this time of food and fellowship.
- Lord, we give thanks for the young people who are involved in Ness Bank in Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade, Messy Church and the Baby & Toddler Group. We ask Your blessing on the leaders and volunteers who readily give their time to help and support the young folks.
- Father, we pray for all those suffering in the Middle East and pray for an immediate ceasefire, an end to the violence and the release of all hostages. We pray that world leaders with influence in the region will make wise decisions that will lead to lasting peace.

Week beginning Sunday 1 December

- Today we will celebrate the Sacrament of The Lord's Supper and we pray that the Holy Spirit will be in our hearts and in our minds.
- Father, we give thanks for Inverness Foodstuff as this organisation continues to provide nutritious meals in the hall at Ness Bank and in the Community Centre in Hilton. We ask Your blessing on the trustees, staff and volunteers who give their time and talents for the benefit of the people coming along for food and company. We give thanks for the many support agencies who provide advice and support.
- Thank you God for our church family. We pray that by coming together for worship this will be a time of encouragement which will strengthen our faith and commitment.

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- Gracious God, we give thanks for the church administrator, church office and cleaner who provide wonderful support to everyone in Ness Bank.
 - Almighty God, we ask Your blessing on all those in positions of authority in Westminster and in Edinburgh. We pray that they will exercise integrity and wisdom in their decision-making.

Week beginning Sunday 8 December

- The Guild Work Party will meet this week and we give thanks for their skill in making garments for charities and hospitals. We pray that more volunteers will join this group so that more articles can be provided by the knitters.
- We pray for the NHS which continues to struggle with long waiting lists for appointments and treatment. We give thanks Lord for the wonderful care provided by staff in hospitals and in the community.
- Father, we pray for the Inverness Street Pastors as they continue to patrol the city centre during some days and evenings.
- We remember those known to us who are grieving for the loss of a loved one whether it be recent or long ago. We pray that they will know the peace, love and strength of a Loving God.
- Lord, we give thanks for the staff and volunteers in CrossReach and particularly ask Your blessing on the new development at Beechwood in Inverness which offers residential rehabilitation and community outreach to those suffering from addictions.

Week beginning Sunday 15 December

- Lord, we ask you to be close to those who are ill whether at home, in hospital or in a care home. We pray that your comfort and strength will sustain them during these difficult days.
 - We ask Your blessing on the Flower Group in Ness Bank who provide wonderful displays at the entrance and in the sanctuary. After services the flowers are delivered to members and friends who may be ill or have suffered a recent bereavement.
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- We give thanks for the AV system in Ness Bank. We ask Your blessing Lord on those who operate the system each week, and for those who access the livestream. We pray for those who cannot get to church for various reasons, and hope that they might feel connected to our fellowship as a result.
 - Some of the recent decisions regarding changes to the welfare benefits will result in many older people not receiving additional resources during the cold weather. Lord, the cost of living is already very worrying for many people, young and old, and we pray that additional funding will be made available to those in need.
 - In the midst of so much change give thanks for God's constant love. Help us to know that whatever the circumstances and challenges we face, He cares for us. It is important in these difficult times that we count our blessings for everything God is doing for us.

Week beginning Sunday 22 December

'O Come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord'

- Pause this week to give thanks for the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, and pray that He would remain at the heart of our Christmas celebrations.
 - Father, we think about the many people who will be sad and lonely at this time of year. We pray that families will strive to meet up together and that communities will look after their neighbours who may be without family and friends.
 - Schools, colleges and universities will be having a break over the festive season and we pray that this will be a time of rest and relaxation. The school prelims will take place in the New Year and we ask Your blessing on the pupils and teachers during this important and stressful time.
 - Loving God, we remember the Highland Council staff and councillors as they continue to provide services throughout the region but with reduced budgets. We especially ask Your blessing on the staff who are responsible for clearing ice and snow from the roads and pavements and pray for safety for them as they undertake this essential work.
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- Nineteen female medical students banned from attending university in Afghanistan are now in Scotland to complete their studies. They were forced to give up medicine after the authorities clamped down on women's rights. We pray Lord that the students will feel safe and welcome during their time in Scotland.

Week beginning Sunday 29 December

- In the last week of this year we give grateful thanks for all the blessings we continue to receive in Your name. We give thanks for the faithful service carried out by members and friends in Ness Bank during the last year. We ask Lord that you will give us the strength to provide this same service in 2025.
 - The weather throughout the world is now unpredictable due to climate change and in the UK some of the policies and plans are insufficient to achieve the UK targets. We pray Lord that the Government in Westminster and the devolved governments will take this on board and strive to improve the situation.
 - Father, we remember those members of our congregation who are being cared for in residential care homes. We give thanks for the wonderful care provided by staff and also by volunteers. We ask Your blessing on the members of Ness Bank who organise the monthly service at Ach an Eas which is so enjoyed by the residents and staff.
 - Mental health issues, particularly in young people, continue to be a problem and we give thanks for the various local groups in Inverness who provide support such as the Samaritans, Mikeysline, and Inverness Foodstuff. The NHS waiting lists for mental health continue to be very long and we pray that additional funding will be made available so that more people can be helped.
 - We give thanks that so many members and friends of Ness Bank continue to support the Inverness Foodbank which is operated by Blythswood Care. We remember the staff and volunteers who readily give their time to those in need.
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World Mission Prayer Items:

- Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) have 28 UK personnel living abroad. Today we are thinking about their day-to-day lives – the climate, the humidity, the distances, learning a new language and customs, the supply chain for foodstuffs, the distances from family at home, the schooling of their children, the availability of medical advice and help. We pray for them as they deal with these challenges as well as carrying out their professional jobs.
- We give thanks for every Shoebox that has been filled with love and care and will be travelling, with Blythswood, to churches and contacts in Eastern Europe. We ask for safety for the drivers of each lorry and also that these messages of practical help will speak of God's love for each recipient.
- In their September letter, Rev Stuart and Rev Muriel, Mission Partners in Jerusalem and Tiberias, ask for prayer for the following topics:

pray for all those on both sides who have been subjected to rocket attacks
pray for all bereaved, all wounded, all suffering trauma and distress
pray for all aid workers, UN staff, and all those charged with the care of the vulnerable on all sides
pray for bold support for peace from the international community and for international law to be upheld and strengthened

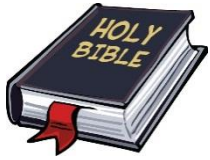
and to remember both of them and their ecumenical associates in Jerusalem and Tiberias, that they may know God's peace in seeking to carry out the ministry of Christ.
- There are opportunities to share the Bible in the classroom in countries where learning about Christianity is included in the curriculum and the Bible is a required textbook. The Bible Society in Ghana, for example, aims to give a Scripture portion to every pupil taking part in "Open the Book" in primary schools in that country. As they receive part of the Bible, we pray that each child will want to know more about Jesus.
- CrossReach Residential Recovery Service, Glasgow, supports people who are committed to living drug and alcohol free. Today, we pray for these residents to experience complete freedom from addiction through the help and support of this service and to understand God's love and healing.



Daily Bible Readings

November 2024

Friday	1	John 17: 1 - 19
Saturday	2	John 17: 20 - 26
Sunday	3	Psalm 11
Monday	4	1 Samuel 13: 1 - 15
Tuesday	5	1 Samuel 15: 1 - 31
Wednesday	6	1 Samuel 16: 1 - 13
Thursday	7	1 Samuel 17: 1 - 27
Friday	8	1 Samuel 17: 28 - 58
Saturday	9	1 Samuel 18: 1 - 16
Sunday	10	Psalm 12
Monday	11	1 Thessalonians 1: 1 - 10
Tuesday	12	1 Thessalonians 2: 1 - 16
Wednesday	13	1 Thessalonians 2: 17; 3: 5
Thursday	14	1 Thessalonians 3: 6 - 13
Friday	15	1 Thessalonians 4: 1 - 12
Saturday	16	1 Thessalonians 4: 13 - 18
Sunday	17	Psalm 13
Monday	18	1 Thessalonians 5: 1 - 11
Tuesday	19	1 Thessalonians 5: 12 - 28
Wednesday	20	2 Thessalonians 1: 1 - 12
Thursday	21	2 Thessalonians 2: 1 - 12
Friday	22	2 Thessalonians 2: 13; 3: 5
Saturday	23	2 Thessalonians 3: 6 - 18
Sunday	24	Psalm 14
Monday	25	Song of Songs 1: 1; 2: 7
Tuesday	26	Song of Songs 2: 8; 3: 11
Wednesday	27	Song of Songs 4: 1; 5: 1
Thursday	28	Song of Songs 5: 2; 6: 3
Friday	29	Song of Songs 6: 4; 7: 9a
Saturday	30	Song of Songs 7: 9b; 8: 14



Daily Bible Readings

December 2024

Sunday	1	Psalm 15
Monday	2	Acts 9: 1 - 9
Tuesday	3	Acts 9: 10 - 19a
Wednesday	4	Acts 9: 19b - 31
Thursday	5	Acts 9: 32 - 43
Friday	6	Acts 10: 1 - 8
Saturday	7	Acts 10: 9 - 23a
Sunday	8	Psalm 16
Monday	9	Acts 10: 23b - 33
Tuesday	10	Acts 10: 34 - 48
Wednesday	11	Acts 11: 1 - 18
Thursday	12	Acts 11: 19 - 30
Friday	13	Acts 12: 1 - 19a
Saturday	14	Acts 12: 19b - 24
Sunday	15	Psalm 17
Monday	16	Isaiah 5: 1 - 7
Tuesday	17	Isaiah 5: 8 - 23
Wednesday	18	Isaiah 5: 24 - 30
Thursday	19	Isaiah 6: 1 - 13
Friday	20	Isaiah 7: 1 - 9
Saturday	21	Isaiah 7: 10 - 17
Sunday	22	Psalm 18: 1 - 29
Monday	23	Isaiah 8: 1 - 10
Tuesday	24	Isaiah 8: 11 - 18
Wednesday	25	Isaiah 9: 1 - 7
Thursday	26	Isaiah 9: 8 - 17
Friday	27	Isaiah 9: 18; 10: 4
Saturday	28	Isaiah 10: 20 - 27
Sunday	29	Psalm 19
Monday	30	Isaiah 11: 1 - 9
Tuesday	31	Isaiah 12: 1 - 6