



COWAL KIRK NEWS

**CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
SCOTTISH CHARITY No. SC001976**

ISSUE No. 38

FEBRUARY, 2025

MISSION STATEMENT

As a church family,
we seek to grow closer through fellowship,
more compassionate through outreach,
and stronger through worship.
We aspire to be a caring, inclusive community
within a spirit of Christian love.

Our focus will be to:

- † Connect with the youth in society
- † Support the elderly and vulnerable
- † Put our church at the heart of the community



FROM THE MANSE

Looking Ahead

Dear Beloved Cowal Kirk,

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, I want to take a moment to reflect on the journey we've shared and the path that lies ahead. Each year brings with it a fresh opportunity for growth, renewal, and deepening our faith. It is a time to embrace new beginnings with hope and

courage.

This past year may have brought its share of challenges and trials, but it has also been filled with moments of joy, connection, and divine grace. Let us carry forward the lessons we have learned, holding them close to our hearts as we step into this new year together.

I encourage each of you to approach this year with an open heart and mind. Let us dream big and set our intentions not only for ourselves but also for our community. Imagine the impact we can have if we commit to uplifting one another, serving our neighbours, and spreading kindness wherever we go.

In the days ahead, let us be reminded of the words from Isaiah 40:31- "But those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not be faint." This reminds us that our strength and resilience come from our faith and trust in God.

As we embark on this new chapter, let's foster a spirit of encouragement and support within our congregation. Let's lift each other up in prayer; celebrate our achievements, and comfort one another in times of need. Together we are stronger, and together we can create a community that reflects the love and grace of God.

May this year be filled with blessings, opportunities for growth, and an abundance of hope. I look forward to seeing how we, as a congregation, will flourish and shine our light in the world around us.

With love and blessings,

Everisto

RETIRAL OFFERING FOR ALEX HUNTER

The memorial service for Alex Hunter resulted in a Retiral Offering of £267, which has been given to the Cowal Elderly Befrienders. Alex enjoyed his times with them and made many friends there.
A heartfelt thank you from the family for all your support.

Janet Hunter

A BIG THANKYOU

This is just a short note to say many, many thanks for the support I have received from the folk of Cowal Kirk. My accident is taking its time to heal, but I'm glad to say I'm getting there.

The telephone calls, cards, visits at home and in hospital, not to mention the beautiful flowers received from the Kirk, have all fairly brightened the days.

It's true what they say, that friends are the family we choose for ourselves, and we find this in abundance in Cowal Kirk.

So, once again, many thanks, and I hope to be back amongst you in the church soon.

Cathie Burgess

PREACHING ROTA

Sunday 2nd February	Kirn & Sandbank
9th February	St. John's
16th February	Toward & Innellan
23rd February	Kirn & Sandbank Scouts Founders Day

Advance Notice for WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

The World Day of Prayer this year has been prepared by the women of the Cook Islands.

It will be held in Cowal Kirk St. John's
at 2.30pm on **Friday, March 7th, 2025.**

The Theme: 'I made you wonderful'
Psalm 139, verse 14.

Cowal Kirk Guild

Guild meetings will continue in the High Kirk Hall,
Hanover Street, on Thursdays at 2pm.

Everyone is welcome.

Please bring your own mug.

The speakers for February are:

- 6th Rev. Canon Paddy Allen
- 13th Priority Areas
- 20th Under 5's to play *
- 27th t.b.c.*

**programme change*



BLYTHSWOOD CARE SHOEBOX APPEAL

The Guild's Annual Shoebox appeal was once again very well supported with, this year, a total of 111 boxes and well over £500 being forwarded to Blythswood.

This winter it was gratifying to know that all our donations were sent to support the hard-pressed people of Ukraine.

Many thanks to all who donated.

Guild Shoebox Team.



Care Home Worship

The Cowal Kirk is still responsible for worship in the Care Homes as below. We try to visit monthly and any assistance on these occasions will be deeply appreciated.

The dates for February are:

Ashgrove - Tuesday, February 11th at 11.00am.

Ardenlee - Tuesday, February 18th at 2.30pm.

**When we work for the Lord we don't get a huge salary,
but His retirement plan is out of this world!**

PRINTED NEWSLETTERS

If you, or anyone you know is having difficulty in reading the printed newsletter, an audio version of it can be provided via a USB stick.

FreeTTS (Free Text To Speech) is the process by which this is done, and it seems to be working quite well. We currently have one monthly user, and two more are giving it a trial run.

The format for the USB stick is created, copied and then made available. It may be, however, that you prefer to stay with a paper copy and magnifier, and that's perfectly okay.

We are delighted with this latest version of FreeTTS as it enables us to embed pauses and to adjust the speed at which the text is read out. If anyone would like to get involved in this process, or just wants to find out more, please contact the administrator.



"I downloaded them
from a cloud."

ELDER'S NAME BADGES

You may have noticed that we have also introduced Name Badges for those who are part of the Welcome team at the door. We believe this is a helpful addition for any visitors who come to our church.

MID - WEEK WORSHIP

Services will continue in High Kirk Hall at 11.00 on the dates listed below. All are welcome.

Wednesday 5th February - Geoff Roberts

Wednesday 19th February - Donald Manson



Recruiting Now!

We had a little taste of how things used to be in Toward Church at the service just following storm Eowyn; perhaps not with regard to the lack of heating, but re our need to use hymn books once again! The screens that we have become so used to, provide us with notices and information,

as well as everything else that is needed during our church services and at events in the High Kirk Hall.

And making all this happen unobtrusively in the background have been the Cowal Kirk Audio-Visual (AV) team.

They are now looking for **new members** to join their small friendly team of three. This involves:

- * preparing Order of Service and Welcome Slides for each service
- * printing readings and large text hymn sheets
- * checking the AV equipment prior to each service
- * running the presentation during the service.

This may sound like a lot, but full training will be given, and the other team members will always be there for support.

If you would like to find out more, please contact the administrator.

Notification of Sale



We can now confirm that the sale of the High Kirk was finally completed in November 2024, for the sum of £85,000.

REQUESTS FOR VISITS

If you know of anyone who would like a visit, for any reason or none, either from an Elder or from the Minister, would you please pass the information on to either Everisto or Jim Anderson.

So often we learn too late that someone has had a fall, been in hospital, is having a difficult time or is just feeling lonely. We are a caring community, so we need to keep abreast of all such circumstances.



STARTER PACKS PLUS

The expression “calm before the storm” suggests that a quiet period in which there is little or no activity presages a period in which there may be a lot of trouble or intense activity. Such was the case for Starter Packs.

At the end of last year we recorded that we’d met a total of 36 requests. This necessitated a constant search for stock items at affordable prices that had been depleted. Thanks to Morrisons recently selling duvets and pillows at a reduced price, plus other sources successfully located, we were once again able to create what should have been a comfortable supply that is, until 17th January, when we received 5 new requests! In total, as well as all the other items (shown above), these created a need for 4 double and 2 single duvets, plus pillows!

Time constraints have meant that, so far, I’ve only managed to fulfil half of these, although thankfully I’m not being pressured by the agency concerned. But then, today (28th), I received a further 3 requests from a different organisation. Each of these also have children to provide for, and increase the need for a further 4 double duvets and 8 singles. So you can see it’s a constant battle.

I’m highlighting this because I’m concerned that at some point we may not have enough funds to help these folk. And although we do still have enough of the donation from the Lotteries Community Fund to keep us going ...that will soon be used up.



You may recall that I’ve previously listed the smaller items that we also run short of on a regular basis, and I’m grateful for the donations of these that have been made, as well as the occasional monetary gift. But if the above is an indication of what is going to be expected of us going forward, then I’m afraid I’m going to be appealing even more for your support in whatever way you can give it.

Ruth Griffiths (Rev.)

P.S. I may as well also ask — if anyone is interested in helping put these packs together, I will be more than happy to show them what’s involved.

Children & Families Report

Happy New Year!

I think it's probably well overdue that I stop saying this, now that we're almost at the end of January.

And yet, every time these words leave my lips, or my fingertips in this case, I find myself pondering the very notion and sentiment of these words.

“Happy New Year”

If you've met me, you know I love to be happy.

Actually, I think everyone does.

We want the ability to feel happiness.

And with that thought, I would love if the entire year of 2025 could be full of happiness.

However, I also think we are all old enough and wise enough to know that not every moment in this coming year will have us “feeling” happy or experiencing happiness. Life has a habit of throwing all sorts of curveballs at us.

It can be unpredictable, and it can be completely outwith our control, as we all witnessed here in Cowal just a week or so past with Storm Eowyn.

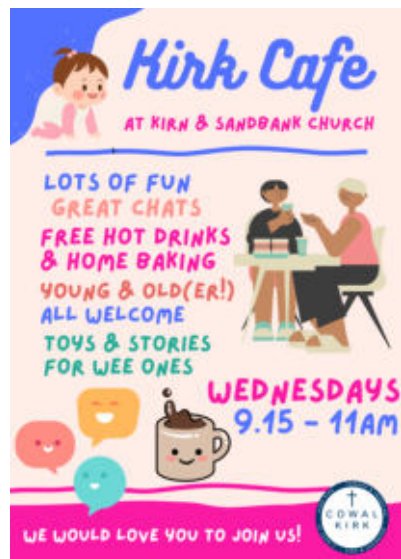
And yet, in the midst of the storm, we may not cling to happiness in every moment; but we do hold onto Hope. We also hold onto those close and dear to us, especially those in our community.

I am so thankful for the lovely community we have built up within Cowal Kirk, and for the signs of this growing even bigger with our Pizza Church and at the Kirk Cafe.

It has been such a blessing being able to welcome every person who has walked through the doors and been made to feel that they belong; and for every person who has given of their time and their skills to make these things happen.... the seen and the unseen.

I am thankful for the prayers which have been spoken on our behalf, and for the prayers that surround us.

So, when I think upon all these things - the happy little faces singing ../..



../.. at the Kirk Cafe on Wednesdays, or the congregation's happy faces when watching them perform in our Nativity at Christmas. And with so many new families joining us and enjoying all the pizza or the



home baked goodies on any of our fun events; these things really do make me happy.

Just today I was reading that apparently, Finland is number one on the World Happiness Index.

A Finnish philosopher from Aalto University, suggested that happiness is found when we: "Connect with others

through social relationships... doing good things to other people... or through small acts of kindness."

My Hope and prayer for us all is that we lean into these things more and more; that we see our communities flourish and grow; and that we all realise we have a part to play in building God's wonderful community. May it be that — yes, we will have happiness throughout this year... and lots of it! But more importantly, that we can build on our Hope and Trust in Jesus.



This is my "Hopeful New Year" x

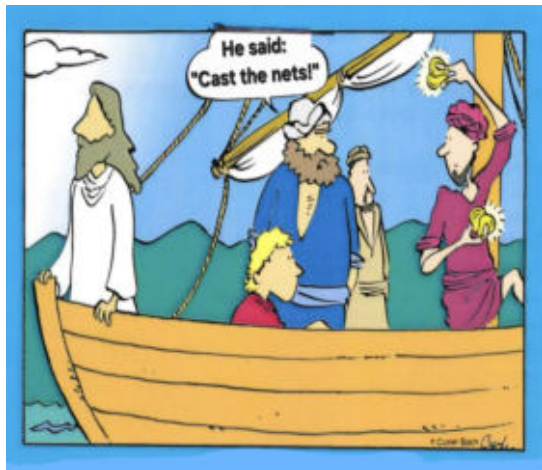
You can contact me at familiesworker@cowalkirk.org.uk or phone me on 07967191238.

Lorna McGinnigal

"Let all you do be done in love." (1 Corinthians 16:14)

BIBLE STUDY

Bible Study continues to take place on Tuesday afternoons, at 2pm in the Manse. But there is also now an opportunity for those of teen age to take part in discussions on the bible. These informal sessions are also in the Manse on Friday afternoons at 10 past 3.



QR Code

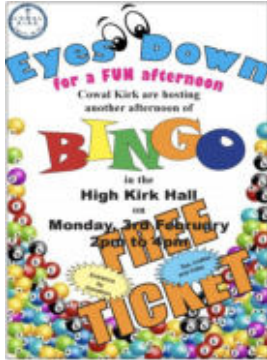
In these days of seeming digital overload, where those around us appear able to do just about everything with their mobile phones, from making calls (its original purpose!) to sending messages, pictures, emojis; looking for items of information or advice, following do-it-yourself videos or recipes, and now checking their bank accounts or paying for purchases in shops, supermarkets, cafés, hotels, restaurants, etc. There seems to be no limit to what can be done digitally.

As a church, we have had to catch up with all of this. So now, in order to enable those so minded to use their mobile phones to make their congregational giving on entering the church, we now have a QR Code (< see left). Those familiar with the process can now simply scan the code, open the associated App and decide on how much they want to give. I'm told its all very simple. Who said the church was outdated!



FUND RAISING ACTIVITIES

The fundraising group have had a well-earned wee break since Christmas and into the New Year. But now, batteries charged, we are planning the next BINGO day on Monday 3rd February. Don't



forget to get your ticket and spread the word. Hopefully enough of you will have received the magazine before then?

We have also decided as of the first Sunday in March to give everybody attending a tube of Smarties. However, after you have enjoyed eating the contents you are then asked to use the tube to save 20p coins and, once the tube is full, to give it to a member of the fundraising group. This will be part of our contribution towards Christlan Aid.

~ Start saving your 20p pieces now and be ahead of the game! ~
The WEE Shop had a great Christmas turnover. We are constantly amazed by the generosity of our customers, and the diversity of donations. Recently, we sold 2 prams, a Moses basket, blankets galore, warm coats for wee ones ... the list goes on. This week we have received books, Tupperware, and a lawnmower! It really is like working in Aladdin's cave. Don't forget that we also support the Starter Packs, so check out (below) what is needed this month.



Thank you.

Lawther, Fund-raising Co-ordinator.



Starter Packs

Are currently in need of: Fitted sheets (not flat) for single beds, cleaning materials (small bottles of floor cleaner, washing-up liquid and the like) washing cloths and scourers, toothpaste and brushes, flannels and soap, shampoo and shower gel, dinner plates and cutlery, tin openers and potato peelers and small saucepans/milkpans.

1st Cowal:

Kicking Off 2025 in Style

The 1st Cowal Boys' Brigade & Girls' Association has launched into 2025 with energy and enthusiasm! We're thrilled to share that 61 young

people are now registered with us, including 23 Anchors and 26 Juniors. We also celebrated clearing our waiting list for the first time in 18 months, only to have to start it back up again, with 9 young people currently waiting for spaces across our sections. We're hopeful to be able to offer them places after the February half term! Since our last update, we've also welcomed two new adult volunteers, George and Aaron, and are in the process of registering another. Their addition strengthens our team and allows us to provide even more opportunities for our young people.

This term, our **Anchors** have been exploring what makes each of us special. Through creative self-portraits, they've learned that we are all unique, like different colours in a box of crayons. These portraits will soon be displayed at Hanover Street Hall. We've also discussed the importance of sharing through the story of Benny and Sammy the Squirrels. Looking ahead, the Anchors will explore the world of birds through crafts and games, and we'll finish the term reflecting on God's protection and His plans for each of us.

Our **Juniors** started the term with challenges that introduced them to Binary Code and Braille. They wrote three-letter words in binary and shared facts about themselves using Braille. We then tackled a creative activity called "What if God were an Emoji," using emojis to represent Bible stories—a game that proved to be a big hit! Over the coming weeks, the Juniors will delve deeper into coding, learn how programmes work, and create constellation boxes before heading outdoors to spot constellations in the night sky.

The **Company & Seniors** have focused on their *Build Your Skills* course, the first formal leadership qualification within the Boys' Brigade. This course is a key milestone towards earning the President's Badge, the second-highest award in the BB. We are delighted to share that 2025 will be the first year we have awarded this badge in a long time! This term, they've explored the roles we play in life—at work, school, and home—and the qualities needed to excel in those roles. Over the coming weeks, they'll test these skills through team challenges and real-world scenarios.

We must also celebrate the success of our **1240 Challenge**, which took place just before Christmas in support of the Rotary's *End Polio Now Campaign*. Our Anchors



collectively caught a ball 1,240 times, while the Juniors, Company, and Seniors completed a sponsored 1,240-second silence (20 minutes!). Remarkably, they all managed it! Together, we raised an incredible £434—enough to vaccinate 6,510 children. With match funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, this total becomes £1,302, enabling vaccinations for 19,530 children. This achievement is a testament to the dedication of our young people, their families, and the local community.

This half-term has been filled with exciting activities and enthusiastic participation. We are so grateful for the ongoing support of the Cowal Kirk family, the encouragement of parents and guardians, and the dedication of our adult volunteers—Sam, Jen, George, Claire, Aaron, and Bobby. Their commitment makes everything we do possible.

Thank you all for being part of this journey with us!

*Jamie,
Captain.*

Children's Biblical Blunders 😊

- 
- No. 1 In the first book of the Bible, God got tired of creating the world so he took the Sabbath off.
 - No. 2 Noah's wife was Joan of Ark.
 - No. 3 Lots wife was a pillar of salt during the day, but a ball of fire during the night.
 - No. 4 Samson slayed the Philistines with the Axe of the Apostles.
 - No. 5 Moses led the Jews to the Red sea where they made unleavened bread which is bread without any ingredients.
 - No. 6 The Egyptians were all drowned in the dessert.
 - No. 7 the seventh commandment is thou shalt not admit adultery.
 - No. 8 Moses died before he ever reached Canada.
 - No. 9 The greatest miricle in the Bible is when Joshua told his son to stand still and he obeyed him.
 - No. 10 Solomon, one of David's sons, had 300 wives and 700 porcupines.
 - No. 11 Jesus enunciated The Golden Rule, which says to do unto others before they do one to you.
 - No. 12 The Epistels were the wives of The Apostles.
 - No. 13 One of the Oppossums was St. Matthew who was also a Taximan.
 - No. 14 St. Paul cavorted to Christianity, he preached Holy Acrimony which is another name for marraige.

FOR THE 'SHUT-INS'

From Rev. Sandy

Dear Friends,

The Book of Psalms is a treasure-trove of readings in which we find comfort, joy, reassurance and the means to praise God for his love and for all that he has done for us.

One Psalm which I think is very appropriate, as we take our leave of the old year and launch into the new, is Psalm 46, the first line of which reads: 'God is our refuge and strength'. It goes on to affirm the faithfulness of God in all that we face.

This new year will be a continuation of what we might call 'the rich texture of life.' There will be good times and times of sorrow; times of opportunity and times of challenge; times of dreams realised and times of disappointment.

Throughout it all, God will be with us, right by our side, upholding us if the going gets tough, and enriching those times when we feel on top of the world.

As the year unfolds, let's remember to take God with us in all that we do and in all that we experience; and we can do this by praying to him in every situation. There is no mystique about prayer; there is no laid down format. I rather like this excerpt from a recent book by the Rev. Dr. Marjory MacLean:

".....it might make it easier for you to pray, because if you imagine you are speaking to someone who can easily hear you, totally understand you, already know you; you will stop parroting the formulae of prayer you think you ought to use and start just saying what you think and feel as you would to the most trusted friend you've ever had."

Our 'most trusted friend' is our Heavenly Father, so let's enjoy talking to him as our ever-present companion.

Every blessing,

Sandy



CYBER AWARENESS

We have recently been contacted by Police Scotland informing us to be aware that criminal activity has moved into the everyday world through our (and our children's) use of social media and the various messaging services that are now available. Further details of this will be reported in next month's magazine. In the meantime — just be on your guard.

- * Some people don't realise that the 10 Commandments aren't multiple choice.
- * One thing about a church: you're never too bad to come in, and you're never too good to stay out.
- * Coincidence is when God chooses to remain anonymous.

O give me a sense of humour, Lord. Give me the grace to see a joke, to get some humour out of life, and pass it on to other folk.

Flower Rota for February

Kirn & Sandbank

St. John's

FEBRUARY

2nd Mrs P. McIntyre

Mrs Grace Black

9th t.b.c.

Mrs Lynda Norris

16th Mrs Moira McDonald

Mrs Dorothy Docherty

23rd Dr & Mrs J.B. Hamilton

Miss Margaret McVicar

Contacts:-

Mrs Maureen Robinson **702903**

Mrs Linda Murry **830022**

Mobile: **07570 973011**

Mobile: **07779121257**



Pizza Church with Cowal Kirk

DINE IN DATES

FRIDAY JAN 31ST
FRIDAY FEB 21ST
FRIDAY MARCH 21ST
FRIDAY APRIL 25TH

HIGH KIRK HALL, Hanover Street
4.30 - 6.30pm

Dine In Only!

  **PIONEER MISSION FUND** 

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Please note: **Last day for March Newsletter contributions : Sunday 23rd February.** Please email these to EDITOR as above – thank you.