December 2026/January 2027 **Issue 5**

PARISH NEWS



The magazine for West Calder and Polbeth Parish Church of Scotland.

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Dear Friends



As if in the blink of an eye, we are finding ourselves in the festive season again!

Are you aware of the fairly new advent tradition, where an “elf on the shelf” gets into some kind of mischief each day in the leadup to Christmas? Well, we don’t have an elf on the shelf in the manse, but what I do have, is a lovely wee angel, given to me by a special friend. So instead of an elf, I have an angel on my shelf, and although she was a Christmas gift, she sits there all year long. And every time I look at her, I think of how God is watching over me all the time, and that gives me a sense of peace, even on the most hectic of days…

So, as we venture into advent, and eventually into the new year – I would like to remind you that God is always with you. It’s a busy time of year, it’s a cold and dark time of year, and we can so easily feel overwhelmed by everything we feel we need to get done, or we can feel extra lonely during the long nights. But I want to reassure you that God is always there. Not sitting on a shelf, gathering dust – but around you, and within you – actively supporting you and leading you. Please feel comforted by the fact that nothing you need to do, you have to do alone. And that nothing you feel, is hidden from him. God came close to us in Jesus, and he stays close to us through his Spirit.

So, amidst all the hard parts and all the fun bits of Christmas and Hogmanay – let us not be blinded by the twinkling lights and everything that goes with it, but let us celebrate the biggest gift of all – a baby who became our Immanuel – God with us. God with us – everywhere, all the time...

May God bless you and keep you this Christmas and all through 2027.

Much love,

Nanda

Hello Everyone,

First of all, thank you for the warm welcome you have given me. It is an absolute privilege and pleasure to be undertaking my second-year placement with you.

So, who am I?

I have been involved in church life for as long as I can remember. However, when I was sixteen, I felt God calling me to ministry. To be honest, the idea terrified me. My immediate response was, "Why me? I couldn't possibly do that!"

My mum and I spoke to our minister at the time, and her advice was simple: go and do life. If God really wanted me, He would ask again.

So that is exactly what I did.

Our family church is Avonbridge. Although we only lived there for five years, we have continued to worship there ever since. We have now lived in Harthill for nearly forty years, but Avonbridge remains our church home and a place where many of our closest church friendships were made.

After that first sense of calling, I became heavily involved in leading the Sunday School. It was a thriving and rewarding ministry, and I convinced myself that this must have been what God had been asking me to do all along. Problem solved, I thought!

Later, my mum and I founded a charity called **Ponies Help Children**. We rescue ponies, rehabilitate them, and then work with children and adults who have additional support needs. It has been an incredible journey and a ministry that has blessed many people. Once again, I thought I had worked out God's plan. Surely this was the calling God had in mind, and not ministry after all!

Then life took another turn.

When our locum minister at Avonbridge had to retire unexpectedly, the church suddenly found itself without a minister. I began leading services through Advent and into the New Year. As I prepared and led worship, I found myself returning to the same thought: perhaps this really is what God has been asking me to do.

I tried to ignore it for a while. By then, the charity carried significant responsibilities, and I could not imagine stepping away from it.

But God can be wonderfully persistent.

Over time, He showed me how responsibilities could be shared and delegated, creating space for me to listen more carefully to His call. Eventually, after many conversations and a fair amount of negotiation on my part, I accepted that God had not changed His mind. My compromise was that I would train as a part-time minister while continuing to be involved in the charity.

And so, here I am.

My discernment took place at Linlithgow and Avon Valley, and my first placement was at Broxburn and Uphall. It was there that I discovered something important: there are many different churches, but the Church family is found in every one of them.

I am now enjoying my second-year placement with you and will be here until after Easter. I am looking forward to learning more about the church, the community, and the many different aspects of ministry. Although I have only been with you since the beginning of October, I already feel very much a part of your vibrant and welcoming church family.

I look forward to getting to know you all better in the months ahead.

Heather Stephens

Reflection – Sustained through the seasons

Reading: Ecclesiastes 3:1–13

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance…
What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given to everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in all their toil."

We are on the threshold of a new year. We are sitting in the quiet space between what has been and what is yet to come. In just a short time, the year will draw to its close, and a new one will begin.

For generations, the people of the Kirk have gathered at the end of the year to do exactly what we are doing now: to take a collective breath, to look back with honesty, and to look forward with faith.

The writer of Ecclesiastes—often called the Teacher—presents us with a text that feels as timeless as the Scottish hills. He speaks of a divine rhythm. *"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven."*

If we are honest with ourselves, the past year has been a tapestry woven from all the seasons the Teacher describes. For some of us sitting in the pews or joining online, this year brought

a "time to laugh" and a "time to dance." Perhaps it brought new life into your family, a hard-won success, or unexpected moments of pure community joy. We thank God for those seasons of light.

But for others, this year has held a "time to weep" and a "time to mourn." It may have brought the pain of an empty chair at the table, the anxiety of a changing health diagnosis, or the quiet weight of financial worry.

The profound comfort of this Scripture lesson is that **every single one of those seasons is held within the hands of God.** The Teacher does not say that life is a chaotic series of accidents. He says that God has *"made everything suitable for its time."* Even when we cannot see the bigger picture—when we, as the text says, *"cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end"*—we are invited to trust the One who *does* see it.
We do not leave the past year behind because it was perfect. We leave it behind because **its work is done**, and we trust that nothing we have suffered or celebrated is wasted in God's economy.

As we step across the threshold into the new year, we do not go alone. We travel as a community of faith—a pilgrim people. The Teacher closes by telling us that God's desire for us is simple: to find joy in our ordinary days, to do good, and to recognise our daily bread and daily work as gifts from heaven.

So, let us lay down the burdens, the past regrets, and the 'what-ifs' of the old year. Let us leave them safely in God's keeping. And let us step into the dawn of the new year with light steps and courageous hearts, knowing that the God who sustained us through the seasons of the past is already waiting for us in the future. Amen.

Message for the New Year: Faith, Hope, and Community in 2027

As the calendar turns to **2027**, we are given a welcome opportunity to pause amid the busyness of daily life. In the Kirk, we often talk about pilgrimage—not just as a historical journey, but as the daily walk of faith we share together. Entering a new year is a natural milestone on that journey, a time to look back with thanksgiving and to step forward into the unknown with quiet confidence.

Gathering Up the Fragments

Scripture frequently reminds us of the value of remembering. In the Old Testament, God's people set up stones of remembrance to mark the places where they had been sustained through difficult times.
As you look back on the past year, take a moment to notice where you found strength:

- **Moments of comfort:** The unexpected kindness of a neighbour, the peace found in quiet prayer, or the joy of fellowship in our congregation.
- **Moments of resilience:** The times you faced worry, illness, or loss, and found a quiet strength—a reminder that, as the Scots confession beautifully implies, we are never beyond the reach of God's grace.

Whatever the last year held, we leave it in God's hands, trusting that nothing is wasted in His economy.

Looking to the Hills

Living in Scotland, we are never far from the hills, which have long stood as symbols of permanence and divine protection. The Psalmist writes: *"I to the hills will lift mine eyes, from whence doth come mine aid. My safety cometh from the Lord, who heaven and earth hath made"* (Psalm 121:1-2).

As we look ahead to 2027, the future can sometimes feel uncertain or fast-paced. Yet, our faith anchors us. This year, rather than setting rigid resolutions that are easily broken, let us commit to simple, faithful practices within our church family and wider parish:

- **Cultivating Hospitality:** Opening our doors and our hearts to the lonely, the seeker, and the stranger in our community.
- **Stewardship of Creation:** Reflecting on how we can better care for our local environment and God's earth in the year ahead.
- **Deepening our Fellowship:** Supporting one another through prayer, conversation, and practical help, ensuring no one in our parish walks alone.

Prayer for the Journey

As we cross the threshold into 2027, let us travel light, carrying forward only love, faith, and hope. May our sanctuary be a place of light, and may our lives reflect the love of Christ to all we meet in the coming year.

I wish you, your families, and our whole parish community a peaceful, blessed, and happy New Year.

Rev Alison Quilter

Community Evening of CHRISTMAS MUSIC in the West Kirk

SUNDAY 13 DECEMBER • 7 PM

Get into the Christmas spirit singing your favourite Christmas songs & Carols!



SPECIAL GUESTS: The Wee Calder Bells
From Kirk of Calder, Bathgate Youth Band, West Calder Beavers, plus a few extra surprises!

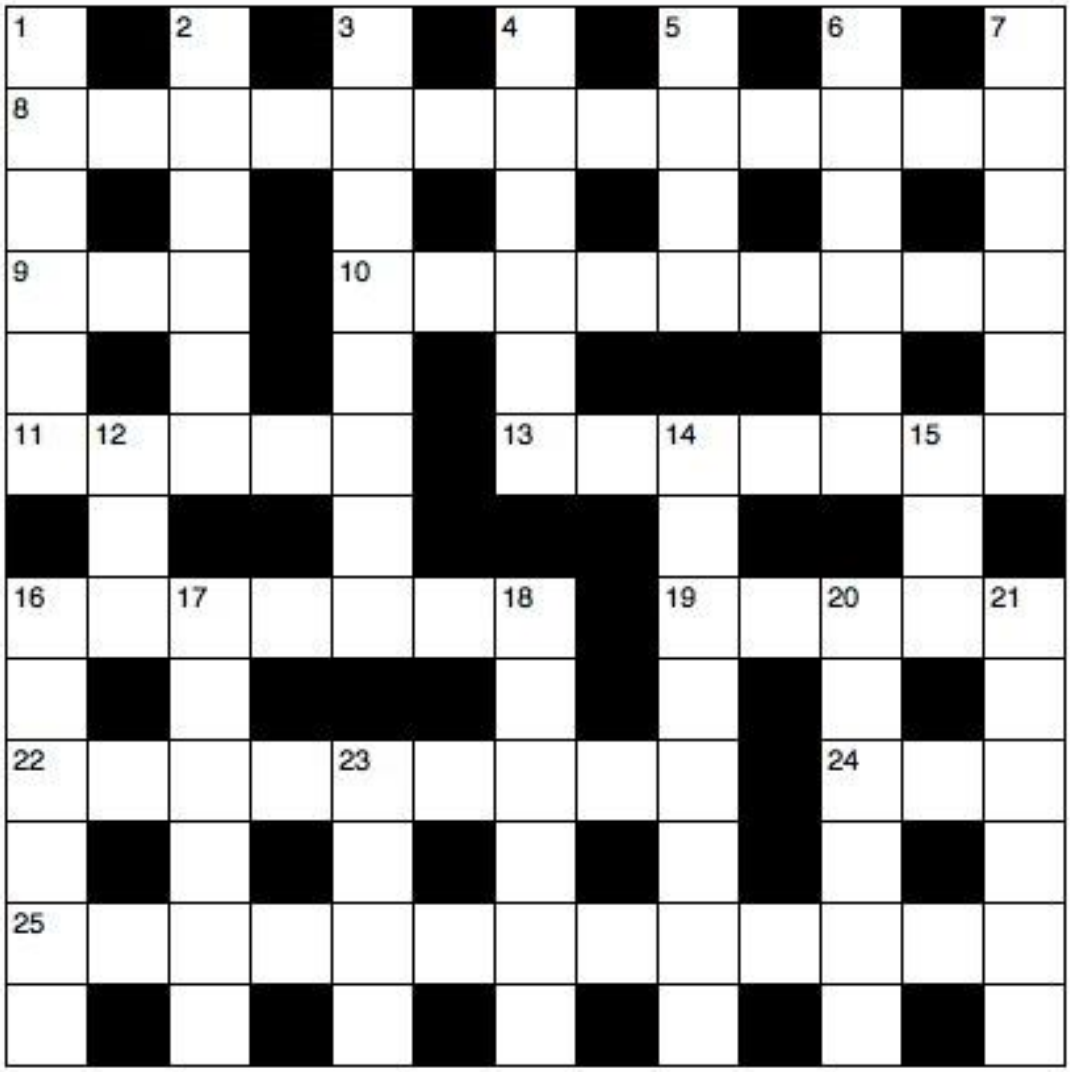


Don't forget your santa hat and christmas jumper!



Followed by free seasonal refreshments in the hall at the end. Retiring offering available at the end for the fabric of our united churches. All welcome!


Jingle and Mingle
at West Calder High School
Thursday 17 December
13:30 - 15:00
The young people invite the people from our community for an afternoon of Christmas fun and food.



Across

8 One of the titles given to the Messiah in Isaiah's prediction (Isaiah 9:6) (6,2,5)
9 International Nepal Fellowship (1,1,1)

10 Single (1Corinthians7:27)(9)
11 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's seminal book about Soviet prison camps, The — Archipelago (5)
13 Treachery(2Kings11:14)(7)
16 Of India(anag.)(2,3,2)
19 'God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession,like men condemned to die in the — ' (1 Corinthians 4:9) (5)
22 Follower of a theological system characterized by a strong belief in predestination (9)
24 'Put these old rags and worn-out clothes under your arms to— the ropes' (Jeremiah 38:12) (3)
25 They brought together all the elders of the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 4:29) (5,3,5)

Down

1 The season when kings ‘go off to war’ (2 Samuel 11:1) (6)
2 Simon Peter’s response to Jesus by the Sea of Galilee: ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a — man’ (Luke 5:8) (6)
3 Beaten with whips (1 Kings12:11) (8)
4 ‘You shall not — adultery’ (Exodus 20:14) (6)
5 Encourage (Hebrews 10:24) (4)
6 Service of morning prayer in the Church of England (6)
7 ‘Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and — — him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving’ (4,2)
12 Run(anag.)(3)
14 Member of 17th-century party that denied the right of autonomy to the Church (8)
15 ‘We will triumph with our tongues; we—our lips’(Psalm12:4) (3)
16 Earnings(1Corinthians16:2)(6)
17 ‘I rejoice greatly in the Lord that——you have renewed your concern for me’ (Philippians 4:10) (2,4)
18 How Paul described Philemon (Philemon 1)(6)
20 Multiple territories under the rule of a single state(Daniel11:4)(6)
21 ‘You have been unfaithful; you have married foreign women,—to Israel’s guilt’ (Ezra 10:10) (6)
23 This month(abbrev.)(4)

Answers to issue 4

ACROSS: 1, Womb. 3, Agnostic. 9, Long ago. 10, Fleet. 11, Horeb. 12, Yellow. 14, Deceitfulness. 17, Banish. 19, Towel. 22, Boils. 23, Inferno. 24, Eternity. 25, Defy.
DOWN: 1, Will hide. 2, Minor. 4, Glory of Christ. 5, Offal. 6, The Robe. 7, City. 8, Zabbai. 13, Psalmody. 15, Chalice. 16, Let off. 18, If son. 20, Worse. 21, Able.



Bereavement Service

6 December 3pm

West Kirk, West Calder

A special service dedicated to those we have loved and lost. An open invitation to everyone to come along and take a special moment to remember.

Free refreshments in hall after the service

The Threshold of the Year

The winter hills stand quiet in the gray,
As afternoon surrenders to the night.
We watch the final hours slip away,
And wait together for the morning light.

We bring the fragments of the year now past:
The sudden joys that took us by surprise,
The heavy shadows that the seasons cast,
The quiet prayers that rose to silent skies.

A time to harvest and a time to sow,
A time to hold, a time to let things be;
The hand of God was in the current's flow,
Through every storm and calm conformity.

So let us leave regrets within the dark,
The heavy burdens we were meant to share.
The dying embers yield a newer spark,
The coming days are held in holy care.

We cross the threshold, leaving what is done,
To walk the pilgrim path another mile.
Beneath the promise of a rising sun,
We meet the future with a faithful smile.



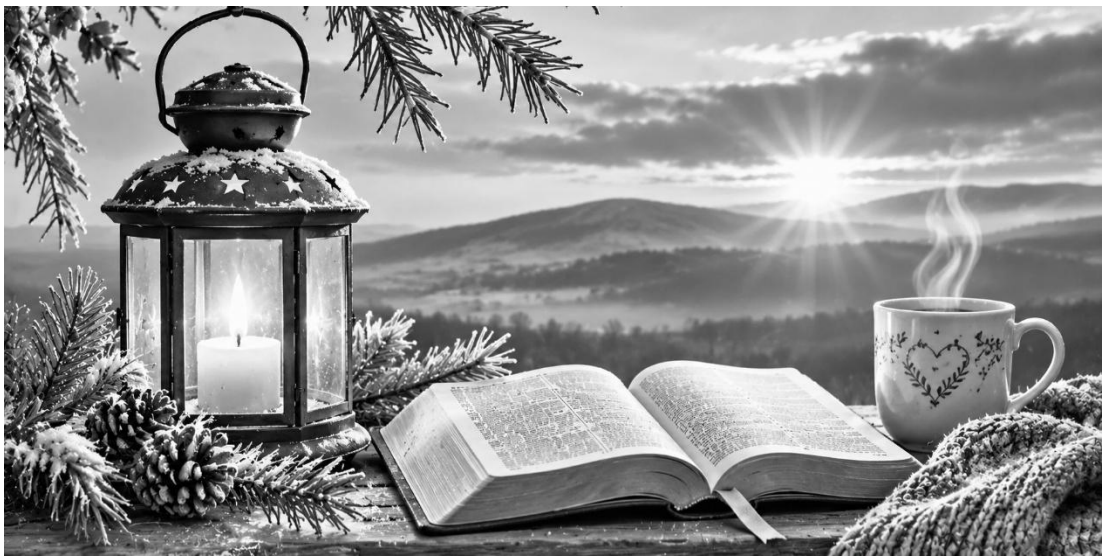
A couple of hymn verses to help us move forward into 2027

From CH3 (613)

March on my soul, with strength,
March forward, void of fear;
He who hath led will lead,
While year succeedeth year;
And as thou goest on thy way,
His hand shall hold thee day by day.

Here is a modern hymn verse for the new year, inspired by themes of God's faithfulness and fresh beginnings (such as Isaiah 43:19 and Lamentations 3:22–23):

As we step into the quiet
Of a year we've never known,
We surrender every moment,
We are sealed and called Thine own.
With new mercies shining brighter
Than the morning's early dew,
Lord, we trust Your faithful promise
To be making all things new.



Rev Alison Quilter

Pastoral Care Group outing to Pentland Plants Garden Centre

A lovely day out was had by everyone who came along.





Heaven's Grocery Store

I was walking down life's highway a long time ago.
One day I saw a sign that read 'Heaven's Grocery Store.'
As I came a little closer, the door came open wide.
And when I came to myself, I was standing inside.
I saw a host of angels, they were standing everywhere.
One handed me a basket, said 'My child shop with care.'
Everything a Christian needed was in that store.
And all you couldn't carry, you could come back the next day for more.
First, I got some Patience, Love was in the same row.
Further down was Understanding, you need that everywhere you go.
I got a box or two of Wisdom, a bag or two of Faith
I just couldn't miss the Holy Spirit, it was all over the place.
I stopped to get some Strength and Courage to help me run this race,
By then my basket was getting full, but I remembered I needed some Grace.
I didn't forget Salvation, for Salvation, that was free.
So…..I tried to get enough of that to save both you and me.
Then I started up to the counter to pay my grocery bill
For I thought that I had everything to do my master's will.
I went up the aisle, there was Prayer and I just had to put that in.
For I knew when I stepped outside, I would run right into sin.
Peace and Joy were plentiful, they were on the last shelf.
Song and Praise were hanging near, so I just helped myself.
Then I said to the angel, 'Now how much do I owe?'
He just smiled and said, 'Just take them everywhere you go.'
Again, I smiled at him and said, 'Really, how much do I owe?'
And this time he said, 'My child, Jesus paid your bill A LONG TIME AGO.'



Candlelit Watchnight Service

Christmas Eve at 23:30

In the West Kirk

You are warmly invited to gather with us
as we welcome the Saviour
and step into the year ahead with Hope.

All Welcome

All-Age Family Christmas Eve Service



24 December at 18:30
Polbeth Harwood Church

Everyone Welcome



The Quiet Service

The next quiet services in Polbeth Harwood will be held on **Wednesday 9th December and 20th January at 3:30pm**, in the 'quiet room'.

All are welcome to this short service followed by tea, coffee, biscuits and a 'blether'. The short service of worship includes a couple of hymns, scripture reading, prayers and a short reflection. Entry via the Ramp Door of the Polbeth Church building.

Anyone who would like to come and needs assistance with transport should call Sandra Dixon on 07855861223.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Sandra and Alison

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Wednesday Blether Group

Meet in the café area of Polbeth Church every Wednesday evening between 6.30pm and 9pm for a blether and a cup of tea. Knitting/crocheting is optional. Everyone is welcome.

We had a lovely day out at Rosebank for a Christmas Lunch for a little change of scenery.




Lessons & Carols
— Service —
and Gift Service
Sunday 13 December
West Kirk 9:30
Polbeth Harwood 11:15
All welcome
Please bring gifts
in a gift bag,
unwrapped

The Bridge  '16 to 25+ year olds'

'The Bridge' for young folk aged 16 to 25+ years old is held quarterly. A get together and a blether, sharing a meal or light snack and exploring our faith and discussing things that matter to you as young folk in 21stC. If you are interested, please get in touch with me or Nanda and bring a friend along too!

We meet in Polbeth Harwood Church Café Area on a **Wednesday at 7pm.** Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 16th December.

The Bridge let's stay connected! Look forward to seeing you there!

Nanda, Sandra and Alison

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What do you call a blind reindeer?

No-eye deer.

What do you call a blind reindeer with no legs?

Still no-eye deer.

Why was the snowman embarrassed when he was spotted rummaging through a bag of carrots?

He was caught picking his nose.


West Kirk
Christmas Mingle
Saturday 5 December
10am - 1pm
Home baking, crafts,
raffle, lucky dip
Serving:
tea, coffee, soup,
sandwiches & seasonal savouries,
cakes & mincemeat pies.
Cost £8

A Sobering Reminder this Advent

Winter arrives at fragile shelters, carrying the chill of long, uncertain nights.

Rain falls heavily upon the earth, and their tents tremble beneath the storm.

The nights grow long for those who have lost so much, while the cold reaches even the smallest children.

The wind moves through their fragile tents, threatening the dreams they still hold close.

Mothers carry silent wounds in their hearts, shielding their children from the darkness around them.

They ask for nothing more than the dignity of safety, for safety is the hope they hold above all else.

Each day they endure with remarkable strength, even as hunger leaves its mark.

Yet hope remains, even through the cold – a light that refuses to fade.

Extend the warmth of your generosity to their hearts, for love is what builds a kinder, more hopeful world.

Noor Al Hariri

In Zaatari Refugee Camp

BC News



NATIVITY SERVICE

Sunday 20 December at 10am
in the West Kirk

Service led entirely by children.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

EVERYONE WELCOME



December 26

Wednesday	2nd	Meet Me @ the Manse	Manse	14.00 – 15.30
Saturday	5th	Christmas Mingle	West Calder	10.00
Sunday	6th	Kirk Session meeting Holy Communion Bible Class Bereavement Service	West Calder West Calder Polbeth West Calder West Calder	09.15 09.30 11.15 09.30 15.00
Wednesday	9th	Wednesday Warblers Quiet Service	West Calder Polbeth	11.00 15.30
Thursday	10th	Beyond Kirk Walls services	Dickson Court Burngrange Home	13.45 15.00
Sunday	13th	Morning Worship: Gift Service Evening of Christmas Music	West Calder Polbeth West Calder	09.30 11.15 19.00
Tuesday	15th	WL Council Christmas Service	West Calder	10.00
Friday	18th	Parkhead PS Service	West Calder	09.30
Sunday	20th	United Nativity service	West Calder	10.00
Thursday	24th	Family Service Watchnight Service	Polbeth West Calder	18.30 23.30
Sunday	27th	United Worship	Polbeth	11.05



January 2027

Sunday	3rd	United Worship	West Calder	09.30
Friday	8th	Session Meal	West Calder	18.30
Sunday	10th	Morning Worship	West Calder Polbeth	09.30 11.15
Wednesday	13th	Wednesday Warblers	West Calder	11.00
Thursday	14th	Beyond Kirk Walls services	Dickson Court Burngrange Home	13.45 15.00
Sunday	17th	Morning Worship	West Calder Polbeth	09.30 11.15
Wednesday	20th	Quiet Service Session Meeting	Polbeth	15.30 19.00
Thursday	21st	Bible Study	Manse	19.00
Sunday	24th	Morning Worship	West Calder Polbeth	09.30 11.15
Friday	29th	Youth Group		19.00
Sunday	31st	Morning Worship	West Calder Polbeth	09.30 11.15





We are warmly invited to

Christmas services

by our friends of

East Calder Kirknewton and Ratho Church

6th December	17.00	Carol Service	East Calder Church
13th December	17.00	Carol Service	Kirknewton Village hall
20th December	17.00	Carol Service	Ratho Church
25th December	10.00	Christmas Morning	Ratho Church

As part of our Presbytery Mission Grouping, we already have links with our friends in East Calder Kirknewton and Ratho Church with whom we have shared Festival of Light services over the last three years. We are warmly invited to share in any of the above services, as they are to share in any of our special services over the festive season.

Parish Record

Deaths

Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life."

To all who have lost a loved one we extend our sincere sympathies and prayers.

17th September – Ian Wilkinson, Fairbarn Retreat, Western Australia

18th September – Thomas McLean, Aitken Orr Drive, Broxburn

25th September – Grace Reid, Mid Street, Deans, Livingston

Loving God,

In this coming season of Christmas,

we pray for your peace and comforting strength

to those saddened by loneliness and grief;

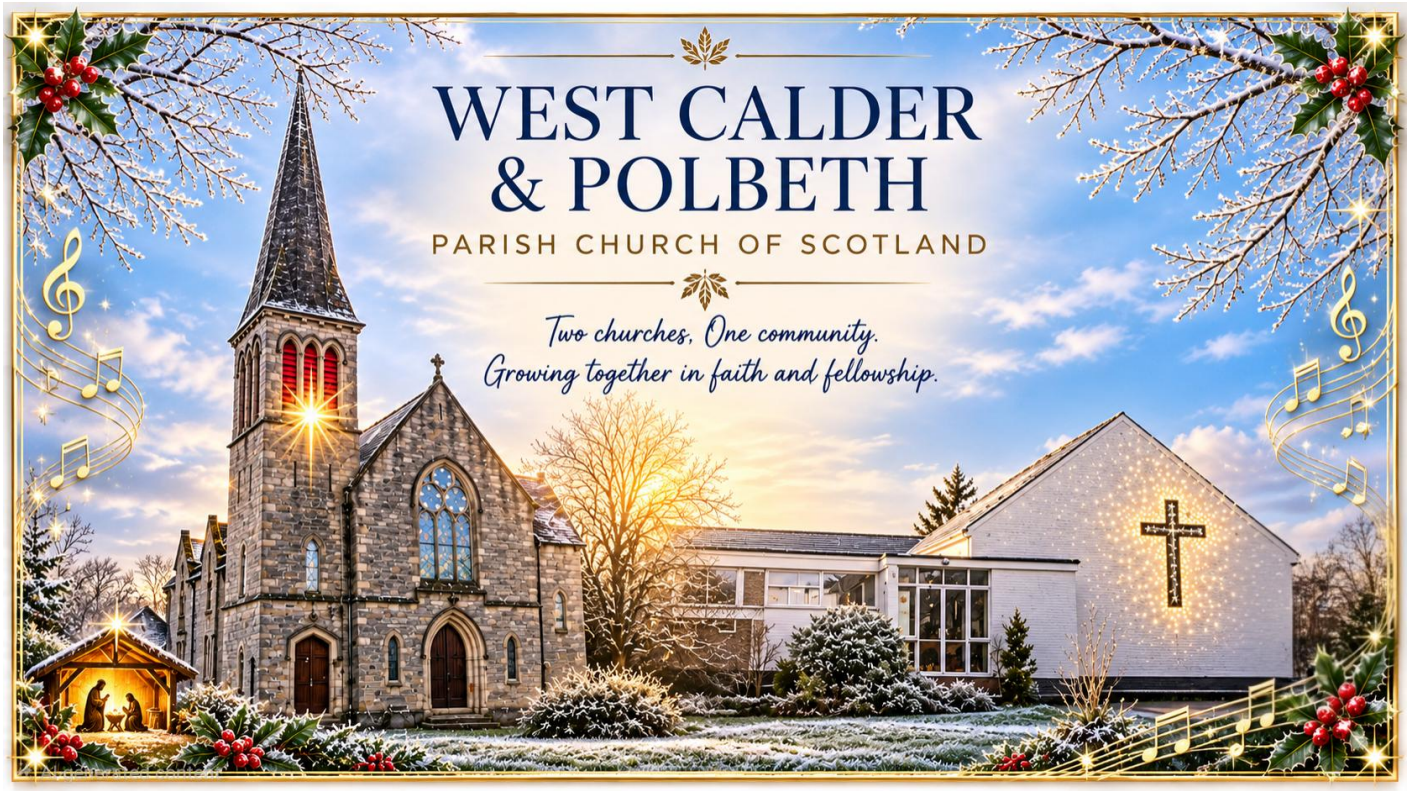
to those debilitated by illness, anxiety or sorrow;

to those engulfed in conflict and confusion;

to those caught up in tragedy and despair.

May the celebration of Jesus' birth be

the rekindling of love and hope for them.



Winter & Festive Program

Saturday 28 November
Polbeth Harwood - Christmas Fayre 14:00 - 16:00

Sunday 29 November - 1st Sunday in Advent
Morning Worship – 9:30 West Kirk & 11:15 Polbeth Harwood

Saturday 5 December
West Kirk – Christmas Mingle 10:00

Sunday 6 December – Holy Communion
Morning Worship – 9:30 West Kirk & 11:15 Polbeth Harwood

Annual Bereavement Service
West Kirk – 15:00

Wednesday 9 December - Quiet Service
Polbeth Harwood 15:30

Sunday 13 December - Gift Service
Morning Worship – 9:30 West Kirk & 11:15 Polbeth Harwood

Community Evening of Christmas Music
West Kirk – 19:00

Sunday 20 December – Nativity Service – Led by the Children
West Kirk – 10:00

Wednesday 24 December – Family Service
Polbeth Harwood – 18:30

Watchnight Service
West Kirk 23:30

Sunday 27 December - United Worship
Polbeth Harwood – 11:15

Sunday 3 January 2027 – United Worship
West Kirk – 9:30

Sunday 10 January 2027
Morning Worship – 9:30 West Kirk & 11:15 Polbeth Harwood

"We are proud to be an all-inclusive church community where everyone is truly welcome. Whether you are a regular churchgoer or simply curious, we warmly invite you to join us for any of the events held across our two churches."

For full details and upcoming dates, please visit our website, notice board and Facebook page.

www.west-kirk-polbeth-harwood.co.uk
Facebook: West Calder & Polbeth Parish Church of Scotland
Charity SC004703 - Congregation 020161

Please send all articles for the February/March issue of Parish News to **parishnews@west-kirk-polbeth-harwood.co.uk before 20th January.**