

# Parish Profile



Polbeth Harwood linked with  
West Kirk of Calder

"Growing in faith and sharing our faith in God with the world  
around us to make way for Jesus in our community"



Polbeth Harwood Church  
Chapelton Terrace  
Polbeth  
EH55 8SH

West Kirk of Calder  
West End  
West Calder  
EH55 8EN



## **Introduction**

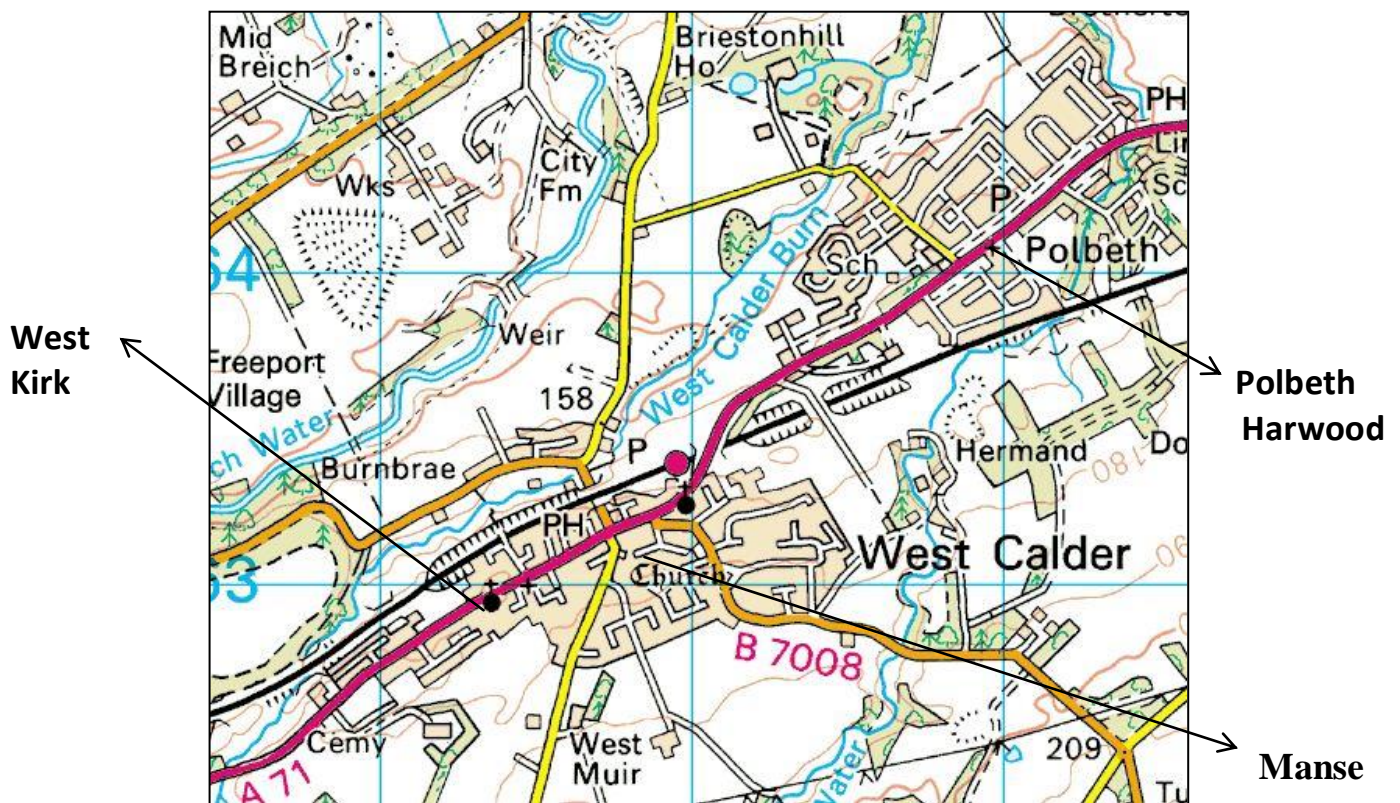
The history of West Kirk goes as far back as Reformation times when the community of West Calder grew up around its kirk. The current traditionally Victorian church building was first open for worship in 1880 replacing the original kirk, the ruins of which still stand just behind the main street in the village.

Polbeth Harwood congregation have recently celebrated 50 years of witness and worship in their more modern suite of sanctuary, hall and rooms –all paid for by community funding - in a position designed to be a focus of community life in the village. The linkage between the two churches was formed in 2003 and both Sessions are now actively discussing a closer working relationship with the exciting possibility of even closer involvement under the visionary leadership of a new minister.

Whilst the West Kirk congregation are proud of their long past history, the Sessions hold the view that together the congregations are stronger and, with faith, more able to meet the challenges facing the Church and where and how God wants us to serve him in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We seek a minister who can encourage us, nourish our faith and lead us in the direction God has mapped out for us as his servants.

The two churches are only over a mile apart, both situated on A71.



### About West Calder and Polbeth

The semi-rural communities of West Calder and Polbeth are situated around the A71, 17 miles west of Edinburgh and 3-4 miles south west of Livingston. The parish boundaries extend as far as the A70 to the south and west and meet those of the still developing town of Livingston to the east and north.

West Calder initially grew up around its Kirk, established as a separate entity in 1647 although history of the presence of the Church in the area can be traced back as far as 1160. Over the centuries, the area has remained predominantly rural except for a century, from 1863 – 1962, when the shale mining industry of James ‘Paraffin’ Young, with its numerous pits and refinery, was in its heyday. Polbeth was home to Sir James and boasts the Limefield Falls, a miniature replica of the Victoria Falls, discovered by Young’s friend David Livingstone. Now West Calder sits in the lee of the Five Sisters – shale bings which are a protected industrial heritage site. The village has also benefited from the largesse of philanthropist Andrew Carnegie and his Foundation with the building of the public library in 1903, and in the donation of half the cost of the pipe organ in the West Kirk in 1902.

The surrounding villages, including Polbeth, take the town's name in their postal address and the immediate area recovered better than many in West Lothian after the demise of shale oil.

Shops in Polbeth provide all essentials for residents while West Calder has a larger variety of shopping facilities, and nearby Livingston provides several big name supermarkets and other excellent shopping outlets in its central retail complexes along with a good variety of leisure facilities. There is a small local zoo within the parish boundaries and plenty of scope for various outdoor activities within reach including access in the Pentland hills.

There are good transport links in the parishes, with a half hourly train service to Edinburgh and Glasgow from West Calder station and a good network of bus routes to Livingston and beyond. There is also easy access to the M8 and Edinburgh airport.

There are three schools within the parish boundaries

- West Calder High School, with a good academic record providing secondary education with a current roll of 950 pupils.
- Parkhead Primary School with currently 365 pupils in p1-p7 and 70 nursery children.
- St Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School (with nursery unit attached)

Within West Calder are churches of two other Christian denominations – Our Lady & St Bridget's Roman Catholic Church and Limefield United Free Church. There is a good working relationship with these two resulting in shared ecumenical worship early on Easter morning and at Pentecost and in the distribution of leaflets to all households in the parishes at Christmas and Easter advertising worship in the Christian community.

West Calder Medical Practice, based in new purpose built accommodation, almost opposite West Kirk, provides GP and community services for the healthcare of residents not only in West Calder but the surrounding villages. St John's Hospital, the local district general hospital, is situated 4 miles away. There are two sheltered housing complexes and a residential care home in West Calder with a further care home close to the Livingston boundary of Polbeth parish.

The villages support a variety of businesses in small industrial units employing local people. However, the area predominantly provides commuter residence for nearby Livingston, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Each village retains its own unique community spirit. In recent years there has been new housing in both villages with currently planning permission for around 200 new homes within the parish boundaries. The population within the parishes is slightly under 6,000.

## The Congregations

In common with the general picture across the country, there has been a gradual decline in membership over the past number of years but this is a reflection of the recognised increase in elderly population in the parishes. However, the slightly smaller size of the congregations does not diminish the workload for minister, Sessions or members. Currently, congregational rolls stand at 264 + 15 adherents for West Kirk and 181 + 8 adherents at Polbeth Harwood.

### Worship

Currently, **morning worship** is celebrated each Sunday, 9.45am at West Kirk and 11.15am at Polbeth Harwood. These services have a traditional structure whilst including a variety of input and approaches aimed at being relevant to today's world. Both congregations have a rota of volunteers for Bible readings and West Kirk also uses a rota of members undertaking the prayers of Thanksgiving & Intercession. The young people are present for the first part of the service in both congregations, leaving to continue their own style of worship and fellowship in the halls. Both congregations enjoy an informal time of fellowship with refreshments. Due to service timings, Polbeth Harwood members hold this before their service, whilst West Kirk congregation meet after theirs.

From time to time, services take the format of '**All Age Worship**', structured to appeal to wide range of age groups making up the congregations. During these services, younger folk remain in church throughout.

Both congregations organise **transport** for weekly worship on a rota of volunteer drivers for those who would otherwise have difficulty attending.

**Holy Communion** is celebrated quarterly - on the first Sunday in March, June, September and December.

**Home communion** is available to the housebound & sheltered care residents are given small communal services. Elders accompany the minister on these visits.

**Bimonthly short informal services** ('Beyond the Kirk Walls') have been set up during the vacancy and been well received. These are conducted by the worship group of West Kirk and held in local sheltered care accommodation on a Sunday afternoon.

A **Bereavement service**, introduced during the vacancy, was conducted in December 2012 in West Kirk. This, too, was very well received and attended. Following on from this success, it is intended to hold an annual service alternating between the two churches.

**Christmas** – The young people in both congregations are heavily involved in services around the Christmas period, particularly with their Nativity services but also at the joint early evening service on Christmas Eve, traditionally held at Polbeth Harwood eg Christingle The joint worship continues at 11.30pm, when West Kirk open their doors for the Watchnight service. A joint Christmas day service has been revived during the vacancy after an absence of several years and has been well attended.

**Easter** – During Holy Week, West Kirk is open for quiet reflection on the evenings of Monday to Wednesday which includes a short service of prayer and meditation. An evening communion service (followed by a communal pot luck supper) is hosted by Polbeth Harwood on Maundy Thursday, followed on Good Friday by an evening service hosted by West Kirk. Easter Day celebrations commence with an outdoor ecumenical early morning service in the Auld Kirk yard at West Calder and communal breakfast before congregations involved celebrate morning worship at regular service times.

**Annual Harvest Thanksgiving** services are held at which the young people take a prominent part.

**World Day of Prayer.** Ladies from both congregations take it in turn annually to organise the local services for this ecumenical service, holding a shorter afternoon version in the local sheltered accommodation followed by the longer service in the evening within the host church.

### **Kirk Sessions**



West Kirk currently operates under Quoad Omnia constitution, but at a special meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2013, the congregation unanimously agreed with the recommendation of Session to adopt a Quoad Sacra constitution for the future. This matter is now en route via Presbytery to The Delegation of Assembly. There are currently 18 active elders who play important participative roles in all aspects of church life, including membership of various groups covering worship, pastoral care, business, fund-raising and communication. Session regularly convenes 6 times a year, approximately bimonthly.

Polbeth Harwood Session, which runs under the Quoad Sacra constitution, has 29 members and Congregational Board of 12 members. They meet 6 times a year, usually alternate months to West Kirk.

During the vacancy, there have been several joint session meetings and joint training session on safeguarding. Currently, both congregations share a safeguarding co-ordinator. Both sessions have a support group for the minister.

## **Church based organisations**

### **Young people**

West Kirk Sunday Club. We currently have five teachers plus one student helper in the Sunday Club who are actively promoting the Sunday Club in the village and have established an excellent rapport with the local primary school which has led to new children coming along on Sundays. The children are actively encouraged to play their part in worship when the opportunity arises, for example on Mothering Sunday by singing and signing 'Jesus Loves Me' and to understand the needs of the less fortunate in our world by raising funds for Save the Children.

Traditional annual outings, eagerly supported by the congregation, are held. Innovative approaches to Club activities involve the use of visual aids, music and DVD formats to maintain interest and reflect the technology savvy backgrounds the children are used to.

Excellent examples of engaging with the children have been the visit of a local zoo keeper who brought a live snake to enliven the children's talk at Sunday Worship and two local police officers who dressed the kids in body armour and handcuffed a teacher! Numbers in the Club are stable and with the forward looking approach of the staff, the growth in content and quality of our ministry to the children is set to continue.

There is a crèche for younger children in the hall during Sunday morning worship staffed by approved members of the congregation.

Polbeth Harwood JAM (Jesus and Me) Club meet every Sunday at morning worship, leaving the main worship area part way through the service to gather together in their very own JAM Club room upstairs where they continue their own style of worship, which occasionally takes them into the kitchen to make tasty treats. With two teachers, the Club is open to all children from the age of 3yrs. Each year the annual trip to the seaside is eagerly anticipated by the youngsters and the young at heart in the congregations, sharing the fun of the beach and the picnic. Appreciating that everything has costs and grateful for the support of the congregation, the Club holds lunches every few weeks, popularly selling sausage or bacon rolls.



**Sunday Club**



**Jam Club**

## **West Kirk Guild**

Currently 20 strong, West Kirk Guild offers members and guests an interesting and varied programme on 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays of the month from Oct to April. This branch involves itself with other neighbouring guilds and women's groups, as well as fund raising for national Guild projects and other charitable organisations.

## **Emmaus Group**

The group meets on the last Tuesday of most months in a member's home to explore the bible, talk and pray together. Amazing things have happened on the Emmaus road.

## **Polbeth Ladies**

The group hold an annual 'At Home' evening each November when guests are invited from neighbouring congregations and guilds.

## **Sanctuary & Premises**

Thanks to dedicated commitment from members, each church is well maintained both internally and externally. Completely different in outlay and design, both possess an air of reverence and peace. Whilst the more traditional West Kirk has beautiful stained glass windows and several items of historical significance, Polbeth Harwood has a sanctuary of homely simplicity and flexibility as well as a 'quiet room' for smaller gatherings.



**Polbeth Harwood**

**West Kirk**



Both congregations have a Loop system and audio facilities installed within the sanctuary for the hard of hearing and West Kirk has a Loop system in the hall. The recent purchase of a laptop and a projector for regular use by Sunday Club in West Kirk means there is occasional use of visual aids in Sunday worship.

In both congregations, church flowers are donated by members, arranged by volunteers, and distributed after morning worship to those, including the sick and the housebound, who need to know that the congregations are holding them in their thoughts and prayers.

## Music

The congregations currently employ the services of the same supply organist for Sunday morning worship.

Polbeth Harwood has a modern electric organ / piano through which music can be played from CDs in addition to a piano in the 'quiet room'.

West Kirk has a rare pipe organ and separate piano in the sanctuary. A small choir form part of the congregation at morning worship. The sound system installed in the sanctuary allows for both live and pre-recorded music. There is also a piano in the hall.

## Halls

Polbeth Harwood has a well maintained suite of halls and meeting rooms, including a large kitchen area, as an integral part of the church building.

At West Kirk, the hall is a separate building within the church grounds. It comprises of 2 rooms, the main one fitted with a Loop system, and includes kitchen facilities, where those qualified in food hygiene can serve meals.

## Community Outreach

### School Chaplaincy

There are strong links with both Parkhead Primary School in West Calder and West Calder High School on the outskirts of Polbeth. Since the high school's catchment area covers the neighbouring parishes of Mid Calder and East Calder, a shared chaplaincy team operates within the school. Involvement at morning assemblies at the primary school occurs monthly. Both schools welcome the opportunity to hold end of term services in our churches. Polbeth Harwood also welcomes the children from St Mary's RC primary school for a short service for World Day of Prayer

### Local community use of premises

In addition to church based organisations -

The local Scout Group uses the hall at West Kirk for meetings and events for all three of its sections - Beavers, Cubs & Scouts. The hall is also used by the local Bridge Club; Craft Club; Strategy Games Club. The facilities at Polbeth Harwood are utilised by the local WRI & handicrafts group; children's dance classes; Slimming World meetings.

Both church premises are used occasionally by community groups for special concerts and functions eg West Calder Brass Band; NYCOS choir.

Both congregations hold regular fund raising events, which also serve as opportunities for the community to meet and socialise and are widely supported.

‘Candy Bars’ have been a feature of West Kirk life from the late 70’s and are still going strong. Organised by the fund raising group but manned by different church organisations on a rota, these monthly events follow the format of a coffee morning with sale of home baking and other goods, finishing with a hot 3 course lunch.

Thrift shop at Polbeth Harwood is run on a monthly basis August to November and January through to May, offering new or nearly new clothing for sale and providing tea and coffee.



Ecumenical services are held on Easter morning and at Pentecost when congregation members are joined by members from Limefield United Free Church and Our Lady & St Bridget’s Roman Catholic Church.



Approaching Christmas, the West Kirk hold an Evening Xmas Music, complete with augmented choir, Sunday Club, Scout Group & local Brass Band, all contributing to the evening's entertainment.

As the parish church, West Kirk has taken responsibility for organising the production and distribution of ecumenical leaflets, detailing all services and events, on behalf of the Christian community in the area at Christmas and Easter. At various times in the year, thanks to the co-operation of the head teacher, leaflets are also distributed to the pupils at Parkhead Primary School advertising kids' events in the two congregations.

For many years, Polbeth Harwood congregation have organised an annual summer holiday offering anyone in the community the opportunity of a week's break and company through a David Urquhart Tour.

Since the linkage of the congregations, a joint publication, LINK magazine, has been circulated to households of members and supporters of both congregations on a monthly basis. This publication makes a valuable contribution to the lives of the congregations, keeping members up to date with the activities of the various groups and special functions. It also informs readers of issues concerning the wider Church.

The web site, [www.west-kirk-polbeth-harwood.co.uk](http://www.west-kirk-polbeth-harwood.co.uk) has been recently remodelled as a joint site to provide what is seen as a vital communication and outreach tool for the congregations.

Several members from both churches, with the support of Sessions, have attended Scripture Union training sessions as preparation to undertake the exciting new venture of a Holiday Club to be held in Polbeth Harwood premises during the school summer holidays. This will be for children in the communities of primary school age.

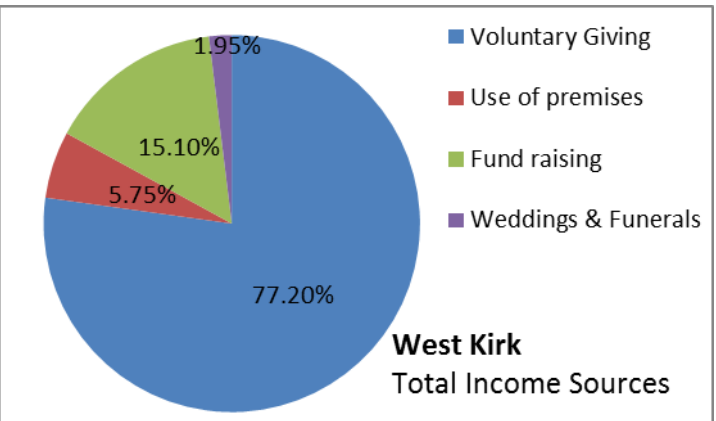
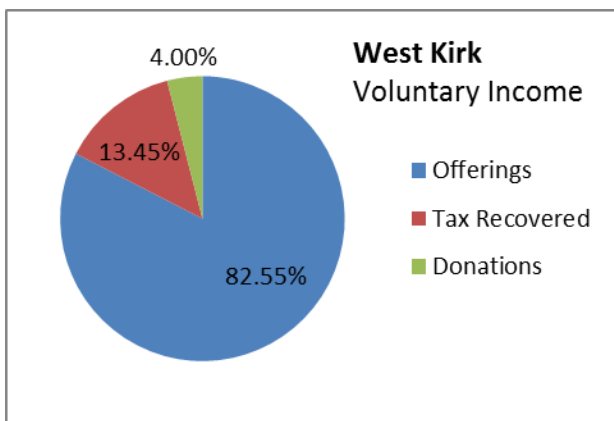
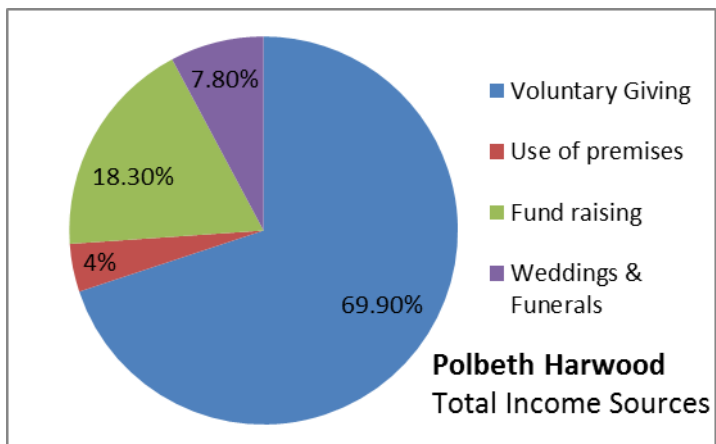
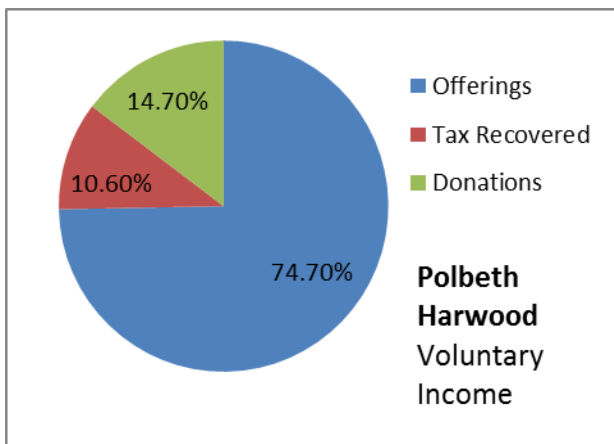
Both congregations offer Fairtrade products for sale; support Christian Aid; Blythwood Trust through its Shoebox Appeal; Church of Scotland HIV/Aids campaign; and several other Christian and local charities.

### **Finances**

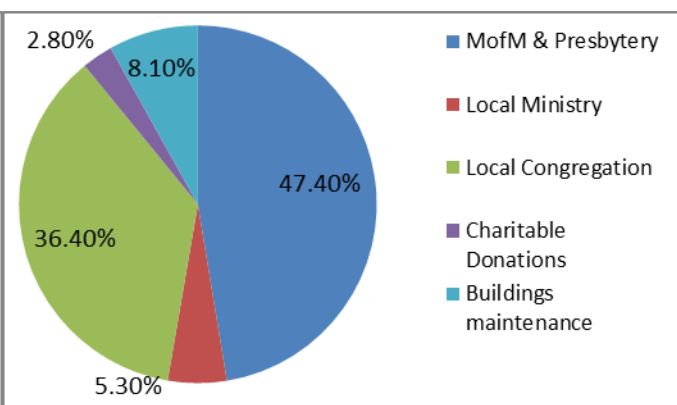
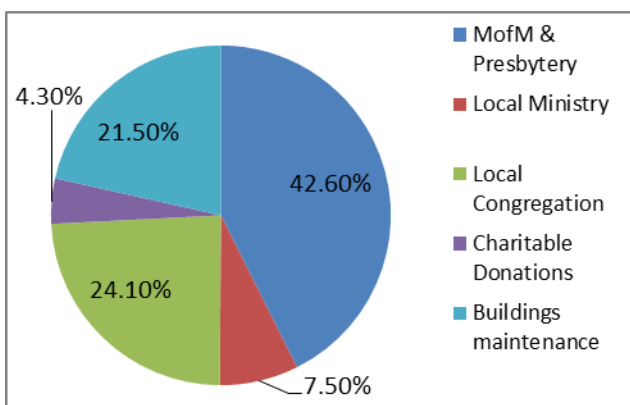
In addition to the regular voluntary giving schemes, fund raising occasions are important sources of income as well as of fellowship for both congregations with occasional special events supplementing the regular Candy Bars and Thrift Shops and Polbeth Harwood's May & November Fayres.

The pie charts below show a simple breakdown of income for both congregations

## INCOME



## EXPENDITURE



**West Kirk Expenditure 2012**

**Polbeth Harwood expenditure 2012**

Because of the vacancy, it is more difficult to give a true picture of the expenditure of both congregations and closer inspection of the audited annual accounts can be made on request.

## **The Manse**



The manse is centrally situated within 10 -20mins walking distance of both churches, at the end of Learmonth Crescent. The modern bungalow with landscaped gardens is in a quiet area close to the centre of West Calder, comprising lounge, dining room, 5 bedrooms, study, kitchen, bathroom, shower room, utility room and single garage. The Kirk Sessions are mindful of making adequate funding provision for the comfortable needs of a minister & family.

### **Challenges and opportunities**

The vacancy has encouraged us to participate more as congregations in Sunday worship and helped us develop more both individually and collectively. We look forward to continuing that together with a new minister.

We see our main emphasis for the future on

- More congregational member participation.

West Kirk is in the process of changing its constitution to that of the Model Constitution

- Outreach for young people and their families.

Summer 2013 sees a new venture of a Holiday Club for the communities, run jointly by the congregations.

- Make provision for wider scope of worship.

West Kirk are investigating the possibility of 'media' facilities within the sanctuary.

- Stewardship Campaign.

Both congregations are participating in the 3 year programme of money, talents and time.

### **Our new minister**

- Committed to preaching and teaching the Word in a way which will help us to be open to God's calling, develop our faith & inspire us to deepen our service
- Caring pastor working in church, home, hospital & school
- Easy to talk to and comfortable with all age groups
- Approachable and blessed with sense of humour
- Listener
- Motivator and delegator
- Keen to help us attract young families and young people into the church

We are keen to move forward with a new minister to work more closely together to learn, support and serve God in our communities.

