

NESS BANK CHURCH

Congregational Newsletter

Spring 2026 - No 1028



Congregation Formed 1787

Present Church Opened 1901

MINISTER'S LETTER

Dear Friends, I wish you every blessing in 2026. May the days ahead be full of spiritual refreshment, Christian witness, and living hope.

It is not everyone who can read the news or view the world with confidence. Many things which are beyond our control seem to be going badly. A Scottish election in the next few months will give us all the chance to cast our vote – but maybe not even political power, at local, national or international level, is enough to make a difference.



But our trust is in a higher authority, and so we also cast our votes with prayer. We may not know what God is doing, but we are learning to trust him. The unpredictable words and actions of Jesus that surprise us in the Gospels, where so many were blessed, continue through the faithful following of those who belong to his church today.

Christmas was full of good things in Ness Bank. I am grateful to the many who catered, decorated, sang, played, acted, printed, delivered and welcomed people into our midst. The Carol Crawl was once again a particular pleasure, sharing praise and prayer with hundreds of people from many different congregations. And the input to our Nativity of Bishop Gabriel Kijjambu from Uganda was a highlight for many. I look forward to returning to Luwero in the Spring to visit his family and share in his church leaders conference there.

Before that, we have another chance to celebrate on an African theme. On the evening of Tuesday 3rd March, the Watoto Children's choir will visit Ness Bank. "Watoto" is the Swahili word for children, and the choir consists of children touring the UK to bring hope and healing to vulnerable woman and children in Uganda and Sudan through this work of Christian mission. The entertainment will be lively, and the cause is good, so I hope you will be able to come along and give your support.

Then our thoughts will turn to Easter, with another opportunity to open our church during the week to visitors. In the past, the numbers coming in have been encouraging, and their response has been inspiring. But the work of welcome has fallen on the shoulders of a small number of faithful volunteers. Perhaps there is someone reading this

today who could step forward and share in that work. All it needs is a cheerful smile, a few spare hours, and a little courage. And if you haven't done it before, we'll make sure you do it with someone who has. Who knows? Perhaps this could be an exciting new adventure for you.

In fact, that will be true for us all this year, no matter what our plans are. It has been said the only things we can be sure of are Death and Taxation! But I would add to that list both Unexpected Change, and God! Let us trust him who has paid our debts, to guide us through our use of the gifts he has given us, and prepare us for the life after death that awaits all those who believe in Jesus Christ as Lord.

***Blessings
Stuart***

Congregational Register

Deaths : 4th November 2025; Mairi Miller
23rd November 2025; Moira Smart
3rd December 2025; Helen Rhind
6th December 2025; Carol MacArthur
14th December 2025: Isabella Paul

New Members in 2025: by Resolution of the Kirk Session; Ingrid Bruce of Tain, Di Wood, of Inverness

By certificate of transfer; Cathy Morrison, Sheila Kerr, Evelyn Stafford, Jennifer Matheson and Christine Matheson, all of Inverness.

Remembering Service

All of us experience the loss of a loved one. Be it after their rich full life, too soon or too suddenly, in difficult circumstances or sacrificing themselves for the good of others.

At our last service in November, 62 names were read out, those who were remembered by folk there that day. Many present were not on our church roll, but had maybe used Ness Bank to help them cope with a funeral, some time ago or in more recent years. Our door is always open. The Remembering service was there for them. A time of quiet reflection, music, words and prayer. It is such a comforting service offering our memories to our Lord. All being well we will hold this annual service again towards the end of 2026.

Sheila C Proudfoot

Christmas at Ness Bank



It may seem a long time ago, but it is good to recall and appreciate the various services and events which marked Christmas, and to thank all who made them possible.

The all-age Nativity service on 14th December, included our very own 'angel' Gabriel from Luwero, Uganda, and drew folk from across the congregation to play their parts in celebrating God's gift of Jesus, the light and hope of the world. On 21st, the choir played their part along with various readers, in exploring all the

different ways that the angels were involved in the story, and reminding us that the goal of all history is to join with the angelic host in worshipping our Lord, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The second Inverness Churches Together Carol Crawl took place on Monday 22nd December, and the weather was very kind to us, so that nearly 200 people shared in worship across the 6 different churches along the riverbank. We enjoyed the variety of styles of music, prayer and readings, and especially enjoyed the refreshments provided for all at Trinity Life where the crawl came to a happy conclusion.

On Christmas Eve, a significant number of visitors joined members of the congregation to bring in the day itself, with a short service following some community carols introduced by Margaret Livingstone. We enjoyed warm fellowship in spite of the failure of the upstairs heating system!



And on Christmas Day, since the heating was still not functioning, the service moved at short notice to the hall, where we were toasty warm, and shared the joy of Christ's birth, learning a new song to the tune of 'The Twelve Days of Christmas', which helped us to think of the immense significance of that event. Special appreciation is due to both our minister, and to the sound team on duty that day for managing a last-minute relocation so smoothly!

Here are the words of that song – and if you would like to learn the actions that go with it, find someone who made it to church on Christmas Day and ask them!

**On the first ever Christmas
My true love sent to me..
Life everlasting,
Love overflowing,
Hope – keeps me going –
Faith, ever knowing,
Joy, ever glowing,
Seed ever sowing,
Church ever growing
PEACE ON EARTH!
Truth that reveals
My shame, that
Seeks forgiveness from
His son – Christ Jesus, my Lord**

A visit from Gabriel

In May, 2025, our minister, Stuart Smith, made his annual visit to Uganda, to take part in teaching at the Luwero Pastors and Leachers Conference. In December, the leader of the ministry in Luwero – Bishop Gabriel Kijjambu – visited Ness Bank, sharing in our nativity service, bringing greetings and sharing the story of the ministry since its inception in 2002.

Gabriel's story is inspiring, and gives us cause for great rejoicing, as there is now a strong church in the village, and a Christian witness to the community through the schools, clinic, bible college, and the work of the farms which help to provide food for the students. Uganda is a nation of young people, and the need to reach them with the good news of Jesus, and to equip them with skills and education, is very great. It is a privilege to partner with Gabriel and his family in this work, by our prayers and by giving if we so wish. In addition to running all the various activities, the ministry enables sponsorship of individual children who might otherwise miss out on education. There is a Facebook page for the project (Luwero community projects) and a website for the work is to be found at the following location:

www.luwerocommunityprojects.org



Familiar Faces in Ness Bank

This month we hear from – Stuart Black



I have been attending Ness Bank Church for over 50 years. The first time was when my Dad, Archie, preached as sole nominee in 1974 and I was 10 years old. When the congregation was asked to vote I stood up too! Church played a big role in my school years in Inverness. On Monday evening there was a badminton club, Wednesday (Juniors) then Friday (Seniors) was Boys' Brigade, on Saturday evening there was a youth club and Sunday was Sunday School and later the Kirk Youth Group. I remember great teachers like Rob Gourlay and Bill Arthur in the youth group and lots of stories about Snoopy and singing with Bob's guitar in Church House. I played a lot of football when I was younger for the school in the morning, then the 2nd Company BBs on Saturday afternoon. I usually didn't have time to wash between matches so would have quite a muddy bath on Saturday evening! I really enjoyed being in the BB's and was one of the first boys in the company to get the Queens Badge, its highest achievement. The photo is from 1981 and shows my colour sergeant uniform and Queen's Badge certificate.

After studying Geography at Edinburgh University, I decided to do a PhD at Glasgow University. It was partly funded by the Highlands and Islands

Development Board as I was interested in how to make the Highlands more successful and help retain young people. There were HIDB employees in Ness Bank like Keith Farquarson and I was very interested in their work. I submitted my doctorate in late 1989 and graduated in July 1990.

In 1996, after a spell working in London followed by 6 years as a lecturer in Land Economy at Aberdeen University, I got a job with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the successor to the HIDB, back in Inverness. My career there was very interesting and in 2002 I became Chief Executive of the enterprise company for Inverness and Nairn. After 12 years with HIE I moved to Highland Council as Director for Planning and Development. By now I was an elder at Ness Bank with 3 daughters who went to Girls Brigade and the Sunday School and KYG. I also helped run the KYG for many years with Keith Gibson.

In 2020 I moved back to a job with HIE and in January 2022 became its Chief Executive. In this role I meet lots of senior business and community leaders and politicians. I never forget the grounding I had growing up in Inverness and Ness Bank Church. I now also chair Inverness Foodstuff which helps people who are in need in Inverness as I want to give back to the church and community which has given me so much. I know my most important role is as a parent and this August I was delighted to become a grandad to Aaron, Iona and Tony's son, who live in Edinburgh. The picture is of the two of us.



Baby and Toddler group

The group continues to meet on a Wednesday morning from 0930-1130 during term time, in the downstairs hall, and always have space for any child from 0-5 yrs. If parents/carers are able to pay, we ask for £3 which includes a suitable children's snack and tea, coffee and biscuits for parents/ carers.

Anne Sutherland (contact details on back page of magazine)



Christmas Party 2025

The Christmas Party took place on Wednesday 24th December, when 56 guests came to enjoy a four-course dinner, at festive tables including the essential crackers!

The starters of prawn cocktail or soup, were prepared by the IF team, while the main course - a full roast turkey dinner, with all the trimmings, with a vegetarian option – was supplied, cooked and served as a gift by the Glen Mhor Hotel. Guests chose between trifle or cheesecake for dessert (both prepared by IF), and finally filled up the space with tea or coffee, and plenty of mince pies.

During a short break between the main courses and dessert, Santa Claus, diverted from his around-the-world journey, and called into our party, surprising all the guests with a wrapped present! Crombie Gordon somehow knew about this, and was present to herald Santa's arrival on his bagpipes.

Before they left, each guest was provided with two 'goodie' bags of festive food, chocolates etc. and a selection of wrapped presents, part of these were 'bags of hope' donated by the Vineyard Church.

There were also 36 takeaway meals for guests and volunteers



The Board of Trustees are very grateful to all those who made donations, including presents, festive food and not least money, in the run up to Christmas. They are also grateful to all the volunteers and staff, who gave of their time to prepare and cook food, to wrap presents, to sort out 'goody' bags, to set up the hall, tables and chairs etc. and to serve and generally look after all the guests and finally to clean up and clear away the 'leftovers' of the party

Barry Gilbert



Ness Bank Church Bible Readings and Prayer Prompts for Spring 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)

March 2026

- 1st Psalm 78:1-39
2nd Matthew 8:1-13
3rd Matthew 8:14-22
4th Matthew 8:23-27
5th Matthew 8:28-34
6th Matthew 9:1-8
7th Matthew 9:9-13
- 8th Psalm 78:40-72
9th 1 Kings 1:1-27
10th 1 Kings 1:28-53
11th 1 Kings 2:1-12
12th 1 Kings 3:1-15
13th 1 Kings 3:16-28
14th 1 Kings 4:29-34
- 15th Psalm 79
16th 1 Kings 5:1-18
17th 1 Kings 6:1-13
18th 1 Kings 8:1-21
19th 1 Kings 8:22-30, 54-66
20th 1 Kings 9:1-9
21st 1 Kings 10:1-13, 23-25
- 22nd Psalm 80
23rd Matthew 26:1-16
24th Matthew 26:17-30
25th Matthew 26:31-35
26th Matthew 26:36-46
27th Matthew 26:47-56
28th Matthew 26:57-68
- 29th Psalm 98
30th Matthew 26:69-75
31st Matthew 27:1-10

*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)*

April 2026

1st Matthew 27:11-26

2nd Matthew 27:27-44

3rd Matthew 27:45-56

4th Matthew 27:57-66

5th Matthew 28:1-20

6th Leviticus 1:1-17

7th Leviticus 2:1-15

8th Leviticus 4:1-2,22-35

9th Leviticus 5:1-13

10th Leviticus 5:14-6:7

11th Leviticus 6:8-23

12th Psalm 81

13th Leviticus 16:1-22,29-34

14th Leviticus 19:1-18. 30-37

15th Leviticus 23:1-22

16th Leviticus 23:23-44

17th Leviticus 25:1-17

18th Leviticus 26:1-26,40-46

19th Psalm 82

20th 1 Timothy 1:1-11

21st 1 Timothy 1:12-20

22nd 1 Timothy 2:1-15

23rd 1 Timothy 3:1-7

24th 1 Timothy 3:8-13

25th 1 Timothy 3:14-4:5

26th Psalm 83

27th 1 Timothy 4:6-16

28th 1 Timothy 5:1-16

29th 1 Timothy 5:17-6:2

30th 1 Timothy 6:3-10

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

May 2026

1st 1 Timothy 6:11-16

2nd 1 Timothy 6:17-21

3rd Psalm 84

4th Jeremiah 11:1-23

5th Jeremiah 12:1-17

6th Jeremiah 13:1-17

7th Jeremiah 17:1-18

8th Jeremiah 18:1-17

9th Jeremiah 19:1-15

10th Psalm 85

11th Jeremiah 20:1-18

12th Jeremiah 23:1-8

13th Jeremiah 23:9-32

14th Jeremiah 26:1-24

15th Jeremiah 29:1-14

16th Jeremiah 30:1-24

17th Psalm 86

18th Matthew 9:14-17

19th Matthew 9:18-26

20th Matthew 9:27-34

21st Matthew 9:35-10:8

22nd Matthew 10:9-20

23rd Matthew 10:21-31

24th John 14:15-27

25th Matthew 10:31-42

26th Matthew 11:1-19

27th Matthew 11:20-30

28th Matthew 12:1-21

29th Matthew 12:22-37

30th Matthew 12:38-50

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

***Praying for ourselves, our community, our world
– and for God’s kingdom to come!***

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

Amen.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The psalmist has moved from talking about God (‘He’), to talking directly to God (‘You’).. did you notice? There is a profound relationship of trust here, a trust grounded in God’s past faithfulness and unfailing love for the writer. In his time of crisis, the truth about God which the writer has been recounting becomes the basis for his personal appeal and

dependence. I come in prayer, not to someone who is merely a name to me, but to the One who knows and loves me best of all, and who invites me to trust utterly in his constant presence. Because of my saviour, Jesus, I am the beloved child of God, and I am invited – even in the darkest shadows - to rest, to delight in my Father’s love and care for me.

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

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

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

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

Prayer Prompts

The bible teaches very clearly that we can, and should, be prayerful at all times, continually sharing our lives, burdens and joys with our Heavenly Father, and seeking his power, guidance and glory in our world. But it can be helpful to have specific prayer habits – perhaps different topics on different days of the week, and this quarterly prayer diary will use that format to cover a range of things we can be praying for.

Sundays

As we share in worship with our family at Ness Bank, we can pray for our fellow believers across Inverness in their various congregations. Pray that God would pour out his Spirit on our city, so that people will be stirred up to seek God. Pray that believers would be eager to share their faith and to speak simply and effectively of what Jesus has done. Pray especially for the congregation at the Junction Church, as they mourn the death of their leader Owen Morris, and support his wife Kate (who is also in leadership) and their family.

We can also pray for worshipping communities across Scotland, as they meet for fellowship and then scatter into their neighbourhoods to serve, pray and witness to Jesus. Our land needs to see the light, to know the healing and forgiveness that comes only through Christ.

Mondays

Scripture Union Scotland has a diverse and rich ministry to school children and young people in our country. Pray for those who lead groups in schools, that they might have wisdom and perseverance; pray for the witness of Christian pupils, who face ridicule, rejection, and a hostile environment; pray that our children and young people would encounter Jesus through the bible, and through other Christians, so that they find hope and purpose in life, and know forgiveness and healing.

Pray for those who are developing resources for schools and youth groups, addressing difficult issues in light of the truth of God's love and purpose for his creation. Pray for the preparation now underway for the 2026 residential events and holiday clubs which will take place from Easter onwards. Pray that God would prepare the hearts of each child who will attend, and that the leaders and helpers would have courage and strength for the task!

www.suscotland.org.uk

Tuesdays

Bishop Gabriel Kijjambu visited Ness Bank in December, and shared with us about his work in Kiryanyonza village, Luwero, Uganda. Let's take time to thank God for this ministry, for Gabriel's strength, wisdom and humble service to his community. Pray for ongoing wisdom in developing the work, in recruiting staff and investing time and resources well. Pray for the word of God to be handled wisely and well in the many churches within Gabriel's diocese of Luwero, where pastors often have little formal training. Pray for protection from the dangerous 'prosperity gospel' teaching, which is so damaging to believers. Praise God for all those who profess faith in Jesus today in that part of our world!

Uganda had presidential elections in January, and political tensions are very high. Pray for stability in the country, so that people might live in peace, and that the gospel might be shared without fear.

www.luwerocommunityprojects.org

Wednesdays

It sometimes seems that our world is more unstable and unpredictable than ever – and while humanly speaking there is much uncertainty - we as believers have confidence in the Almighty God, who is on the throne and whose purposes for his creation will be fulfilled. So we pray for world leaders to become conscious of their responsibilities to act justly; we can pray for them to be convicted of their own need for salvation.

We can also give thanks that in spite of what looks frightening, our God remains sovereign over all. Pray that those who work for peace would find favour with warring powers; pray that God will restrain evil and promote mercy, justice and compassion.

Thursdays

There remain many people groups, languages and cultures in our world where there is no living gospel witness, no known believers. There are places where sharing Jesus is very dangerous, and where learning about him, having access to a bible or other resources is very difficult. And so we pray, giving thanks for all the many agencies by which the bible is being made available, and the good news brought to the ends of the earth. Pray for ongoing bible translation work through agencies like Wycliffe; for literacy and education projects which enable people to read for themselves. Pray for creative outreach mission work in countries where no missionaries are allowed to enter; and for courage for native believers in those lands to step out in faith, taking risks to meet and encourage one another.

www.platform67.org

www.wycliffe.org.uk

www.omf.org

Fridays

Our God is in the business of bringing the dead to life; of healing and transforming brokenness and of bringing wholeness where there has been desolation and emptiness. Our land desperately needs this kind of change; life-by-life, we long to see people brought into the knowledge of their place as God's beloved children; to see addiction broken by the presence in their hearts of something more powerful and attractive than the strongest temptation; to see relationships healed and to see families thrive. God has called us, his church, to be his presence and the channel of his loving power to the world – what are we doing to obey that call? Prayer is a good place to start. Pray that God will help us to love as he loves, to see each human being as his precious child; to care as God cares. Pray against addiction, and pray for opportunities in your own life to speak of Jesus, our hope and our salvation.

Nothing is impossible for God, no-one is beyond his mercy and grace. Pray against pride and the independent spirit which resists his invitation, and ask our loving Father to show his power in our land, in our city, by bringing many to Christ.

Saturdays

There are many in the world of sport and entertainment who profess Christian faith, and who consequently are held to the highest standards by the unbelieving world around them. Pray for those in our public realm – sport, media, and also politics – who are faithful followers of Jesus. Pray that they would be wise, that they might be strong against temptations, and humble enough to know when they need help. Pray that their witness might bear fruit, and they will be encouraged to see that God has purposes to use them in their communities and in the public realm.



The Guild

After the Christmas break, Guild members met to enjoy a late festive lunch on 13th January in Lochardil Hotel (see pictures below). At the end of



January, Stewart and Katia MacFarlane shared something of their experience and life in Katia's home country, Brazil. In February, we enjoyed an afternoon discussion on our theme topic of "Living Stones", which is the 2nd year of our 3 year national Guild strategy of "Let's Build a House". At the end of February and into March, we will enjoy two

sessions of being guinea pigs for the students at the college doing a Health and Beauty course. In March, we hope to have a speaker from the Highland Council recycling department, before our AGM at the end of March.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, we would appreciate any input from members of the congregation who may be able to speak to our group on any interesting topic and as always, we would love to welcome anyone new to our group for friendship, fellowship and fun.

Anne Sutherland (contact details on back page of magazine)

The Guild Work Party

Before Christmas we delivered knitted goods to Cheshire House, Salvation Army, Blythswood, Baby Unit Raigmore Hospital, the Friends of Raigmore shop, and to a new local charity called HALO – Highland Action for Little Ones, which supports families with essential items such as baby food, clothes, nappies etc. Many thanks to all who contributed to these very worthwhile causes.





Girls' Brigade Article for Newsletter

Riverside Company was delighted to fill twenty-one boxes for the Blythswood Shoebox Appeal. There were also ten bags and one box of extra items. This was done with the help of the congregations of Trinity Life and Trinity Dalneigh Churches, and we are very grateful to all those who contributed.

The anniversary celebrations were very much enjoyed by Riverside GB on Sunday 23 November 2025. In the morning, the Annual Enrolment Service was held in Trinity Life Church. Ann and Alison, our Captains, received a beautifully decorated mirror from Pastors Robbie and Karen Halkett to mark the occasion. This will be displayed in the hall. In the afternoon, we were delighted to be joined for lunch by Anne Macquarrie, our Divisional President, Robbie, Karen and Stuart, our chaplains, Elspeth Smith and Lorna Murdoch. The girls enjoyed craft activities, games, a dance and songs during the afternoon and were also presented with age-appropriate Bibles to mark both the 75th anniversary of 4A Inverness Company in 2024 and the 70th anniversary of 3rd Inverness Company in 2025. The leaders received prayer journals and a little book of devotions. Some generous donations were received around this time and we were touched by this kindness.

In the run-up to Christmas, the girls were busy colouring in wooden decorations to be included in the care packages delivered locally by Trinity Life Church. On Monday 8 December, our annual Singalong was held. The girls always enjoy telling the Christmas story with the help of the audience who



are very much expected to participate. They never let us down! We'd like to thank all those who attended and supported the company with donations.

We delayed our start-back by a week due to the weather but will kick off the new session with our traditional new year party.

At 4B Company, the girls enjoyed a Christmas party complete with small gifts made possible by generous donations from Ness Bank Church and members of the congregation. These were very much appreciated.

Hazel MacDonald

Blythswood *Shoebbox Appeal*

Many thanks to everyone who helped with the recent appeal. We sent 100+ boxes, many bags and £150 to Blythswood. So, whether you helped wrap boxes, filled boxes, donated to the appeal in any way, many thanks. And of course, it's not too early to start preparing for this year's appeal. Maybe you could knit hat/scarfs/gloves, or pop bits into your shopping basket that will be needed to fill them. Please speak to Janet / Church Office, if you could become a 'box collector' (we have friendly shops that will save boxes for us) to help gather in the 150 boxes that we will wrap in the summer.



Christmas Fayre

A very successful day was had in November, and thank you to so many of you who supported the morning. A good blether over a cuppa and mince pie and a wander round the great stalls. Perhaps you were lucky enough to win a hamper (If you don't need the basket, please just hand it back at any time). It raised almost £3000.

Please have a wee think of things we can do next time – the favourite stalls will still be there, but would be nice for suggestions of new things we could try. We also could do with a team to help split up all that is involved. Please give your name to the church office if you feel you'd like to join the team.



Big Quiz Night 2025

On Saturday, 15th November, around 40 people gathered in the hall at Ness Bank to take part in the 8th annual Tear Fund Big Quiz Night. Over the course of 8 rounds, we shared our ignorance and general knowledge, speculated wildly and sometimes guessed right! We enjoyed refreshments and one another's company, and the winning team finally emerged – a narrow margin of less than 3 points separating them from those in second place.

Tear Fund reported that 177 churches across the UK took part in the quiz, with 6,799 people testing their memories and ingenuity together. By Sunday 16th November, £32,347 had been raised for the work of Tear Fund in Transforming Communities around the world and lifting people out of extreme poverty.

We look forward to welcoming more members and friends to the Big Quiz night 2026!

Bught Stop - Cosy Café

There is always a warm welcome and a friendly vibe at the Cosy Café but this week there was a party atmosphere when one of our regulars brought his guitar to lead a sing-song after the meal. The social aspect of the venture is an important element and it is great to see everyone enjoying this so much.

The café is open on a Monday at the Bught Stop, Torvean Avenue, next to the Bught Park Shop, from 12.30 until 2.30pm. serving soup, sandwiches, scones and traybakes. Take-aways are also available. Each week we offer a warm space and good food to a regular group of around 15-20 folk. There is no charge but a donation box is available if anyone is able to contribute.



Originally the café was a joint venture with the local Ballifeary Community Council. When our parish boundary was altered to include the Bught area, Rev. Penelope Smirthwaite, whose remit included community outreach on the west side of our parish, looked at the café as a good place for Ness Bank to become involved in the area and a few church members volunteered to help out alongside local residents.

Unfortunately, the Community Council is disbanded at present, so Ness Bank has now taken the lead in this project. This is possible thanks to the Hector Gordon Russell Trust,

which previously funded our Wednesday lunch club, and support from Highland Council who provide the premises and utilities free of charge.

A small group of eight volunteers run the café on a rota system but more are always welcome! Only four are required each week and the project runs from October until the end of April so it is not a huge commitment. Perhaps you might like to join the team? We enjoy our sessions and the time flies by!

Contact either **Lilian Gilbert** or **Dawn Bain** via the church office

Party Time !



December 14th was a busy day for us... the nativity service followed by a party edition of Messy Church, both including a special visit from Gabriel from Uganda! The nativity service involved congregational participation with volunteers dressing up (even Gabriel was given a set of wings!) and some of these moments remain with us as a happy, warm memory. Gabriel's talk and presentation was stunning in its honesty, and breathtaking when you consider how much has been accomplished since he had the 'dream' to go back to Uganda from Glasgow and establish a new christian outreach.

The party that followed was a happy occasion too with plenty of food, active games and some personal talks from four of the team. Gathered around in the chancel area, Gabriel added to the accounts of our favourite parts of the Christmas story by speaking in a simple and relaxed way about the purpose of Christmas. The children and young parents listened attentively and we finished that part of the party with one verse of Away in a Manger, accompanied by the organ.

Downstairs, like last year, the focus was releasing the balloons that were suspended above us, held up by nets.

The next Messy Church is on February 8th when we will be exploring what God is like. If you can encourage family members and neighbours to attend, that would be a great encouragement to the team.

Margaret Livingstone

SANCTUARY

Our plans to develop the Sanctuary at Ness Bank have taken two significant steps forward. Permission has been given – Planning and Listed Building Consent, and the approval of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland. And Money has been given – the General Trustees also approved our grant request for £340,000.

Taken together with funding already in place – from our Reserves, our “Giving and Sharing” appeal to the Congregation, and our allocation of a Legacy – that means we now have access to around 70% of the projected cost of almost £1.2 million.

As 2026 begins, we now move on to the next stage of the design process. That involves our working group on the building meeting with LDN Architects and their advisors to do the detailed design work required for Building Control approval and Tender. We have allowed six months for that, during which time further applications for grants are being submitted. When the design work is complete, the Tenders are in, and the money is in place, we will be ready to begin.

We plan to keep the building in use as much as possible while the work is taking place – but there will inevitably be some disruption. So please be prepared to use different rooms or entrances when the time comes, and to cope with some temporary changes.

It is worth emphasizing the aim of the planned changes. We hope not only to make the Sanctuary more comfortable for its existing use – better access and improved decoration – but also to open it to the wider public on a regular basis. That is why we have included a new kitchen in the Vestry area of the church, and a new Servery in the Sanctuary – to offer hospitality, and generate income to pay for the staffing that regular opening will require. With this new purpose – regular Christian welcome, witness and worship – we believe the long-term place of the building in the centre of Inverness is guaranteed. That is also the part of the vision which is most likely to attract the external funding the project needs.

Please continue to pray for people and plans as we make progress.

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

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Next Issue

Contributions for the Summer 2026 Newsletter can be sent to me at any time, but no later than Monday 20th April, 2026. The Newsletter will be available for collection by Elders and Visitors on Sunday 10th May, 2026.

Email: nessbmagazine@gmail.com

“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