

NESS BANK CHURCH

Congregational Newsletter

Autumn 2026 - No 1030



Congregation Formed 1787

Present Church Opened 1901

A World Away?



The World has come to an end. Or at least, at last, the Cup has! Forty-eight hopeful teams turned up – the disappointing Scots, the expectant English, the surprising Cape Verdeans, the angry Argentinians, and of course the successful Spaniards who took the trophy home. Now our TV screens have returned to Love Island, Strictly, and David Attenborough. As the world moves on, what global perspective do Christians have?

God made the World. We may think of God as spiritual, valuing prayer over practice, feelings over facts, and ethereal over material things. But the physical world was his idea. He brought it about. Then he looked at it and said it was “very good”. We can spoil ourselves and hurt others by being greedy about things. But to appreciate the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of beauty and usefulness is to see through the eyes of God. “Everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving”. (1st Timothy 4.4)

The World is not what it was. We know that people have gone wrong, and do not live as God intended. Each one of us is both the guilty party, and the victim of human sin. But the Bible also described the world as damaged. Where the Garden of Eden was all fruitful beauty, the wilderness beyond is full of weeds and thorns. Even so earthlings today continue to struggle with fires, floods, earthquakes and droughts, as well as sickness, loneliness, separation and bereavement. But the World is also not yet what it will be!

The World is not enough. The World Cup winners have acquired one trophy. Other prizes are given to the fastest runners, the best-selling singers, the longest-serving, and the most successful. But nothing we win will ever be enough. Jesus asks, “What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world but forfeit their soul?” (Matthew 16.26) The best of us cannot impress God with our achievements – which means the rest of us need not be excluded from his blessing by our personal mediocrity.

The World is not our judge. We all try to do what others expect of us – and that can be practical or loving. Families and communities only work when people work together, and the Gospel is going to the ends of the earth because Christians can adapt to the culture they are part of. But fitting in can never be a substitute for serving God. “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve... God’s good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12.1).

God so loved the World, he sent his only Son (John 3.16). The word “world” in that verse does not mean the natural environment, but the human population, and especially those who are against God. Earlier John said, “though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him” (John 1.10). Jesus came to reveal himself, and those who see the glory of God in him – in contrast to their own boasting and shame – are granted through faith both a higher ambition, and a means of fulfilling it.

The World needs light. “Let there be light” (Genesis 1.1) was the first command, turning nothing into something as a place for us to live. And “the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ” (2nd Corinthians 4.6). Now, “You are the light of the world... (so) let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5.14,16).

The World Cup is over, but in every nation from which the teams came, there remain people who do not yet know how much Jesus loves them and how good their lives could be. The winners could do better, and the losers need lack nothing. As his church, we possess both the means and responsibility of sharing the ultimate prize.

People make huge sacrifices to participate in the World Cup – players, coaches, administrators, fans. Obstacles are swept aside because they have their eye on the goal. What would we plan, endure and expect if our greater goal was to win the world for Christ?

***Blessings
Stuart***

Congregational Register

Deaths: Janet Gray, 8th May 2026
Campbell Macintosh, 16th May 2026
Marie Macfarlane, 8th June 2026

A little night music...

It is the evening of 26th May, a long queue snakes down from the church door, the warmth of the air and the bright evening light create an atmosphere of celebration. It is the annual summer concert by the Inverness NYCOS* Regional choir, and judging by the animated and anticipatory conversations, we are all in for a treat.



All three sections of the choir are present, schooled by their engaging conductor, John Thomson, and full of enthusiasm and musical skill.

The Junior choir – all singing by heart – enchanted us with a suite of songs celebrating “Tartan Terrors”, composed by Tom Cunningham, which included a warning against ‘taking a selfie with a kelpie’, and also introduced us to The Wee Gigelorum, ‘the tiniest creature there ever could be..’ I was utterly delighted with these funny and clever songs, so well performed.

The Intermediate choir gave a suite of songs starting in outer space with an eerie arrangement of ‘Twinkle, Twinkle’, and gradually returning to earth. The Senior choir opened their set with an assured and impressive demonstration of their musicianship – performing without conductor and using rhythm, individual voices and part-singing to show off thoroughly! Their songs were a cycle called “The Sprig of Thyme” comprising folk songs arranged by John Rutter.

The final song brought all performers on stage to entertain us with “The Circus”, and leave everyone quite satisfied that being a member of NYCOS is a VERY GOOD THING!

*NYCOS stands for National Youth Choir of Scotland, and if you know a child who might enjoy being part of such a marvellous experience, look up their website at nycos.co.uk

A Word of Thanks..

Katherine and Deirdre (Macfarlane) thank the Ness Bank congregation who supported them attending the funeral service for their dear mum, the late Marie Macfarlane, on Friday 26th June. It was a beautiful service, led by Rev Scott McRoberts, followed by an afternoon tea the church hall.

Thank you to all the church members who gave up their time to make it all happen and run so smoothly. Marie's daughters are very grateful for all the support they have received.



by

in

Next Issue

Contributions for the Winter 2026 Newsletter may be sent to me at any time, but please no later than Monday 18th October, 2026. The Newsletter will be available for collection by Elders and visitors on Sunday 8th November, 2026.

Elsbeth Smith

Email: nessbmagazine@gmail.com

Copies of the Newsletter are available in the vestibule.

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

Follow Ness Bank Church on Facebook

Ness Bank Church of Scotland, Inverness, Charity No. SC010870, is a Registered Charity

125th anniversary of Ness Bank Church

Our current church building has been open since just before Christmas in 1901; so we celebrate our 125th anniversary at the end of this year.

As a way of celebrating these 125 years I have commissioned a painting of the church by the well-known local artist Heather Afrin. It will show the church from View Place, as seen in the photo we use in our weekly PowerPoint presentations that appear on the big screens.

The prints made from it, *for exclusive purchase by members of the congregation over a short period of time later this year*, will be different from those that will be available later on to members of the public. They will be individually signed by the artist and will show the following along the lower edge:

1901 125th anniversary 2026

Some of you may already have a print produced from a painting by Jim Borland, who was an Elder in our Kirk Session, that shows the church from the riverside. That is why I decided to get a different view painted for this special anniversary.

More details will be made available, such as the size, cost per print and framing options in either late August or early September. After a short period, the alternative print will be made available to the public and *no further special edition prints will be made*. We will also have the option to produce the painting on a postcard or notelet in the future.

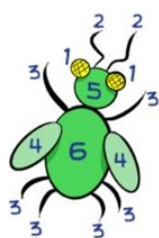
Any profit from these prints will go into our Sanctuary Project funds. Please let me know if you would be interested in purchasing one of these limited-edition prints.

Geoff Thomson
Deputy Session Clerk

Ladies' Lunch

This group meets all year round, enjoying a meal and conversation together at the Redcliffe Hotel, 12.30pm on the last Friday of each month. The gathering is open to any lady living alone, and we are always happy to welcome newcomers. The meetings are always intimated at Sunday morning services beforehand, or you can contact Catherine Harper, Betty Gordon or Eleanor Smart via the church office for more information.

Beetle Drive



This event will take place on **Friday 18 September, 2026** in the Church hall. This will be a lovely social evening with a chance to meet & chat with lots of folk throughout the evening. A great game for all ages. Refreshments will be served. Keep an eye on the weekly order of service for more details.

Girls' Brigade News



at

Viv Goodall has kindly provided some information on the photo included in the last newsletter. She thinks it was taken least thirty-five years ago, probably by Rob Gourlay. Rob and Liz Gourlay led Duke of Edinburgh expeditions for many years and I'm sure there are lots of former GB girls who remember both the couple and the expeditions fondly. Viv gave the following names from left to right – Aileen Smale or Louise Henderson, Julia MacRae, Viv herself, Elaine Sharp, Liz Gourlay, Hugh Goodall, Catriona MacRae. She did not recognise the male on the far right of the photo.

It was announced in late May that Girls' Brigade Scotland will wind up on 31 May 2027. This did not come as a surprise, as falling membership over the last few years has led to the organisation becoming unviable. The good news is that we will join with Girls' Brigade England and Wales to become Girls' Brigade Great Britain, or GB² as some of our leaders have suggested. The new organisation will come into being on 1 June 2027 and the aims and objectives will remain the same.

To mark the final year of GB Scotland, the companies in Highland Division have decided on an overall theme of Scotland for the 2026 / 2027 session. We are looking forward to sharing resources and coming together for a celebration at the end of the session. We'll let you know what we get up to!

Both 4B and Riverside Companies are on a summer break at the moment and will start back in late August / early September. Enquiries about joining either of the companies should be sent to the following email addresses:

Riverside – riversidegbinv@gmail.com (company meets on a Monday evening at Trinity Life Church)

4B – maria.girlsbrigade@gmail.com (company meets on a Tuesday evening at Hilton Primary School)

Hazel MacDonald



Pop SATURDAY 28 NOVEMBER (10.00am-12noon) in your dairy. That's the planned day of our Christmas Fayre. A chance to enjoy a blether over a cuppa & mince pie and get some Christmas shopping done. Please hold on to any donations you may have until November.

Please get in touch with Mary in the office or Janet, if you'd like to join the organising team. Keep an eye on the Order of Service nearer the time for more details.

Us... and them!

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead, he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic*church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen

(the Apostles' creed: *signifies worldwide or universal)

I [therefore], a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

(Eph 4.1-6)

In recent weeks, I have worshipped in three very different contexts – a 'reformed' presbyterian church, an Anglican cathedral, and an Anglican church plant in a primary school. Three very different styles of building, of music, of clerical clothing; and in each one I was welcomed, spiritually nourished and refreshed, and glad to lift my voice with my neighbours in praise and in prayer. Subsequently I had a conversation with a dear friend who was expressing the sense of unease she feels in attending a church belonging to a denomination that appears to embrace and endorse a very wide spectrum of belief about God's word, and as a result includes people who believe very different things from what she feels to be true. I get it; I know that denomination. But we were reflecting on the fact that Jesus never mentioned denominations! They are a human construct, and as such deeply flawed, reflecting humanity's narrowness, judgemental tendencies, and fondness for defining itself by excluding others. There is no such thing as the perfect church.....

So what are we called to be as members of these flawed institutions? Paul makes it clear that our goal should remain the same – pursuing unity around the completed work of Christ who is our peace with God, and with one another through his saving work and the forgiveness which he has achieved for us. We are to unite around the truth revealed in Scripture – that we worship one Lord, and belong to one body; we are animated by one Spirit, and share one faith.

The Apostles' creed, which I have included in full above, is a tremendous aid to focussing our minds on that one faith – it sets out the core beliefs of the church down

the centuries, and reminds us what really matters, and what must be held fast. There will inevitably be things which believers disagree about, but Paul is exhorting his readers to concentrate on the important things, and to sit lightly to the lesser ones. If a church – whether a local one, or an entire denomination – denies these core beliefs, that is a different matter, and must be challenged.

So as a believer in a local church in a messy denomination, where boundaries are unclear, I give thanks that this creed remains core to our identity, and I want to work as a member of my local church to help my fellow believers to grow in confidence in these core truths, and to share them with those who do not yet know Jesus in all his saving love and power. It is not fitting that we should spend all our energies judging and condemning those in other churches for not being like us! Our society is already sick of, and disillusioned by, the multiple divisions which have marred the church down the years, and it is dishonouring to Christ as Lord, and to the unifying energies of the Spirit to promote further division.

God, our Father Almighty, your children confess their judgemental and critical spirit with shame and contrition. We have dishonoured you, and broken the bond of peace which our Lord Jesus, your Son, won for us by his death.

Grant us the humility and gentleness to bear with one another in love; let us be so eager to love our brothers and sisters that we sit lightly to those things which we disagree on, and rejoice in the shared foundations of our faith. May we be slow to judge, and quick to forgive, remembering how you forgive us.

May we walk in a manner worthy of those for whom Jesus died, and rose again, and who will be raised in turn to share his glory – how surprised we will be to meet some people there whom we have dismissed – and how surprised they may be to see us!! In the name of Jesus, Amen.

Aforgetfulsoul.com



Easter Alive Open days, March & April 2026

This year's Easter Alive open church ran 29th - March 3rd April. Each day gave opportunities for visitors to come through the building, take time to think through the Easter story, or just enjoy the peaceful space. The building opened each weekday from 10am to 1pm, and from 1pm to 4pm, and on Palm Sunday (1-3pm), and Maundy Thursday (6pm-8pm). 20 members supported our open church and, a big 'thank you' goes to those who signed up to attend more than one session, enabling us to welcome 140 guests, over the six days! They came from every continent, but primarily Europe; the world map had dots from as far away as Chile and Vietnam!

The largest number of visitors was on the Wednesday, when 39 visited Ness Bank, and the least number was on Thursday, when 6 visitors came – but this was mainly due to a funeral in the morning. We received £55 in donations over the course of the week.

Visitors enjoyed our interactive story of Easter, together with explanatory notes at each point of contemplation -

- a welcoming archway, decorated with palm branches and colourful strips of cloth, together with a 'Hosanna' banner, celebrating Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem;
- an opportunity to look in the 'miracle' box, and to see who it is that Jesus loves;
- bread and juice on the communion table, giving a reminder of the Last Supper and visitors were invited to take these, and quietly celebrate the sacrifice of Jesus Christ;
- a small prayer tree, where visitors were encouraged to sit and write a short personal prayer or message, to hang on the tree, remembering that it was to give us this access to God that Jesus died;
- a small cross and a twisted barbed wire crown of thorns, to remind visitors of the pain and suffering that Jesus endured for our salvation;
- a tomb, with entrance-blocking stone rolled away, and the body wrappings lying on the floor. The stone was daubed with the glorious truth, that Jesus is Alive!!
- Finally, visitors were encouraged to write their name on a paper foot and place these on the floor, as they made their way out of the Sanctuary, reminding us that Jesus walks with each of us on our journey of life.

There was a dedicated children's corner in the South Transept, with videos of Bible stories and colouring activities.

I would encourage those who didn't volunteer for this event, to have a go next year, as it is very easy and you will enjoy introducing our church, and our faith, to many people visiting Inverness. Finally, I'd like to thank all those members of the congregation who gave their time and talents for this event, it takes a team!

Barry Gilbert



Ness Bank Church

Bible Readings and

Prayer Prompts for Autumn 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)

September 2026

1st Amos 1:11-2:5
2nd Amos 2:6-16
3rd Amos 3:1-15
4th Amos 4:1-13
5th Amos 5:1-17

6th Psalm 102
7th Amos 5:18-27
8th Amos 6:1-14
9th Amos 1:1-17
10th Amos 8:1-14
11th Amos 9:1-10
12th Amos 9:11-15

13th Psalm 103
14th Matthew 14:1-12
15th Matthew 14:13-21
16th Matthew 14:22-36
17th Matthew 15:1-20
18th Matthew 15:21-28
19th Matthew 15:29-39

20th Psalm 104
21st Matthew 16:1-12
22nd Matthew 16:13-20
23rd Matthew 16:21-28
24th Matthew 17:1-13
25th Matthew 17:14-23
26th Matthew 17:24-27

27th Psalm 105
28th Matthew 18:1-9
29th Matthew 18:10-14
30th Matthew 18:15-20

*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)*

October 2026

1st Matthew 18:21-35

2nd Matthew 19:1-15

3rd Matthew 19:16-30

4th Psalm 106

5th 2 Kings 22:1-20

6th 2 Kings 23:1-18

7th 2 Kings 23:19-30

8th 2 Kings 24:8-20a

9th 2 Kings 24:20b-25:21

10th 2 Kings 25:22-30

11th Psalm 107

12th Matthew 20:1-16

13th Matthew 20:17-28

14th Matthew 20:29-34

15th Matthew 21:1-11

16th Matthew 21:12-17

17th Matthew 21:18-27

18th Psalm 108

19th Matthew 21:28-32

20th Matthew 21:33-46

21st Matthew 22:1-14

22nd Matthew 22:15-22

23rd Matthew 22:23-33

24th Matthew 22:34-46

25th Psalm 109

26th Jeremiah 31:1-22

27th Jeremiah 31:27-40

28th Jeremiah 33:1-26

29th Jeremiah 36:1-32

30th Jeremiah 38:1-28

31st Jeremiah 39:1-18

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 :-

www.scriptureunion.org.uk

November 2026

1st Psalm 110
2nd Jeremiah 40:1-41:3
3rd Jeremiah 41:16-42:22
4th Jeremiah 43:1-13
5th Jeremiah 44:1-30
6th Jeremiah 51:33-64
7th Jeremiah 52:1-34

8th Psalm 111
9th Ephesians 1:1-14
10th Ephesians 1:15-23
11th Ephesians 2:1-10
12th Ephesians 2:11-22
13th Ephesians 3:1-13
14th Ephesians 3:14-21

15th Psalm 112
16th Ephesians 4:1-16
17th Ephesians 4:17-32
18th Ephesians 5:1-20
19th Ephesians 5:21-33
20th Ephesians 6:1-9
21st Ephesians 6:10-24

22nd Psalm 113
23rd Proverbs 10:1-22
24th Proverbs 11:1-31
25th Proverbs 15:1-33
26th Proverbs 16:1-33
27th Proverbs 17:1-28
28th Proverbs 18:1-24

29th Psalm 114
30th Matthew 23:1-12

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!***

Living Lord and Heavenly Father, I offer up today all that I am, all that I have, and all that I suffer, to be yours today and yours forever.

Give me grace, Lord, to do all that I know of your holy will. Purify my heart, sanctify my thinking, correct my desires.

Teach me in all of today’s work and trouble and joy, to respond with honest praise, simple trust, and instant obedience; that my life may be in truth a living sacrifice, by the power of your Holy Spirit, and in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, my master and my all, Amen.

(Author unknown)

The apostle Paul, founder of many churches, and author of many letters, gives us some marvellous models in praying for one another and for the work of God in the world around us. This prayer comes early in his letter to a group of churches in the area around Ephesus (Ephesians 1.17-19).

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

In John’s gospel, ch17 v3, Jesus is praying just before his trial, and says, “Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” Here we see Paul picking up those words, and reinforcing their importance – to personally know God (not merely know about him, or have excellent bible knowledge) as our Father, is to be fully alive!

No matter what is happening in our lives, and to those around us, we can pray this with confidence; that God would open the understanding of hearts and minds to know him better. There will always be more wonderful things to discover in the glorious loving faithfulness of our God!

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you,

In the passage of John’s gospel mentioned above, Jesus has promised his disciples that he goes to prepare a place for them with his Father, and that he will return to bring them home. This is the hope of the Christian, a hope which nothing that happens to us can take away. This hope changes everything about life in the present age, and equips us to walk in it by faith, loving and trusting the One who calls us.

We can pray for ourselves and one another, that we might become more confident in our hope – really grasping just what it means to be the beloved, adopted and secure children of God, with a home in glory. This hope is our anchor, and a steadying centre in all of life’s storms.

that you may know,the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,
The bible is quite clear that the church – the global community of believers – are God's holy people. This is not some specially equipped group, but all of us! And our identity is 'God's glorious inheritance'!

Let us pray then that we might learn to see and love one another in this way. We are the community where divine love dwells and is made visible; we are the community in which God's treasures lie. We are his precious jewels and he longs for us to cherish and delight in one another even as he delights in us.

that you may know.... His incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms...

'Incomparable' – what a marvellous word to use as we consider the God whom we call Father, and who reveals himself to us in Jesus Christ, his Son our Lord. There is none like him, and we are his special care – let that sink in for a while. The power which birthed all creation; the power which broke the chains of death and raised Jesus to new life – that is the power which God exercises – for us, not against us - as he works all things together in fulfilling his purposes, creating a people for himself and preparing to dwell with us in the unimaginably wonderful life of the age to come. We are on the side of victory! We are in the hands of the Almighty God, and nothing can defeat his purposes or steal us from him.

Friends, let us pray for one another that we might indeed live in the knowledge of that power – confident that we are on the winning side, and that God will complete all his plans. Such knowledge equips us to stand firm as believers, no matter what is going on in the world, and to proclaim that God is sovereign, Christ is ruling at his right hand, and all shall be well.

Heavenly Father, we pray as Paul directs, giving thanks for all your goodness to us in Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. We pray that we might know you better – living in loving relationship with you day by day.

We pray that we might be inspired by and confident in our future as your children, heading home to live with you forever. We pray that we might recognise in our Christian community the glorious and beautiful inheritance which is your delight – cherishing and building one another up.

And we pray that in all these things, we might be confident because it is your power at work, by your Spirit, which achieves all you purpose to do. We rejoice to rest in your incomparable power, devoted to our blessing and your glory.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

The following 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.

Organisations and Occasions – prayer prompts

Funerals

Pray for those who come to funeral services at Ness Bank, often it is on these occasions that people are moved to seek God for the first time, or to return to a long-abandoned faith.

Weekly Sunday Worship

Pray for all who come to worship week by week, and for our minister, Stuart, as he preaches and teaches us from God's living word. The Holy Spirit works as people listen, meditate, and open their lives to being changed.

Pray that we might truly become a family of believers, knowing and sharing one another's lives, and demonstrating God's love in action to our wider community.

Guild, Work Party, Crafties, Monthly Ladies' lunch

Pray for all who gather to share common interests, and to enjoy one another's company. As we open our hearts and lives to each other, God uses us to show His love, His compassion, and to teach us how to live for Him by faith.

Girls' and Boys' Brigade companies, Messy Church, Sunday School

These organisations exist to make Jesus known among our families and young people, and to make disciples who can serve and love Him. Their leaders need wisdom, strength and humour, and each and every child – and the family they represent – need Jesus.

Caring for Inverness... Foodstuff and Street Pastors

These organisations provide practical, loving care to some very vulnerable people in our town. The Foodstuff community includes paid staff, as well as volunteers; the staff and the Board members need wisdom in planning for the future, and strength and humour to tackle the everyday challenges of such service. Pray for the nurses, GP, CAB and other professionals who come week by week to provide practical care – for discernment and perseverance.

The Inverness Street Pastors go out both on Saturday nights, and also Wednesdays around midday, to minister to vulnerable and needy people on the streets, to show God's love and to help people in potentially dangerous situations to make good choices and stay safe. Elsewhere in the newsletter, there are specific points to pray over, but in particular we can pray for the new coordinator – Ross – as he settles into this crucial role.

Blythswood

This is about so much more than shoeboxes! An incredibly practical and far-reaching ministry, where again the leadership require wisdom in using their resources well. Their aim is to share God's love with some of the neediest people, through charity shops, shoeboxes and many practical ministries here in Scotland and overseas. We can pray that this will be the case, and that people will be drawn to faith in Jesus as they are met with love, compassion, and the gospel.

Scottish Bible Society

We believe that God reveals Himself to us through His Word, and so we pray for this word to be available, accessible, and for the Holy Spirit to speak through it. The Bible Society produce many resources to help people meet Jesus, from the 'Bibles for Bairns' initiative, to the youth editions of the gospels, and many others. We know for ourselves, that as we read, we hear God's voice, and encounter Jesus for ourselves – let's pray for that life-changing experience to be shared by many people in Scotland and around the world.

Pray too for the 'Healing the wounds of Trauma' course, which is run by trained leaders around Scotland – that it will reach those who most need and can benefit from it. For more information, go to

www.scottishbiblesociety.org/trauma-healing

Luwero Community Ministries, Uganda

The church in Uganda is growing – like its population – very fast, and needs good teachers and wise leaders to make disciples. We can give thanks to God for this wonderful demonstration of His power, and pray for our brothers and sisters that they will be kept safe from false teaching; strengthened in faith when they face trials; delivered from fear when they face danger. We can pray for Gabriel Kijambu and his wife Deborah as they lead the work at Luwero. Various building projects are underway to expand and improve the facilities, and they rejoiced recently in the news that the secondary school is performing well in national league tables.

The Pastors and Leaders conference in May was attended by around 600 people; pray that they will benefit deeply from the teaching as they go back to lead the hundreds of churches in that district. May God be glorified in the church in Uganda and around the world, as people witness to the transforming power of the gospel in their lives.

Delight yourselves in the Lord, yes, find your joy in him at all times. Have a reputation for gentleness, and never forget the nearness of your Lord.

Don't worry over anything whatever; tell God every detail of your needs in earnest and thankful prayer, and the peace of God, which transcends human understanding, will keep constant guard over your hearts and minds as they rest in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4.4-7; JB Phillips translation)



The Guild

The Guild enjoyed a lovely afternoon tea at Ness Castle Lodges (see pictures below) on 7th July and although the weather was dull and overcast, the company and fellowship was warm and sunny!

Our Rededication Service is on Sunday 20th September and our first meeting of the new season will be on Tuesday 22nd September at 7.30pm, following an afternoon tea for Moray Firth Guilds Together at 2.30pm in Lochardil Hotel .

Our Guild theme is "Beyond the Walls," building on the strategy of "Let's Build a House" and striving to take the message of the gospel to folks in our communities as commanded by our Lord. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus is sending his followers out to accomplish a specific mission: to make more disciples.



The Guild Work Party plan to reconvene on the first Wednesday after the Guild begins – Wednesday 30th September. We meet at 10.30am in the small hall, fortnightly thereafter.



The Toddler group will recommence on Wednesday 19th August, 2026 at the revised time of 0930-1130. We welcome any children up to school age with a parent or carer to join our happy band.

Familiar Faces in Ness Bank

This month we hear from – Marty MacBean, who in characteristic manner, has chosen to reflect on her life through the women who made a great impact on her.

When I was a young girl, in Girls' Guildry, our bible study was Women in the Bible. I really enjoyed this study, and as I look back over the years, I remember all the ladies in Ness Bank church who have helped me and encouraged me. I came to Ness Bank as a very young child, and have been here ever since.

The first was Mrs Riddell, whom I met in Sunday School. A lovely gentle lady, kind to all the many children in her care, and with her I learned to love the bible stories.

At 7 years old, I joined the Girls' Guildry, where our leader was the wonderful Mrs Burnett. My time in the Greenwood company was so much fun, with so many different things to learn and enjoy. We had country dancing, and there was a choir led by Mrs Munro – I couldn't sing, but Mrs Burnett let everyone into the choir, so I tried hard to get the right notes!

We learned to knit and sew, and we embroidered tray cloths, everything was so much fun. Mrs Burnett did like us to have good manners, so we behaved very well – at least while we were at Guildry! Mrs Burnett was a brilliant leader, and I really enjoyed my time in the Greenwood.

I progressed into the Company section at 12 years of age, where the leader was Mrs Finlayson, a terrific leader who worked hard to help all of us in whatever way she could. We learnt many skills, and how to carry ourselves in public, and how important it was to treat others as we would be treated ourselves. Mrs Finlayson was a tremendous influence on us for good – although when I took my lessons in etiquette home to my brothers and corrected their table manners, they weren't so sure! Once we all turned 18 and sometimes met up in a pub for a drink, we would wonder whether Mrs Finlayson would approve...

It was Mrs Finlayson who supported us to pursue the Duke of Edinburgh awards, and I was proud and happy to finally achieve and receive my gold award. Camps were organised for us, and for many of us, these trips to Holland and Switzerland were our first experiences abroad.

It was at camp in Cullen in 1966, where I was working for a certificate to enable me to be a leader at other camps, that Mrs Finlayson had to break the news of my mother's death to me. I was devastated.

In the days that followed, I received so much help from folk at Ness Bank church, and found that many of the life skills which I had learnt at Guildry had equipped me to look after my dad and my brothers. I worked for many years in insurance, latterly in the field of banking insurance services, although it was a steep learning curve moving into the bank!



I feel really blessed when I think about all the help that I received from the ladies of Ness Bank church, both in those early days after my mother's death, and also in the following years. I worked in Sunday School and in the Girls' Brigade, and in both, I have been so well supported and encouraged – the 4b Company would not have survived without that kindness and practical help. I will not forget the guidance and kindness I received at Ness Bank church.

I was so happy when my two sisters-in-law shared their children with me, and I have 4 nephews and 1 niece. We had great fun as they were growing up, making trips to town together, enjoying sleepovers. The boys attended Boys' Brigade and Alison went to Girls' Brigade.

Now I am a great aunt to 7 and a great-great aunt to 2! I am having a great time watching them growing up, and so thankful to be part of their lives. Some are now working, and they are all enjoying life to the full.



I was quite astonished in recent years to be nominated to receive both a National Youth Work Award (lifetime achievement), and the British Empire Medal in recognition of my years in Sunday School and the Girls' Brigade – I have loved doing these things so much,

and it seemed there must have been many more deserving people! But others wanted to let me know that my efforts were appreciated, and it would have been unkind to reject their loving kindness.

I have a good number of good friends going back to my Greenwood days, and it is good in life if you have people you can turn to.

(Editor's note – special thanks to Anne Fraser Reed for her assistance and support for Marty in preparing this piece for us, it is good to have tech-savvy friends! Thanks also to Ann Urquhart of the Girls' Brigade and Hazel MacDonald for sourcing the photograph of Marty in her finery to receive the BEM)

Sanctuary Update

Work continues on the plans approved by the Kirk Session and congregation in November 2024 to adapt our Ness Bank church building to:

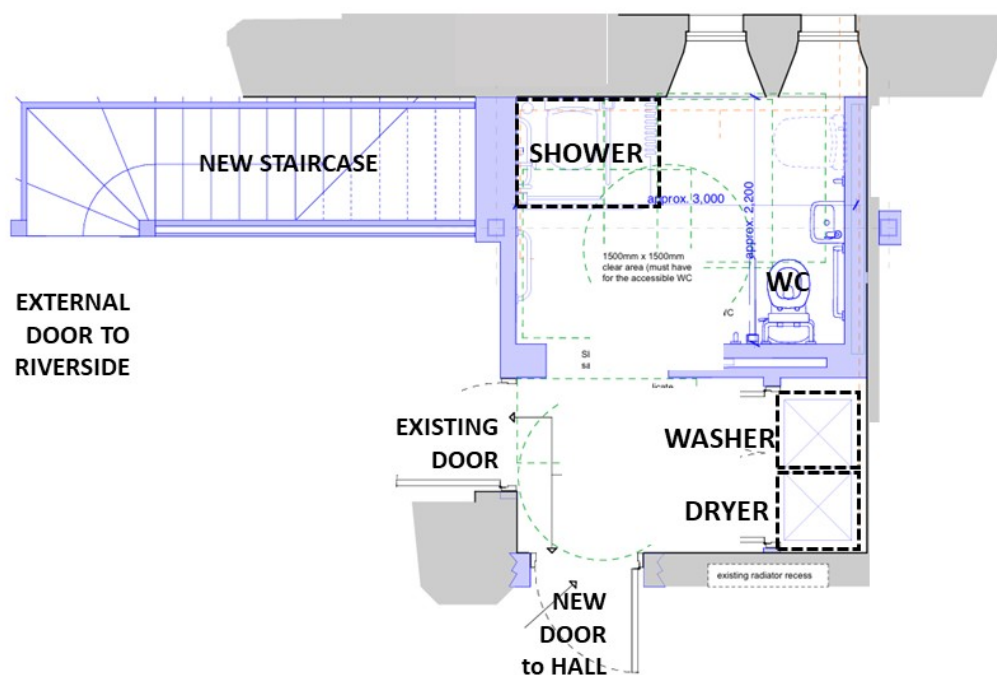
- improve access, with a new internal stair and passenger lift;
- extend mission, by opening the building to the public every day;
- enhance the appearance, by redecorating the Sanctuary;
- increase flexibility, with more open space and new kitchen and toilets.

Over the summer, the planning teams remain busy behind the scenes. Our Architect, Mechanical and Electrical engineers continue to consult with Building Control, and complete the detailed design work that will inform the Tender documents. An Asbestos survey has been completed – and thankfully found almost no asbestos! Our Building Group meets regularly with the professionals to discuss details. And our Funding Group continues to raise the last of the money from external grants. A recent success was the allocation of £10,000 from the Hugh Fraser Foundation, and £30,000 from the Inverness Common Good Fund.

The earliest date for work to start has now slipped back to the middle of October – but even that depends on lots of variables falling in to place. Before that, we have work to do to clear the Sanctuary and move items into storage – so our last Sunday service will be a few weeks before the builders begin. Already we have been moving things around, and reallocating cupboard space. So if you can't find what you are looking for, don't panic – just ask!

Take a Pew: The refurbishment includes the removal of the choir pews from the stage, all the pews from the Transepts, and the front three rows from the centre of the church. The Building Group is in touch with others to have these recycled creatively. But if you would like one for your home or garden, please speak to Barry Gilbert who will see if he can help. You will need to make your own arrangements for transport and any alterations required.

Sight and Sound: Many people appreciate amplification on Sunday mornings, information on the screens in church, and the livestream they can watch at home. All that is controlled from a desk in the gallery, but regulations now require the equipment to be accessible to those who can't climb the gallery stairs – so it needs to come down. The best place for it – taking account of sight lines and cable runs – is the back pew in the centre of the church near the toilets. So, there will be some minor alterations there, and one or two regulars may need to move seats – or learn how to push the buttons!



Toilets and Showers: The original plan was to install two new toilets in the store room behind the main riverside entrance on the ground floor. Discussion with Inverness Foodstuff (IF) and design changes elsewhere, mean this can now be adapted to include a single accessible toilet and shower, plus a basic laundry facility. This will give IF the much-needed opportunity to offer our homeless guests the chance to wash themselves and their clothes when they come for food. At present all they get is vouchers to use elsewhere. The extra cost of this change will be funded by IF, and we are delighted to provide the space for this significant improvement.

More Sounds: Our magnificent church organ, first installed in 1903 and not much changed since, needs repaired. We had thought this could happen during the refurbishment – but it turns out there will be too much dust, and too little space. This work will now take place after the rest is complete – so we will be without the organ for a few weeks then. And as you would expect, it will cost money! The organ builder's estimate is £56,900 plus VAT – or £10 for every week of its life so far. Admittedly that is a little more than the £590 it first cost to build it – but we believe this repair will last a lifetime.

Life Goes On: When the work is taking place in the Sanctuary, our Sunday services will be held in the hall downstairs. There will be space for everyone, sound and vision, tea and coffee afterwards, and the livestream will continue. Of course it will be different – but there is nothing in the Bible to suggest the Holy Spirit will not be with us, so we trust the rest of the congregation will be there too!

Ness Bank Crafties

This group recommences meeting on Tuesday 18th August, at 10am in Meeting Room 1. We share some refreshments, enjoy one another's company, and create beautiful things together! We are always happy to welcome newcomers, and to make new friends.



SHOEBOX APPEAL

We are once again supporting the shoebox appeal. Leaflets and pre-wrapped shoeboxes will be available in the vestibule from **Sunday 20 September, 2026.**

The essentials they ask to go into every box are, toothbrush & toothpaste, hat & scarf & gloves, soap, underwear/socks/tights, sweets and either a small toy for children or a wee gift for adults. After that they look for a variety of things which are detailed on the leaflet. If you want ideas of other fillers to include have a look at <https://tinyurl.com/Blythswoodfillerideas> . If you'd like to knit hat/scarf/ gloves, go to <https://tinyurl.com/knittingpatterns> (or ask Mary in the office for a copy). If the links aren't working, just google Blythswood Shoebox Appeal. (Blythswood may update links between this article being prepared and the official launch.) QR codes below if you want to use those.

KNITTING PATTERN FOR
HAT / SCARF / MITTENS /
SNOOD



EXTRA FILLER IDEAS



Items in the box should be new, but 'value/supermarket own brands' are fine. Although they also ask that we choose items that will last, rather than those with a short shelf life that can't be recycled. The deadline to return will be Sunday 1st November, 2026.

If you'd like to help with the checking of the boxes at Culduthel Christian Centre, the dates for your diary are -:

Monday 16 November - Midday until 9:00pm.

Tuesday 17 November - 09:00am to 9:00pm

Wednesday 18 November - 09:00am to around 14:00

CHECKLIST

Please tick the items included and firmly secure this list on your shoebox lid. Include the essential items highlighted in the orange box. **Important: please only include new items.**

ESSENTIALS

☐ Toothbrush & toothpaste

☐ Bar of soap

☐ Underwear

☐ Socks/tights

☐ Scarf, hat, gloves

☐ Toy*/gift

*Small toy for children such as cars, dolls, balls, etc. Please only include new shop-bought toys.

☐ Sweets

No chocolate, split multipacks, or any other food items. No loose sweets, lollies, or undated bags of sweets. Best before date no earlier than 31st March next year.

Do not include used or damaged items; war-related items such as toy guns, knives, or military figures; mouthwash; seeds; hand-made or knitted stuffed toys; **chocolate** or any food other than sweets. Chocolate eclairs and chocolate limes are not allowed; books that are mainly words should not be included.

TOILETRIES (NO TALCUM POWDER)

MAXIMUM SIZE OF BOTTLES 200ML

- ☐ Shampoo or shower gel
- ☐ Face cloth/moist wipes
- ☐ Deodorant
- ☐ Moisturising cream
- ☐ Comb/brush
- ☐ Sanitary products
- ☐ Shaving foam/razors

MISCELLANEOUS

- ☐ New make-up
- ☐ Sewing equipment
- ☐ Household candles
- ☐ Screwdrivers/pliers

STATIONERY

- ☐ Pens/pencils/sharpener
- ☐ Notepads/colouring books
- ☐ Rulers/rubbers

CLOTHES AND OTHER ITEMS

WE CANNOT ACCEPT BABY BOXES, OR NEW KNITTED GOODS APART FROM HATS, SCARVES AND GLOVES

☐	_____
☐	_____
☐	_____
☐	_____
☐	_____

SELECT YOUR SHOEBOX RECIPIENT

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| ☐ Man | |
| ☐ Boy (teen) | AGE <input type="text"/> |
| ☐ Boy (8-12) | AGE <input type="text"/> |
| ☐ Boy (3-7) | AGE <input type="text"/> |
| ☐ Elderly woman | |
| ☐ Woman | |
| ☐ Girl (teen) | AGE <input type="text"/> |
| ☐ Girl (8-12) | AGE <input type="text"/> |
| ☐ Girl (3-7) | AGE <input type="text"/> |

Tear along the perforation to detach this panel and secure to the outside of your shoebox

Inverness Street Pastors – recent news

We are giving thanks for newly trained Street and Prayer Pastors, who were commissioned on 12 June, at a joyous service in Culloden and Balloch Baptist Church. We also bade farewell to Mark Hadfield, with deep gratitude for his work as co-ordinator over the 19 years since we began.

Our work is a response to God's grace and goodness, which we want to share with everyone in Inverness, and we therefore appreciated the support of community and business leaders – including the Police force, and our Councillors – represented by Craig Still, Glynis Sinclair and David Hass, who all joined us for the evening.

Ascencion Trust Scotland is our 'parent' organisation, looking after all the important things which keep everyone safe – like national protocols, procedures and training. We were glad to have Chris Jewell from the Trust with us on the evening, to be reminded of the bigger picture of which we play a part.

Being a Street Pastor can bring opportunities to grow in faith and in understanding of Jesus' love for all people, and we are always keen to welcome new trainees who wish to experience this for themselves, and to serve their community. To this end, we will be recruiting and training a new cohort of volunteers this autumn. Please contact us on inverness@streetpastors.org.uk

The Organ Thunders for Ness Pastors, Inverness Cathedral, 31 July 1:15-2pm

On 31st July, Philip Berg, Master of Music at the King's Chapel of the Savoy, was playing as part of the summer season of recitals on Friday lunchtime at Inverness Cathedral. Inverness Street Pastors were the nominated charity for the retiring collection that day, and in addition to enjoying terrific music, there will have been time to share with visitors to the cathedral about our work.

Points for Prayer

Father, as we enter the summer season, we pray that the city of Inverness will be a place of peace and justice. Let no family go hungry, and bless all those who provide for those in need.

Give thanks for the people who have joined our mission. Bless and protect them and those who support them, along with the rest of our team. May they grow in wisdom, faith and perseverance, as they respond to your grace by serving others.

Bless those who are no longer able to serve on the street. May their experiences remain as a blessing and encouragement to them, as they continue to support the work.

Pray for those who have not yet stepped up to serve. Pray that God will nudge them into exploring the ministry of Street Pastors for themselves

“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** 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

