

NESS BANK CHURCH

Congregational Newsletter

May/June 2025 - No 1026



Congregation Formed 1787

Present Church Opened 1901

Dear Friends,

How wide does a staircase need to be? How heavy is a lift? How far apart are the beams holding up the existing floor? How much can you charge for a slice of cake in a café? These questions, and others like them, are being asked at Ness Bank. Our Property Team is meeting with LDN Architects. And our Mission Team has been thinking how to welcome guests – as we did during our Easter Alive open days – and what kind of hospitality to share.



This is the detailed outworking of plans to develop our church building. Last year the Kirk Session and Congregation agreed to look at a five-part project:

- to improve the main riverside entrance and staircase
- to install a lift from Room 2 to the West Transept
- to convert the Vestry and Organist's Room into a kitchen
- to remove pews from the sides and front of the church
- and to redecorate the worship space.

This would make the building easier to access and use for worship on a Sunday, but also allow us to open it regularly as a place of Christian friendship and witness.

We have named the project “Sanctuary”. To those familiar with churches, that describes the place where worship often takes place. To others it describes a feeling of safety and security, reflecting the warm welcome we hope to provide.

In the next few weeks, as this detailed planning is completed, we will move on to the next stage. Our professional advisors will provide a realistic cost estimate. We can begin to approach the city and church authorities whose permission we will need. And most importantly, we will share the plans with the whole congregation – explaining the thinking, answering questions, listening to suggestions, and seeking support.

Some of you have already said they would like to contribute. Help will be needed – both from within the congregation and from external grant funders. As the plans and prices become clear, we will share the details and invite support. Watch this space!

Easter Alive was an exciting event. Thanks to those who planned displays, carried stones, tied up trellises, arranged flowers, played the organ, and managed the technology. Thanks also to those who hosted guests or came along with relatives and friends. Visitors had the chance to share in the joy of Palm Sunday; reflect on Jesus' teaching in the Temple; ponder the Last Supper significance of his foot washing, and his bread and wine; pray as he did in Gethsemane; contemplate the significance of his death for sin by crucifixion; and to imagine their futures in the light of his empty tomb. In the week we were open, we hosted 228 guests. More importantly, many of them stopped to think, read, talk, act and pray – demonstrating that a city centre church can be a place of Christian witness for more than just one hour on a Sunday.

Meanwhile it has been a joy at other times to visit some of you at home. Ness Bank has a large congregation, which I can't get round quickly! But many people have already shared friendship, stories, hopes and fears that we have discussed together and prayed about. If you would like me to come and spend some time with you, please let me know.

Blessings
Stuart

Springtime Praises

Bless the Lord of heaven above,
sing to God with thanks and love.

Praise him for the joyful spring,
bringing life to everything.

Praise him for the blossom trees,
birds and butterflies and bees.

Praise him for the cloud and rain,
and for sunshine once again.

Bless the Lord of heaven above,
sing to God with thanks and love.

(Sophie Piper)

LUWERO COMMUNITY CATHEDRAL KIRYANYONZA

In Conjunction with Greater Luwero Pastors Fellowship

THE 13th ANNUAL PASTOR'S & LEADERS CONFERENCE



Bishop Gabriel & Deborah
Kijambu - Host



Ernest Baylon
GUEST SPEAKER - UK



REV. STUART SMITH
GUEST SPEAKER - UK



BISHOP OMIDO J.
GUEST SPEAKER - KENYA

Accompanied by our regional Bishops & Pastors from all over the country



BISHOP.
KALWARI SAMUEL



BISHOP.
MUDDÉ FRED



BISHOP.
BUWANGA DAVID



PASTOR.
MORRIS KIGONGO



BISHOP.
SSEMBATYA GODFREY



PASTOR.
KISIRIZA KIWARUKA



PASTOR.
KAGOZA ELISHA



PASTOR.
BOARILEGE JOHN

THE THEME
**PREPARATION AND
ESTABLISHMENT IN MINISTRY**
"John 1-12 & Jeremiah 1:4-10"



BIBLE GIFTS

VENUE

LUWERO
COMMUNITY CHURCH
KIRYANYONZA

DATE

MAY
SUN 4TH-2025
SAT 10TH-2025

TIME

8:00 AM
5:30 PM
EVERYDAY



GOSPEL MUSIC
& RVHMS

Contact your area coordinator or call the numbers below

Tel: 0740773771 / 0772 620552 / 0778481070 / 0772 587950

Congregational Register

Deaths

- 3 March: Robert Mackay
Funeral held on 14 March
- 12 March: Elizabeth (Betty) Rice
Funeral held on 31 March
- 19 March: Murdo Grant
Funeral held on 2 April
-

Easter Messy Church



We had fun decorating these letters with paint, glue, sequins, fluffy balls, foam stickers, sparkly things etc and though Easter is now over, the message will remain with us. Time with Messy Church families is time well spent!

Our next event is on Sunday 8th June possibly with a fitness theme based on the quote from Psalms - "I am fearfully and wonderfully made".

***Margaret Livingstone
and the MC Team***

Financial Report - March 2025

Income remains steady at £190,000 per year but expenditure each year and in the future exceeds income. The important thing is that if we carry on with the current level of expenditure being higher than income we will run out of cash for day-to-day operations in the not too distant future.

This year it is anticipated that the money we have for day-to-day activities will drop to £23,000 from £61,000 at the beginning of the year. The reason for this is we know the income is flat but inflation and other cost pressures means expenditure is going up.

The restricted and endowment funds hold £197,691 of money we can only use for specific purposes because of the nature of the original donations. For example, they cover the expenditure in the fabric of the sanctuary, any work needed on the organ and the fabric of the remainder of the building.

The budget for cash balances is unknown at the moment because as you are aware we are commencing a major project of which £30,000 has been committed, but we are dependent on endowment trust and grant income to fund the majority of expenditure. At this stage we do not know the timing of when that money will come in, but we will not be committing anything until we have sight of the necessary income.

From this you will note that whilst we have monies for specific investments, for our day-to-day operations we are getting close to having a problem unless we take action to increase income and/or reduce costs.

The accounts show the major items of expenditure and how they have grown since 2023:

- Giving to Grow is the money we give to the Church of Scotland each year as a levy, and covers ministerial costs. This will rise next year because we now have a minister!
 - Office costs are basically rising with inflation but we will do all we can to control them.
 - Staff costs are rising because of an increase in the Scottish Living Wage and will also rise this year with the additional cost of employers' national insurance.
-

-
- With property costs, the main increase is contracts and servicing and maintenance of equipment.
 - The annual forecast of ongoing cost for Heating and Lighting is anticipated at around £15,000 - £17,000 depending on any increase in prices in the agreement made through the Church of Scotland.
 - Accountancy is the fees we now have to pay to have an outside accounting firm prepare our accounts both monthly and annually, as previously we had someone to do it free.
 - The main item of capital expenditure in 2023 was the work done in the manse which totalled around £56,000. In 2024 the £29,000 relates to work in the sanctuary with the livestreaming and the new lighting.

With income it is important to note the impact of Gift Aid. Fundraising was down as there were fewer craft sales. We continue to benefit from the use of halls. The investment income is up largely due to transferring our savings from a low interest account to a higher 65 day notice account with Virgin Money. And the other income includes grants, weddings and funerals.

So finally, the message from the Finance Team is that we have to keep a very tight control on our day-to-day expenditure and do all we can to maximise income.

The one thing the congregation can do is to look at increasing the donations you give regularly, which are very welcome, and to maximise the use of Gift Aid.

Stewart MacFarlane
Finance Team Leader

Car Ride

A teenager who had just received her provisional licence offered to drive her parents to church. After a hair-raising ride, they finally reached their destination. The mother got out of the car and said in a quiet but fervent voice: "Thank you!"

"Anytime," her daughter replied.

As the woman slammed the car door she said, "I wasn't talking to you. I was talking to God."

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

Gilly Thomson

I was born in Southampton, where my father was working as a pilot for Channel Island Airways after the war. In 1950 we moved to Sunningdale, which is within commuting distance of Heathrow, when he joined what was then British European Airways. I was baptised in Southampton, and later confirmed into the Church of England in Sunningdale.

I went to Hurst Lodge School in Sunningdale until I was 15. Following a year at Winkfield Place, near Windsor, where I learnt to cook, I attended Farnham Art School for 3 years, specialising in woven textiles.



It was during that time that I first came to Scotland for a summer job, working in a Shooting Lodge - Hunthill in Glen Lethnot near Brechin. Two of us were from England and the other 5 'girls' were local to Arbroath. Three of them are still good friends, and the following year I came up again to stay with one of them in Arbroath. Aileen's brother was studying Theology at the time.

I continued to travel to Scotland at least once a year as my brother was studying Forestry at Aberdeen University, and I would stay with the three friends as they were all studying and working in Aberdeen as well.

After my time at Art School, I decided to change to study Occupational Therapy. This involved a move to London, to attend the London School of Occupational Therapy in Hampstead. For two of the three years there, I shared a flat with Norwegian and Swedish girls who were also studying O.T. Another summer job involved spending six weeks in Bergen, and working as a chambermaid in the Hotel Norge.

For much of the year after graduating, I was travelling. First to Durban, South Africa, where I have relatives, and I worked as an O.T. in a TB hospital for a few months. Then for six weeks in July and August I travelled with three friends in a Land Rover through Turkey and around Iran. This was when the Shah was still in power! Finally at the end of August I moved up to work to as an O.T. at Corseford School for Spastics, as it

was called then. There were three of us young newly qualified therapists starting at the same time, and we rented a house together in Linwood, near Paisley. They were both regular attendees at church, one being in the Christian Brethren. I was too busy at weekends, either flying South to see family, or hill-walking or skiing with friends!

It was on one of these trips to ski in the Cairngorms, that I met my husband Ian. At the time he was teaching Classics at Grantown Grammar School, and living in Nethybridge.

By the time we married he had moved to teach Classics at the old I.R.A. in Inverness. We married in the Baptist Church in Grantown-on-Spey, with the reception at the Nethybridge Hotel. I became a Community O.T. working for Inverness County Council from an office in Ardross Street. I was provided with a green minivan, and covered Strathspey and Badenoch, and the Isles of Skye and Raasay. A wonderful introduction to the Highlands.

As was the norm in those days, I left my job when I became pregnant with our first child. I enjoyed being a “stay at home” Mum, and I didn’t return to work till the youngest of our 4 children had started school. I did join a group to learn Norwegian, which I had started studying at Glasgow University evening classes. That group led to the formation of the Highland Scandinavian Association, of which I was an active member. And I was also a member of the Highland Textile Guild, which morphed into different groups as membership increased over the years.

In 1990 with four children we moved to a larger house in Dingwall. I started working part-time as an O.T. and I also took my time to explore the churches in Dingwall. But it was after the death of our eldest son, Lewis, aged 15, in a road traffic accident that I became a member of the Church of Scotland, where the minister was Graham Henderson. Following Lewis’ death we became involved with the charity - The Compassionate Friends - which was created by and run by bereaved parents.

We finally moved back to Inverness over 25 years ago. This was when I joined Ness Bank Church, as it was the nearest church, and the Manse was nearby too.

It was around this time that I started working as a Care Attendant with Crossroads, and through my interest in patchwork and quilting, I was responsible for the Remnant Stall at the annual Marymas Fair, held in the Northern Meeting Park. And then Carr-Gomm took over the running of the care business and I continued working until I was 67.

In 2002, our youngest son spent a year in Hungary, between school and university, for Épee Fencing training. We visited, and I was persuaded by his landlady to return the following year with a quilt that I made with the traditional blue and white fabric of Hungary - Kékfestő.

This trip resulted in me establishing a small online business selling the Hungarian fabric in the UK and the USA, mainly for patchwork. For a little over 20 years this kept me busy, as a hobby!

On retirement from Carr-Gomm, I learnt that Ness Bank Church was establishing Inverness Foodstuff, so I registered my interest, and I have been involved ever since. It is great to be involved in such a worthwhile organisation. I enjoy cooking and working with a very fine group of people.

Gilly



Christian Aid Week 2025

As we approach Christian Aid Week (May 11th - May 17th) I am again appealing for volunteers to deliver envelopes in our parish. The envelopes to be delivered are once again delivery only, therefore no collection is necessary. Ness Bank will be delivering in the same streets as before and around 23 volunteers will be necessary to complete the task.

I will be in the foyer of the church, prior to the morning service, on Sunday 4th May for the distribution of bags and envelopes to those volunteering.

Also this year marks the 80th anniversary of Christian Aid and to mark this event a special fundraising 'Tea and Cake' social occasion will take place after the church service on Sunday 11th May when all of course are welcome to attend. All money received will greatly help the very poorest throughout the world, including disaster victims.

On a personal note I am standing down once all Christian Aid work is completed this year. I have however enjoyed the past six years I have been the CA representative.

Raymond Matheson



The Guild

The Guild meetings have finished for this session, but we do have a visit to Inverness Botanics and the Grow Project with afternoon tea on Tuesday 20th May at 2pm. We will also have our Guilds Together AGM and Songs of Praise in West Moray Church in Forres on 24th May.

Our regular meetings will commence again in September and, as always, we would really love to see some new faces in our friendly group. We are on the lookout for interesting speakers, on virtually any subject, so if anyone in the congregation feels that they may be able to help, please get in touch. You only need to hold our attention for about half an hour!

Our strategy for this three year block is "Let's Build a House" and this year's theme is "Living Stones".

Anne Sutherland



Flower Group

Many thanks to all who have donated towards Sunday flowers. There are still quite a few spaces for July and August and we would be delighted to see a few more names during the summer months. The list is on the noticeboard in the vestibule, so please just add your name to the appropriate date.

Finella Thomson

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 and Twitter

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

Ness Bank Finance Team

Following the retirement of Sandra Gibson after many years of conscientious work as Treasurer, the Finance Team has been reorganised as follows:

- I am the Team Leader
- Joyce Muir has become the Treasurer
- and the other members are as before - Gordon Leitch, Bill Paterson and Stuart Smith

The responsibility of the team is to ensure proper financial governance of Ness Bank and associated organisations. Also, each year in conjunction with the accountants, the annual accounts have to be prepared, audited and financial returns submitted to the Church of Scotland. On a day-to-day basis the treasurer ensures the smooth running of financial transactions, payment of bills and proper recording of receipts.

Another important function is the processing of Gift Aid and our team member with specialist knowledge of this is Bill Paterson.

The team is well balanced with a range of specialist finance and business experience to ensure proper scrutiny and management of the finances. We would however encourage anyone who feels they can contribute by being a member of the team to speak to myself.

Stewart MacFarlane

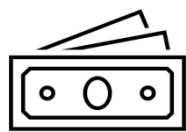
Aled Jones at Eden Court Theatre

On the evening of Easter Sunday a group of twenty people from Ness Bank Church went to see Full Circle with Aled Jones at Eden Court Theatre. Aled took us through a journey of his forty-year career in music, radio and television, from being a teenage chorister with a treble voice to the present day and forty-three albums later! One of his most memorable successes was singing 'Walking in the Air' from the animated film The Snowman.

It was a wonderful evening reminiscing with him and a great time was had by all.

Heather Brain

Gift Aid



to



Do you want to give the church more money?

Yes, you can, and it won't cost you a penny.

How is this possible?

The way to do this, is to sign a **GIFT AID** form.

If you pay tax to the government, and sign a gift aid form, the government will increase your offering by 25%.

Give £10 and the church will get £12.50.

If you want to help the Church, and haven't signed a Gift Aid form, or if you're not sure if you have, please get in touch with me.

Bill Paterson, Gift Aid Convenor

billpat47@btinternet.com 07985421571

Remembering

Every day
in silence we remember
those whom we loved
to whom we have said a last goodbye.

Every day
in silence we remember.

My Job and My Faith

For those who don't know me, my name is Moira Mills and I have been attending Ness Bank all my life. My job title is a Pupil Support Assistant (or PSA for short), otherwise known as a teaching assistant, and I work at the Inverness Royal Academy in the Learning Support Department (The Core) where I have been for the last 8 years. The school roll currently stands at 1353 pupils and of that number 618 are listed as having Additional Special Needs (ASN). In our department we have 230 pupils on adapted timetables and we have 43 staff made up of 12 ASN teachers and 31 PSA's.

We work with young people from year groups S1 - S6. Many are on the autistic spectrum, have ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) or Global Developmental Delay. They may also have a combination of any of these learning difficulties. All of these conditions create problems in the childrens' ability to learn but are all due to the fact their brains are wired up differently causing neurodiversity.

Other pupils have social and emotional problems due to their home or family lives, friendship groups or peers. These may be physical or emotional abuse, backgrounds involving alcohol or drugs, eating disorders, bullying and anxiety - which is a huge issue not helped by social media - any or all of these factors again cause difficulties in their ability to learn. Our role within the school is to help, support and encourage all the pupils in our care. We could liken it to the Good Shepherd looking after his flock.

Each PSA has their own timetable to follow within the school day and this is usually a combination of working in some mainstream classes giving support to those pupils who need help to keep focused on their work, or with a small group within the class who need a bit of extra attention. The other side is that we work in classrooms in our department with specific ASN teachers, again with small groups, or on a one-to-one basis with pupils who have a high level of need. Many of those are working on primary school levels of learning due to their disabilities. A lot of the children present as being much younger than their actual age and this is reflected not only in their learning but also by their behaviour.

We provide many different aspects of learning not just in reading and writing. There are gardening groups and we have our own garden with a polytunnel. The gardening

groups are ably run by two of our staff, Mrs Leitch and Mrs Fowler. The pupils also have trips to the Floral Hall Botanical garden, Leys Castle garden run by our own Ness Banker, Anne Sutherland, and Homegrown garden at Holm Mills. All of these organisations are great at supporting our young folk.

A lot of what I do personally is cooking on a one-to-one basis with various pupils throughout the week in our Core kitchen. My two colleagues, Mrs Charmley and Mrs Krall, also do the same as me and we work closely together with usually at least two of us in the kitchen at the same time with different pupils. We teach life skills, cooking simple meals such as macaroni cheese or homemade burgers and potato wedges, as well as baking various cakes, muffins and tray bakes which we sell to other staff and pupils at our Core Café on a Wednesday morning during break time.

In the department there is also a special room for Art with one of my gifted colleagues, Mrs MacDonald. Also a sensory room, a soft play and ball pit area and a quiet room.

Every day is different even if you work with the same pupils. Each child is different and we must remember we are each made in God's image. A lot of our time is given to nurturing these children who need our help. We must be there to care, listen and understand them on their level which is important in order that we can build relationships with them and gain their trust in us. These relationships are so important for them and us, and I spend a lot of time thinking and worrying about the pupils outside of school hours. This is when I turn to God in prayer. It is hard to stay emotionally detached but I have come to realise we can only do what we can to help while we are in school. I keep all of them regularly in my prayers as they really need God to watch over them.

The job can be challenging, it is emotionally demanding, but most of the time it is very rewarding. The pupils each make progress at their own pace and bring much to school life. We can also learn a lot from them. To do this work we each leave our own troubles at the door as we have to always be calm whatever the situation, as many of them are unable to control and understand their emotions. I believe that by working there I am doing God's work with His help to guide me and patience which He helps me to sustain even on difficult days. Before I started this journey I wasn't sure I could manage to do it, or that I would enjoy it as working with teenagers and young people is not for everyone, but I quickly realised I had found my niche.

Moir



Girls' Brigade

We've had a busy time since the last newsletter!

The Riverside coffee evening at the start of March was a great success. The hall was buzzing with people chatting and trying their hand at some games. The girls enjoyed serving their guests and plying them with goodies! On the night we raised around £750 but in total we now have the amazing sum of £1,453.



The photo shows the girls and leaders revealing the amount, as it stood at the time, to Karen and Robbie Halkett, pastors at Trinity Life Church. We have been overwhelmed by the support and encouragement we've received from the congregations of Ness Bank, Trinity Life and Trinity Dalneigh Churches. Thank you, everyone! The team is now in the process of applying for and siting the defibrillator, and the extra amount raised will be used for installation and running costs.

Towards the end of March, Trinity Life Church was the venue for the Explorer and Junior Divisional Event - Caring for Creation. Around forty girls from the Inverness, Dingwall and Dornoch Companies met to explore environmental issues and learn some tips to try in their daily lives. Everyone had lots of fun with highlights being a walking bus game, making a beaver pencil pot from recycled materials and swapping books.

The next day, the theme was continued at the Highland Division Annual Service, held at Ness Bank Church. Girls and leaders from five companies, along with their families, received a warm welcome from the minister and congregation and everyone enjoyed participating in the service. We were very grateful for the hospitality provided in the hall after the service where girls, leaders, their families and the congregation chatted whilst enjoying refreshments.

The session is drawing to a close for both Riverside and 4B Companies. Each company will hold a display evening when the girls receive their awards and parents and friends will be given a taste of the year's activities. The Riverside one will be held at 6.45 pm on Monday 19 May at Trinity Life Church and 4B's one will be on Tuesday 27 May at Hilton Primary School. Members of the congregation are very welcome to attend.

Thank you once again for the support shown to both companies. It's very much appreciated.

Hazel MacDonald

Home Schooling

Our mothers taught us **TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE**: "If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning."

Our fathers taught us **RELIGION**: "You better pray that this stain will come out of the carpet."

Our mothers taught us **LOGIC**: "If you fall out of that swing and break your neck, you're not going to the shops with me."

Our fathers taught us **MORE LOGIC**: "Because I said so, that's why."

Our mothers taught us about **CONTORTIONISM**: "Just you look at that dirt on the back of your neck!"

Our fathers taught us about the science of **OSMOSIS**: "Shut your mouth and eat your supper."

Our mothers taught us about **BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION**: "Stop acting like your father!"

And finally, our fathers taught us about **JUSTICE**: "One day you'll have kids, and I hope they turn out just like you!"

Elsbeth's blog

Love.. is

God spoke: "Let us make human beings in our image, make them reflecting our nature..."

(Gen 1.26. the Message)

Jesus said,".. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him. You've even seen him!.... to see me is to see the Father"

(Jn 14.7&9. The Message)

Love from the centre of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.... Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.

Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."

Don't run up debts, except for the huge debt of love you owe each other... When you add up everything in the law code, the sum total is love.

(Romans 12.9-19, 13.8&10. The Message)

By his son, God created the world in the beginning, and it will all belong to the son at the end. This son perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God's nature.

(Heb 1.2&3. The Message)

What are we here for? What is our purpose, and the reason for being human with all that means? The very first words of the Hebrew Scriptures give us the fundamental answer from which an infinite variety of paths will flow – we are here in order to be like God! That doesn't sound very practical... so let me unpack a little.

God is revealed as the Maker, the Great Artist and source of all creative energies. To be like Him therefore is to reflect his creativity, delight in beauty, to share in his care

for creation. That overwhelming abundance of good things is made to glorify God and reflect his nature, his generosity; it is an expression of a love that delights to give. The little word 'us' indicates to the reader that God exists in community; beyond time and created space, our Almighty and infinite Maker is in a loving relationship, enjoying and sharing at the very heart of deity. To be like God then, is to be made for community, for mutual appreciation and affection, for shared life.



Let's think in particular, of how to be like God is to love – how does God love? I believe that all of scripture is a revelation of love in action. From the codes of law which God gave as an expression of love, through the admonitions of the prophets against the lovelessness of God's people, and ultimately in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, that love is demonstrated and expressed. This is not a soft, indulgent love; this is a never-quenched flame which burns to achieve the best possible outcomes for the beloved – guarding them against danger, calling them back from the ways of folly and rebellion, providing for them what they most need and cannot achieve for themselves.

We, as the creatures of this loving God, are not called to do all that He does. But in Jesus we have a clear example of what it means to be "like God" as mere human beings. Jesus claimed to be God, to be revealing God to humanity in a perfect way. So Jesus shows us what it is like for a human being to love as God loves.

As you read the wonderfully rich list of love-in-action in Romans, consider how Jesus did all these things during his time walking among us. Rejoice that none of these things is out of our reach! We are not being called to an impossibility but to the fullest kind of life, one which is our calling, that perfectly fits what we are designed for – to love, because God first loved us.

We have this one shared purpose, and there will be as many expressions of it as there are human beings – no two people will live for and with God in the same way, but each may know what it is to love God and others with all that they are. Love is to offer up all that God has given us in his service, generously sharing his gifts and our own experiences of his goodness in that unique path to which we are assigned by his grace.

aforgetfulsoul.com

World Day of Prayer - March 2025

Every year on the first Friday of March individuals from every country meet together in their local church for a World Day of Prayer Service of Worship written by a group of women from a different country each year. This year the service was written by women from the Cook Islands, a cluster of Pacific Islands between Australia and Peru with cultural links to New Zealand. Their chosen theme this year was "I made you wonderful" from Psalm 139:14. The reading covered verses 1-18 and the life stories of three women from the Cook Islands were linked with the verses.

On Friday 7th March about 25 people met in the Crown Church, Inverness, and we were sharing the same service with many other groups in the UK and beyond.

Psalm 139 speaks about God's care over us, from before birth and throughout our whole lives. His care extends throughout the world, wherever we may be, there is no remote place where his care cannot reach us. The readings linked with the personal stories of three Cook Island women; one detailing a family's experience through Covid and one individual experience of discrimination in school years where speaking the native Maori language was not encouraged, and a third experience of medical training developing to a leadership role in paediatrics.

Later sections dealt with thanksgiving to God with confessions of shortcomings both in relationships and in the care of the environment, and with prayer for world leaders and for the protection of women in our societies. Each service always closes with the hymn 'The day thou gavest Lord is ended', so it was being sung in every time zone that first Friday of March.

Shina Grant

Some additional information about the artists:

Tarani Napa and Tevairangi Napa, a mother and daughter duo, created this year's artwork. They share the vision they had for their composition based on Psalm 139:14: *'I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made'*.



“Our Heavenly Father blessed our islands of the sea. From the northern islands across the ocean to the southern islands, the golden sun shines through the clear blue skies and birds freely fly. From the bright, white sandy shores all the way to the highest mountain top, our islands are abundant with fresh produce and colourful flora and fauna. The lagoons and oceans are bountiful with sea life, fish and gems (like black pearls), which link us to the world.

On each island the mighty coconut tree stands tall, a symbol of strength and goodness. The coconut tree provides for our health and wellbeing. We have discovered how to use every part, from the fronds to the very deep roots for food, drink, medicine, shelter and much more. The coconut tree is essential to our survival and is the tree of life for our people.



We are grateful for the arrival of Christianity to our shores 200 years ago. The gospel of Jesus Christ brought hope, peace and light. In time, our cultures have interwoven with Christianity, and the blessings are evident today. As guardians and caretakers of God’s marvellous works, we always treasure these words, ‘I made you wonderful’.

Our women play a vital role in keeping our heritage and traditions alive. They are the keepers of talents, teachers and mentors. From mothers to daughters, the cycle of life, faith and love continues here on our islands of paradise. We show our respect and love for God and for one another in harmonies of song and prayer. Our precious Tivaevae quilts represent patience, love and unity. We honour God’s love and mercy with hats we wear to church, woven by skillful loving hands from the strands of rito, the young coconut leaf. We adorn ourselves with sweet scented Tiare tropical flowers, made into crowns and garlands. From the heart, we teach and nurture our beloved children, the younger generation, our future.

At the closing of a gathering, our Tongareva elders always say these powerful words of encouragement: **‘Kia mau te serenga! Kia mau te napena! Kia mau!’** This means *‘hold on tight to who you are, in all aspects of your existence!’* We are wonderfully made by God, and we should cherish all the aspects of who we are!”

Ness Bank Community Outreach and Mission Team

The Community Outreach Team has now joined with the Youth and Children's Group and World Mission Team to work together as one. This will enable us to support each other and work towards our common purpose together.

The purpose of our team is:

- to reveal the Love of God for all people within our church, community, the city of Inverness and the wider world
- and to provide a safe space for all to learn, worship and grow their faith.

The team members are:

Lilian Gilbert (Lead)
Wym Simpson
Anne Sutherland
Jane MacBean
Keith Gibson
Margaret Livingstone
Raymond Matheson

The work of our team is to provide support from Ness Bank Church where needed with the following:

- Inverness Foodstuff
- The West side of the parish (Bught area - projects like the Cosy Café)
- The Baby and Toddler group, Sunday School and Messy Church
- The Open Sanctuary (Holy Week and Summer opening)
- The future vision of use of the Sanctuary
- Communication with the parish and City, eg Noticeboards, Christmas card and website/social media
- Our wider world mission includes supporting Christian Aid and various other appeals and organisations, such as Blythwood shoe boxes, MAF and SASRA

If you would like to come and join our team you would be very welcome. There are exciting things to be done and new thoughts and ideas are always welcome. Please speak to me if you are interested in joining us.

Lilian



Stamp Project 2025-2026

**"Let us not become weary in doing good,
for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."
(Galatians 6:9)**

The Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Northern Gaza has been in operation since 1882. It is owned and run today by the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem, a partner church of the Church of Scotland. The hospital is the only Christian hospital in the Gaza Strip and Gaza's only cancer hospital. It normally handles around 300 surgeries, 600 radiological visits and a total of 3,000 outpatient visits per month. It is supported by international charities such as Embrace the Middle East. In times of calm during the occupation of Gaza, Al Ahli Hospital runs as any normal hospital with varying departments and an Accident and Emergency Department dealing with the usual day to day ailments of a population.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Gaza in October 2023, the Al Ahli Anglican Hospital has conducted emergency operations 24 hours per day, operating on 30-35 people per day.

This was in addition to hundreds of medical consultations carried out each day at Al Ahli Hospital and its field clinic in Khan Younis. As well as serving as a hospital, it also provided a shelter for thousands of residents who fled their homes in northern Gaza seeking safety from Israeli airstrikes. Unfortunately, the hospital was hit by a fatal air strike killing and wounding several hundred people including children.

Despite all, and through all the bombing, the hospital continued to serve the population in whatever way they could with the small resources they had, with staff working hours under difficult conditions.

Another feature of the war is psychological trauma. The Ahli field clinic in Khan Younis now offers a Psychosocial Support Programme for children who have experienced trauma. Most have lost family members. Some are orphans. The Co-ordinator of the Programme said, *"The psychological support programme aims to foster self-development and [help people] acquire skills to overcome difficulties and psycho-*

logical pressures resulting from the war on the Gaza Strip. It also focusses on expressing emotions, and the ability to solve problems and life challenges."

One mother added, "I'm from Gaza. I was displaced first to Rafah, and then to Khan Younis. My daughter contracted hepatitis. So, I took her to this medical point associated with Ah Ahli Arab Hospital. Thankfully, they treated her and provided her with the necessary fluids. I also learned about the psychosocial support programme and wanted her to participate. She lost her father and her brother, and her uncles and cousins. She endured significant psychological pressure. The programme has helped my daughter immensely and I'm grateful for the improvement she has experienced."

The team at the Al Ahli hospital continue to schedule its staff to ensure that the hospital is accessible 24 hours a day. To enable the Ahli to respond to the increasing need at this time, there continues to be an urgent need for medications and other resources for an emergency response which will enable more people to access basic health care during this crisis.

The hospital has been significantly damaged by the war and will require substantial funding to ensure buildings are once again brought up to standard and there will also be the need for new medical infrastructure which has been damaged.

Archbishop Hosam of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East has requested all of us to join him in the following prayer:

***"Please pray with us that this wave of violence will be stopped,
as there are no winners in wars.***

All are losers"

Amen.

©Church of Scotland

(Thank you for your continued support of the Stamp Project. Please continue to collect used stamps and put them in the green container in the vestibule in support of the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza)



Prayer Diary



**God has raised from death our Lord Jesus,
who is the Great Shepherd of the sheep as the result of his blood,
by which the eternal covenant is sealed.**

**May the God of peace provide you with every good thing you
need in order to do his will, and may he,
through Jesus Christ,
do in us what pleases him.**

And to Christ be the glory for ever and ever! Amen.

(Hebrews 13: vs 20-21)

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

Week beginning Sunday 18 May

- Lord, we pray for our Minister, Stuart, and ask Your blessing on him as he preaches the word of God. We give thanks for his pastoral care to the congregation and to the wider parish, and for his enthusiasm and vision for the development of Ness Bank.
- Father, we ask Your blessing on our Session Clerk and the elders, together with Leaders and members in the various teams for their dedication and commitment to the work of Your church.
- Gracious God, we pray that the plans for the development of our sanctuary are progressing and we give thanks for the architects and other professionals who are involved in this project. We ask Your blessing on members and friends who are involved in the various teams.
- The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland will take place this week and we pray for the Rev Rosie Frew as she is installed as Moderator. We pray also for all the commissioners who will be in attendance and ask Your blessing on them as they consider the many issues to be debated and decided on.

-
- The Guild meetings have stopped for the summer but members will visit the Inverness Botanics and the Grow Project this week. We pray that this will be an interesting visit and that the afternoon tea will be a time of fun and fellowship.

Week beginning Sunday 25 May

- Our organist, Ian, continues to lead praise on Sunday mornings and at other times, and we give thanks for his musical expertise. We ask Your blessing on the choir for their commitment and enthusiasm.
- Father, we pray for those known to us and those in our congregation who have suffered a bereavement whether it be recent or long ago. We all know the pain of loss and we pray that Your love and strength will sustain them in the days that lie ahead.
- Loving God, we pray for those who experience everyday life challenges and find difficulty in coping with major changes in their life.
- Heavenly Father, we appreciate all the young folks that are involved in Ness Bank in Boys' and Girls' Brigades, Sunday School, Messy Church and the Baby & Toddler Group. We give thanks for the dedication of the leaders and pray that more leaders and volunteers will come forward to help.
- Lord, the Team Leaders will meet this week and we give thanks for the work carried out by the leaders and members. We pray that their discussions will result in decisions which will be beneficial to the work of Your church.

Week beginning Sunday 1 June

- God, we give thanks for our church administrator, church officer and cleaner as they continue to provide essential services to the office-bearers, members and friends.
 - We pray for all those known to us who are ill whether they are at home, in hospital or in a care home. We pray that those waiting for appointments and admission dates will not need to wait too long, so that diagnosis and treatment can commence promptly.
-

-
- We pray Lord for those suffering from abuse whether it be alcohol, drug or physical. The centres in Inverness such as Beechwood House, Cale House and New Craigs provide excellent help and support, and we give thanks for the staff and volunteers for their continued care.
 - During the summer young people in S4-S6 can sign up for Scripture Union Content Creating Camp, a week-long event at Altnacriche that offers a space to explore design, photography, video editing and more. The vision for this event is to help young people develop their existing interest in digital media in a creative environment with a strong biblical base. We give thanks Father for the Team Leaders, for the housekeeping volunteers and everyone involved in this and other SU camps.
 - Gracious God, the conflict between Israel and Gaza is ongoing and air strikes and rocket fire continue to inflict death and injury to people together with damage to buildings. Our prayer today Father is for a ceasefire and lasting peace for this region.

Week beginning Sunday 8 June

- Father, we give thanks for the NHS and ask Your blessing on all staff both in hospitals and in the community. We are grateful that the new treatment centre in Inverness is providing to be so beneficial to patients who require joint replacements and cataract surgery.
 - Loving God, we ask Your blessing on the work of Inverness Street Pastors who patrol in the city centre and support those who find themselves in difficult situations. We give thanks also for the Prayer Pastors.
 - The CrossReach Board works closely with the Chief Executive and Assembly Trustees to ensure that there is good governance over CrossReach so that the services can continue to provide vital care and support. Father, we give thanks for all the gifts and talents of those who volunteer to serve on the Board of CrossReach.
 - Lord, we think of some of our members who are in residential care homes and receiving such excellent care. We give thanks for the staff and volunteers who go out of their way to help those who cannot cope with everyday living in their own homes.
-

-
- Recently Tearfund launched the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) Emergency Appeal. More than £580,000 has been donated and because of this, they have been able to provide clean water and hygiene kits to 1,000 people so far who have had to flee their homes because of conflict. Father, we give thanks for Tearfund and other aid agencies for their dedication in so many areas where there is conflict and disaster.

Week beginning Sunday 15 June

- Loving God, the cost of living continues to increase for everyone. We think of those who are on low incomes and finding it difficult to pay for food and energy. We also remember those who are on benefits and who now have the added worry of a review of the welfare system. We pray that those who are ill and unable to work will receive an adequate welfare payment.
 - Father, we give thanks for the advanced technology which is available to many people now. This allows easy communication between families, friends, businesses and many organisations not only in the UK but throughout the world.
 - We give thanks Lord for the chaplains in hospitals, hospices, workplaces, and in the armed services. The chaplains in the armed forces serve not only in the UK but throughout the world and often in areas of conflict. We pray for their safety.
 - Lord, we think of those who suffer from mental health problems and it seems that the numbers are increasing, especially in young people. Waiting lists to see professional staff are still long and this of course increases the risk of suicide and self-harm. We give thanks for the various agencies in Inverness who provide help and support such as the Samaritans, Mikeysline, and Inverness Foodstuff.
 - Some of the Scottish prisons are now deemed as not fit for purpose and we remember the prison in Inverness which is overcrowded. The new prison is under construction but will not be ready until 2026. We pray for the Governor, the prison officers and the civilian staff as they cope with outdated facilities. We ask Your blessing on prisoners as they cope without their freedom and pray that the various rehabilitation programmes will be beneficial.
-

Week beginning Sunday 22 June

- Almighty God, we give thanks for the Trustees, staff and volunteers in Inverness Foodstuff and ask Your blessing on the food and services provided in Ness Bank and in Hilton. Everyone involved in this organisation gives readily of their time and skills so that the participants can receive food, company and support.
- Gracious God, we ask Your blessing on the Westminster and Holyrood governments and we pray that their decision-making will be based on Christian values and will be for the benefit of all citizens.
- Lord, the Citizens Advice Bureau is a source of great knowledge and assistance in so many areas of life and we give thanks for the staff and volunteers who have been trained as advisors.
- The Ladies Discussion Group is for ladies in our congregation who stay on their own and their monthly meeting will take place this week. We give thanks for this time of fellowship.
- We remember the staff and councillors in Highland Council as they continue to provide vital services to the communities throughout the area.

Week beginning Sunday 29 June

- Schools, colleges and universities will now be closing for the summer break and we pray that staff and students will benefit from a break from studying. The exam results will be due in August and we pray that good results will be obtained for those waiting for possible places for university and college.
 - Father, we give thanks for the staff and volunteers in the Inverness Foodbank which is operated under the auspices of Blythswood Care. We ask Your blessing on those who come along for a three-day emergency supply of food. We give thanks that local church congregations support the Foodbank on a very regular basis.
 - We remember all those affected by the earthquake in Myanmar, Thailand and China. We pray for the injured and family members grieving for those who have lost their lives. We give thanks for the emergency services and for the international aid that has been provided.
-

-
- Lord, volunteers at Ness Bank continue to attend Ach an Eas on a monthly basis to conduct a service of worship which is enjoyed by both staff and residents. We give thanks for this Christian outreach.
 - We give thanks for the livestreaming service in Ness Bank and for the small group of volunteers who operate the system. The livestream is used by members and friends who are unable to attend church and it means that members can continue to feel part of the church family. We pray that some more volunteers will offer their services.

World Mission Prayer Topics:

Blythswood Shops in Romania

- Blythswood shops are not only in Scotland and Northern Ireland but also in Romania. Please pray for the three charity shops in South West Romania which help support the work of the Paliata Pum, the afterschool programmes for children from poorer backgrounds in Jimbolia.

Scripture Union (Scotland)

- SU are currently putting 2 short clips from their Bible short series out on TikTok each week. They ask that we pray that these clips will grab the attention of young people. Each clip is part of a longer video that can be watched on YouTube.

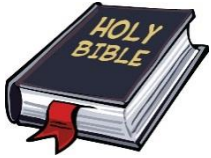
The Bible Society

- Malawi has many different languages and people groups. The skills of the many Bible translators allow countless people to hear the words of Jesus in their heart language. We give thanks for this skill and their willing to translate.

Praise and Glory

You alone, O God, deserve praise and glory,
because of your constant love and faithfulness

(Psalm 115:1)



Daily Bible Readings

June 2025

Sunday	1	Psalm 40
Monday	2	Joel 1: 1 - 12
Tuesday	3	Joel 1: 13 - 20
Wednesday	4	Joel 2: 1 - 11
Thursday	5	Joel 2: 12 - 27
Friday	6	Joel 2: 28 - 32
Saturday	7	Joel 3: 1 - 21
Sunday	8	Acts 2: 1 - 21
Monday	9	Romans 6: 1 - 14
Tuesday	10	Romans 6: 15 - 23
Wednesday	11	Romans 7: 1 - 6
Thursday	12	Romans 7: 7 - 25
Friday	13	Romans 8: 1 - 17
Saturday	14	Romans 8: 18 - 39
Sunday	15	Psalm 41
Monday	16	Romans 9: 1 - 18
Tuesday	17	Romans 9: 19 - 29
Wednesday	18	Romans 9: 30; 10: 21
Thursday	19	Romans 11: 1 - 10
Friday	20	Romans 11: 11 - 24
Saturday	21	Romans 11: 25 - 36
Sunday	22	Psalms 42, 43
Monday	23	2 Samuel 1: 1 - 16
Tuesday	24	2 Samuel 1: 17 - 27
Wednesday	25	2 Samuel 2: 1 - 11; 3: 1
Thursday	26	2 Samuel 5: 1 - 12
Friday	27	2 Samuel 6: 1 - 23
Saturday	28	2 Samuel 7: 1 - 17
Sunday	29	Psalm 44
Monday	30	2 Samuel 7: 18 - 29
