

Soundings

Portobello & Joppa Parish
Church Magazine

February 2025



Portobello and Joppa Parish Church

From the editor



I'm writing this on the Thursday evening before Storm Éowyn is due to explode upon us. Currently not a leaf is stirring and it's a bit difficult to imagine that we'll be covering inside tomorrow. Schools are to be closed, there will be no trains and we're all to stay at home – it's a bit reminiscent of lockdown. Still, it's a good opportunity to get the magazine finished early.

In this edition you can read of some of the activities undertaken by members of our congregation (and also by a member of Meadowbank, a church in our parish grouping) to reach out to the wider community. These people truly embody the “more excellent way” that Stewart talks about in his letter to us: with projects as varied as helping on The Care Van, knitting for the homeless, going out as a Street Pastor and running a marathon to support Prostate Cancer UK. Help with, or participation in, any of these projects would be welcomed.

I looked on the internet for a cheering quote about storms and found this:

“Be thou the rainbow in the storms of life
The evening beam that smiles the clouds away
And tints tomorrow with prophetic ray.”

It was written by Lord Byron in his poem “The Bride of Abydos.” I confess that I haven't read it - and I'm not sure that he was much of a rainbow himself in his personal life – but those who care for others either outside or inside the church certainly are.

I'm hoping that all of our roofs will be intact after the coming storm. Maybe there will be an actual rainbow tomorrow evening? Let's hope.

Pam

From the minister

Dear Friends and Neighbours,

‘We live in a community of forgiveness.’

This is a quote, if I remember correctly, from Rowan Williams, a former Archbishop of Canterbury who has consistently offered thoughtful and perceptive insights into the Christian faith and into contemporary life.



This phrase particularly came to mind because this epistle is, once again, many days late and the editor has granted a much-appreciated extension. Not uncommon these days!

We as a faith community and church family engage in so many activities and initiatives that require time, energy and commitment. Sometimes this means that things don't turn out quite the way we would prefer or perhaps things are said or left unsaid that would have ensured understanding and appreciation.

It is part of being human and fallible. None of us is perfect and none of us ever will be.

At a recent service I used a prayer about love and it came from the Pray Now booklet of 2013 or 2014, which we used at our Monday morning prayers.

The booklet itself, which I've used many times, is based on 1 Corinthians 13, Paul's beautiful meditation and reflection on love.

Just prior to the passage, there is a well-known line: 'I will show you a more excellent way'.

That more excellent way is, of course, based on love. And that more excellent way also includes forgiveness. To reference Christ himself, sometimes it might require forgiveness 70x7 times.

In my work with the Presbytery, implementing a plan that requires endless hours in order to cut 40% of our ministry posts and release perhaps 20% of our buildings by 31 Dec. 2025, forgiveness is crucial. Things are done or said or conveyed that result more from the tension and stress of difficult conversations than from the angels of our better natures. To err is human, to forgive divine....

It made me wonder, however, if there is a manner to interact with others or to communicate with others or simply to be with others that forestalls the need for consistent forgiveness. That is, what is the way that we can live and conduct ourselves whereby the need or search for forgiveness is minimised? The need for forgiveness will never go away—we are human—but can we live (or try to live) that more excellent way?

In the midst of meetings and conversations and emails, I have discovered the importance of keeping the temperature down. When there are difficult topics to broach and discuss, the heart can race, the blood pressure rise and the breathing quicken.

Breathe in, breathe out. Repeat... but don't hyperventilate.

It goes further.

Why the reaction? What is it surfacing in me? What are the underlying issues such as fear or identity or dignity in others and myself?

The more excellent way requires a knowledge of ourselves, a knowledge of Christ, a knowledge of God and perhaps a knowledge of others insofar as we are able.

Or – maybe that could be refashioned: the more excellent way requires the love of Christ, the love of God, the love of others and, perhaps most challenging of all, love of ourselves.

We can strive for that more excellent way with God's presence and God's love.

And then we can perhaps say with conviction and honesty, 'we live in a community of love.' No more. No less. That is indeed a miracle of love.

Stewart

Worship

Sun. 2nd Feb	9.30am	Quiet and reflective with Communion
	10.30am	Informal and interactive
	11.15am	Traditional
Sun. 9th Feb	9.30am	Quiet and reflective
	10.30am	Informal and interactive
	11.15am	Traditional
Sun. 16th Feb	9.30am	Quiet and reflective
	10.30am	Informal and interactive
	11.15am	Traditional
Sat. 22nd Feb	3.30pm	Messy Church in Main Hall
Sun. 23rd Feb	9.30am	Quiet and reflective
	10.30am	Informal and interactive
	11.15am	Traditional
Sun. 2nd Mar	9.30am	Quiet and reflective with Communion
	10.30am	Informal and interactive
	11.15am	Traditional
Sun. 9th Mar (First Sunday of Lent)	9.30am	Quiet and reflective
	10.30am	Informal and interactive
	11.15am	Traditional



Care Van

In 1990 the Care Van, a partnership between Bethany Christian Trust and Edinburgh City Mission, began serving the needs of homeless people in Edinburgh.



The van is an essential source of care and support for people who are homeless and vulnerable in the City of Edinburgh. Relying on volunteers, it goes out almost every day of the year providing soup, food, hot drinks, blankets and clothes, friendship, encouragement and advice to up to 60 people a night who are rough sleeping or housed in homeless B&B accommodation by Edinburgh Council.

Edinburgh City Mission and Bethany co-ordinate rotas for over 40 teams that are drawn from local churches across the Lothians and includes over 750 volunteers.

In 2023, over 8539 meals were served by the Care Van on the streets of Edinburgh.

There has been a team from Portobello and Joppa Parish church involved with the Care Van for the past 18 or so years. Mike told me that Chris, now minister in Bathgate, was a probationer at St Philip's and told the congregation about the work of Bethany. Mike thought that this was a really good form of outreach and gathered a team together. About 5 years later, Winnie and Hunter began staffing the lunchtime care van, before handing responsibility over to David and Louise, who still coordinate the team today.

During the day, our team provides filled rolls, crisps, biscuits and fruit, as well as tea and coffee. In the evening, the fare consists of hot soup provided by

the charity Empty Kitchens, Full Hearts, paid for by PJPC outreach team. Buttered rolls, crisps, biscuits and fruit are provided by our team.

The van has four stops in the city centre and serves between 40 and 70 adults experiencing homelessness... and the occasional tourist! I asked the Evening Team what volunteering for the Care Van means to them.

Here's what some of them said:

"I volunteer on the care van to offer some help and support to people who have found themselves in difficult circumstances."

"I feel humble when people are so grateful for a cup of tea and a chat."

"I support the work that Bethany does to help homeless people in Edinburgh, and this is an easy way to contribute to a worthwhile initiative."

If you would like to help, please speak to David or (the other) Sheena.



Guild news



In a change to the advertised speaker (Lourens), we are very happy to welcome our own **Shahrukh** at 2pm on Tuesday 4th February.

All are welcome.



(This is the only February date for the Guild.)

Penny Tubes

Thank you to everyone who has returned full penny tubes in 2024. The fabric fund has benefitted by £355.00. When cash is used less and less, this is an amazing total.



Tubes are always available in the vestibule and can be returned in the basket on the shelf at the back of the sanctuary.

Angela

Operation Christmas Stocking

In 2018 a friend of mine visited her podiatrist. They chatted about plans for Christmas, and the podiatrist mentioned that he would be volunteering for Crisis at Christmas. This was an event held by the homeless charity in Edinburgh for 3 or 4 days around Christmas and provided a whole range of services for people usually living on Edinburgh's streets, hostels or on friends' sofas.



Over 4 days, volunteers from all sections of the community gave up their time to help, and offer their expertise and experience. Hairdressers, podiatrists, musicians, cooks and social workers all gave their best, freely, to help out.

My friend thought how good her feet felt after her treatment and how a nice pair of hand-knitted socks would be the icing on the cake.

Before putting her brain in gear, she said that she would knit a pair of socks for all the people receiving a foot treatment that Christmas. Realising that she had overpromised, she asked a number of friends, myself included, if we would hand-knit a pair of socks to be given out at Christmas.

She warned her knitting friends, 'The socks are a gift, not just 'they'll do – it's just for some old homeless guy'. Please knit something you would be proud to give and happy to receive.'

That year, about 160 pairs of socks were given to Crisis, along with hats, scarves, and gloves, and Operation Christmas Stocking was born.

In 2020, during COVID, things changed a little. The large four-day event couldn't happen, so the socks, gloves, scarves and hats that were still being

knitted by OCS supporters were given out in 'well-being' packs to families and individuals, along with toiletries and food.

We were also asked if we could knit blankets, as many homeless people were living in hotels.

A reasonably sized blanket is a big commitment for a knitter, so an OCS blanket square pattern was produced. This allows many knitters to produce just one or two squares, and 20 all sewn together makes a lovely blanket. Since 2021, my job has been to sew the blanket squares together. Last year we gave over 35 hand knitted blankets to Crisis, and they are well received.

A member of staff at Crisis said 'people love them because they are hand-knitted, they really appreciate the gift of time and warmth.' Do you knit? Socks and gloves are particularly welcome, any size, any colour.

Please speak with (the other) Sheena if you can help. Patterns for socks, gloves and the blanket square will be available soon.



Edinburgh Street Pastors

This article is by Fiona, who is a member of Meadowbank and Willowbrae Church – with whom we at PJPC are working and will continue to work in the future. Our churches are in the same Parish grouping, as set out in the Presbytery Plan.

“Listening, helping and caring” on the streets of Edinburgh since 2009. These three little words sum up our aim when we are on Patrol. These three little words are quoted on the little card which we hand out to any interested members of the public, who might want to “like us” on social media.

Passers-by often ask us, “Who are you?” and are surprised to find that we are all from different Christian churches. Team 2 (my team!) has one Baptist, one Anglican, two Church of Scotland members and one Franciscan monk.

Team 2 is out every fourth Friday night. We meet at the Base at 10 p.m. where we pack the rucksacks with thermos flasks (drinks for the homeless), first aid, bottles of water, wrapped biscuits, pairs of flip-flops and the inevitable lollipops. Before we leave our Base in the Pleasance, we have a Prayer Time, asking God’s protection on us and others out on the streets and that He would lead us to the folk who need our help or might like a spiritual conversation.

Normally, we Patrol in the New Town for the first half of the night, return to the Base to replenish the flasks about 2 a.m. and then head out for the Cowgate. Here we are able to offer water to those who need it, or flip-flops to those ladies who can’t keep their balance on their 4” high heels.

We once gave flip-flops to a young man who had bare feet – he had given his shoes to his girl friend. (I hope she treasures a man like that!)

The Team collects any glass bottles or glasses that are adorning the streets thus preventing them from being used as a weapon, but also to prevent broken glass endangering our streets (bare feet...). “Lollipops?” I hear you say. Yes, we often give them out to the Bouncers as well as groups/people who might have stopped to speak to us. Lollipops make folk smile!

The clubs close at 3 a.m. and after lingering in the streets to help any stragglers (lost phone, where is a taxi rank, where can I buy food) we return to the Base through the empty streets to wash out the flasks, and have a brief time of thanking God for working through us (that’s faith – as we don’t usually know what He has done) and hope to be away home by 4 a.m.

One night, Team 2 were asked by the Police if we could stand beside a young lady who had been required to leave that particular club. She was waiting for her father to collect her – he lived in the Borders. This freed up the Police – whom we can call on at any time.

Another charity, but non-Christian, “Street Assist”, also patrols the streets (in their nice warm cars!) We have their phone number, as they can deal with any sick people better than we can, having more advanced First Aid training.

While we hope to have an opening where we can talk about the Christian faith, that does not necessarily happen every night, and we are careful what we do say when the occasion does arise.

Sometimes our very presence is enough to stop minor fights from escalating. Our uniforms and our rucksacks are plastered with the words “Street Pastor” which we think gives us a certain amount of street cred, even though lots of people have no idea what we are doing!

Do you fancy becoming a Street Pastor? Why not get in touch and ask if you could join a Patrol one night as an Observer? There are Patrols every Friday and several Saturdays each month. Email the Street Pastor Office: edinburgh@streetpastors.org.uk

Gardening with George – *More plant lore from George, horticulturist and star of the small screen.*



We have been quite pleased with the pots of Paperwhite narcissus that were planted back in September. The pots, left outside for the duration, all flowered in time for Christmas. They have more or less finished now.

However, I bought some extra Paperwhite bulbs online in November and after planting some in pots as usual, I saved half a dozen bulbs which were then planted in a glass container. I half-filled the glass container with some gravel and planted the bulbs on top. Adding water until the water just reached the base of the bulbs, I put the newly-planted container next to the south facing window. The bulbs' foliage has now reached its peak and there are six stems of pure white highly-scented flowers filling the room with their sweet, heady fragrance. It was interesting to watch the bulbs developing as they put out their white roots and then their leaves and finally their flower stems. I did not feed the bulbs, just simply kept the water level just at the top of the gravel layer.





It is a tradition in our house to scour the garden on New Year's Day to see what different plants are in flower. The count this year was something of a surprise: there were flowers open on 18 different plants. There were the usual suspects such as Winter Jasmine, Witch Hazel, Viburnum and Daphne. Snowdrops, winter Aconites and Crocus also featured in the mix. It has been a crazy season with many plants starting to flower almost a month earlier than 'normal'.



The recent cold snap has put a stop to even the hardiest of species pushing forth new flowers. Even the hardy snowdrops have put new growth on hold for the time being. It is interesting to note how the delicate flowers behave during periods of hard frost. Often in the morning after a night's hard frost, all the snowdrop stems will have collapsed, and the flowers will be lying flat on the soil surface. However, once the temperature returns above freezing, the plants slowly recover, and the snowdrop flowers lift themselves aloft once more. There is of course a name for this process. It is called thermotropism, the movement of plants in response to temperature. I have noted it in winter aconites as well as snowdrops and also in the leaves of rhododendron. In rhododendrons, when the temperatures fall, the leaf petioles curve downwards and the leaves partially curl up. At first glance it appears that the plant is suffering from drought but once the temperature rises above a critical level the leaves assume their natural position around the stems.

I have sown my first seeds of the year. I sowed leek seeds back in early December and set the pots out in the cold glasshouse. They have germinated and, all being well, there will be lots of leeks for soup next season. I have chosen two different varieties this year, Musselburgh and Porbello (correct spelling). The variety Musselburgh has been grown in this area for centuries, first cultivated by the local monks before gaining wider popularity. It is still a very popular garden variety. The other variety is one named Porbello, chosen simply because it too sounds as though it should be a local.

Soon it will be time to sow spinach, lettuce and broad beans and so the season begins. "To everything there is a season under heaven". Spring surely follows winter.

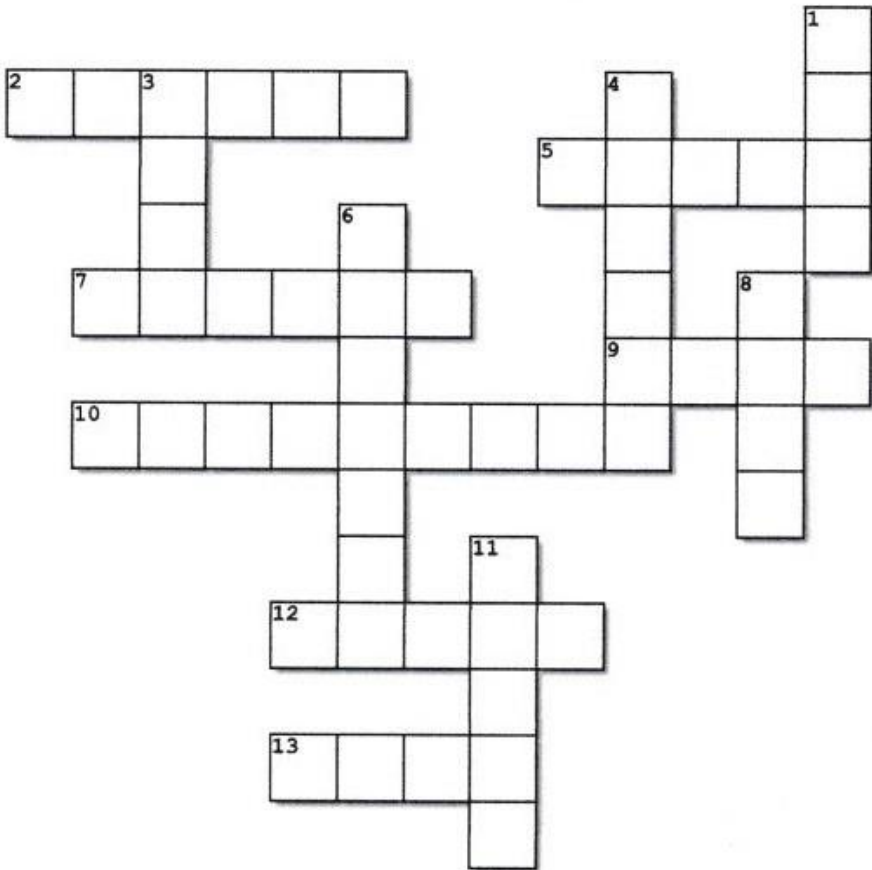
Happy Gardening
Stay safe
George

Brain-teaser



This is the month of St Valentine's Day. According to Wikipedia, there are multiple (and contradictory) legends about St Valentine, but one is that he cut hearts out of parchment and gave them to people to remind them of God's love. Well, it's a nice idea.

I've chosen words (mainly Biblical names) beginning with the letters V-A-L-E-N-T-I-N-E-S-D-A-Y and have made up clues to these words. Can you work out the answers and fill them into the crossword?



Across

2. ...in the lions' den
5. Brother of Moses
7. Doubting...
9. Twin of Jacob
10. Mother of John the Baptist
12. Son of Abraham
13. First man

Down

1. I am the true...?
3. Built the Ark
4. Version of "Jehovah"
- 6 Brother of Martha and Mary
8. Paul's original name
11. Mother-in-law of Ruth

(Answers at the bottom of page 21)

Alison

***Getting to know you – the either/or? version –
Nicholas. Nicky is 13 and a member of Breakfast Club.***

Pizza or pasta? – Pasta – healthier and while less consistently good than pizza, good pasta beats pizza.

Trains or buses? – Both! They are both good for different things! I couldn't choose one!

Spring or summer? – Summer. Spring is overrated. Most of the time it just rains!

Autumn or winter? – Winter, I like them both, but winter has Christmas and the possibility of snow.

Chocolate or cheese? – Chocolate!

Shower or bath? – Showers, they're quick and easy, but I do also like baths.

Pen, computer or iPad? – Pen or computer, either for writing or drawing. The touchscreen is annoying to use for long periods, although if using a stylus,

drawing with an iPad beats using a computer, but it's still not as good as using a pen and sketchbook.

Art gallery or museum? – Museum, but it depends what it's a museum of. A transport museum definitely beats an art gallery for me!

Dogs or cats? – Neither, I'm allergic to both!

Fame or fortune? – Fortune. I would prefer to have some privacy, and also you are less likely to be assassinated!

Cereal or bacon and egg? – Cereal, but some vegetarian bacon and an egg are quite nice.

Music or sport? – Sport, I'm not the most keen on either, but I quite like playing water polo (or I will when I get rid of this cold!)

Beach or countryside? – Both! A combination sounds nice! I do like cities, though.

Oatcakes or croissants? – Croissants. Oatcakes are a bit boring in my opinion.

Getting up early or going to bed late? – Not sure, although I do more of the latter!

Reading or computer games? – Both, depends on how I'm feeling.

Crosswords or sudoku? – Sudoku. It depends on the crossword, but I prefer sudokus overall.

Answers - Across: 2. Daniel; 5. Aaron; 7. Thomas; 9. Esau; 10. Elizabeth; 12. Isaac; 13. Adam. Down – 1. Vine; 3. Noah; 4. Yahweh; 6. Lazarus; 8. Saul; 11. Naomi.

Remembering

24 November 2024

Mary (May) Owenson, Marionville Court Care Home

8 December 2024

Douglas Griffin of North Berwick (previously Joppa)

11 January 2025

Douglas Brown of Joppa



Baptism

12 January 2025

Rose, daughter of Arjun and Jessica

LIFE AND WORK February 2025



‘More Than We Could Ever Have Hoped’

Churches offering a regular warm space in the depths of winter

Becoming a Christian at 40

A reader’s reflection

Stories of Ordinary People

John L Bell talks about his latest book

Connection and Purpose

Continuing the series on Priority Areas work, Neill Shaw highlights how churches can provide a welcoming home for people experiencing hardship.

Cultivating Generosity

Stewardship in north-east Scotland

Our Presbyteries

The series finishes with the Presbytery of Jerusalem

‘You Should Be Very Proud’

Christian Aid at 80, and the Church of Scotland minister who started it all.

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The Rev Ruth Kennedy on digital church

Worship column by the Rev Roddy Hamilton

Reflection by the Rev Dr Richard Frazer

Bible study by the Rev Richard Baxter

My Church: Alan Reddie of Gillespie Memorial Church, Dunfermline

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MAGAZINE/DIARY DEADLINES

March 2025

April 2025

May 2025

Sunday 16th February 2025

Sunday 23rd March 2025

Sunday 20th April 2025

Scottish Charity Number : SCO11728



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