

ST.NINIANS OLD PARISH CHURCH

PARISHIONER

SUMMER 2025



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From the Manse

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter to you in early May the sun is streaming through my study window, and I can feel its warmth as I work at my desk. I hope the good weather will continue for invariably it lifts our spirits, and I certainly feel energised by it!

Another session in the life of the Church is drawing to a close and soon some of us will endeavour to take our foot off the pedal and spend more time enjoying leisurely pursuits.

Whether we go off on holiday or remain at home over the summer, it is good for us to have a less demanding schedule, and to be able to do things that help us not only to unwind but to recharge our batteries for the new session that will begin in September.

Having been your minister for many years, I am very much aware of the need to continually seek the leading of the Holy Spirit in order that we do not fall into the trap of always doing the same things year on year. With this in mind, a group of us have been looking at the Five Marks of Mission that were endorsed by the General Assembly in 2020. They have given rise to some good discussions and ideas which will be shared with the Kirk Session in June.

One of the ideas is to run an Alpha Course and there is an article about this elsewhere in The Parishioner which I commend to you.

Another idea is to actively encourage more people to become involved in our Sunday services. St Paul reminds us that we all have gifts, and these gifts are to be used for the good of the Church as the Body of Christ. Many gifts are used in different ways in the life of the Church, which is great, but what about those of you who may have gifts that could be used in the Sunday service? Perhaps you do not think you have such gifts. I ask you to think again!

Reading the lessons, giving the all age talk, leading the prayers, playing a musical instrument, singing a solo. If you would like to get involved, please speak to me. I will be glad to hear from you!



We are also very keen to ensure that all who come along to our services are made to feel welcome, and we have discussed ways in which we might be able to provide further opportunities for fellowship including after our weekly service. While the fellowship tea in the Parish Halls on the third Sunday of the month will continue for the foreseeable future, there is a suggestion that tea, coffee and biscuits be served in the Sanctuary on the other Sundays. There will, of course, be certain things that will have to be done to make this possible including having volunteers to help, but we believe this would let people get to know one another better and be a good opportunity for us to welcome visitors and provide hospitality every Sunday.

The Rev Tom Allan was minister of North Kelvininside Parish Church from 1946-53. He wrote a book called 'The Face of my Parish.' I read it again recently and was taken with his inference that the challenge is not only getting people into our churches, it is to hold on to them and integrate them into the life of our congregations. Though we live in a different age and culture from that of the 1940's and 50's I believe such thinking is still relevant today, and so I pose the following questions;

- How welcoming are we as a congregation to one another and to those who come for the first time or the first time in a while?
- How welcoming are we to those of faith and those who are inquiring about the faith?
- How welcoming are we to those who offer their gifts to help the cause of God's Kingdom?
- What could be done to make our church more welcoming?
- What are some things we can do to foster a more inclusive and accepting environment for everyone?
- How welcoming are we to the Holy Spirit who is ever at work and challenges us to be the people God calls and wants us to be?
- How do we enable people to feel that they belong?

I hope that the summer months will afford us time to think and pray about our life as a congregation, and I would welcome your thoughts about what more we could do to enrich our worship, strengthen our fellowship, and increase our witness in and beyond St Ninians.

I assure you of my prayers and good wishes,

Gary

The Rev Gary J McIntyre

Services

Services in June, July and August will be at the usual time of 10:30am apart from the service on the first Sunday in August which will begin at 10am.

Services can be watched on the Church YouTube channel on a Sunday morning or at any other time.

There is a further time of fellowship following the service on the third Sunday of the month in the Parish Halls when tea, coffee and biscuits are served.

A 'Time for Prayer' is held in the McMichael Chapel on the last Sunday of the month following the service.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated on Sunday 8th June at 10:30am. All who love the Lord are invited to gather at his table.

Eccles Court

There will be a service in Eccles Court on Wednesday 25th June at 2pm. Services will resume after the summer recess on Wednesday 24th September at 2pm.

School Service

St Ninians Primary School will have their end of session service in the Church on Friday 27th June at 10am. It is always a joy to welcome the pupils, teachers, head teacher and families of the pupils to the Church!

Kirk O'Muir

The annual open-air service at Kirk O'Muir will take place on Sunday 3rd August at 12 noon. At the close of the service there will be a discussion and vote on whether services in future should be at 12 noon or 1pm.

Kirk O'Muir is situated in the Carron Valley. At one time there was a chapel and later a school on the site, but these have long since disappeared.

It is a peaceful spot overlooking the Carron Reservoir. A service has been held there on the first Sunday in August for well over one hundred years.



Songs of Praise



A joint songs of praise service will be held in the Church of the Holy Rude on **Sunday 7th September at 7pm**. The service will be followed by a further time of fellowship. All welcome!

Open Day

The Church will be open from **12 – 2pm** on the afternoons of **Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th September**. Members of the public will be welcome to look round the sanctuary and to learn something of its history as well as about the life of the congregation today.

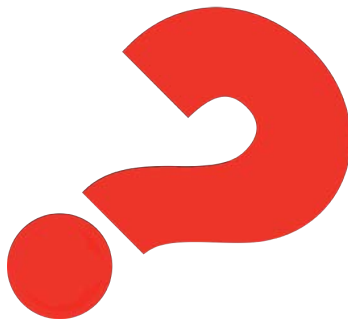
Alpha Course

An Alpha Course will be held in the autumn and winter and dates and times will be announced soon.

The course began in Britain and is run around the world by various Christian denominations.

Key features of the Alpha Course are:

- **Interactive format:** Each session includes a talk, followed by discussion and sharing.
- **Exploration of faith:** The course delves into questions about life, Jesus, and the Bible.
- **Evangelistic purpose:** It's designed to introduce the basics of the Christian faith to people from all backgrounds.
- **Open to all:** The course is free, welcoming people regardless of their beliefs or experiences.
- **Focus on core beliefs:** It highlights the common ground of the Christian faith.



It is hoped that members and friends of the congregation as well as people in the wider community will come along and explore what Christianity is about and its relevance today.

This is one of the initiatives put forward by the Five Marks of Mission Committee that was mentioned in the last edition of The Parishioner. Watch this space for more initiatives!

The General Assembly

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland met in Edinburgh from 17th – 22nd May.

The Rev Rosie Frew was elected Moderator succeeding the Rt Rev Dr Shaw J Paterson.



The new Moderator has chosen 'Extravagant Love' as her theme for 2025-26.

His Majesty The King appointed Lady Elish Angiolini as his personal representative to this year's General Assembly. Lady Elish was Scotland's first female Lord Advocate and the first female Lord Clerk Register of Scotland.

As well as 400 commissioners, made up of Church of Scotland ministers, elders, deacons and recent Moderators, there were delegates from other churches, invited visitors from at home and abroad, and presbytery youth representatives.

Snippets of reports are available to read in 'Life and Work' the magazine of the Church of Scotland and on the Church of Scotland website.

Organathon

TONY BALDWIN



The Caird Hall Organathon, in which I participated with 15 other organists back in March, was a resounding success.

Taking Gift Aid into account, £6100 was raised for the upkeep and refurbishment of an instrument that is truly a jewel in Dundee's crown. Of the total amount,

over a quarter (£1585) was raised by me. Several parishes and private individuals contributed, but this lovely sum was mainly due to the extreme

generosity of our own congregation. A massive thank you to everyone for their kind donations. The Friends of the Caird Hall Organ are very grateful for - and amazed at - your contributions, as am I.

Easter Holiday Club

MOIRA PARRY

This year our joint Easter Holiday Club was held in St Ninians Old Parish Halls for three days during the first week of the school holidays.

The title of the club was ***The Restoration Station*** and told the stories of Jesus restoring people - the official's son, the lame man and Peter after he denied Jesus.

The children took part in 'getting to know you' games, challenges, songs, craft and a variety of games as well as watching videos, drama and enjoying snacks.

Here are some of the comments made by the children at the end of the club.

I've learned ...

...that Jesus is a kind person who forgives us no matter what we do.

...that Jesus came back from the dead.

...about Peter.

...that Jesus will help anyone.

...about Jesus.

...what Amen means.

...about stories from the Bible.

...Jesus is kind and alive.

I enjoyed ...

...making new friends and learning about Jesus.

...the games and drama.

...the games and snack.

...doing the art and watching the videos.

...everything.

...arts and crafts.

...all of it.

All the children were very attentive and were enthusiastic in taking part in everything. Some of the helpers even enjoyed themselves too! Thanks to everyone who played a part, big or small, from St Ninians Old and Park Churches, to make this Holiday Club a success.

The 8th Stirling (St Ninians) Company of the Boys' Brigade

DAVID ROSS

The Boys' Brigade Annual Awards Ceremony was held on Friday 30th May in the Church. Registration for all sections for the new session will be on Friday 29th August in the Parish Halls. The new session will begin in September and first meeting nights are:

Anchor Boys (P1-P3): Wednesday 3rd September

Junior Section (P4-P6): Friday 5th September

Company Section (P7 -S6): Friday 5th September

Craft Group

JANETTE PETERSON

The Craft Group meet in the Front Room of the Parish Halls fortnightly on a Thursday from 2pm-4pm. They turn their hand to a number of different crafts including sewing, knitting and card making while enjoying a cuppa and a natter.

Pastoral Care Group

GRACE McINTOSH

If you know of anyone who would benefit from telephone contact or a visit from a Pastoral Care Group member, please let me or the Minister know.

Social and Fundraising Committee

ALISON NEWMAN

A date for your diary! The Social and Fundraising Committee are organising the annual Barbecue for **Saturday 19 July**. If you have been before or coming for the first time, we look forward to sharing a time of fellowship. Further details will be announced at Church and online nearer the date.

Photo Gallery

There were some beautiful and tasty Easter treats at the Easter Sunday Fellowship tea, courtesy of Mairi Rybicki, thank you.



Sunday Club



We have enjoyed a variety of different activities at Sunday Club over recent months.

We had pancakes on the Sunday before Ash Wednesday and thought and spoke about Lent.

We also made lovely Mother's Day cards.

We spoke about Christian Aid week and how climate change is making it very difficult for people in some parts of the

world to grow the crops they need to survive, and we made a loved planet and a sick planet. We loved colouring these in.

The sunny weather in May allowed us to tidy the planters in front of the Parish Halls and we sowed some wildflower seeds.

The Prayer Group

Do you have a person or a situation you would like our Prayer Group to pray for?

Please make your prayer requests known to the Prayer Group and we will pray over them.

Members of our prayer group will hold your loved one or situation in their individual daily devotions and monthly we meet following the service in the McMichael Chapel, where others are welcome to join us in a *Time for Prayer*.



You can make your prayer requests known to us at Church or online. In the McMichael Chapel, in the Church, you will find the prayer tree and prayer box. You can write your request on a label and hang it on the tree or if the prayer request is more private, please use one of the small cards and place it in the prayer request box.

You can also submit your prayer requests online, using this form, https://formurl.com/to/stniniansold_prayer_requests . These requests are anonymous and confidential.

A Prayer from the Church of England

Summer is a 'time between times', particularly if we have young people in our community. It's a time of rest, a different kind of rest to that of winter where we focus on building a store of energy for the year to come. Summer is a time to release and rest, to step away from the drive to produce and create. It is a time to enjoy all that spring has promised, the flowers and fruit of the earth's labour. It is a time to spend with family, to share new experiences and the simple pleasures of being together.

Summer is here Lord, still our hearts and minds, help us to breathe deeply and experience all that you have given us so far this year.

Pause

Help us to recognise the good things which have grown around us, those things which not long ago were simply seeds, ideas and possibilities.

Pause

Help us to notice the new relationships, the friendships that have blossomed, the richness of community and the joy of simply being with each other.

Pause

Help us to let go, relax and let things be what they need to be, as we know that you will nurture them as you nurture us.

Pause

Help us to slow down and resist the pressure to produce, to release the guilt that often comes with stopping and doing nothing, to value the small and fragile things with joy.

Pause

Help us to value and care for this planet with which we are blessed, its climate, the ground on which we walk, the seas which we might cross, the life on its surface, in its oceans and the air.

Pause

Bless our travels and our rest, our families and friends, those we spend time with this summer and those we will miss. Bless the things we will let go of and the new things we will experience. Bless our earth and all that lives, grows and moves around us. May we feel the warmth of your love and the light of your grace as we stop doing and allow ourselves simply to be. In Jesus's name.

Amen.

Knowing God is there

GARY J MCINTYRE

One day a young boy was out flying a kite. It was a fine day to go kite-flying, the wind was brisk, and large billowy clouds were blowing across the sky. The kite went up and up until it was entirely hidden by the clouds.

“What are you doing?” a man asked the little boy. “I’m flying a kite,” he replied. “Flying a kite, are you?” the man said. “How can you be sure? You can’t see your kite.” “No,” said the little boy, “I can’t see it, but every little while I feel a tug, so I know for sure that it’s there!”

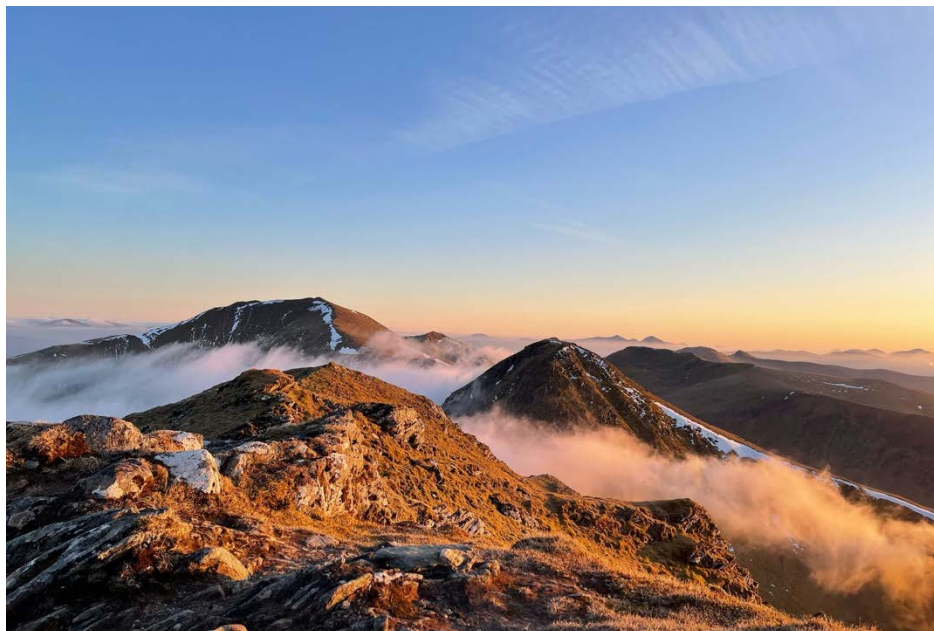
It can be like that in our walk with God. We do not see him as we see those around us but in ways that sometimes defy description, he touches us and tugs at our heartstrings, and we know with absolute certainty that he is there.

The Psalmist put it well, *“Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his.”*

Photo Gallery

Submitted by ERNIE COLTHART

Taken by Caleb Fell on an overnight expedition in the Ben Lawers range near Killin.



The Pencil and the Eraser

Submitted by MARGARET LAMONT

"Hey, how are you?" the eraser asked the pencil kindly.

"I'm not your friend," the pencil snapped. "I hate you."

Surprised and hurt, the eraser asked, "Why?"

"Because you erase everything I write."

"I only remove the mistakes," the eraser replied gently.

"That doesn't make it right," said the pencil.

"But that's what I'm here for. It's my purpose."

"Then your job is meaningless," grumbled the pencil. "Writing is more important than erasing."

"To erase the wrong is just as important as writing the right," the eraser said.

The pencil paused, then quietly said, "But I see you getting smaller each day..."

"That's because I give a little bit of myself every time I help correct a mistake."

"I feel smaller too," the pencil admitted.

"We can't do good for others unless we're willing to sacrifice something," the eraser smiled.

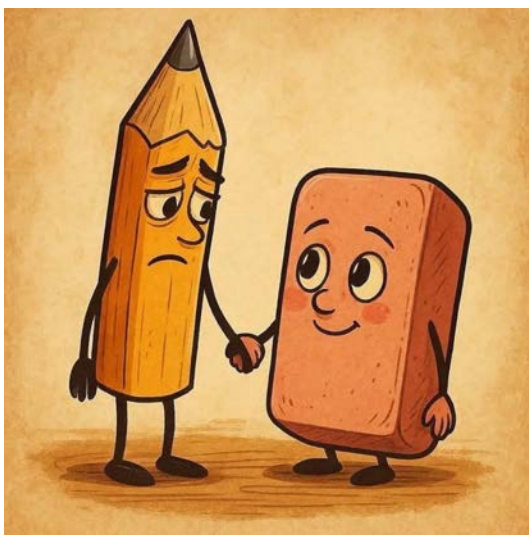
Then she looked at him and softly asked, "Do you still hate me?"

The pencil smiled back:

"How could I hate someone who gives so much of themselves?"

Each day we wake up with one day less. If you can't be the pencil that creates joy for others, be the eraser that wipes away their pain, planting hope and reminding them:

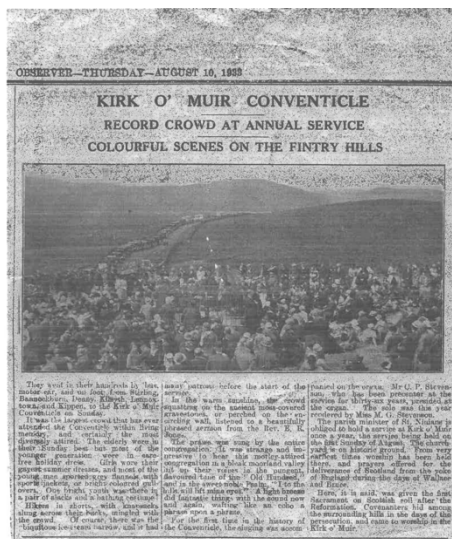
The future can still be better than the past. Be grateful. Always.



From the Archives - Kirk O'Muir Conventicle 1933

REV GARY J MCINTYRE

At the Kirk O'Muir service last year I read from an article in the Stirling Observer in 1933. Many found the article interesting so ahead of the Conventicle this year on Sunday 3rd August at 12noon it is reproduced below. I hope you enjoy it.



From The Stirling Observer – Thursday August 10, 1933 Kirk O' Muir Conventicle Record crowd at annual service Colourful scenes on the Fintry hills

They went in their hundreds by bus, motor car, and on foot, from Stirling, Bannockburn, Denny, Kilsyth, Lennoxtown, and Kippen to the Kirk O' Muir Conventicle on Sunday.

It was the largest crowd that has ever attended the Conventicle within living memory, and certainly the most diversely attired. The elderly were in their Sunday best but most of the younger generation were in carefree holiday dress. Girls wore their gayest summer dresses, and most of the young men sported grey flannels with sports jackets, or bright coloured pullovers. One bright youth was there in a pair of slacks and a bathing costume!

Hikers in shorts, with knapsacks slung over their backs, mingled with the crowd. Of course, there was the ubiquitous ice-cream barrow, and it had many patrons before the start of the service.

In the warm sunshine, the crowd squatting on the ancient moss-covered gravestones, or perched on the encircling wall, listened to a beautifully phrased sermon from the Rev E. R. Jones.

The praise was sung by the entire congregation. It was strange and impressive to hear this motley - attired congregation in a bleak moorland valley lift up their voices in the pungent, flavoured tune of the "Old Hundred," and in the sweet noble Psalm, "I to the hills will lift mine eyes." A light breeze did fantastic things with the sound now and again, wafting like an echo a phrase upon a phrase.

For the first time in the history of the Conventicle, the singing was accompanied on the organ. Mr C. P. Stevenson, who has been precentor at the service for thirty-six years, presided at the organ. The solo was this year rendered by Miss M. G. Stevenson.

The parish minister of St Ninians is obliged to hold a service at Kirk O' Muir once a year, the service being held on the first Sunday of August. The churchyard is on historic ground. From very earliest times worship has been held there, and prayers offered for the deliverance of Scotland from the yoke of England during the days of Wallace and Bruce.

Here, it is said, was given the first Sacrament on Scottish soil after the Reformation. Covenanters hid among the surrounding hills in the days of the persecution and came to worship in the Kirk O' Muir.



The Apostle Paul

ARTHUR S WALLS

The apostle Paul was the first, and possibly the greatest, Christian theologian and missionary.



He was the first to fully explain the death and resurrection of Christ as the focus of God's plan of salvation. It was he who first understood the new nature of God's people, now made up of Jews and Gentiles bound together in one 'body.' It was he who first saw how God's new action in Christ fits together with his special relationship with his 'old' people, Israel. And it was he who first spread the gospel effectively around the Gentile world, telling people simply of Jesus the Saviour, and not requiring them also to become Jews. What a man!

His love for his converts was passionate. In his letters he pictures himself variously as their father, mother, nurse, servant and brother. He held himself up as an example for them to follow, and lived every moment knowing that he must one day appear before Christ to give account for his ministry.

What made him do all this?

Paul's Early Life

He was born probably around AD5 in Tarsus, on the south coast of modern Turkey, where his father was a leading citizen and a very strict Jew. Paul inherited Roman citizenship from his father, a rare privilege for someone born outside Rome. At a young age Paul was sent for his education to Jerusalem, where he had relatives.

He grew up passionately committed to 'the traditions of the fathers', as he puts it, a Pharisee of intense devotion, and violently opposed to the suggestion that a cursed criminal could be the Messiah. In his passion for the Jewish law he began a violent campaign against those who believed such blasphemy.

The Turning Point

Then came the famous conversion on the road to Damascus (described three times in the Book of Acts) when he discovered his zeal for the law had led him to

persecute the Messiah - and that God had nonetheless accepted him, forgiven him, and called him to be a prophet and apostle on behalf of Jesus.

His conversion was also his call. But he knew that he could not simply add belief in Jesus as Messiah to his previous Jewish beliefs. So, he had to rethink his whole theology, wrestling again with this amazing discovery of a Messiah who had died and risen again, and of his call to preach him to the Gentiles.

How could he tie it all together?

He could not simply reject God's law, but clearly God had now done something wonderfully new -though promised by the prophets. It is likely that the first few years after his conversion were spent in intense prayer and thought in the Roman province of Arabia.

Then he started work!

Antioch became his home where Jewish Christians and Gentile believers formed a single community. The Church there was his base for the three missionary journeys that followed.

He longed to reach Rome. Eventually he exercised his right as a Roman citizen to be tried before the emperor in Rome and was transported there as a prisoner.

After waiting two years for his trial, he may have been freed for a further period of travel and ministry before his final arrest and execution, possibly by the Emperor Nero in Rome in AD65.

Thirteen of Paul's letters are included in the New Testament, all date from the period of his travels and imprisonments, probably starting with Galatians and ending with 2 Timothy. His letters are one of the great foundation stones of the church of Jesus Christ. Through his writings, he serves us still.

Jesus,
*make my heart
more like yours.*

Seven word prayer taught to Pope Francis by his Grandmother.



Still Rabbiting On

AVRIL SCOTLAND

Dear Lord,

I know that I should love all creatures great and small— but Lord, I'm having an awful struggle to love rabbits.

When I think back to my childhood, I really can't recall seeing rabbits— but then it was wartime, and all chubby bunnies would have found their way to the pot. Let's face it, the Easter Bunny wasn't a feature of Springtime then, he would have been hard pressed to find any sweet treats to deliver! I knew such creatures existed— I'd been much more impressed by Thumper than I was by Bambi— so it was that the rabbit provided the first embarrassment of my school career.

Confronted by the ever-present plasticine, I made a rabbit. So impressed was the teacher, that I found myself presenting it for admiration throughout the school. I was mortified. This was no representation of my talents. If they had curated their plasticine into discrete colours, I could have given them Donald Duck. With only the yucky brown stuff at my disposal, a rabbit was all I could come up with. When I was teaching, I inadvertently became the owner of a very disturbed bunny. I was in Nursery and a parent, moving from the area, pressed this creature upon me. Naturally the thought of the free hutch and rabbit accoutrements was tempting—and she assured me it was a dwarf variety— and toilet trained. Reader, she lied.

It was the size of a small spaniel— and lop eared. It spat, it growled, it hissed. The janitor had issued dire warnings about it attracting rats. I can assure you it would have made short work of any rat foolish enough to venture near it. The children were terrified. The only part of rabbit husbandry that I excelled in was hutch cleaning— I've always loved the smell of Jeyes fluid. Of course, this weekly exercise required the help of a colleague who was much more adept at rabbit wrangling than I. Her calm demeanour as the furry one kicked and scratched her amazed me.

So— you can imagine that when I realised that three rabbits had taken up residence in my garden— I was less than impressed, particularly, as I had just been reading about the Fibonacci theory. This states that a pair of rabbits can produce 144 pairs in a year. Well, that was three years ago. Had Fibonacci been right, I'd hardly be able to put a foot out of the back door without squishing a rabbit— and what a mess that would make of my shoes! Oh yes, Signor

Fibonacci would have been much disappointed by the reproductive efforts of the Scottish rabbit, particularly if he'd been planning some bunny based culinary delights. And being Italian, rabbit ragu was no doubt in his mind.

In those early days, I can't say that I was too worried about my rabbits. I was sure that, after consulting the internet, I'd be able to encourage them to move on to pastures new. I set to with confidence, throwing bulb after bulb of garlic into my processor together with considerable quantities of chilli powder; this I placed in a plastic container, added boiling water and sufficient washing up liquid to aid adherence to plants. I left this to mature for a couple of days— the kitchen was a distinctly malodorous zone— and then I started spraying plants. Did it deter them. Not a bit. I could imagine them, snuggled in their burrows of an evening— Nice gesture, making us a wee salad dressing Peter, don't you think? Indeed Benjamin, a tad piquant, but very acceptable none the less. Back to chasing them— and a woman of 80+ years, running around yelling Bad Bunnies is not an edifying sight, I'm sure!!



My husband took a much more mature approach. He sat in a chair and threw wine bottles— ones that he'd prepared earlier by thorough emptying, of course, and, whilst wine bottles are very satisfying to throw, his aim was not very good, and no rabbits were wounded by his efforts. I did, however, notice that the rabbits were sniffing the necks of the bottles with interest. Time for Plan B. We filled shallow dishes with wine, I felt white would complement their diet best, and I eagerly anticipated comatose rabbits littering the grass come morning. These I planned to scoop up and transfer to the park. Again, abject failure. Wine gone, bunnies bouncing. And increasing in numbers by the day.

But what's so objectionable about rabbits, you may ask. They're quiet, they don't smell, their bowel evacuations come neatly packaged and are easily collected by lawnmower— and certainly with their twitching noses and expressive ears, they look cute. When you open the curtains and a dozen of them are chasing and cavorting, it does make you smile. And our herd is a sleek, sonsie bunch. Occasionally I've wondered if we're nurturing a super breed: they're very athletic, walls no object, and they do show advanced intelligence as they figure out how to access their chosen plat du jour— but then I look at my

lawn— an area of grass that has had care and money lavished on it in quantities only rivalled by that applied to the centre court at Wimbledon— and I realise that it's beginning to resemble a lunar landscape— and I know for certain—I don't like rabbits. When my prized magnolia shrivels and dies from lack of bark; when a once colour filled garden can now only be described as a back yard, I truly loathe the little horrors. And each year they extend their eating repertoire: firstly, all crocus disappeared, the next year, all tulips. This year they have found a taste for hyacinths. Only snowdrops and daffodils defeat them. As for the burrowing, I swear one day I'll go into the conservatory and descend into a sinkhole.

I did call in an expert. A charming young man came, admitted there was no means of excluding them and gun use would not be appropriate and suggested that I could establish a feeding station. When they became accustomed to said feeding station, he would come in with traps and remove them to more suitable terrain. I can imagine how that would go— New fine dining establishment at number 30, Mopsy— tell Peter and the rest of the gang! I'd have every rabbit in Stirling. No, I'll just save a fortune on bedding plants— no tender greenery to titivate their taste buds. I retire defeated.

So, Lord, please forgive a curmudgeonly old woman. I just can't love rabbits.

Photo Gallery

ELAINE MACKAY

Arran from Seamill.



KIRK O'MUIR
OPEN AIR SERVICE
SUNDAY 3RD
AUGUST 12 NOON
CARRON VALLEY



**FOLLOWING THE SERVICE THERE WILL
BE A DISCUSSION & VOTE ON WHETHER
SERVICES IN FUTURE SHOULD BE AT 12
NOON OR 1PM**

Saul becomes Paul

IAN CAIRNS

The reading from Acts 9 and the Sermon on Sunday 4th May told us of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus. Had the reading continued a verse or two more we would have been given the actual address of the house in Damascus where Paul was sheltered by the very community he had been sent to persecute.

Many years ago, I visited Damascus. While working in the Arabian Gulf I drove with my friend David, from Al Khobar on the coast opposite Bahrain, to Beirut in Lebanon. Initially the route was across the northern Saudi Arabian desert. This was a lonely, featureless place, cold at nights and hot during the day. There was no road, simply a track on hard sand used by the oil company. However, we were soon in Jordan and driving on tarmac in an increasingly pleasant Mediterranean climate.

We were now on a road where the world had travelled from the beginning of time. Notably the Children of Israel travelling north seeking the Promised Land. Centuries later the armoured brigades of their descendants would thunder south in the Yom Kippur War. Other travellers included T E Lawrence's army clip clopping their camels to relieve Damascus all as depicted in the famous film.

Damascus itself was noisy and busy. Syrian drivers did not know much about lane discipline but a lot about how to use their horns. Eventually we found accommodation in a youth hostel style hotel with clean sheets and hot showers.

We walked round in the city in particular visiting the Umayyad Mosque in the centre. This is one of the largest and oldest mosques in the Islamic world and it was not difficult to stand in the prayer hall and think of the thousands of worshippers who over the centuries had responded to the call from the minaret. John the Baptist's head is believed to be buried in the grounds and certainly the tomb of Salah u Din is there. Better known in the west as Saladin he was the Islamic general who defeated Richard the Lionheart's Third Crusade for despite territorial gains by the Crusaders, Saladin's army held them back from the main objective which was capturing Jerusalem.

On our last night we dined at the cafe beside our hotel planning an early night before the long drive up over the Druze mountains into The Lebanon. As it happens we were befriended by three Syrian boys of our own age dining at an

adjacent table. We were invited back to one of their houses. Initially reluctant to go off with strangers in a foreign country we eventually resolved to do so. Our reluctance heightened when we turned in to a very long, narrow and dimly lit avenue. However, we were soon knocking at the door of what turned out to be a substantial family home with a very pleasant central garden containing a water feature. No sooner had we sat down than the very hot, very sweet, unskimmed tea favoured in the Levant was set before us in the traditional small tumblers with handles. Then came cake - layers of flaky pastry bound by honey. We nattered on as young men will do but when it came time to leave I recalled a story from my teenage years. Then I had learned that Paul, having been converted, was sheltered in Damascus at a Christian address in the Street called Straight. Our hosts burst out laughing at this because we were in that very street sitting in one of the many Christian households which still populated that area. The story from Acts was still remembered and honoured in modern times.

I have often thought about this episode over the years especially when the war in Syria was reported on. The Christian community was severely treated by the regime, and many were killed or fled. The reading and Rev. McNicol's address brought it all back to me again. I have always found it humbling that a story I had heard in a Bible Class in a chilly Glasgow Vestry heated by a single bar electric fire was almost certainly true.

(The Authorised Version says the "Street called Straight". Modern translations lose some of the magic by just saying the "Straight Street". The Roman occupiers built it in their very straight road building style.)

Recycle! Recycle! Recycle! – Old Prescription Glasses



If you have come across some old prescription glasses during your Spring cleaning, Boots the Chemist Optician, Thistle Centre, Stirling will be happy to take them and recycle for further use.



RECIPES



Creamy Halloumi Stroganoff

LORRAINE REID

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp of olive or avocado oil
57g of butter
454g sliced mushrooms
250ml dry white wine or sherry (optional)
375ml of vegetable stock
1 tsp of paprika
125ml of sour cream (full fat)
Chopped parsley

250g halloumi cheese
1 chopped onion
2 minced garlic cloves
2 tbsp of flour
1 tbsp of soy sauce
¼ tsp nutmeg
Salt and pepper

METHOD

Fry the halloumi in oil until golden, remove and set aside.

Sauté the onion in butter, then add mushrooms until brown.

Add garlic, cook for 1 minute, season with salt and pepper.

Deglaze pan with wine or sherry.

Stir in flour, then slowly add in stock while mixing.

Add soy sauce, paprika & nutmeg and simmer.

Reduce heat, stir in sour cream.

Return Halloumi to pan, heat through, and garnish with parsley.



New Booking System for Parish Halls



We have recently implemented a new online booking system for the Parish Halls. This will hopefully make the process of booking the Parish Halls more streamlined and be helpful to those who wish to hire the Parish Halls and help us to manage this resource efficiently and effectively for the benefit of the Church.

The new website can be found here, <https://hallbookingonline.com/stninians/>

Those wishing to hire the halls can check the online calendar and see if the hall they wish to hire is free on their preferred date. That being the case they can then complete a simple form and submit their provisional booking for approval.

Outwith the extensive use we as a Church make of the Parish Halls they continue to be a very popular venue choice for birthday parties as well as for children's activities, sports groups and local clubs for their regular meetings. We are grateful to have such well used halls and for those who make such good use of them.

The Parish Register

Deaths “I am the resurrection and the life”

22nd February 2025
Mr Len Redpath
33 Torbrex Road
St Ninians (District 26)

24th February 2025
Mr Bob Robertson
94 Glasgow Road
St Ninians

28th February 2025
Mr Jack Wardrope
14 Gillies Drive
Stirling

3rd March 2025
Mr Willie Brown
30 Bruce Terrace
Cambusbarron (District 38)

5th March 2025
Mr Andy Millar
Langlands
28 Westerton Drive
Bridge of Allan

6th March 2025
Mrs Wendy Callion
Balfournought Farm
Stirling

16th March 2025
Mrs Emma Campbell
20 Sledgefield Drive
Cambusbarron (District 38)

27th March 2025
Mrs Mary Thomson
Annfield House Care Home
Stirling (District 40)

4th April 2025
Mrs Evelyn Loch
10 Cauldhame Crescent
Cambusbarron

11th April 2025
Mr David Brydie
14 Elizabeth Street
Stirling

18th April 2025
Mrs Margaret Penman
Rose Cottage
Torbrex (District 6)

27th April 2025
Mr Jim Miller
5 Woodside Court
Falkirk

6th May 2025
Mrs Elizabeth Campbell
Oakeshott House Care Home
Stirling

Psalm 23:6 *“Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”*

Wordsearch

Women Mentioned in the Bible

F	R	E	D	C	L	O	G	B	X	Q	Y	E	P	D	K	O	N	T	R
V	I	M	T	S	G	H	E	Z	B	L	D	V	W	M	A	R	T	H	A
J	P	Q	K	D	E	S	T	H	E	R	F	E	X	I	O	C	S	W	M
H	Z	T	S	R	L	C	D	A	L	T	Y	M	L	R	N	F	Q	U	A
R	T	B	I	V	G	R	D	S	I	W	Q	U	P	I	J	O	L	C	R
E	U	N	P	B	E	G	I	K	Z	M	O	Q	S	A	L	B	U	W	Y
B	S	T	Y	A	D	F	J	L	A	N	P	S	B	M	C	A	C	T	M
E	Z	A	H	X	U	P	D	E	B	O	R	A	H	V	F	T	H	S	A
K	B	W	R	A	C	H	E	L	E	J	A	C	G	E	Y	H	M	F	G
A	R	T	X	A	C	O	J	W	T	D	H	B	U	R	O	S	L	N	D
H	A	N	N	A	H	E	U	X	H	O	A	W	R	S	D	H	Q	Y	A
D	X	G	U	B	J	B	P	S	M	O	B	P	J	E	Z	E	B	E	L
Y	C	V	F	I	T	E	J	R	Q	L	C	Z	G	H	I	B	D	A	E
L	J	H	A	G	A	R	B	P	I	Z	F	U	T	A	M	A	R	F	N
U	V	T	B	A	W	M	S	R	N	S	H	P	G	P	N	A	K	D	E
C	O	B	C	I	D	P	K	A	X	G	C	Y	H	T	S	B	R	M	T
P	B	Y	B	L	R	S	K	X	P	B	W	I	Q	U	D	J	G	Y	V
D	N	A	M	V	E	W	F	U	H	Y	T	P	L	Y	D	I	A	M	C
E	K	L	W	B	N	A	O	M	I	F	U	F	N	L	H	Y	G	Q	X
P	D	H	M	C	A	X	H	R	O	P	M	U	U	D	A	C	O	F	V

ABIGAIL
BATHSHEBA
DEBORAH
DELILAH
ELIZABETH
ESTHER
EVE
HAGAR

HANNAH
JEZEBEL
LEAH
LYDIA
MARTHA
MARY
MARY MAGDALENE
MIRIAM
NAOMI

PHOBE
PRISCILLA
RACHEL
RAHAB
REBEKAH
RUTH
SARAH
TAMAR

ST.NINIANS OLD PARISH CHURCH

PARISHIONER

AUTUMN 2025



**The Autumn Edition of the Parishioner
will be out in early September**

**Submission Date for Articles is:
Sunday 17th August**

Thank you

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