

NESS BANK CHURCH

Congregational Newsletter

Autumn 2025 - No 1027



Congregation Formed 1787

Present Church Opened 1901

Dear Friends

Happy New Year!

The first anniversary of my induction to Ness Bank passed quietly at the beginning of June as we celebrated Communion together in the midst of a series of Sunday services looking at Prophet Samuel. He was a man who served God faithfully for the whole of his life, as Israel prospered under his leadership. But he also struggled to understand what God was doing in changing times. Even in his old age he was learning new lessons.



Whether your experience of Ness Bank is one year old or one hundred, I hope you are looking forward to the new things God will be doing among us. Experience will help, but faith and prayer will matter more. Knowing that God knows what he is doing may be what matters most!

The following helpful words are found at the end of the booklet published in 2001 to celebrate the centenary of our Ness Bank building: *“Now is the time to take a fresh look at old problems, a time to dream dreams and see visions. Now is the time to take hold of our lives and our land and our church and make them what we want them to be and what God wants them to be”.*

For a few weeks we were “Giving and Sharing” – the theme of our Stewardship Campaign – as we reviewed together the running costs of Ness Bank and the Project costs of refurbishing the Sanctuary. Over three Sundays we looked at just a few of the 2,350 Bible verses on the subject of money, and thought about God’s gifts to us, what they are for, and how much we give. The choice of how to proceed will be made by us all together as we respond to that Campaign.

In the meantime, we welcome visitors: people coming from all over the world to join us in worship on Sunday mornings, or meeting us online; tourists dropping in to our Open Church days throughout the month of August; and new guests turning up with a variety of needs to Inverness Foodstuff, meeting in our halls. And we have hosted concerts, funerals and a wedding – joy, gratitude, grief and love combining as daily life encounters God through the witness of his people.

It is helpful to remember that Jesus’ measure of our faithfulness (Matthew 25) is not how often we have sung, prayed and read the Bible, but how many we have fed, clothed, visited and welcomed. Our worship is best when it transforms us from within and changes what we do.

There is some hum-drum stuff as well. New regulations from OSCR – the charity regulator – adding to our burden of administration. New legislation on the protection of

vulnerable groups, meaning more forms to be completed. Utility bills to check, a photocopier contract to review, and computer software to be updated. These things may not sound like the preaching of God's Word or the praising of his name, but without volunteers giving and sharing their skills in these things, our church could not function. In my first year among you I have met many people who are good at what they do, and how they do it.

Thank you so much to all who have been helpful, patient, tolerant and kind – and especially to those of you who are doing things that I haven't noticed yet. May the one God whom we all truly serve inspire and fulfill our continued work together, so that every year his love will be new, and the people we meet will give glory to God for the blessings we share.

***Blessings
Stuart***

Thank You

I have now stepped down as editor of the newsletter and wish to record my thanks to everyone for the support I received during the last 13 years. In particular I wish to thank the regular contributors who provided so many interesting updates and to those who became 'Familiar Faces'. The folding team did a great job over the years and their help was always very much appreciated.

Every blessing to Elspeth as she takes over the reins and I hope she receives the great support that I was fortunate to enjoy.

Joyce Muir

Next Issue

Contributions for the Winter 2025/26 Newsletter can be sent to me at any time, but no later than Monday 20th October 2025. The Newsletter will be available for collection by Elders and Visitors on Sunday 9th November 2025.

Elspeth Smith

Email: nessbmagazine@gmail.com

Ness Bank Church

Easter Alive Open days, April 2025

It is always good to try something new with our Church. This Easter, we invited visitors during Holy Week to engage with the story of Jesus' death and resurrection – Easter Alive! The church was open each weekday from 10a.m. to 1p.m. and from 1p.m. to 4p.m., and also on Palm Sunday from 1p.m. to 3p.m. and Maundy Thursday from 6p.m. to 8p.m. Two members of the congregation (19 volunteers signed up) oversaw each session, making a total of 24 'member sessions', and some signed up for two or more – a big thank you to those volunteers in particular!

What did the visitors see?

A number of items were set up to help visitors imagine themselves in the story of Easter. The first was an archway, decorated with palm branches and colourful cloth, together with a 'Hosanna' banner, celebrating Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem. The marvellous 'magic box' came next, into which visitors could look to see the person whom Jesus loves.

A children's corner was set up in the South Transept, with videos of Biblical stories and colouring activities to stimulate conversation and understanding of the story.

On the chancel a small cross and a twisted barbed wire crown of thorns reminded visitors of the pain and suffering that Jesus endured for our salvation.



There was bread and juice set out on the communion table nearby, so that folk could respond by taking these and personally receiving the sacrifice of Jesus' life for them.

A small prayer tree, together with a table and chairs, stood on the chancel and visitors were encouraged to write a short personal prayer or message, to hang on the tree.

Finally, across the top of the pews of the North Transept, we had a model of the tomb, with the entrance stone rolled away, with Jesus' bandages left on the floor, as he had risen from the dead. At this point, visitors were encouraged to write their name on a paper foot and place these on the floor, before making their way out of the Sanctuary; an illustration of the truth that Jesus walks



with each of his children on our journey of life.

Who came to visit?

There were 228 visitors over the six days from:-

- 17 countries in Europe, including France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Georgia, England, Ireland and Scotland;
- 3 countries from the America's, Argentina, the USA and Canada;
- 1 country from Oceania, New Zealand;
- and finally, the very large country of South Africa.

The largest number of visitors was on the Wednesday, when 58 visited Ness Bank and on Palm Sunday, nobody came to see our Church.

We received £47 in donations, which is always good, although we don't ask for anything!

I would encourage those who didn't volunteer for this event, to 'have a go' next year. It is very easy, and you will enjoy introducing your church, and the story of your Saviour, to many people visiting Scotland, and in particular, Inverness.

I'd like to thank all those members of the congregation who gave their time and talents for this event.



Barry Gilbert

Congregational Register

Weddings

26th July: Charlotte Maxwell and Martin Dyer

Deaths

11th July 2025: Heather Sheerin. Funeral held on Friday 25th July 2025

13th July 2025: Shina Grant. Funeral held on Thursday 31st July, burial in Arisaig on Friday 1st August 2025.



The Guild

The Guild had a very successful year 2024-2025 and we look forward to meeting again, with the Guilds Together Group Afternoon Tea on September 16th 2025 at 2pm in Kingsmills Hotel.

Our dedication service will be on Sunday 21st September, with the first meeting will be on Tuesday 23rd September at 7:30pm in the church hall. Our programme this year is varied and (we hope) interesting, with speakers on Inverness history, a lawyer speaking on Wills and Power of Attorneys, musical afternoons and our project, to name a few, and above all, plenty of fun and fellowship. A syllabus will be available in the vestibule in due course.

We are entering the second year of our strategy 'Let's Build a House' where we build up from, "Sure Foundations", to the "Living Stones".

Our project this year is "Playful Beginnings", a Crossreach initiative which lays a strong foundation for vulnerable families at Sunflower Garden in Edinburgh and Daisy Chain in Glasgow.

CROSSREACH
providing a caring future

We would love to have new members to join our group, and there's free membership for the first year with no need to attend every meeting! Contact me at any time for additional information.

Anne Sutherland – contact details on back page of magazine

The Guild Work Party

The Women's Work Party began around 1912 when the women started providing comfort for soldiers - socks, shirts, bed shirts, bed jackets -which were sent to our boys and also to central depots. They also made pillows for use in the Highland Casualty ambulances. How things have changed over the years!

We now produce garments for local charities including the Salvation Army, Blythwood, Cheshire House, Halo, Raigmore's Baby unit, and also items for sale at the Christmas Fayre.

Over time, we have lost many members from our group and would welcome most warmly new members either at our meetings or if you can knit at home we can supply patterns, wool and needles.

We look forward to seeing you at our meeting in Room 2 in Ness Bank on 14th October, further information can be obtained from Anne Sutherland (contact details on back page of magazine).

Heather, Mary and Myra.

Girls' Brigade



In May, both Riverside and 4B Inverness Companies held their parents' nights, when we celebrated the girls' hard work during the year and presented them with their well-earned awards. Thanks were expressed to all the leaders for their commitment throughout the year.

At Riverside, we welcomed Rev Stuart Smith, Pastors Robbie and Karen Halkett and Anne Macquarrie, GB Divisional President. Parents and guests were invited to participate in some fun songs and activities. We hope that Stuart's back has recovered from The Grand Old Duke of York!

The defibrillator application was approved by St John Scotland and it is in the process of being installed at Trinity Life Church. Training will also be provided to interested parties in the local area.

We hope the girls are enjoying their summer break and we look forward to seeing them when we start back in September.

Dates will follow in the intimations, nearer the time. We'd be delighted to hear from anyone interested in helping at either company. If you would like information on this or about Girls' Brigade in general, please get in touch as follows:

Riverside: riversidegbinv@gmail.com

4B Inverness: maria.girlsbrigade@gmail.com

Hazel MacDonald



Baby and Toddler Group

This group will recommence Wednesday 20th August 2025, at 09:30 – 11:30 in the church hall. Some of our children will be moving on to nursery, so we will be happy to see some new wee ones to take their places. There is a charge of £3 per family which includes a children's snack and tea/coffee for carers.

Anne Sutherland – contact details on back page of magazine

Familiar faces in Ness Bank –

this month we hear from Stewart McFarlane

I was born in the last days of the 2nd WW in Glasgow, and grew up in King's Park in the south of Glasgow, where I lived until I left school. It was a pleasant place to live, with parks and open spaces for us to play sports such as football, cricket and athletics. Accordingly, sport has been a continuing activity in my life. I was a keen runner, taking part in marathons in the 80s including the second London Marathon. After a few years I switched to half marathons and shorter distances until the year 2000, when my knees said 'enough is enough!' I also played football, squash and golf, which I still play today.



I was brought up in a Christian household and for most part attended a Baptist Church, where I was baptised, moving to the Church of Scotland in my late teens and again to the Methodist Church when I lived in England. Shortly after retiring to Inverness, we joined Ness Bank and, although moving to Croy in 2013, we stayed with Ness Bank as we relished the community of the congregation and our involvement in church activities.

I have four children who were brought up in England, where they still live. The eldest is an Anglican vicar, and my daughter is a classical musician who runs a music school in London with her partner. My other two sons are a probation officer, and a logistics manager in a company supplying services to the NHS. I have two grandchildren, the eldest of whom graduated in engineering last year in Portsmouth, and is being married this August.

On leaving school, I went into accountancy qualifying in the late 60s. I decided to go into financial roles in industry and moved to London for ten years before taking a role with GEC Marconi in Fife in the mid 70s. In the early 80s, I moved to become the finance director of their electronics division in Lincoln.

In the early 90s I decided on a career change and moved into business development with an engineering company in Buckinghamshire. I soon became involved setting up a joint venture in China over a three-year period. This was a very interesting experience, particularly observing the cultural changes that were taking place as they modernised their industries, and observing the huge difference between the ordinary workers and farmers who were, by our standards, very poor, and their much more affluent business executives and party members.

Following this, I was asked to review the company's South American operation which culminated in my relocating to Brazil in 1997 to run the business from a factory based in Curitiba, in the south of Brazil. Living there and travelling around South America and Cuba was a great experience, and I learnt a lot about the history and the culture of the continent.

I was living on my own in Curitiba, spoke no Portuguese and had to learn fast. I joined the local golf club where I made some friends, and through one of them went to a birthday party where I met Katia in 2001 and we were married in February 2004 in Inverness. We had two wedding celebrations, one in Inverness and another back home in Brazil for our Brazilian family and friends. I retired in 2009 and we moved to Inverness. However, when I was in Curitiba, I bought an apartment which we still have and where we spend about four months a year and keep in touch with Brazilian family and friends. When we return there, it is going from home to home and we easily slip into the Brazilian way of life. However, with modern technology we can readily keep in touch with friends and our social involvements in the UK. This includes being able to attend Ness Bank finance meetings remotely. And, of course, I still play golf there at my club. Having our own house in Curitiba means that we regularly have family and friends from the UK staying with us and give them the chance to see Brazil from a resident's perspective.

After retiring I spent ten years as a trustee of my company's pension fund which gave me a lot of job satisfaction. Today Katia and I, as well as going back to Brazil, love touring in Europe, often taking our own car and staying in rural areas, enjoying the way of life and culture.

Ladies' Monthly lunch and discussion group



This group was established in 2006 by Rev Rosalind MacRae, a member of Ness Bank church, to give ladies living alone an opportunity to meet for lunch, enjoy friendship and to discuss issues of the day.

The monthly lunches proved very popular, and when Rosalind relocated to Cornwall, it was decided that we would continue to meet. A steering group was set the task of finding a suitable venue, and settled on the Redcliffe Hotel, where we continue to be made most welcome on the last Friday of each month at 12.30pm. Our two-course lunch currently costs £15 per person.

The group has gone from strength to strength, and as one attendee said, "it is the highlight of the month". Another comments, "the support I got from these friends, after a spell of ill health, helped me enormously."

Notice of these lunches – to which anyone wishing to join the group will be most welcome – is made in the weekly intimations. For further information, please speak to Catherine Harper (01463 235961), Betty Gordon (01463 238384), or Eleanor Smart(01463 237293).

A joyful noise indeed!

*A sound of hope, a sound of peace,
A sound that celebrates and speaks what we believe.
A sound of love, a sound so strong,
It's amazing what is given when we share a song.*

***This is why we sing, why we lift our voice, why we stand as one in harmony!
This is why we sing, why we lift our voice, take my hand and sing with me!***

(Greg Gilpin: lyricist and composer)

On the evening of Sunday 29th June, Ness Bank welcomed two choirs, one local and long established, the other a unique group who have never sung together before!

The local group – Highland Voices – opened the evening, vibrantly colourful in blue and gold, their brilliant smiles and energy lifting our spirits as they sang for us – there were many toes tapping and hands clapping especially during a rousing rendition of “O Happy day”, and the stirring spiritual “Peace in the Valley”.

The visitors, known as Friends in Harmony, are drawn from across the US and led by the author of this song – Greg Gilpin – came to Scotland for a short holiday/singing tour, having never met before their intensive week of sightseeing and performing! Their programme included some familiar songs and spirituals, beautiful performances by individuals and a trio, but all with great skill and an infectious joy in music. The words quoted above are the ‘theme song’ for the organisation which runs these tours every year, and the concert closed with it – many were humming along by the end, fully agreeing with the sentiments expressed.





Ness Bank Church Bible Readings and Prayer Prompts for Autumn 2025



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)

'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)

September 2025

1st Hosea 1:1-2:1
2nd Hosea 2:2-23
3rd Hosea 3:1-5
4th Hosea 6:1-7:2
5th Hosea 11:1-11
6th Hosea 14:1-9

7th Psalm 54
8th Mark 8:27-30
9th Mark 8:31-9:1
10th Mark 9:2-12
11th Mark 9:14-29
12th Mark 9:30-37
13th Mark 9:38-50

14th Psalm 55
15th Mark 10:1-12
16th Mark 10:13-16
17th Mark 10:17-31
18th Mark 10:32-34
19th Mark 10:35-45
20th Mark 10:46-52

21st Psalm 56
22nd 2 Samuel 8:1-18
23rd 2 Samuel 11:1-27
24th 2 Samuel 12:1-25
25th 2 Samuel 15:1-12
26th 2 Samuel 15:13-29[37]
27th 2 Samuel 18:1-18

28th Psalm 57
29th 2 Samuel 18:19-21,31-33;19:1-8
30th 2 Samuel 19:9-18,39-43;20:1-2

*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 2025

1st 1 John 1:1-2:2
2nd 1 John 1:2:3-14
3rd 1 John 2:15-27
4th 1 John 2:28-3:10

5th Psalm 58
6th 1 John 3:11-24
7th 1 John 4:1-21
8th 1 John 5:1-12
9th 1 John 5:13-21
10th 2 John 1-13
11th 3 John 1-14

12th Psalm 59
13th 2 Samuel 22:1-16
14th 2 Samuel 22:17-30
15th 2 Samuel 22:31-51
16th 2 Samuel 23:1-7
17th 2 Samuel 24:1-17
18th 2 Samuel 24:18-25

19th Psalm 60
20th Hebrews 7:1-10
21st Hebrews 7:11-22
22nd Hebrews 7:23-28
23rd Hebrews 8:1-6
24th Hebrews 8:7-13
25th Hebrews 9:1-10

26th Psalm 61
27th Hebrews 9:11-22
28th Hebrews 9:23-28
29th Hebrews 10:1-10
30th Hebrews 10:11-18
31st Hebrews 10:19-25

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 2025

1 st	Hebrews 10:26-39
2 nd	Psalm 62
3 rd	Exodus 31:1-18
4 th	Exodus 32:1-14
5 th	Exodus 32:15-24
6 th	Exodus 32:25-33:6
7 th	Exodus 33:7-11
8 th	Exodus 33:12-23
9 th	Psalm 63
10 th	Exodus 34:1-14
11 th	Exodus 34:27-35
12 th	Exodus 35:1-29
13 th	Exodus 35:30-36:7
14 th	Exodus 40:1-16
15 th	Exodus 40:17-38
16 th	Psalm 64
17 th	Mark 11:1-11
18 th	Mark 11:12-25
19 th	Mark 11:27-33
20 th	Mark 12:1-12
21 st	Mark 12:13-17
22 nd	Mark 12:18-27
23 rd	Psalm 65
24 th	Mark 12:28-34
25 th	Mark 12:35-37
26 th	Mark 12:38-44
27 th	Mark 13:1-13
28 th	Mark 13:14-31
29 th	Mark 13:32-37
30 th	Psalm 66

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 God, who has been the Refuge of my fathers through many generations, be my Refuge
today in every time and circumstance of need.
Be my Guide through all that is dark and doubtful. Be my Guard against all that threatens
my spirit’s welfare. Be my Strength in time of testing.
Gladden my heart with thy peace; through Jesus Christ my Lord, 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.

“Our Father, who is in heaven”

It is always good to start here, getting our perspective right and remembering that we come to the Almighty, the Maker and Sustainer of the universe, before whom we are as dust. We acknowledge that God is ruler of all things, and that he is worthy of all praise and honour. All the issues which trouble us, are His business, and we are invited to bring everything to him in prayer. All that we have and are comes from Him, and we give thanks, offering it back to Him for His use.

“Hallowed be your name! Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”

The whole purpose of all creation, and of all history, is that God will be glorified, and so we pray for that to happen. We acknowledge that even when we cannot see it, God is working; we pray that heart-by-heart people will come to living faith in Jesus Christ, and join the kingdom. We pray that people will be set free from all that keeps them in fear and darkness – pride, sadness, addiction – so that they can live fully as God’s beloved children. There are many, many ways that God opens minds and hearts, and we can pray for these – for the work of Scripture Union among young people in schools and at youth camps; for the witness of Street Pastors here in Inverness and other city centres; for the impact of media such as the Chosen TV series, and The Greatest Story Ever Told, a book re-telling the story of Jesus written by the adventurer and broadcaster, Bear Grylls.

We can pray for ourselves, that we might share the good news of Jesus with our friends and family – wisely, gently and faithfully, not being ashamed of our Saviour.

www.suscotland.org.uk

www.streetpastors.org/our-network/united-kingdom/scotland/

“Give us today our daily bread”

It is not only bread, but breath that we need each day. We pray for ourselves but also for others that they might receive the portion they need today – of courage for hard situations; of wisdom for difficult decisions; of patience for prolonged challenges; of love and support in a time of grief and loss. God has called us to live for Him, and He promises that all we need to do that will be supplied. So even as we pray, we give thanks for that faithful provision and let go of our worries.

Organisations like Tear Fund, Christian Aid, Embrace the Middle East others give us much information to help us pray for people in need of physical help and support – food, medicine, education, clean water – and for those who are trying to provide that aid.

www.tearfund.org

www.christianaid.org.uk

www.embraceme.org

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One”

We pray for ourselves and for one another as fellow believers, and for Christians around the world, that we might all grow more like Jesus. We may be able to do little in one sense for those far away, but prayer is practical, and we can always use it to bless the church around the world. Christians are called to live in ways that show people what Jesus is like – and that is not always easy! So let us pray for self-control, wisdom, courage, love, a humble and forgiving spirit that forgets the wrongs done to it, and for God to keep all his children trusting in Him and close to Him always.

Organisations like Release International, and Christian Solidarity Worldwide give us so much information to inform our prayers for those who are particularly suffering for their faith; and our daily news gives us much material for prayer for people around the world as they experience war, drought, floods, famine, persecution, displacement. When we pray for these situations, we are acknowledging that only our Heavenly Father is big enough and powerful enough to bear this world's troubles. When we pray, we are only doing what He asks us to do, which is to ask Him to build His kingdom, reveal His glory and make all things new.

www.releaseinternational.org

www.csw.org.uk

“For Yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen!”

All the power is in the hands of God – and when we pray, we are simply asking that power to be used to reveal this glorious kingdom of which we are part.

So we pray for our churches – Inverness has many different kinds of churches, but all proclaim the truth that Jesus is Lord, and invite people to come and find out for themselves. We can pray for the wisdom and strength of church leaders – teachers and others – as they have to make decisions about using their resources well. We can pray that God will work through the churches to reach people here in Inverness, and that each of us will be so full of God’s goodness to us, that we want to tell others about it.

We can pray particularly for Ness Bank, for its leadership – the Kirk Session and Minister – that together they will lead our congregation in what God would have us do. We can pray that all we have – our building, our energies, our money – would be used by God to create a worshipping, loving community where people meet Jesus, and learn to worship Him.

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.

Inverness Foodstuff

This organisation provides practical loving care to some very vulnerable people in our town, and is also a great community. Its paid staff and the Board members need wisdom in planning for the future, and strength and humour to tackle the everyday challenges of such service.

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 foodbanks, charity shops, 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.

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, and especially for 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.

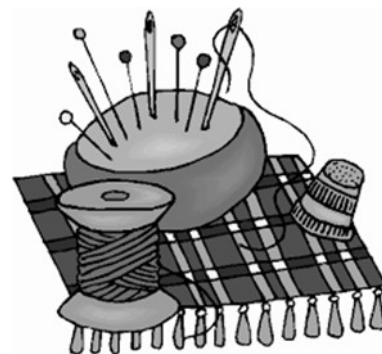
Delight yourselves in the Lord, yes, find your joy in him at all times. Have a reputation for gentleness, and never forget the nearness of your Lord.

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)

Ness Bank Crafties

This group, which began in 2016, now comprises some 16-20 ladies who all enjoy craft work of many kinds, and also like to meet to social chat. We 'blether' of course, but also work hard, especially for items to sell at the annual Easter Table in the vestibule of the church, and at the Christmas Fair. The generous support of the congregation and friends over the years at these events have allowed us to make donations to Church Funds.



We try to introduce new crafts to any who wish to participate, and plan to have a programme during the coming session, of monthly 'taster' events. We have tackled wet- and needle-felting, silk painting, card making, and also the amazing Polyfilla pictures! Our members share a wide range of skills and experience, and there is always someone to help sort out a tricky challenge. Although knitting and crochet, cross-stitch and material pictures remain perhaps our most popular crafts, we are always open to new ideas.

We meet every Tuesday from 10am to 12 noon in room 1, and are delighted to welcome new members. A donation of £1 weekly helps keep our supply of tea, coffee and biscuits topped up, and you are sure of a warm welcome and good conversation. We reconvene on Tuesday 12th August, and hope to see you there. For further information, please speak to any of these ladies:

Matti MacDonald (01463 232853), Anna Thomson (01463 772630) or Kay Ednie (01463 231775)

CHRISTMAS FAYRE – Advance Notice

Pop SATURDAY 22 NOVEMBER (10.00am-12noon) in your dairy. That's the 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 **Janet Russell** through the church office, if you'd like to join the organising team.



SUNDAY SCHOOL

When Sunday School is mentioned, most of us sigh and refer back to days not so long ago. We remember children streaming down the aisle accompanied by teachers and leaders for all the different age groups including the teenagers. We picture toddlers and babes in the arms of the creche helpers; we fondly remember nativities with each child in a glitzy costume with teenagers reading the narrative; the Ness Bank Singers (7-16 year olds) in their logo'd T-shirts performing for us; prize-givings that took up quite a bit of time because there were so many books to be given out; children proudly presenting baby gifts to newly baptised babies. No doubt you have even more warm and happy memories to add to this list. Maybe you were part of it.

What happened? Though the teachers launched a very successful initiative during Covid that kept the children on board, sadly our world changed post Covid. Looking around the presbytery, numbers of children attending churches has diminished significantly so we are blessed indeed that we have a family who have been regularly attending for the past 18 months or so. You'll notice that we have a team of eight helpers who take it in turns to teach but also to take an interest in each child. Linked to this, of course, the eight helpers with six others run the Messy Church events when families with little or no connection to us come to share in the fun and the teaching.

Where are we going now? We go on, with plans for Sunday School to continue and a full schedule of events for Messy Church in the coming session, doing the work that is in our hands.



I'm a miracle! – Messy Church at Ness Bank

It would be wrong to say that MESSY CHURCH is 'stuffy, boring or pedantic' as we employ energetic and super-creative ideas to work with young families!

Our last session, on 8th June had a memory verse: 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made' which was clearly expressed, when four youngsters ran from the pulpit to the vestibule and down the other aisle in less than 12 seconds! Could you beat that?

We explored the wonder of our bodies, and celebrated our Maker God in many ways. A great big drawing of a human body, onto which we placed eg the heart, the lungs, the bones of the feet, helped us to understand how we are so wonderfully put together. The Marvellous Miracle box – in which we saw our ourselves in a mirror, reminded us that God delights in us, his creation! All of this, wrapped around by catchy songs (the singing was great!), a lovely lunch, craft activities and active games made the event go with a swing.

At our planning meeting we sang a verse of the lovely hymn 'May the mind of Christ my Saviour', which speaks of what we seek to do at Messy Church, in and through all the mess!

*May his beauty rest upon me, as I seek the lost to win,
and may they forget the channel seeing only him.
(KB Wilkinson, 1859-1928)*

Messy Church is on holiday for the summer but we have planned ahead, so put these dates in your diary:

2025: 31st August, 2nd November, 14th December
2026: 8th February, 29th March, 24th May



***Margaret Livingstone
On behalf of the Sunday School Team***



BLYTHSWOOD SHOEBOX APPEAL

We are once again supporting the shoebox appeal. It has been well supported by Ness Bank in previous years and we hope you will again be filling boxes. If you'd like to donate but not fill a box with the essentials (or like buying multiples of only a few items), that's fine. Just pop your donation into a carrier bag and hand that into the vestibule instead.

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 a look online, go to <https://tinyurl.com/Shoebox-Appeal-2025> . If you want ideas of other fillers to include have a look at <https://tinyurl.com/Shoebox-Filler-Ideas>. 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.

Leaflets and pre-wrapped shoeboxes will be available in the vestibule from **Sunday 21 September**. Items in the box should be new, but 'value/ supermarket own brands' are fine. Please choose items that will last rather than those with a short shelf life that can't be recycled.

Shoebox Leaflet



Extra Filler Ideas



CHECKLIST

Please  items included and firmly secure this list on your shoebox lid.
Include the essential items highlighted in the red box.
IMPORTANT: PLEASE ONLY INCLUDE NEW ITEMS.

☐ **TOOTHBRUSH
& TOOTHPASTE**

☐ **SOAP**

☐ **UNDERWEAR**

☐ **SOCKS/TIGHTS**

☐ **TOY*/GIFT**

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

☐ **SCARF,
HAT, GLOVES**

☐ **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; 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)

- ☐ 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
- ☐ Kitchen utensils

STATIONERY

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

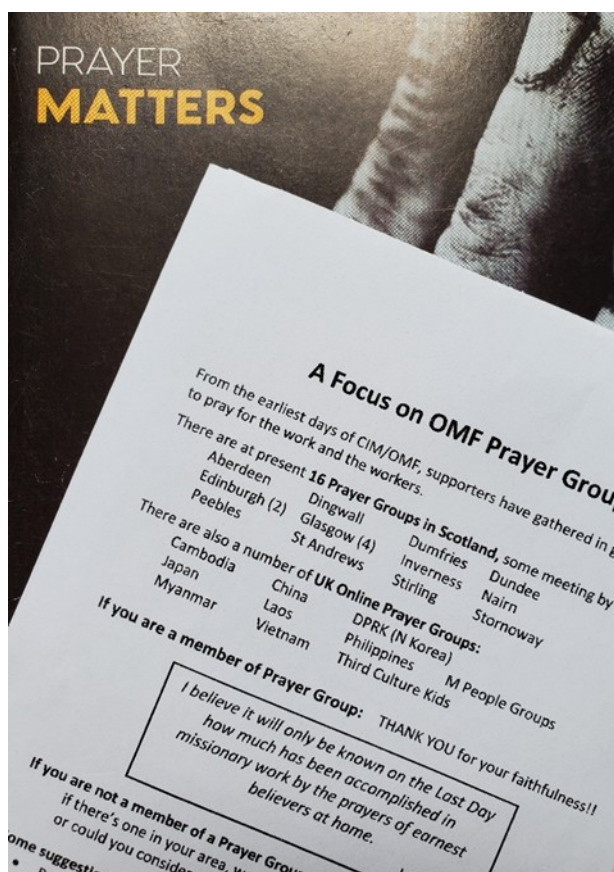
CLOTHES and other items

- ☐
- ☐
- ☐
- ☐

Please tick the box next to who you have packed your shoebox for

- ☐ MAN
- ☐ BOY (Teen)
- ☐ BOY (8-12) Age
- ☐ BOY (3-7) Age
- ☐ ELDERLY WOMAN
- ☐ WOMAN
- ☐ GIRL (Teen)
- ☐ GIRL (8-12) Age
- ☐ GIRL (3-7) Age

The Power



It's news I'm most proud to proclaim, this extraordinary message of God's powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts him, starting with Jews and then right on to everyone else!

(Romans 1.16, the Message)

God can do anything you know - far more than you could ever imagine or guess or request in your wildest dreams!.. Glory to God in the church! Glory to God in the Messiah, in Jesus! Glory down all the generations! Glory through all millenia! Oh Yes!

(Ephesians 3.20-21, the Message)

So, friends, we can now - without hesitation - walk right up to God, into "the Holy Place." Jesus has cleared the way by the blood of his sacrifice, acting as our priest before God. The "curtain" into God's presence is his body.

So let's do it - full of belief, confident that we're presentable inside and out. Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word. Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshipping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big day approaching.

(Hebrews 10.19-25, the Message)

"Can I be honest with you? I'm actually not that into prayer, it's Jesus I'm into, so we talk. I don't believe in the power of prayer. I believe in the power of God. So I ask for his help. A lot"

(Pete Greig, May 2019)

One of the drawbacks of growing up in a christian family and culture is that one develops particular habits of vocabulary, which are not always very helpful when thinking about faith in the context of our unbelieving neighbours and the need to witness to and serve them. I grew up thinking that a prayer meeting was a totally normal thing, and that

setting aside several hours every Saturday evening was a perfectly reasonable thing to do - that it was action, not inaction; a privilege as well as a responsibility. But here's the thing that Pete Greig's words brought home to me... I don't think that prayer meetings matter because somehow if we screw ourselves up to a pitch of faith then we can make God do stuff. I think they matter because we come to admit to the Sovereign Maker and Sustainer of all created things that we are utterly powerless!

And I would hope that I might remember to talk and think about prayer in that way when I talk about it with unbelieving friends – it's not about me and my faith, or my prayers, it's all about Jesus and what God has promised to do through him and for him.

We pray because God alone has the power to work ALL THINGS together for his good purposes in this fallen world of ours; we pray because God alone can bring salvation in Jesus' name to the desperately needy hearts around us; we pray because only the eternal and holy God knows what is the right and proper thing to happen in any and every situation. I am so grateful that God does not ask us to work out what is right before we pray for it to happen – what hope do fallen humans have of every making such decisions?!

We can pray anywhere at anytime; which is an astonishing privilege and a never-ending source of comfort when we are faced by troubling situations (our own, those of dear ones, or the devastatingly widespread suffering of people around the world). But perhaps – like me- you find it helpful to prioritise prayer at times by meeting with others to talk to God about what is going on in his world, with his children; obeying his command to pray that his will might be done, and his kingdom come here on earth as it is always and perfectly done in the heavenly realms.

I can bear witness to the fact that when I gather with others to pray, I always benefit; my own faith is strengthened and I am encouraged to persevere in obedience and love; I know that I have obeyed God's command, and once again lifted the burden for others which He lays on my heart up to his throne, for the demonstration of his power and love in deliverance and transformation. I would also bear witness that even when I cannot see the answers which I long for, yet still to pray is to be in the right place – before the Almighty, and worshipping him in Jesus as the only Sovereign God.

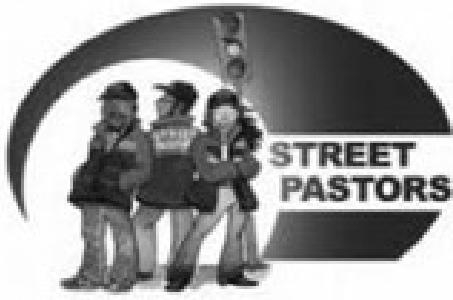
Dear friends, let us pray – and wherever possible, let us do it together for our mutual benefit, and for the glory of God and the proclamation of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord!

aforgetfulsoul.com

*Approach, my soul, the mercy seat, where Jesus answers prayer;
There humbly fall before His feet, for none can perish there.*

(John Newton, 1725-1807)

Inverness Street Pastors update July 2025



“Hello!” One of the benefits of living in Inverness is that most folks still say “Hello” to people they don’t know and there is always a possibility of a random conversation with someone you have never met before.

This is one of life’s simple pleasures. Have you ever thought of it being a lifeline? We are all familiar with the statistics around loneliness and it being likened to being as unhealthy as smoking. Much of the research has focussed on family or close friendships. There is however a growing body of evidence that speaking to strangers can improve your sense of belonging to the place where you live with an increased sense of social wellbeing. The world becomes a less scary place.

Such are the benefits of so simple a greeting, Healthwatch Suffolk launched a suicide prevention campaign “Just Say Hello”. Jesus noticed people. He reached out to people on the margins, people who perhaps others would not speak to, people whose lives were in a mess. As Street Pastors we take the church, Jesus’s church, to where there is need on the streets. However, you don’t need to be a Street Pastor, or to have special skills, to just say “Hello” and you may never know what a difference you have made to someone who is struggling.

Praying with thanksgiving...

Over the past weeks, patrols have been blessed by friends of people in distress who have been contactable and able to provide support in the small hours. They have been an answer to prayer as a seemingly intractable situation is positively resolved.

Give thanks too, that the spate of negative experiences has passed – an answer to prayer too. We really value your prayers when we are out.

Please also pray peace over the city on the nights we are not out. People on the street notice the difference when we

are there. A difference that cannot be attributed to our physical presence alone. Deliver our community from evil.

Please pray especially for those who feel that they have no-one. That they may be touched by the friendliness of a stranger and given the courage to reach out to form new human bonds in a seemingly hostile world.



Ness Bank Monthly Bible Study

A reminder that this group meets on the last Sunday of the month at 5pm in Room 2, and we are currently learning from the lives of Jesus' disciples. For further information, please contact Wim Simpson through the church office. All are welcome to join us!

Ach an Eas – monthly service

Members of Ness Bank have for some years been involved in taking a short act of worship at Ach an Eas care home at 3pm on the 3rd Sunday of each month. We sing hymns, pray, read the bible, and share a short meditation, and anyone is welcome to join us as we go. For further details, please contact Helen MacPherson, who organises our rota (via the church office).

From the (new) editor!

Taking over from someone who has been doing a job for over 10 years is a little daunting, and I would like to pay tribute to Joyce Muir for all her hard work and meticulous attention to detail in producing the Ness Bank Magazine since 2012. I would also like to thank her for the careful coaching and encouragement which she has given – and I hope might still give – as I take on this role.

Any errors in grammar, spelling, layout, are mine; feel free to point them out to me (gently)!

If you have ideas for future articles, different layout, or any other opinions on the magazine, please do be in touch. I am only the editor, not the author of everything you will read, and without your contributions, there would be no magazine.

I have enlarged the list of daily Bible Readings to cover a full three month period – reflecting the time before the printing of the next magazine – which I hope will be helpful. I have also made some changes to the Prayer Diary section, and again, I would be very grateful to receive your feedback on this. I have put these items in the centre of the magazine so that you can easily pull them out and keep them for future use.

Elspeth Smith

Copies of the Newsletter are available in the vestibule.

Ness Bank Church is online at <http://www.nessbankchurch.org.uk/>

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

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