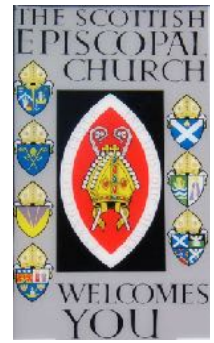


# In Touch



*with St James the Less Church, Penicuik  
& St Mungo's Church, West Linton*



**A quarterly magazine for all of us**

**Issue 19**

**February 2025**

***Lent - Holy Week - Easter - Ascension***



## Reflections from the Rectory

### *Speaking Truth to Power*

On the morning after the inauguration of the President of the USA, it is tradition that the President and his family, plus others moving into the administration, attend a church service at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. You may well have seen a video clip of the sermon by the Rt Revd Mariann Budde (pronounced Buddy), the Episcopal Bishop of Washington. It is not very often that a sermon that included a polite plea that Jesus' message of treating all people with grace and mercy could create such a fuss and a clear rejection of a tenet of Christianity. But, as you will be aware, unless you really have not looked or listened or read any news in the last fourteen days, the preacher's message was directed to the President-elect. His response on social media sometime later that day was not graceful, was not factually correct, and showed a complete rejection of one of the two greatest commandments, to love your neighbour as yourself. A commandment shared by both Christians and Jews.

If you wish to watch all of her sermon (I hope you do), rather than the short end piece that really grabbed the news, you can find it on YouTube, on the National Cathedral's YouTube channel, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xwwaEuDeqM8>.

It is interesting to note that Bishop Mariann Budde had written a book entitled *How We Learn to be Brave: Decisive Moments in Life and Faith*, published in May 2023. She has written other books, including *Receiving Jesus: The Way of Love* together with Bishop Michael Curry whilst he was the Presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in the USA.

When I watched her sermon in full (it lasts fifteen minutes), I was in awe of what she had to say, in a calm and measured way, with a strong link back to scripture. She did not hold back from relating the Christian faith to the context of the current situation; social and political.

She was not rude or disrespectful, she offered the ways of living that God would wish us to follow as a just and right way, and prayed that those most anxious and afraid of the incoming administration would be shown grace and mercy.

Her sermon reminded me of a dictum many preachers hear; *“Our job is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable”*. Whilst I appreciate the sentiments, I am not sure it would be wise that a preacher should preach in such a way as to disturb many congregants each and every week. Having said that, I am aware of a pastor who challenged all who wanted to join his church to make sure they took their faith seriously and were ready to be challenged to follow the radical teachings of Jesus, not just to attend for a warm fuzzy feeling on a Sunday morning. Rather than having an empty church, this pastor regularly had over two hundred attending the main Sunday service. He would invite people to leave if they were clearly not being transformed by the Word! This is so counter-intuitive, and it may work in some places, but rest assured I am not about to start such a practice; well not just now, anyway...

Bishop Budde’s sermon also threw up a comment by a preacher, J Forasteros who said,

*“... I can confidently tell you that the vast majority of people who attend church do not attend to be transformed, and certainly not to hear a pastor (or bishop) offer challenging correction. The vast majority of people go to church to be assured they are good people who are part of a mostly good enough system... don’t be surprised that many Christians are angry at her... because they don’t want to follow Jesus. They want Jesus to follow them and whisper, “You’re doing fine. You don’t need to change...”*

This seems rather extreme and harsh, but perhaps has a kernel of truth for some of us, some of the time. From personal experience I know that sermons I have given from which I have had the most critical comments were those which shone a light on all of our relatively privileged ways of living, compared to the majority of people in this world.

Oscar Romero is one of my heroes. In a sermon preached in November 1979 he said “*The homily is not being ‘political’ when it points out political, social, and economic sins. It is simply the word of God becoming incarnate in our reality, which often reflects not God’s reign, but sin.*”

Bishop Budde’s sermon is a good example of speaking truth to power in a gentle but effective way. The quotes from the preacher J Forasteros and from Oscar Romero are worth reflecting on and taking into prayer. I commend them to you.

Nick Bowry

## Scripture Union Summer Holiday Club



We have selected *Deep Sea Divers* as the theme for this year’s holiday club using materials prepared by Scripture Union England/Wales.

It will be from 29 July to 1 August 2025 in Trinity Community Church Hall.

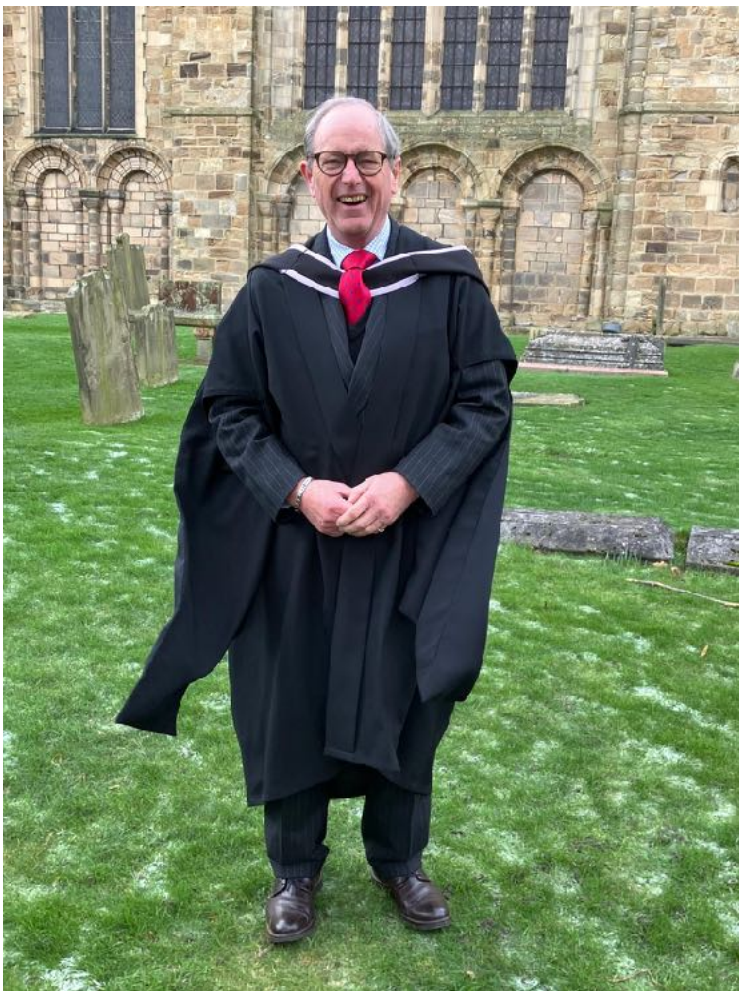
Our first meeting is on Wednesday 26 Feb 7pm in Trinity Community Church Hall.

Everybody who is interested in being part of the *Dive Team* or the *Support (prayer) Team* is invited to come along and receive more information. If you would like to give financially, then please see me (Marion Mather).

Marion Mather

## A special Graduation

Last month I graduated with my Master of Arts degree from Durham University, finally ending years of theological study that started back in 2016. Graduation took place on the 9 January 2025, a crisp, cold snowy day on which the Chancellor, Fiona Hill, must have shaken hands with the best part of one thousand graduates of all ages - with the prospect of doing the same the following day! She is a miner's daughter from Bishop Auckland who has risen to advise three U.S. presidents on defence and security and who is currently advising the U.K. government. It was a



special moment for me as I and a friend were the very first Master's degree graduates from the Scottish Episcopal Institute, which is responsible for training all new priests in the Scottish Episcopal Church. It had extra meaning for me in that I had skipped the graduation ceremony for my undergraduate degree more than fifty years ago! I am looking forward to receiving the official piece of parchment in due course.

But my days of studying for another qualification are definitely over. No PhD for me, whatever Alan Murray might say!!

*Peter Woodifield*

## Fellowship Lunch

### *Foreign Currency Collection in aid of Mary's Meals*

*2 March 2025*

I don't know for sure, but I imagine a lot of us might have out of date/old foreign currency to donate to Mary's Meals. There is no currency they won't accept.

I shall be making an announcement in church on 9 February 2025 when I will leave envelopes in the back of the church for people to take home and pop any out of date/old foreign currency into. People could then bring the filled envelopes to church on the next three consecutive Sundays so that I can hand over what we have to their Representative on the 2 March 2025 at Fellowship Lunch.

At the Fellowship lunch their representative will give us a talk on the work of Mary's Meals. Please do come along if you can.

Mary's Meals feeds children a daily meal at school in some of the world's poorest countries. The promise of this nutritious meal attracts children into the classroom and gives them the energy they need to learn. This education affords them the chance of a brighter future and can, longer-term, help to give them and their families and communities a route out of poverty.

In recent months, Mary's Meals has recently launched a foreign and out-of-date currency initiative, and it is proving hugely successful.

The good news is that it is a very easy process and a wonderful way to get rid of any old coins and notes cluttering up drawers and cupboards. It usually takes a couple of months to receive the final total raised but Mary's Meals will let us know what it is once they have it.

Mary's Meals are being wonderfully supported in this initiative by Left Over Currency who supply the postage boxes and cover the postal costs. They do not charge Mary's Meals commission and generously also add a 5% charitable donation to all currency collected, except dollars and euros.

The history of Mary's Meals can be found online (<https://www.marysmeals.org.uk/our-story>). Briefly, Mary's Meals grew out of a charity called Scottish International Relief (SIR), which was set up after Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow and his brother Fergus took aid from their home in Argyll, Scotland, to Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, during the conflict in 1992. It began by building homes for abandoned children in Romania, and helped returning refugees in Liberia by setting up mobile clinics. It continues to deliver material aid to Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina as well as funding many additional projects.

The Mary's Meals campaign was born in 2002 when Magnus and Fergus visited Malawi during a famine and met a mother dying from AIDS. When Magnus asked her eldest son Edward what his dreams were in life, he replied simply: *"I want to have enough food to eat and to go to school one day."*

That moment was a key part of the inspiration which led to the founding of Mary's Meals, which began by feeding just two hundred children in Malawi in 2002. Today, they feed 2,429,182 hungry children every school day across seventeen countries.

It costs just £19.15 to feed a child with Mary's Meals for an entire school year – meaning even small donations can transform lives.

*Dy Harvey*

## St James the Less church grounds before and after storm Eowyn



This image was captured on 3 January 2025 and shows a snapshot in time.

The newly installed bench in memory of Ben is against the church wall to the left of the tower.

Part of the labyrinth outlined in snow on the left of the photograph.

The very tall conifer which suffered most damage in storm Eowyn can be seen on the right of the photo. (The lens angle diminishes its height).

*Kathryn Topham*



How the mighty are fallen! This photo is taken looking out to the lane from the northeast corner of the church. Huge branches were ripped of the massive conifer tree during storm Eowyn, crashing into the church grounds and onto the neighbour's scaffolding.



This photo is taken from the lane looking towards the back gate. Huge branches also fell onto the back gate and into the lane. The gate is still standing - a testimony to its sturdiness. No doubt it will need some repair once the debris is cleared,

*Top photograph from Kathryn Topham; lower two photographs from Gillian Little*

## St James the Less Fundraising February 2025



The Christmas Coffee Morning on 7 December 2024 was very well attended despite the bad weather, and raised a staggering £910.96! Thank you for your support. There's always a lot of hard work involved in such events, but it was well worth the effort.

The Burns Storytelling event *Ruth meets Robbie* had to be postponed due to the red weather warning, but then took place on Friday 31 January 2024. A good time was had by all and £736 was raised for Church funds. In the photo - Ruth Kirkpatrick (right), storyteller, with husband Ronnie Fairweather (left) and Marion Mather (centre).



### ***Funds raised at Fellowship Lunches***

- 3 November 24 for Renew 26: £300
- 1 December 24 for Church funds: £267.55
- 5 January 25 for Church funds: £247
- 2 February 25 for Water in Ghana: £305

### ***Forthcoming events***

**Daffodil Tea will be held in Trinity hall in late March or early April,** depending on the daffodils. Look out for the date, once we see how the season is progressing.

**Strawberry Tea will be held on Saturday 14 June in Trinity Hall** with entertainer Margo Falconer. Please put the date in your diary and come along for good food and great entertainment!

Thank you to all those who rose to the **Talents Challenge**. Ten people took part and **£1,809.75 was raised**. Quite amazing and it goes to show what can be done when we use our talents creatively!

## Happy News!



Here's the latest addition to the Stenhouse clan. This is Frankie Philip Proctor Amos.

He wasn't due until the 15 January 2025 but decided he'd rather be a 2024 baby and arrived on the 29 December. He had a bit of a hard time for the first week but he's doing really well now.

He was having a bit of a shout day today though! In the photo are four generations of us - dad Fraser, granny Gill, Frankie and Great Granny Isabel.

## A Childhood in the Country

Mum, Dad, my younger brother, Chris, and I came to live in the countryside in June 1955, in the village of Stow on the A7, twelve miles north of Galashiels, just in time to start my primary education. We had a visit from the Revd Wayne, minister of St Mary of Wedale Parish Church. I invited him to join us for a swim in the Gala Water, a tributary of the Tweed at Galashiels. Although my mother was highly embarrassed at her daughter's "forwardness", apparently he was delighted - no one else had ever offered such an invitation!

In 1956 we moved four miles north to Fountainhall to a brand new council house. Mrs Craigie was the Infant teacher at Fountainhall Primary School (P1-P3 - I joined P2) and her husband Mr Craigie took P4-P7. There were two classrooms with never more than thirty children in the whole school. (There were to be more than that in secondary school classes). We continued to take part in some Stow events after we moved.



At Stow Sports Week in June, there is still a Fancy Dress Competition on the Friday evening. Mum was very skilled at dressmaking (and knitting). Her sewing was self-taught on a hand operated Singer machine. Chris and I always won prizes for *Best Dressed Pair*. The most controversial entry by today's standards was as two golliwogs with my brother's golly held between us! Chris thought his golliwog had a stone head and tried to prove it to his friends by banging it onto the doorstep. Of course the pottery head was smashed to smithereens! He was almost inconsolable. Mum picked up all the pieces with tweezers, glued them together holding the crazy-paved head with a bouclé wig to keep it all together.

*The Two Extremes* was another entry. My brother was dressed in red as the devil, with horns and a forked tail, and I was an angel in white (!!). Another was an organ-grinder with Chris as the monkey "*Pepe for Pops*". After the judging, the entrants and spectators followed the pipe band through the village to the Town Hall. The route was along the A7 causing the traffic to be halted by the police. This still happens! I have marched along twice in recent years.



The other occasion for halting the traffic was on Remembrance Sunday from the War Memorial, northward through the village and back to the town hall, with the Boys' Brigade, the Girls' Guildry, and men from the British legion (including Dad), in their warm overcoats and wearing medals from the

World Wars. Ladies from the Red Cross (including Mum) were followed by the junior Red Cross (of which I was a member) marching in white blouses (with white jumpers underneath), navy skirts, ties and berets. The girls' Red Cross classes were taken by Miss Mamie Hope in the back shop of their late father's draper's shop, beside the shelves of corsets etc! Mamie's sister Ella taught me piano and from the age of nine, I cycled four miles from Fountainhall to Stow along the "back road" on the other side of the river from the A7 (originally a drove road).

In 1962, I joined older children on the school bus which began picking up school passengers from Heriot and stopped pick-ups after Stow (which was allocated another bus) and took everyone to Galashiels Academy twelve miles away. The old stone-built academy had been where Dad had gone from Selkirk (pre WWII). He asked me which teachers I had, and he recognised names such as Miss Frier for Chemistry, who blushed furiously when I asked her if she remembered Dad, William Gray! He had been in a class of sixth year boys which had rather unsympathetically been given to a young female teacher, and they had given her the "run around"!!

As children, we revelled in the freedom of the countryside. The deciduous wood at the bottom of the garden was reminiscent of Enid Blyton's "Faraway Tree". The trees were brilliant for climbing, rope ladders, a swing and a rope for climbing. We also gave little concerts for our parents.

Dad built us a “gang hut” from branches overhanging the gardens, a wonderful surprise on our return home from school!

I **loved** reading in bed! Mum used to come in to say “Good night and time to turn off the bedside light!”. I would wait until I heard her close the sitting room door and she would settle down to listen to the radio. When I turned on the light again, I would hear her voice along the corridor, “Gillian, I told you to put that light out!”, For years, I thought she had semi-supernatural powers until I learned that she could hear the click of the light switch over the radio!



As a family, we listened on the radio to *The Navy Lark* with Leslie Philips, Jon Pertwee, Jimmy Edwards etc. Dad had gone straight from school into the Navy so this programme was of special significance. *Sing Something Simple* and *Forces' Sweethearts* with Cliff Michelmore and his

future wife Jean as co-presenters were other favourites. We also enjoyed *The Billy Cotton Band Show*, *Housewives' Choice* and of course *Listen with Mother* (“Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin”), as well as *Friday Night is Music Night*. We were not allowed to listen to *Round the Horn* with Kenneth Horne etc as it was too suggestive! Wilfred and Mabel Pickles' travelling quiz show *Have a Go* was also very popular with its prizes (“What's on the table Mabel?”). Happy memories!

...to be continued

*Gillian Little*

## School Yard Kitchen From Penicuik to Africa (Ghana) & Back

To help celebrate our continuing memory of Revd Dr Neville Suttle, who, along with his wife Tilly, did so much to raise funds for good causes in Africa. The Vestry of St James's had kindly agreed to fundraise for a charity that works in Africa. With Neville's birthday being in October, it was agreed that the monies raised at Fellowship Lunch on the 6 October would be donated to School Yard Kitchen. This amounted to the grand sum of £375.50.

Who, you may ask, are School Yard Kitchen? It is a Scottish Social Enterprise (a type of Charity), which improves the lives of Ghanaian children and their families. I work in Product Development at School Yard Kitchen and have been involved in this charity for a number of years. I've also visited Ghana to see the work there and how it improves people's lives. Not just the farmers, getting a fair price for their produce, but seeing their children in school and their whole community prosper. School Yard Kitchen buys coca beans and chillies from Ghanaian farmers, paying them fair prices to ensure children can be educated and preventing child labour.

No children work on any of the farms within our group, which currently stands at fifty farms. We are supporting all farmers in the group to gain accreditation as members of the Fairtrade Foundation, Rainforest Alliance and to gain Organic status.

From the profits, we have refurbished a school in the town of Jasikan, which is 300 km from the capital Accra. There are currently two hundred children attending the school on various days. As you can see from the picture, children in Ghana love attending school, which is more than can be said for some children closer to home.



We ship the ingredients grown by our Ghanaian community partners over to Kirkintilloch, near Glasgow, to make a range of products, including condiments, jams, oils and sauces, snacks and indulgent chocolate products. Every purchase supports children's education in Ghana.



We employ twenty-six people in Ghana supporting the farmers and school teachers. We have eight employees in Kirkintilloch, plus forty-five volunteers. Many of the volunteers have been through the social justice system and experienced challenges such as mental health issues, drug or alcohol problems and homelessness.



The Chamber of Farmers – Ghana. Pictured with Ella Simpson from our team. We met in September 2024 to shape the future of our collaboration. Jasikan, Ghana.

The products are not just very tasty, they're award winning too. We achieved a Great Taste Awards and recognition, including Gold in the 2023 Farm Shop & Deli Product Awards for our honest, great-tasting food products that reflect our passion and purpose.



So what did we do with the £325 donation? I'm pleased to confirm that the farmers had a specific need, which this donation covered. We bought wellie boots! During certain times of the year there is an increase in snakes and scorpions in the fields!! This can be very risky when you work with poor or even no footwear. You'll see below two of the farmers looking very pleased with their new footwear.



Please let me once again thank the congregation of St James the Less, for the kind donation which will directly benefit these farmers for many years to come and is a fitting tribute to Neville and Tilly.

*Sara Brand*

website : <https://schoolyardkitchen.com/>

## St James the Less Archives ... *the continuing saga*

According to plan, the Archives group met on Saturday 11 January 2025 to continue the work started in our very productive opening session. Having braved the wintry weather, we were grateful for a cuppa and toasted crumpets with, of course, lashings of butter – courtesy of our reverend leader! Funny how food features in many St JtL activities, but it does motivate us so!

While some of us continued to categorise loose documents and photos, much progress was made on sorting the Vestry Minute files and ensuring we have a complete run of these important documents. There might be earlier reports of business meetings, but these have not appeared yet. The oldest volume dates back to 1915, when it was the Congregational Committee who dealt with the church affairs. An entry, dated 29 June 1917, records receipt of a letter from the Secretary of the Representative Church Council to the Priest-in-Charge, Revd Relton Askey:

*“I was instructed by the Executive Committee of this Council, at its meeting held on the 14<sup>th</sup> inst. to intimate to you that the Committee considers that the requirements of the Council as to title deeds of property have been complied with by the Church of St James, Penicuik & that the maintenance of the ministry is sufficiently provided for. The Committee, therefore, agreed to grant this certificate to enable you to make application to the Bishops of the Diocese in Synod to raise the Mission charge at Penicuik to the status of an Incumbency.”*

A Vestry was appointed fairly soon after, but it would still be some time before we became an Incumbency and Revd Askey our first rector. Although the reports are not often the most scintillating reading material, this one records a most significant milestone in the history of our church, and highlights the value of maintaining our records. Not only maintaining, but being aware of what we have and how it might be used to keep alive the continuing story of our dearly beloved church and its family. Roll on the next session, Charlotte!

*Georgina Phillips*

## Latest paintings from Nikki Dickson



Above - *Deep Thoughts*

Nikki Dickson is a very busy person, working at a demanding job, looking after her chronically ill husband and caring for her mum (Kathy Kennedy) who is suffering from Dementia and needs a lot of help and support from Nikki. Painting helps Nikki relax and recharges her batteries. It's brilliant to see her talent blossoming and developing.

*Sue Owen*



Right - *Flying around*

## Sermon of the Season - Our epiphanies?

Isaiah 60:1-6, Ephesians 3:1-12, Matthew 2: 1-12

So, here we are, the start of another calendar year. And in terms of our church calendar, today (5 January 2025) is the Feast of the Epiphany – a liturgical season whose duration varies depending on the date of Easter. This year we get nine weeks of Epiphany...and we finish the season not with the readings for the eighth Sunday after Epiphany, but with the readings set for the Sunday last before Lent, when we have the lectionary readings for the Feast of the Transfiguration. There is a strong theological logic for this; to transition into Lent by reading the story of God's affirmation of Jesus in his ministry and giving Jesus the assurance to journey one last time to Jerusalem, to his Passion, death and resurrection.

In this season we really need to get to grips with the theme of Epiphany. It derives from the Greek word *epiphaneia* which means 'appearing' or 'revelation'.

And what is to appear and be revealed to us during this season?

Well, hopefully we will come to get a glimpse of God's love, God's power, and God's majesty. We will glimpse how this is conveyed through the acts of Jesus and by acts of God. We will get glimpses of these in a variety of ways ... Matthew's gospel does not state a particular number of magi; the gospel does state that they brought three gifts though...

We will read of several revelations or appearances over this season. None of them is really earth-splitting, thunderous, storm-inducing. What we get is a gentle dove descending; water for cleansing; a voice which probably only Jesus heard as the heavens parted at his baptism; an old man - Simeon - and an old woman - Anna - both of whom God had revealed the true nature of the baby waiting to greet a forty-day old Jesus as the Messiah; Jesus turning water into wine, etc. All of these epiphanies are understated, personal, affirming.

These epiphanies are subtle, they are short glimpses, they are gentle in nature. They are brief opportunities for us to hear the experiences of the revelation of God to Jesus and those around him. We can easily dismiss them, or we can marvel at the acts beyond human understanding, that are beyond our understanding of the world - what we might categorise as 'supernatural'.

And what of our times and of our experiences? Are gentle revelations something that stopped two thousand years ago? Or one thousand years ago? Or two hundred and fifty years ago at the time of the European Enlightenment? Do we want to experience a God who reveals God's self to us, or do we think it just doesn't happen, or won't happen to me because I am not holy enough?

Well, I know some individuals who have great faith but profess to never having had a personal revelation of God. I know some individuals who seem to have cornered the market in personal revelations! I think, as I have said before a number of times, that for us, as in the Bible, revelations tend to be gentle in nature, and they require us to be open to receiving them. And why is that?

Well, firstly because the few times I had what I consider to be revelations, they were understated, gentle, but fairly insistent to be noticed. It makes me wonder just how many I have missed over the years, the decades, my whole lifetime. When I was too busy, when I brushed off a feeling and chose to ignore it, when I was so caught up in my own life that I would never have even sensed the offer of a revelation! And when I did follow-up on those few transitory and brief glimpses - revelations from God - they became meaningful and memorable, and made an impact on me. When we read the gospels, we should note how often Jesus spends time alone in prayer. It clearly gave him affirmation, strength and a direction to his ministry. Jesus needed this connection, and so do we.

Today, do we find it impossible to believe that God would want to appear to us? To appear to us in really quite mundane and everyday ways, that we are in danger of missing them? Today, do we find it impossible to take into the core of our being that we are all, yes all of us, and all of humanity, are loved by God?

That means that God loves each one of us. You are God's beloved. Not because you and I are worthy, but because God is love, and we are God's children. God loved us first, before we had any notion of what that means. When God calls us beloved, when you hear someone like me state this, do you recoil from it and internally have a conversation with yourself where you exclude yourself from God's love? Where you put up a wall, maybe instinctively, and won't admit the possibility of being one of God's beloved?

God's love does not coerce and force us to do anything. We have agency to choose. God may show up in your lives more than you are aware. God may offer revelations that are ignored or not even recognised. In all our ordinariness, we can receive God's love and receive our own epiphanies. But, we need to actively and consciously choose to be in "epiphany mode"; to look, to hear, to feel, to see with fresh eyes. I don't believe epiphanies have stopped. I think we have been too busy to notice and experience them.

You, yes each one of you, is loved by God. In this season of epiphany, I invite you to be in "epiphany mode" and feel the love and find your own unique God-gifted way to use it! Welcome to the season of Epiphany.

*Nick Bowry*

*Selected by Sue Owen*

*Ed: If you have enjoyed a particular sermon, or even been inspired by one, let me know, and we'll try to feature it in an issue of In Touch.*

## St Mungo's Report February 2025

Vestry last met on 20 January 2025.

The Crescendo choir concert in November 2024 was a sell out and the refreshments served afterwards well received. As a result we were able to send a donation of £147 to Mission to Seafarers. We also exceeded our target of collecting 120 beverages for the Tweedale Youth Trust hamper appeal.

Although attendance for Sunday morning worship is still below pre-Covid numbers, our Christmas crib service was very well attended and the monthly Taizé service is also well attended.

The AGM was held on 12 January 2025 and I am grateful that all the office holders agreed to serve for a further year. David King presented a silver salver to the church on behalf of the King family, in memory of Pauline King (1927 - 2022).

*Ian Kerry*



*Photo: Revd Nick (left) receiving Pauline's silver salver for St Mungo's church, from David King (right)*

*Ed: The following paragraph from Pauline's eulogy (In Touch Issue 10, November 2022) reminds us of how important she was in the St Mungo's church family: "For the past forty years Pauline has been a committed and active member of this church St Mungo's. She served in numerous capacities, on the Vestry, helping with coffee mornings and fundraisers, arranging flowers and volunteering on Bethany's Care Van into her late 70s serving the homeless on Edinburgh Streets."*

## St James the Less Vestry Notes January 2025

The Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday 1 December 2024, when the new Vestry members were elected for 2025.

### *Vestry Members for 2025*

Chair Rector <i>ex-officio</i>	Revd Nick Bowry
Rector's Warden <i>ex-officio</i>	Marion Mather (2025)
People's Warden <i>ex-officio</i>	Andy Longmore (2024 to Dec 26)
Lay Rep <i>ex-officio</i>	Gillian Little (2025)
Alt Lay Rep <i>ex-officio</i>	Dyane Harvey (2025)
<i>Ordinary (voting) members</i>	Donald Crease (Jan 25 – Dec 27)
	Andrew Gregg (Jan 25 – Dec 27)
	Val McGavin (2022- Dec 25)
	Cicely McCulloch (Jan 2024 - Dec 26)
	Moira Rendal (Jan 2024 - Dec 26)
<i>(Fabric Convenor)</i>	Moira Morrison (2022-Dec 25)
Treasurer	John McCulloch
Vestry Secretary	Charlotte Kemp

**Nigel Johnston acting Safeguarding lead until a replacement is found.**

The draft minutes of the AGM have been circulated to the congregation by email. Any comments should be sent to Nick or Charlotte.

The first meeting of the new Vestry was held on Tuesday 14 January 2025. The following items were discussed:

1. Fire Drill to be held on a Sunday in March 2025.
2. Vestry gave their approval to Nick's proposals:

- To trial a Night Service as a way of bringing people, including those who do not “do church”, into a peaceful and calm environment.
- To create a Young Church Choir for all children in Penicuik who were interested in joining a choir.

More research and volunteers were required for both activities.

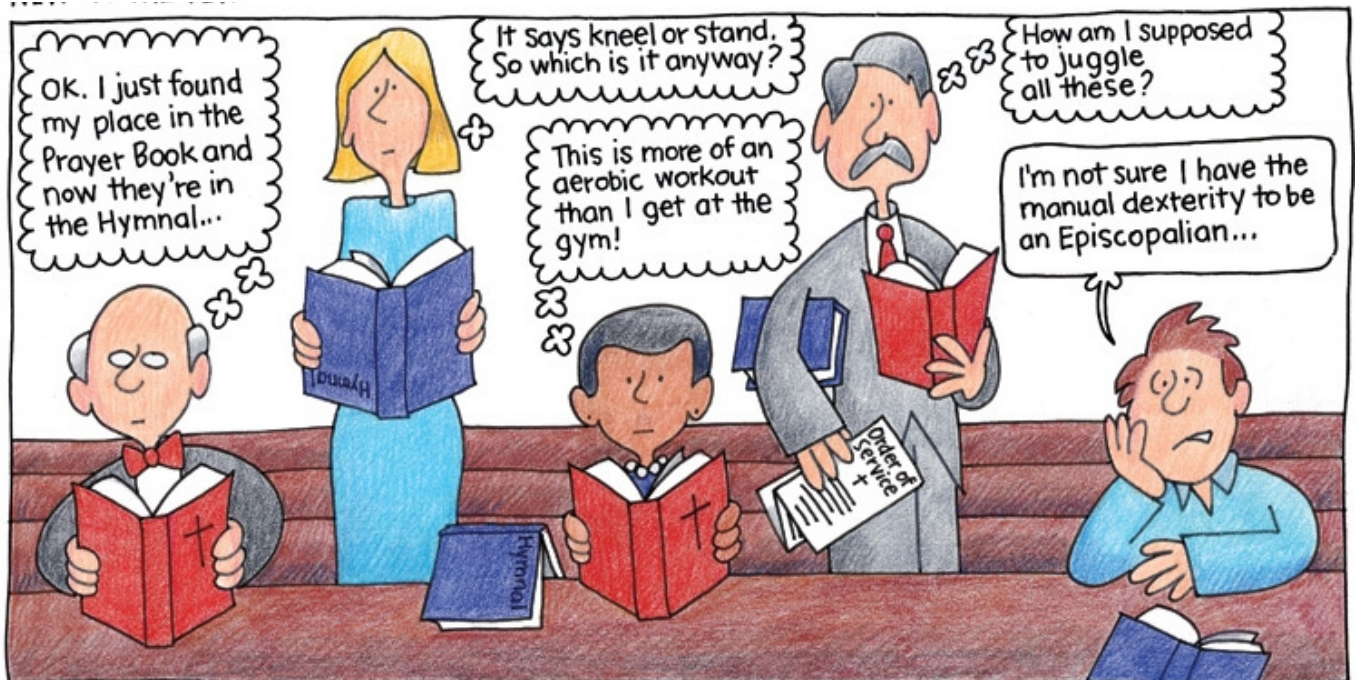
3. The Fire Safety Report has been received. There is much to digest. David McGavin to assist Moira Morrison with the implementation of the report.
4. Icosis Architects have been appointed to progress the project to insulate the Rectory. Their recommendations are awaited.
5. Achieving net zero targets is a complex and expensive process. Vestry are concerned about the costs, time scale and the implication for St James, especially relating to a new church heating system. To progress a new church heating system, it is required to be signed off by the Rector before applying for Canon 25 approval. The Rector is aware of Vestry’s concern but wished to have the opportunity to investigate further possibilities for the long-term position and funding sources. To do this Nick will reconvene the Church Heating Committee who will report to Vestry in September 2025.
6. HMRC requires all charity trustees to sign a declaration that they are a *Fit and Proper Person* to manage a charity in a responsible manner. The Diocesan Office has prepared a form which all Vestry members need to sign.
7. The charges for the use of the church hall by external organisations are under consideration by Vestry. Prior to charges being agreed Vestry have asked that the hourly cost to St James be calculated. They will also decide when or if a discount is appropriate.
8. Congregation to be asked if anyone is interested in volunteering for the role of Safeguarding Lead.

9. The Breakfast Club at Penicuik High School, organised by Penicuik Churches Together, will be in operation in the near future. More volunteers are required. The Breakfast Clubs cost approximately £50 a day to operate. Money had been gifted from St James towards the running costs.
10. An Eco-congregation lead needs to be appointed, as Kathryn Topham is no longer able to continue in the role.
11. Dates for Vestry meetings were agreed for 2025.

Yes, it was a long Vestry meeting, but it takes time to consider important commitments and their implication. Vestry very much wish to make the right decisions for St James for both now and the future. With help we may achieve this. With my love,

*Charlotte Kemp*

## *“New in the Pew”*



<https://www.cpg.org/global/online-resources/cartoons/>

## Last Word

We are slowly approaching the season of Lent. It doesn't commence until Wednesday 5 March 2025. I was reflecting on what may help us approach the penitential season with the right mind. I was reminded of an axiom of Socrates,

*"The unexamined life is not worth living."*

This saying can help us with our own reflective practice; it can be tough work to do, and having a spiritual guide or counsellor can be of great help. Our personal growth and desire to be continually changing and transforming to more closely follow the way of Christ requires some quiet time, where we can be in silence with God, know we are loved, invite God to help us reflect, learn and develop, and then listen for God's word to us.

Richard Rohr asserts that without the ability to self-reflect we do not develop and grow out of our childhood into a spiritually aware and nourished person, able to cope with the messiness of life and the knowledge of our finitude.

How might you have a healthy prayer life with time for reflection, discovery about yourself, and be on a continuous path of transformation and personal development?

*Nick Bowry*

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For donations to any of the causes mentioned in this issue, please contact the treasurer for St James the Less, John McCulloch ([treasurer\[at\]stjamesthelesspenicuik.org](mailto:treasurer[at]stjamesthelesspenicuik.org))

## Websites

St Mungo's: <https://stmungoswestlinton.org/>

St James the Less: <https://stjamesthelesspenicuik.org/>

## Next Deadline

Please send copy to Sue Owen at the email address below by **Sunday 4 May 2025**

The next issue of *In Touch* will be distributed on **Sunday 25 May 2025**

Email: [intouch\[at\]stjamesthelesspenicuik.org](mailto:intouch[at]stjamesthelesspenicuik.org)