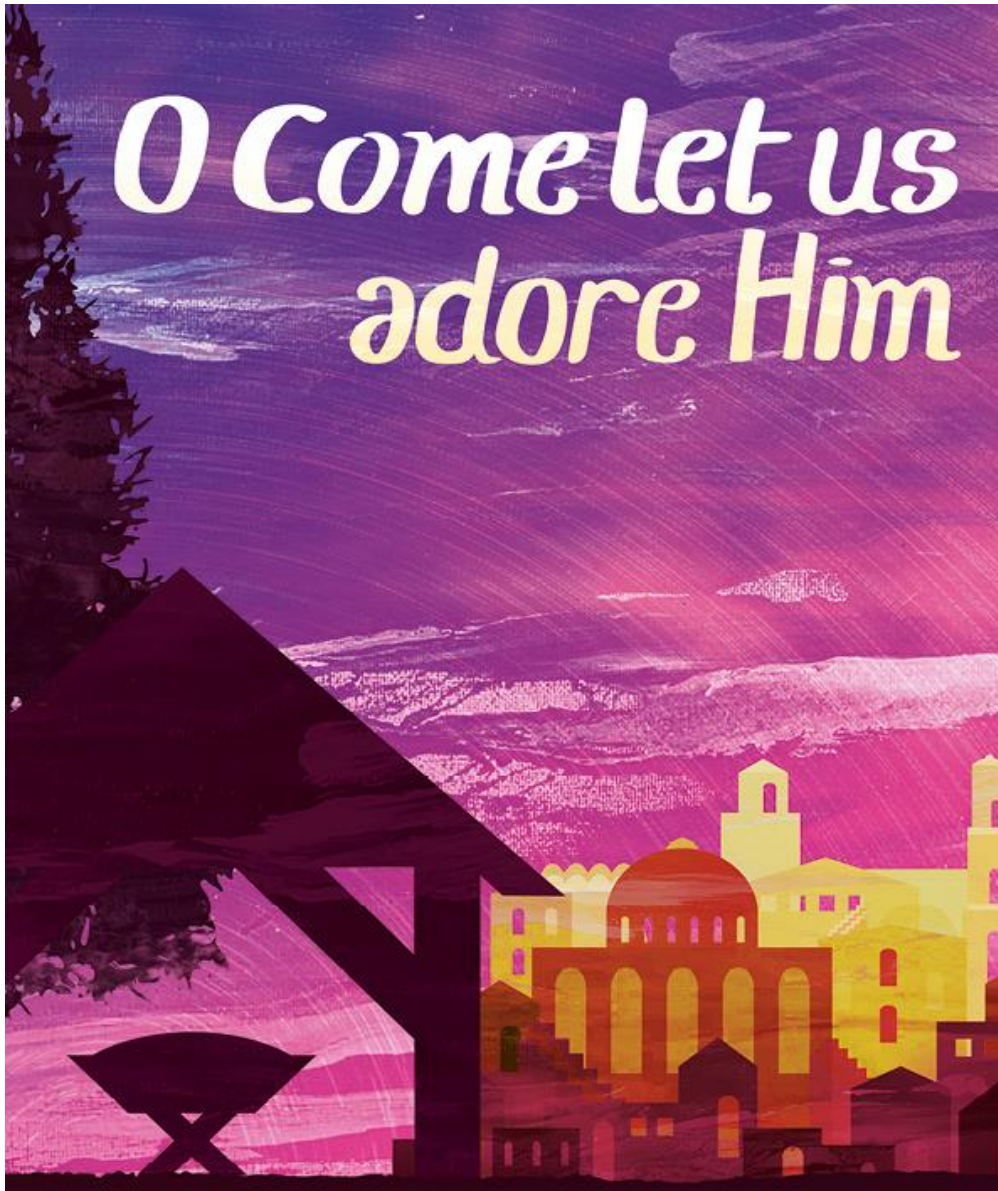


December/January 2024

Issue 166

# The Link



The magazine for the linked congregations and communities  
of the West Kirk of Calder and Polbeth Harwood.

[www.west-kirk-polbeth-harwood.co.uk](http://www.west-kirk-polbeth-harwood.co.uk)

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Dear Friends

“Are you ready for Christmas?”

Someone asked me that the other day. And I thought: “How on earth can I be ready for Christmas, it’s still so far away?” Until I realised, it it’s not far away at all! How can it be December already? Where has the time gone?

Thinking about Christmas sent my mind wandering to that very first Christmas... And then I realised something significant: If there ever was someone who wasn’t ready for Christmas, it was Mary.

She was just a young girl when an angel of God appeared to her and said: “Greetings, you who are highly favoured. The Lord is with you” (Luke 1:28). That was the day her life changed forever. She had no idea what was lying ahead of her. She had no idea what giving birth to the Saviour of the world would mean. She wasn’t ready for it. She wasn’t prepared. Yet... She said yes. Because God promised to be with her, and even though she had no idea how to be who God wanted her to be, she trusted him enough to say yes.

And look how that turned out! Because Mary said yes, we are saved.

So, this Christmas, let's trust God like Mary did. And in this new year, let's trust God like Mary did. We might not be ready for Christmas, we might have no idea what the year 2025 will have in store for us, but we know one thing, and that is: God will be with us.

And that is enough.

May God bless you all this Christmas and new year.

Much love, Nanda



### **Nativity meditation and reflection**

On Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> December at 7pm in Polbeth Harwood Church Thomas Griffin will lead us in a short service to take time out of our hectic lives to reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.

It would be lovely to see you all there.

## Advent Journey

In our churches through Advent, we increase the light in the darkness by lighting our Advent candles each Sunday until we celebrate Christ the Light of the World on Christmas Day!

But it's also a season of waiting. We wait for Christ's coming, and we wait for His coming too at the end of time to bring all things to wonderful completion!

Most people these days are obsessed with time. For many of us there isn't enough of it - especially at Christmas - and we find ourselves busy, stressed, rushed and overworked. For others time hangs heavily and has become oppressive. Either way it's good to learn to wait sometimes.

Waiting is not just a passive thing. What are we to do while we wait? And how are we being formed in this time? How can we open our hearts to God in this season to be ready for all the He wants for us?

We are impatient people to the core - well I can be. Sitting in meetings while decisions are being made and if folk had only

read the emails and papers before the meeting, the decisions could have been reached in 20mins not 2 or 3 hours later.

In those situations, I am not patient at all. But have to spend time and seem interested as old ground is covered and I think of all the other things I could be doing.....

Waiting is always a reminder of the extent to which we cannot always control things. Accepting our limits.

I think, it is the first lesson in Christian spirituality. It is one of the first lessons of Advent. The message in that time, like power, is in God's hands. And this way we learn to own this by learning how to wait.

There is a reflection on this by Stephen Cherry called the Feeder and is based on a bird feeder in his garden in winter.

*Now the leaves have gone  
they are more visible,  
more vulnerable too.*

*The birds of the garden, hedge and tree.*

*Filling the feeder takes on  
An aspect of duty.  
It is a lifeline for  
The birds of the garden, tree and hedge.*

*As the days shorten, and  
The long nights lengthen, teach me  
The grace of looking,  
The grace of listening,  
The grace of being,  
The grace of loving,  
The grace of seeing,  
The fragile beauty  
So close at hand.*

*In a world that feels so dark in every way may we immerse  
ourselves in Advent and find ourselves changed as we pause  
and open ourselves to God to embrace the light which He  
longs for us and all people to know.*

When it comes, have a happy and blessed Christmas! And may we all rediscover gradually the deepest truth that, 'The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.' (John 1:5).

### **Advent Blessing**

Hold your light out to the world  
and let people in our communities  
feel the warmth of God's love  
as they encounter the Word made Flesh  
through Christ our Lord.

Follow, where the Spirit of Hope leads us,  
Listen, as the Child of Peace cries for us,  
Rejoice, as the Love of God embraces us and  
let us go with Hope, Peace and Love in our hearts  
and the blessing of the Creator, Child and Spirit for ever  
remain with us. Amen.

**Rev A Quilter**



## The Bridge



'16 to 25 year olds'

'The Bridge' for young folk aged 16 to 25 years old is held quarterly. A get together to have a blether, sharing a meal or light snack and explore our faith and discuss 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 once a quarter in Polbeth Harwood Church Café Area on a **Wednesday at 7pm**. Our next quarterly scheduled meeting will be in **December on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup>** at 7pm for a Christmas get together.

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

Nanda, Sandra and Alison



## The Quiet Service

A monthly mid-week quiet service in Polbeth Harwood will next be held on **Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December at 3:30pm** in the 'quiet room'. All are welcome to this short service followed by tea, coffee, biscuits and a 'blether'.

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

We look forward to seeing you there.

Enter church at the Ramp Door at the rear of the church.

Sandra, Alison and Thomas

Future dates 15<sup>th</sup> January, 12<sup>th</sup> February and 12<sup>th</sup> March.

## Invitation

Nanda has been asked to lead worship at two special events during Advent, and she would like to extend a warm invitation to all of you to attend these services:

- West Lothian Council's Service of Lessons & Carols, Tuesday 17 December, 10am, West Kirk of Calder.
- Our Lady and St Bridget's Roman Catholic Church's Advent service, Wednesday 18 December, 7pm, Chapel.



Even off duty, the Treasurer's favourite trick was balancing money.

Date for your 2025 Diary.....

**Sunday January 26th**

9:45 in the West Kirk

11.15 in Polbeth Harwood

Come join us for a service of **“All things Scottish”**

From welcome music, to prayer, bible readings, skits and hymns. We will even have a wee taster of Haggis, Neeps & Tatties in the hall after the service, and perhaps even some canny wee tunes & songs.

We would like to invite you all to wear a wee bit of tartan to this service as we celebrate this Scottish themed service.

Here's a wee poem about the wee church moose to whet your appetite.



### **The Moosie's Prayer**

A puir wee kirk moose a' forlorn  
Its furry coat fair sairly worn  
Sank doon upon its bony knees  
and prayed - for just a wee bit cheese.

The tears ran doon its wee thin cheeks  
But nane could hear the saddest squeaks  
That drifted oan the cauld nicht air  
Till whiles it couldnae pray nae mair.

Syne daylight cam, the kirk bells rang  
The doors swung open wi' a bang  
Communion day had come oan by  
Wi' wine and plates o' breid held high.

The wee mouse lay as still as daith  
And watched it a' wi bated braith  
Then thocht - if I keep awfu' quate  
A bit micht jist fa' aff a plate.

And so it gazed as roond they went  
Then jist as tho twas heaven sent  
Whit landed richt upon its heid  
Bit twa lumps o' communion breid.





# Special events in Church this December

## Bereavement Service

West Kirk

December 1<sup>st</sup> at 15:00

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.



## Sunday Morning Worship

9:45 West Kirk

11:15 Polbeth Harwood

Anyone wishing to bring along a gift to this service is invited to put the gift under our tree to support those in need.

All welcome  
with or without a gift



**United Lessons &  
Carols Service**

Polbeth Harwood Church

December 15<sup>th</sup> at 11:15

*This is a united service, and  
there will be no service in the  
West Kirk this Sunday*

Come join us for a Cracker of  
**A Christmas Sing Song**

Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> Dec

In the West Kirk at 19:00

Special Guests

WC High school Brass Band

Scouts & Kirk & friends

Singing Group



Favourite Christmas songs  
carols and hymns.

Get in the Christmas spirit

Fun Friendly and free!

Open plate for donations at  
end to a local charity

Light seasonal refreshments  
in the hall at the end.





## **United Nativity Service**

Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December

West Kirk 9:45

Come join us as we unwrap  
the real reason we  
celebrate Christmas.

This service is led entirely by  
children from both churches

## **Christmas Eve Family Service**

18:30 in Polbeth Harwood Church

All ages welcome at this lovely family service



*Silent Night Oh Holy Night.*





## **Watchnight Service**

Christmas Eve

West Kirk at 23:30

Join us as we ring out the bells of  
Jesus birth

## **United Worship**

29<sup>th</sup> December 11:15

Polbeth Harwood Church

## **United Worship**

5<sup>th</sup> January 9:45

West Kirk



*May the true spirit of Christmas shine in  
your heart and light your path"*

## Birds of the Bible – Robin

‘Rubbish’, I hear you say – ‘there is absolutely no mention of the Robin in the Bible’. And you would be quite right. However, I thought that as this is our Christmas edition of the Link and the Robin plays such an important role at this time of year, you might forgive me a little digression from the theme.

In Scotland, the rest of the UK and much of northern Europe the Robin is a year-round resident and one of the easiest birds to identify; its red face distinguishes it from all other red breasted birds. They are found in our gardens as well as hedgerows, woodlands, city parks and suburban areas so there should be no excuse for being unable to identify them. The male and female adult birds look alike while the juveniles are a speckled brown until their adult plumage appears. We often think of them as quite aggressive little birds -14cm when fully grown - and we see fast and furious arguments over food we put out or in the spring at mating time.

The robin is also found in some middle eastern countries, including the Holy Land, but there they are non-breeding winter visitors and generally much shyer than we are used to. Therefore, it is quite possible that robins are included in the generic references to small birds throughout the Bible.

The taxonomy (the naming, describing and classification) of birds as individual species did not really begin to evolve until around 1676 so it would not be surprising if the robin and many other small birds were not given individual names at the time the books of the Bible were written.



Robins have become such a staple image of Christmas and especially when illustrated on our Christmas cards that we probably never wonder how our garden

friends got there.

Maybe because they do sing throughout the winter months and also seem to have a natural tameness that they have more of an endearing presence in the garden during the darker days of December.

Perhaps the answer goes back to Victorian times and the inventor of the penny post, Rowland Hill. In 1840 a letter or card could be sent to family & friends for just one penny and this led to the first Christmas cards in 1843. A happy coincidence for robins occurred later in the Victorian era that may have started their connection with our Christmas greetings.

Victorian postmen already wore bright red uniforms and had gained the nickname 'Robins'. We even have a link back to that time as Royal Mail vans and post boxes are still painted red due to the original Victorian branding. So, the natural link was to see the

'Robin' postman delivering the mail and many Victorian illustrators started to depict an actual robin delivering your Christmas card in its beak.

Back in pagan times the holly with its bright-red berries became a symbol of the dark days of winter, providing a splash of colour in the gloomiest of months and possibly the robin red-breast did the same.

Of course, robins have a long-time association with Christianity, and therefore Christmas. There are several stories linking the robin to various tales in Christianity, and some of these tell how the robin got his red breast. It is said that the robin got his breast after burning himself on a fire that he fanned to try and keep the baby Jesus warm in the manger. This red breast was passed on to all robins as a sign of their devotion to God. Another legend details the robin's presence at Christ's crucifixion, where to ease His pain and suffering, the robin sings a beautiful song to Jesus. The blood from the crown of thorns then drips on to the robin's breast, where it persists as a sign of the compassion that the robin demonstrated. Then again there is the belief that the robin is a constant companion in accompanying souls that have passed to purgatory, before they are judged. The red breast is once again said to be from getting too close to the flames as the robin passes the souls safely through to purgatory.

Whatever the truth of it robins do hold a special place in our culture and as they are present in our gardens throughout the year, they give life and hope to the darkest days of winter. Recently in a national poll robins were voted the avian symbol of the United Kingdom so to be lifted from our Christmas cards to this accolade of respect puts them at the top of any Christmas tree.

## Memory Stars

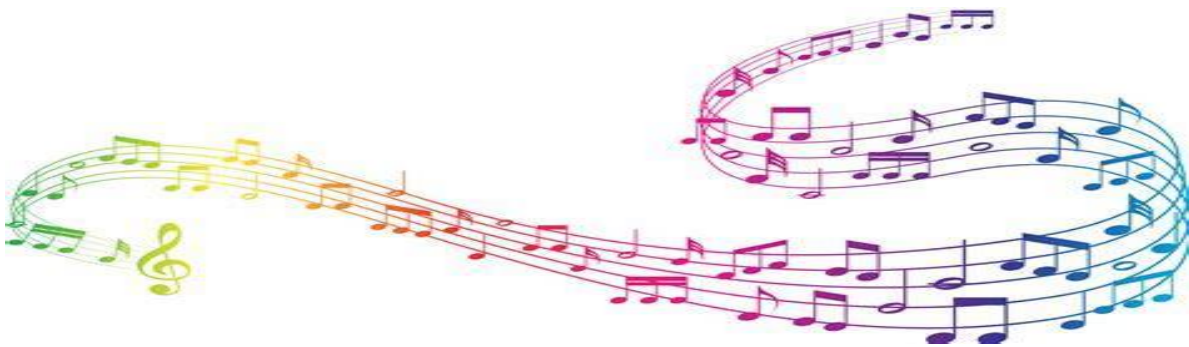


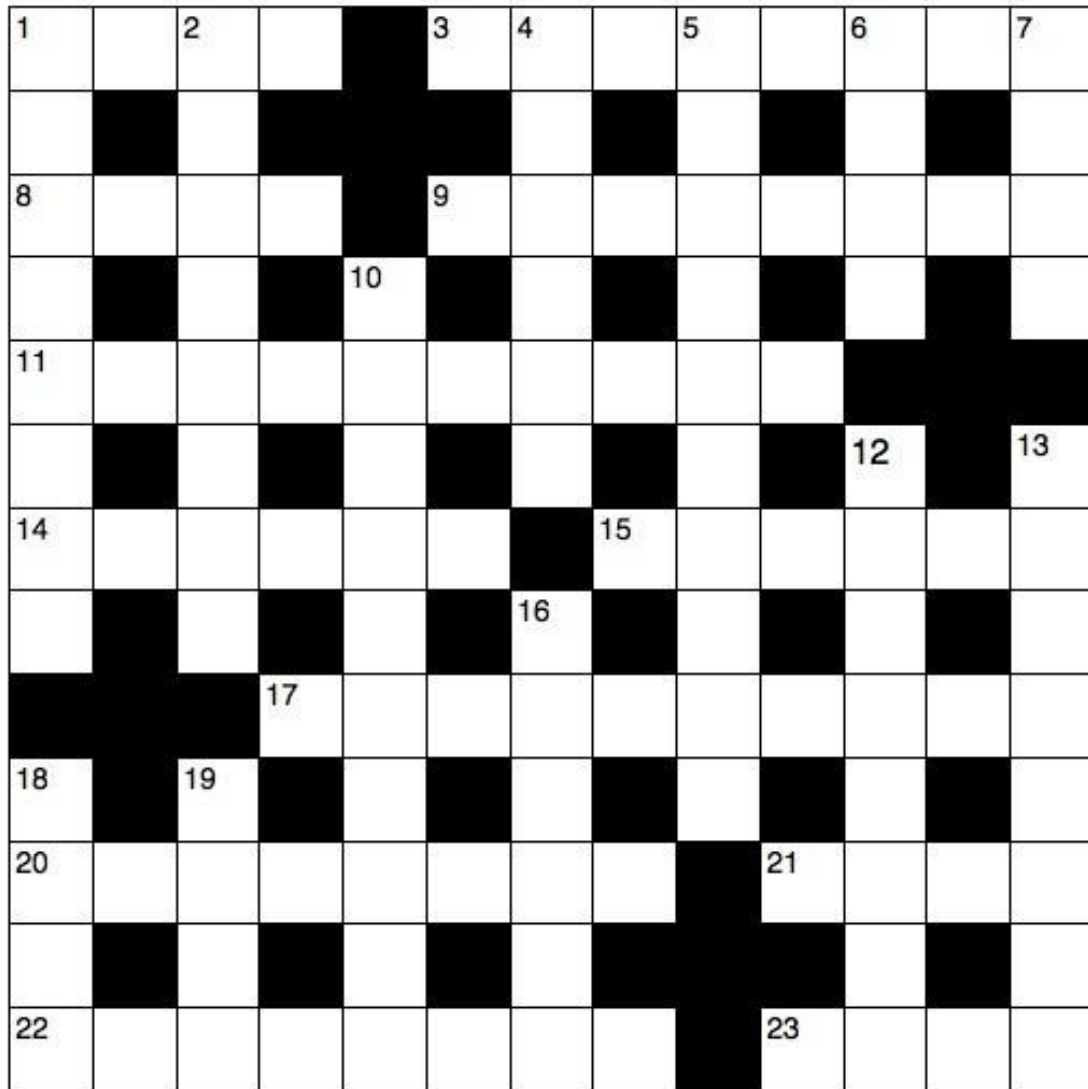
If you would like to dedicate a star to a loved one no longer with us, there will be an opportunity to do so during the Bereavement Service on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December, 3pm at the West Kirk of Calder, and every Sunday after that in the lead-up to Christmas, at both churches.

## *AFTERNOON OF MUSIC* *19<sup>th</sup> January* *in Polbeth Harwood* *at 3pm.*

*Please come along and join us for an afternoon of music followed by refreshments.*

*Watch out for further information.....*





**Across**

- 1 'The blind receive sight, the — walk' (Luke 7:22) (4)
- 3 Got (Philippians 3:12) (8)
- 8 Leave out (Jeremiah 26:2) (4)
- 9 Castigated for using dishonest scales (Hosea 12:7) (8)
- 11 Weighty (1 John 5:3) (10)
- 14 'Now the serpent was more — than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made' (Genesis 3:1) (6)
- 15 'Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot — God' (Romans 8:8) (6)
- 17 Because Israel lacked one of these, tools had to be sharpened by the Philistines (1 Samuel 13:19) (10)



- 20 In his vision of the two eagles and the vine, this is how Ezekiel described the latter (Ezekiel 17:8) (8)
- 21 Rite (anag.) (4)
- 22 Nine gigs (anag.) (8)
- 23 'The eye cannot say to the — , "I don't need you"' (1 Corinthians 12:21) (4)

## Down

- 1 'Flee for your lives! Don't — — , and don't stop anywhere in the plain!' (Genesis 19:17) (4,4)
- 2 Principal thoroughfare (Numbers 20:19) (4,4)
- 4 'The tax collector... beat his — and said, "God have mercy on me, a sinner"' (Luke 18:13) (6)
- 5 'The zeal of the Lord Almighty will — this' (2 Kings 19:31) (10)
- 6 'The day of the Lord is — for all nations' (Obadiah 15) (4)
- 7 Specified day (Acts 21:26) (4)
- 10 Deadly epidemic (Deuteronomy 32:24) (10)
- 12 Roman Catholic church which has special ceremonial rights (8)
- 13 Tied up (2 Kings 7:10) (8)
- 16 In his speech to the Sanhedrin, Stephen described Moses as 'powerful in speech and — ' (Acts 7:22) (6)
- 18 'Although he did not remove the high places, — heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life' (1 Kings 15:14) (4)
- 19 Tribe (Deuteronomy 29:18) (4)

## ISSUE 165 ANSWERS

**ACROSS:** 1, Charioteers. 9, Immoral. 10, Cairo. 11, SAE. 13, Inns. 16, Firm. 17, Accuse. 18, East. 20, Ogam. 21, Judith. 22, Seba. 23, Msgr. 25, Den. 28, Inane. 29, Entreat. 30, Chrysopraxe.

**DOWN:** 2, Human. 3, Rare. 4, Oils. 5, Ecce. 6, Raising. 7, Citizenship. 8, Commemorate. 12, Assail. 14, Sat. 15, Scouse. 19, Sabbath. 20, Ohm. 24, Seeds. 25, Deny. 26, Nero. 27, Star.



Thank you to everyone who supported the Annual Blythwood Care Shoebox Appeal from the congregations of the West Kirk, Polbeth Harwood, Limefield UFC Church, West Calder Cubs, The Bridge Group from West Kirk & Polbeth Harwood and caring dedicated colleagues of mine in the NHS at Dedridge Health Centre.

A Total of 116 boxes were completed and £300 in monetary donations sent. The boxes have been to the Sorting Centre and are now on route to Ukraine. In times of great uncertainty in the Ukraine we pray these simple boxes of basic daily needs will bring comfort to those receiving them to know that someone very far away is thinking of them.

The Bridge Group made a noticeable difference to the number of completed boxes - 25 in total. The young adults worked well in twos with some of the ministerial team joining to enjoy co-ordinating their box contents very seriously 🙏. It was a great night of fellowship and indications are they would like to return next year.



The Category Statistics for 2024 are:-

Pre-School Girls = 4

Pre-School Boys = 2

Primary School age Girls = 21

Primary School age Boys = 18

Teenage Girls = 14

Teenage Boys = 2

Adult Female = 25

Adult Male = 22

Elderly Female = 4

Elderly Male = 4

Shoebox wrapping will start in earnest again when Spring days arrive. Anyone interested in being involved please contact Rhoda @ West Kirk or Eleanor D @ Polbeth Harwood.

Kind regards

Rhoda

## **Link-out-loud**

If you would like to be part of a team reading parts of the Link Magazine to be recorded, please contact Nanda or Alison.

This will allow us to distribute an audio version to people who struggle to read the magazine.

## Help Wanted

By Timothy Tocher

Santa needs new reindeer.  
The first bunch has grown old.  
Dasher has arthritis;  
Comet hates the cold.  
Prancer's sick of staring  
at Dancer's big behind.  
Cupid married Blitzen  
and Donner lost his mind.  
Dancer's mad at Vixen  
for stepping on his toes.  
Vixen's being thrown out—  
she laughed at Rudolph's nose.  
If you are a reindeer  
we hope you will apply.  
There is just one tricky part:  
You must know how to fly.

### Jingle and Mingle

West Calder High School would like to invite all retired people from our community to an intergenerational afternoon of Christmas fun and food.

Date: 19<sup>th</sup> December

Time: 1:30 to 3:00pm

Venue: West Calder High School



# West Kirk Flower Rota 2025.....

I am compiling the Flower Calendar in Seasons in readiness for 2025. I hope to have the dates available for 7th Dec Christmas Event in West Kirk Hall.

Anyone can offer to donate flowers or money to allow the arranger to purchase flowers to mark a special date or just an available spot you are happy to fill.

We are a small team of four arrangers so if you have a calling to join us please speak to Rhoda asap.

Deliverers are also a very valuable part of the team so again, if anyone would like to join that team please speak to Rhoda

Email - [rhodalawton@gmail.com](mailto:rhodalawton@gmail.com)

Text- 07901 822534

Kind regards, Rhoda



## Reflection - New Year

### Psalm 90: 1-4, 10, 12

<sup>1</sup> Lord, you have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. <sup>2</sup> Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the whole world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. <sup>3</sup> You turn people back to dust, saying, "Return to dust, you mortals." <sup>4</sup> A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. <sup>10</sup> Our days may come to seventy years, or eighty, if our strength endures; yet the best of them are but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away. <sup>12</sup> Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

There comes a time in our lives when it dawns on us that we are not as young as we used to be. Whereas the future once seemed to stretch out indefinitely, suddenly it appears all too short, the time left to fulfil our dreams being far less than we thought.

Time and tide, as they say, waits for no one. It would be easy to move from here to a maudlin self-pity, but instead the psalmist turns to focus on God whose eternal nature stands in such contrast to our own transience.

In the context of faith, the passage of time should not be seen as the years running out so much as life moving on, one more step along an unfolding journey in which there is always more to be discovered and new joys to be experienced.

Of course, we will sometimes remember the past with a tinge of regret, and look to the future with a degree of anxiety, but we should also recognise each day as God's gift, and live each one of them in the assurance that nothing will ever separate us from his love made known in Christ.

May the New Year bring you joy, peace and abundant blessings. As the clock strikes midnight and we welcome 2025, may your heart be filled with hope and your spirit with optimism.

### ***Prayer***

Lord, we look toward you, our hope, our peace, and our comfort in this New Year. As we enter into the unknown of the coming year, we ask for your guidance and wisdom.

Illuminate our path with your light so that we may walk in your ways and make choices that align with your will. Help us to seek first your kingdom and trust that all other things will be added unto us. Amen.

# 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.*

27<sup>th</sup> October – Marjorie Thornton, Murieston Wood, Livingston

28<sup>th</sup> October – Jessica Craig, Burngrange Gardens, West Calder

Loving God,

We are aware that nothing is beyond your power.

We come seeking the comfort only you can provide.

You gather us as lambs in your arms and hold us close,

gently leading us.

Help us to know in our hearts

that comfort is part of your healing touch,

that in the darkest places, we find your light.

Amen.



## December 24



Sunday	1 <sup>st</sup>	Holy Communion	West Kirk	09.45
			Polbeth Harwood	11.15
		Bible Class	West Kirk	09.45
		Bereavement Service	West Kirk	15.00
Wednesday	4 <sup>th</sup>	The Bridge	Polbeth Harwood	19.00
Saturday	7 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Fayre	West Kirk	10.00
Sunday	8 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Worship	West Kirk	09.45
		(Gift service)	Polbeth Harwood	11.15
Wednesday	11 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday Warblers	West Kirk	11.30
		Quiet Service	Polbeth Harwood	15.30
Thursday	12 <sup>th</sup>	Beyond Kirk Wall	Dickson Court	13.45
		Services	Burngrange Home	15.00
Sunday	15 <sup>th</sup>	United Lessons & Carols Service	Polbeth Harwood	11.15
		Jak's Den Concert	West Kirk	14.00
		Evening of Christmas Cheer	West Kirk	19.00
Tuesday	17 <sup>th</sup>	WL Council Christmas service	West Kirk	10.00
		Bellsquarry School Christmas service	Polbeth Harwood	13.45
Wednesday	18 <sup>th</sup>	Parkhead School Christmas service	West Kirk	09.30
		Advent Reflections	Our Lady & St Bridget	19.00
Sunday	22 <sup>nd</sup>	United Nativity Service	West Kirk	09.45
Tuesday	24 <sup>th</sup>	Family Service	Polbeth Harwood	18.30
	24 <sup>th</sup>	Watchnight Service	West Kirk	23.30
Sunday	29 <sup>th</sup>	United Worship	Polbeth Harwood	11.15



**January 25**

Sunday	5 <sup>th</sup>	United Worship	West Kirk	09.45
Wednesday	8 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday Warblers	West Kirk	11.30
Thursday	9 <sup>th</sup>	Beyond Kirk Wall Services	Dickson Court Burngrange Home	13.45 15.00
Sunday	12 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Worship	West Kirk Polbeth Harwood	09.45 11.15
Wednesday	15 <sup>th</sup>	Quiet Service	Polbeth Harwood	15.30
Thursday	16 <sup>th</sup>	Session Meeting	West Kirk	19.00
Sunday	19 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Worship	West Kirk Polbeth Harwood Polbeth Harwood	09.45 11.15 15.00
Sunday	26 <sup>th</sup>	Scots Service	West Kirk Polbeth Harwood	09.45 11.15
Friday	31 <sup>st</sup>	Youth Group		19.00

**February 25**



Sunday	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Morning Worship	West Kirk Polbeth Harwood	09.45 11.15
		Bible Class	West Kirk	09.45
Sunday	9 <sup>th</sup>	Morning Worship	West Kirk Polbeth Harwood	09.45 11.15
Wednesday	12 <sup>th</sup>	Wednesday Warblers	West Kirk	11.30
Thursday	13 <sup>th</sup>	Beyond Kirk Wall Services	Dickson Court Burngrange Home	13.45 15.00