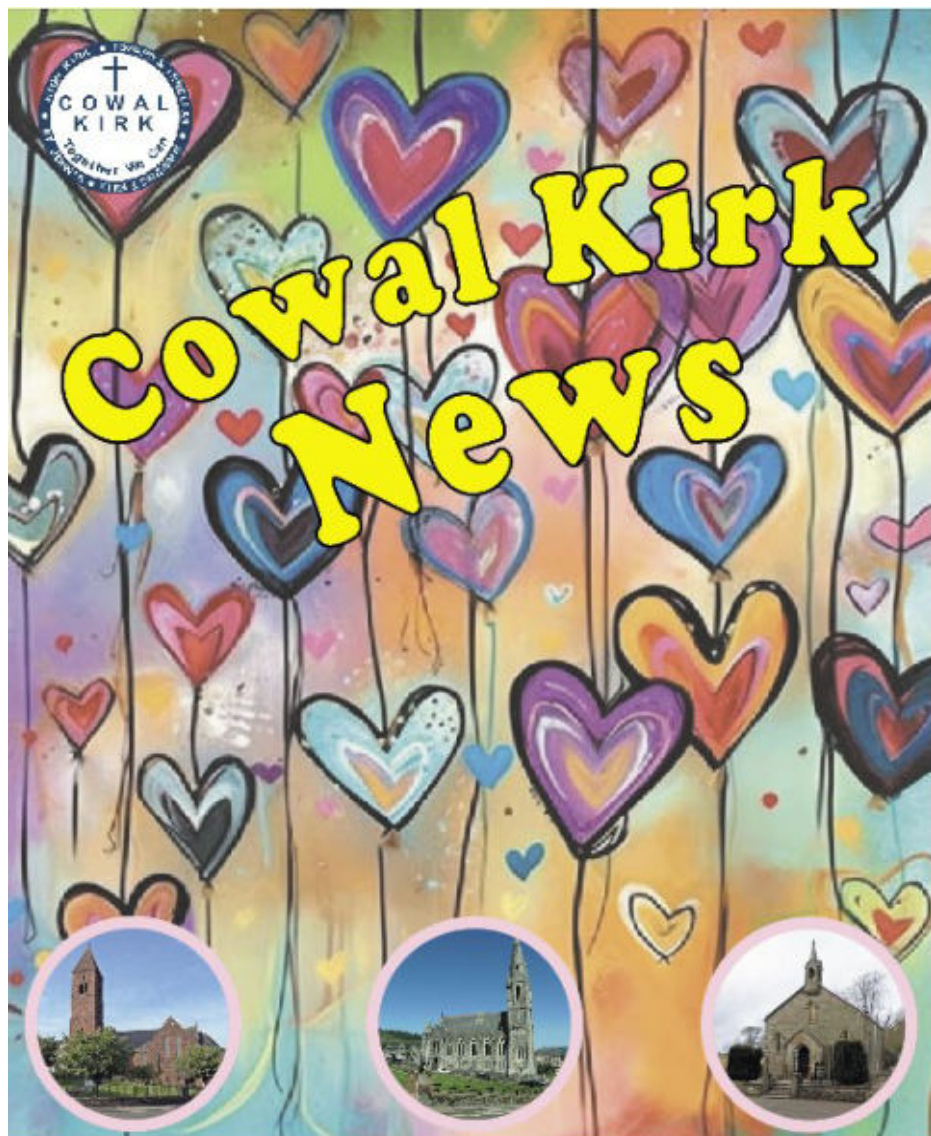




CHURCH OF SCOTLAND
SCOTTISH CHARITY No. SC001976
ISSUE No. 48 ~ FEBRUARY, 2026

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

~ A Season of Gratitude and Hope ~

Dear Cowal Kirk Family,

As we reflect on the end of the festive season, I wanted to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you for your love, support, and commitment to our church community. It's been a joy to see our church come together to celebrate the birth of Jesus, and I'm so grateful for the many ways you've contributed to make this season special.



As we look ahead to the new season, I'm filled with hope and anticipation for all the amazing things God has in store for us. I'm excited to see how He will continue to work in and through our church, and I'm confident that together, we will grow and flourish as a community of believers.

As we move into this new season, I want to encourage each of you to continue to care for one another; to make a conscious effort to check in on our neighbours, visit the sick, and support those who are struggling. Let's be a church that truly loves and serves one another, and let's shine the light of Christ to a world in need.

I also want to take this opportunity to express my huge appreciation to everyone who has served our church in various ways. To our volunteers: thank you for giving your time, talents, and resources to serve others. To our Elders: thank you for your dedication and hard work. To our teams: thank you for your tireless efforts to make our church a place of worship, community, and growth.

As we look to the future, we are in need of more volunteers to help us serve and reach our community. If you're interested in getting involved, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. We have many opportunities to serve, and we'd love to have you join us.

In closing, I want to thank you again for being part of this amazing church family. I'm honoured to serve as your Minister, and I look forward to seeing what plans God has for us in the days ahead.

With love and gratitude,

Everisto

FUND RAISING ACTIVITIES

Thanks to our generous donors we had a remarkably busy December and, perhaps it's a sign of the times(?) but we were inundated with electrical items to sell. We sold over 200 items, all of which were PAT tested, in the three months leading up to Christmas.

As a consequence of this busy-ness, we also opened on the Monday of Christmas week (normally our day off), but we had an absolutely fabulous day ... and more of the same on 23rd.

Then Anne and I decided to open on the morning of Christmas Eve as well(!) but those two half-days were as good as a full week. We were really amazed, as we've never experienced this real rush of business in all our 13 years....SO, I think we truly earned our two weeks off in January!!



Further thanks are due to the generosity of Ricky and Linda Murry, who donated a Jan Ferguson print, and to Anne Muir for selling the raffle tickets for it at our first Christmas coffee morning in the refurbished Toward Hall. We were delighted at

the turn out — and the lucky winner was Jennie Harrison.

NOW — with the First Monday of January being so close to all the Christmas and New Year celebrations, we decided it was best to wait until February to re-start our MEET and GREET events.

So get your tickets and **Come Along**, for a 2pm start(!) on **Monday, 2nd February**, so we can have an afternoon of fun, as well as a cuppa and cake. What's not to like? We look forward to seeing you there.

*Lawther,
Fund-raising Co-ordinator.*

STARTER PACKS PLUS

I took over the organisation and distribution of Starter Packs from Ruth in December, 2025, and have been quite delighted with the response from church members and the community, who have been so generous with donations of cash and household items.

Already in January, 2026, we have been able to help four young people to set up house in Dunoon, and they have all been extremely appreciative of the gifts received from the churches in Cowal.

This month, we are needing to replenish our stock of pots, frying pans and ovenware, so if you are able to help with any of these, that would be wonderful.



The photo here is of the Starter Pack given to one of our referrals; a young girl coming out of the care system. In this instance she didn't need bedding, but otherwise that would have been provided as well.

Fiona Anderson
07894762934
Starter Pack Co-ordinator.

MID-WEEK WORSHIP

Short services are held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month, at 11.00am in the High Kirk Hall, Hanover Street, to which everyone is welcome.

February 4th—Donald Manson

February 18th—Jen Zielinski (Ash Wednesday)

Here are the Cowal Kirk Mission Events in 2025:

Pizza Church — average monthly attendance — 90
Summer Holiday Club — 60 children
Café at the Kirk — average weekly attendance — 30
Good Food Project bags to schools — 650 bags over the year
Easter Cinema trip to see “The King of Kings” Movie — 80 + babies
Christmas Cinema tickets to local families — 42 families
Supporting local groups with the minibuses — 40 trips
eXp Financial support for assisted holiday places
Starter Packs — 54 referrals
Shoebox Appeal — 78 shoeboxes and £475
Haven at the Cowal Games (Cowal Churches)
Practice Space for Cowal Games Dancers & Families
Christmas Fayre — £1,500
Christmas Tree Festival
Christmas Family Fun Day — approx 120 in attendance
Christmas Chat and Cheer
Kirn Lights Switch On — Hot Chocolates at Church — approx 50
Donations to: Erskine — £362.22 CHAS — £450 Salvation Army — £1,411.36 Foodbank — £50 Christian Aid — £1,603.20
Harvest Lunch
Agapé Meal
Stamp Appeal
Meet and Greet

The Wee Shop Donations to:
Hilltop Nursery (Kenya) — much needed goods
Children in Need — £140
Hospice weekly donations of fabrics (for their rag bag)

The Wee Shop Collections:
Christmas Lights (all year round)
Poppy Appeal

Attendance at “The Big Conversation” for Priority Areas

Phoenix Choir

THE FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION

It seems appropriate, now that the Supermarket shelves are bursting at the seams with displays of Easter eggs, to ask ourselves: “Why are Chocolate prices increasing?”



The latest communication I received from the Fairtrade Foundation tells us that rising cocoa costs are reshaping the chocolate industry, but not always in ways that protect the farmers. Behind the question is a much bigger story about the growers of the cocoa beans whose livelihoods depend on their production.

Many cocoa-growing communities face low wages, unstable demand and rising production costs, all of which widen the gap between what chocolate is worth and what farmers actually earn. But chocolate is also getting more expensive because the cocoa supply chain is under major strain - and that is primarily as a result of climate change. Cocoa trees are highly sensitive to temperature and rainfall changes, with the knock-on effect that when less cocoa is produced, the cost of the raw bean rises, and that ultimately increases the price of chocolate.

Fairtrade endeavours to provide a safety net for the farmers by ensuring they are paid more fairly and can build resilience in the face of these challenges. Fairtrade standards prioritise human rights, environmental protection and economic stability - which all put money back in the hands of farmers and workers and can help put food back on the table for their families.

This Easter we should remember them when buying our chocolate. *Ed*

It's been a wonderfully busy few weeks back at the 1st Cowal — just the way we like it! We began the term by

welcoming a number of new members in the first couple of weeks, bringing us

back up to around 70 young people. What an incredible blessing! We were even able to clear our waiting list (hooray!), although it wasn't long before we had to start one again because of the number of new young people keen to join.

Over the course of the year, this means we'll be delivering around 2,790 hours of activities rooted in our Christian ethos, engaging young people with God's word in ways that are fun, relevant and meaningful to them. That is something we are truly excited about.

Our Anchor Section (ages 5–8) started the term by learning about communication and teamwork. We kicked things off with a game of Battleships before moving on to Robots and Coding! You might be wondering how robots connect with faith — but the link is a lovely one. Robots are designed to help people, and in the Bible, Jesus teaches us to do the same through kindness, love and care. We explored the story where Jesus washes his disciples' feet, showing that real love means serving others, even when the task is simple, humble or messy.

Our Junior Section (ages 8–11) began with a fast-paced game of Battle Balls before slowing things down to learn the song "God is Good" using Makaton. Makaton uses signs, symbols and speech to support communication and is used by over 100,000 people as their main way of expressing themselves. This reflects our commitment to making the 1st Cowal — and the wider Kirk community — as inclusive, welcoming and accessible as possible.

Meanwhile, our Company and Senior Sections (ages 11–18) kicked off the term with activities inspired by the TV programme *The Traitors*. At first glance, this might not seem very biblical — but it led us into the story of Joseph in Genesis. Joseph is betrayed by his own brothers despite remaining faithful, a powerful reminder of trust, forgiveness and God's bigger plan. In *Traitors* terms, Joseph is the "Faithful" among the "Traitors" — a creative way to explore a deep and meaningful Bible story.



Using everyday experiences and familiar themes helps us meet young people wherever they are on their faith journeys and walk forward together in learning and faith.

We were also delighted to take part in our first ever Battalion Competition. On Saturday 24th January, five of our young people travelled to Inverclyde for a 5-a-side football tournament with around 35 participants. Two young people from 4th Port Glasgow joined our team, and it was wonderful to see the friendships form.

Although there was no trophy this time, our young people came away proud of their effort and their teamwork. Our leaders were especially proud of how they supported one another, welcomed new teammates, and handled both highs and lows with maturity and kindness. The next Battalion event is the Cross Country Run at the end of February, and we're thrilled that some of our young people are keen to take part.

Jamie, 1st Cowal BB&GA Captain.

Open Church

**This is an invitation to any and everyone
to come along to Kirn & Sandbank Church
on any Wednesday ~ between 9:30am and 3pm.**

**The church will be Open
for a cup of tea or coffee and a chat in the hall,
or just an opportunity to sit in the church
for some quiet contemplation.**

**Everisto will be available
between 12 and 1pm.**

February

The month of February brings with it a few significant events that have Christian connections. The first, I guess, is that of St Valentine's Day which, according to legend, though significantly muddled by history, relates to a 3rd century Roman priest or bishop of that name, who defied Emperor Claudius II by secretly conducting marriages of persecuted Christian soldiers believing that love shouldn't be banned*. For this he was imprisoned and later executed.

Legend also tells us that while imprisoned, he healed his jailer's blind daughter, Julia, and writing her a farewell note, prior to his execution, he signed it with the words: "from your Valentine". It is this that appears to have established the tradition of sending love letters, which has evolved into the widespread exchange of cards and gifts on February 14th. The significance of the date being that, when Valentine's disobedience was discovered, he was executed on this date.

Although there may have been multiple martyrs named Valentine, it is this tale of compassion and defiance against an unjust law that forms our basis for Valentine's Day - a day to celebrate love and affection.

** The Emperor Claudius II banned marriages for the young men in his army because he thought that single soldiers made better fighters!*



● The second event falls this year on February 17th - Shrove Tuesday (or Pancake Day, as it has come to be known) traditionally a feast day before the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday. It's a day of penitence, feasting, and clearing out the pantry before the austerity of Lent begins. The main purpose was to use up perishable foods (i.e fats, eggs, sugar - hence the pancakes) that were forbidden during Lent. The word "shrove" comes from the Old English "shriven" meaning to confess sins and receive absolution; a common practice before the Lenten period of fasting and reflection.

Giving something up for Lent is a Christian tradition where people fast from a luxury, a bad habit, or a distraction (like social media, alcohol, sweets or gossip) for the 40 days leading to Easter. It is a somewhat poor attempt to imitate Jesus' sacrifice in the desert, although it does require an amount of self-discipline, and a reminder to make time to turn towards God through reflection, prayer, and acts of charity.

**Give me a sense of humour, Lord, give me the grace to see a joke;
to get some humour out of life, so I can pass it on to other folk.**

A father was reading Bible stories to his young son:
"The man named Lot was warned to take his wife and flee out of the city, but his wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt."

His son looked up, concerned, and asked: "What happened to the flea?"



**"In church, who's watching to see
if we're good? Santa, or God?"**

A friend of mine has two tickets in an executive box for the England v Scotland match on Saturday.

He didn't realise it was the same day as his wedding, so he's looking for someone to take his place.

"It's at Rutherglen Registry Office at 4pm. The bride's name is Sarah, she's 5'4", quite pretty and a really good cook!"

Flower Rota for February

Kirn & Sandbank

FEBRUARY 1st Mrs P. McIntyre

8th Mrs ? Rose

15th Mrs Moira McDonald

22nd Dr & Mrs J. B. Hamilton

St. John's

Mrs Grace Black

Mrs Lynda Norris

Mrs Dorothy Docherty

Mrs Margaret McVicar

Contacts: Mrs Maureen Robinson **702903** Mrs Linda Murry **830022**

Mobile: **07570 973011**

Mobile: **07779131257**



CHILDREN & FAMILIES NEWS

First of all, let me wish you all a Happy New Year! I hope you are all well and enjoying the start of the New Year.

Personally I used to *really* dislike January! The cold, wet, darker months, and the quieter more “*boring*” lull, after the buzz and excitement of December.



Now, I really love and appreciate it. I love the feeling of the new, fresh opportunities which the New Year brings in, but I also love the quieter spell, where you can hunker down in the evenings, when it's possible to have an early night with a good book.

If you've been reading my reports in earlier months, you will know I've spoken of my new appreciation of the seasons and of how God has designed us / the world this way. And, as each year goes by, I think my appreciation grows. And in my hunkering down, I have been reading two books, both of which I would highly recommend:

Practicing the Way by John Mark Comer and ***Sounds from Heaven, The Revival on the Isle of Lewis*** by Colin N. and Mary Morrison Peckham

There's a lot of talk in the media just now about the “Quiet Revival”. If you haven't seen or read, please look it up and see for yourself. It's maybe not in quite the same way as they were seen on Lewis in the 50s but in the UK right now, Bible sales are soaring and there's a real hunger amongst the younger generation. This is so exciting and we are so ready for it :)))) Please pray for this to continue and for us to see the same hunger here in Cowal.

Through my reading, I am really gaining an understanding of the need for our prayers to lead the way. In the Lewis revival, it was the prayers which came first.

In our conversations with God - and not just our talking, but in our ***listening to Him*** to guide our every thought and action, as we make our plans for the year ahead, we must remember “***He is the potter and we are the clay***” (Isaiah 64:8). We look forward to all that God has in store for us and our community in 2026, as we seek to follow His plans and be his clay.

Let's begin with some of the **GOOD NEWS** from the end of 2025 >

Good Food Project

In December we worked together with our local Primary Schools and handed our Good Food bags in to: Dunoon, Kirn, Innellan and Toward Primary

schools. Around 300 bags containing the ingredients to make a festive Mulled apple drink, along with a message & instructions to make a Christingle at home with their families. In this way we encouraged families to both cook and learn together. The families also received a Christmas card from the Cowal Kirk along with invitations to all that was happening within the church over the festive period.



Thank you all so much for your encouragement and support with this project.

Christmas Gifting

We were further blessed to be able to gift cinema Vouchers to 42 families in need of a little extra this year - an enjoyable day out together. How good it is to be able to bless our community in this way and to build such positive relationships with our local schools. On top of this, in December we had the privilege of leading the Assembly in Dunoon Primary alongside the Good Food project and we also invited the P1s to P4s of Kirn Primary to come down to our Cafe for the morning.



Pizza Church

Another busy Christmas special for Pizza Church, with well over 100 in attendance (lots of families and children) all enjoying the night together. It was wonderful to have some of the Young People from eXp leading the worship / music

of the night, and having more young people involved with the leadership roles of Pizza Church. There was a great mix of regulars and new families, and a true sense of the Joy of Christmas.

Kirk Cafe

Continues to be a warm and wonderful space for our community.

We have continually had new faces join us, whether new Mums with babies and visitors too. And Morian



and Maureen have served joyfully each week providing home baking and hospitality alongside Fiona. It would be great to welcome new volunteers this year too!

Christmas Family Fun Day - at Christmas Tree Festival

A hugely successful part of the Christmas Tree festival - our Family Fun Day - was packed from the minute the doors opened until we closed the doors. Christmas crafting, cookie decorating and hot chocolates provided just some of the Festive Fun alongside the real story of Christmas (the Nativity) read by our very own Santa.

An opportunity for children to leave a message for Jesus at the foot of the Manger was one of my personal highlights and seeing some of the children return to be involved in our Nativity, was the most precious gift of all.



*Lorna McGinnigal,
familiesworker@cowalkirk.org.uk*



“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ...”

Colossians 4:2

Below is the list of Kirk Session approvals from 14th January:

1.	Retiring Collections for 2026: ● Harvest Sunday, 4th October - Arthritis UK - Scotland ● Remembrance 8th November - Erskine ● Salvation Army 6th December - Salvation Army ● Families & Watchnight 24th December - CHAS
2.	The Fabric Committee to instruct Balimore to carry out lightning conductor checks on Kirn & Sandbank and St. John's churches at a cost of £750 + vat.
3.	John Hawley to carry out Cowal Kirk assessments.
4.	The Fabric Committee to instruct Gibsons to carry out the urgent upgrade to the High Kirk Hall emergency lighting at a cost of £395 + vat.
5.	The Fabric Committee to instruct Shaws to carry out investigation into the reason for water ingress above the arch in St. John's balcony, with a view to repair.
6.	The Fabric Committee to instruct Shaws to provide the cost of the repair to the faulty front door handle in St. John's, as this has to be functional for H&S and operational reasons.
7.	The Fabric Committee to instruct Shaws to provide the cost to replace the valve in the radiator of St. John's entrance hallway.
8.	Now that the Church of Scotland Stamp Appeal is ending for good at the end of January, 2026, Cowal Kirk will continue to collect stamps for Age Scotland.

Cowal Kirk Guild

The Guild continues to meet at 2pm on Thursdays in Cowal Kirk St John's Hall. Everyone is welcome and you are asked to please bring your own mug. Details for February are listed below:-

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| February 5th | Rev Janet MacKellar, Moderator, Cleir Eilean I |
| “ 12th | Mission Aviation Fellowship |
| “ 19th | AGM and more Bible Quiz. |
| “ 26th | Craig Herbert, Guide Dogs Training |

Care Home Worship

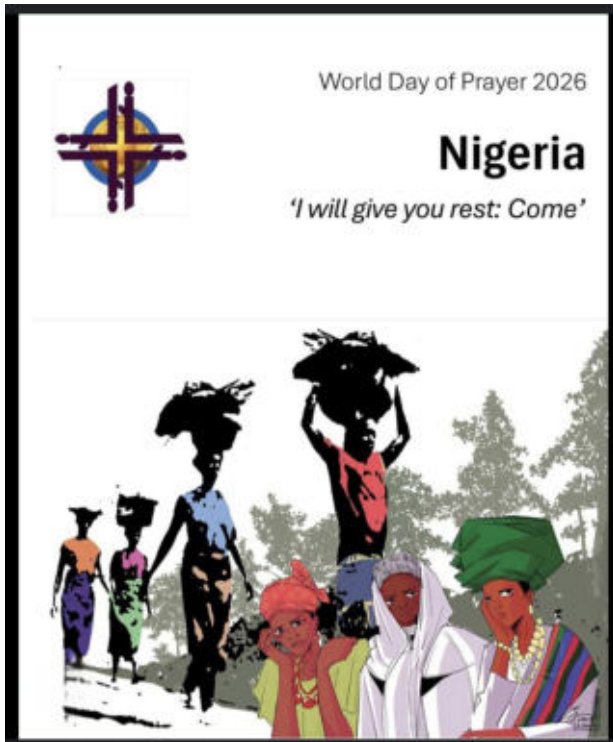
There will be services on the dates and times below in the month of February, and any assistance on these occasions is deeply appreciated.

ASHGROVE	Tuesday, 10th February	11.00 a.m.
ARDENLEE	Tuesday, 17th February	14.30 a.m.

WORLD DAY OF PRAYER

The countdown to the World Day of Prayer 2026 has begun. This year's theme is: **"I Will Give You Rest: Come"** and is based on Matthew Chapter 11, verses 28-30. It has been written by Christian women in Nigeria, and the service explores finding rest from burdens like poverty and injustice.

This year the service will be held on **Friday, 6th March**, in Holy Trinity Scottish Episcopal Church, Kilbride Road, Dunoon.



The artwork for this year's poster was created by final-year university student: *Gift Amarachi Ottah*. Drawing inspiration from her home state of Abia, she wanted her work to speak to the struggles and strength of Nigerian women. She hopes that her art will help to amplify their voices.

Jen Zielinski

Heaven's Grocery Store

I was walking down life's highway, a long time ago. One day I saw a sign that read "Heaven's Grocery Store".

As I got a little closer, the door came open wide. And then I found that I was there, standing right inside.

I saw a host of angels. They were standing everywhere. One handed me a basket and said: "My child, shop with care". Everything a Christian needs was in that grocery store. And if one couldn't carry it all, one could soon come back for more.

So first, I got some PATIENCE. LOVE was in the same row. Further along was UNDERSTANDING - you need that wherever you go.

I took a box of WISDOM, a bag or two of FAITH. I couldn't miss the Holy Ghost, for He was all over the place.

I stopped to get some STRENGTH, and COURAGE, to help me win the race, and though my basket was getting full, I remembered to get some GRACE.

I didn't forget SALVATION, for salvation, that was free. So, I tried to get enough of that to save both you and me. Then I started to the counter, to pay the grocery bill, for surely I'd got everything to do my Master's will.

As I stepped further along the aisle, I scooped PRAYER from its bin, for I knew that when I stepped outside, I'd for sure run into SIN.

PEACE and JOY were plentiful, piled on the very last shelf. And SONGS and PRAISES were hanging there, so I just helped myself.

As I approached I said to the Angel: "Now how much do I owe?" He smiled and said: Just take them, wherever you may go".

Again I smiled and said to him: "No - really how much do I owe?"

"My child", he said: "Jesus paid your bill, a long long time ago."

Anon.



eXp Update: Exciting Times Ahead!

2026 is shaping up to be an incredibly busy year for the eXp community. From high-energy conferences to ambitious fundraisers; our young people, staff, and volunteers have a packed calendar of opportunities.

Here is the latest from the heart of our youth ministry:

C7 Youth Conference: Glasgow Bound

Date: 20th February ~ Location: C7 Church, Glasgow

We are heading to Glasgow for an unforgettable night! Expect powerful worship, high-stakes games, and amazing prizes. We are especially thrilled to welcome guest speakers from Audacious Church in Manchester, who will be sharing brilliant and inspiring teaching with the group.

The Kilt Walk 2026: The Big Fundraiser

This year, eXp is taking a "step" in a new direction to fund our Summer Camp. We've set an ambitious goal to raise £1,000, and we need the Cowal Kirk community behind us!

✚ *The Challenge:*

Jack and the team will be trekking for miles decked out in "creative" (and likely very silly) outfits.

✚ *How to Help:*

Your donations make Summer Camp accessible for our youth. Will you sponsor the team and help us hit our target?



MAD Club: A Tuesday Staple

MAD Club continues to be a vital hub at the High School. It remains a consistent safe space where young people can hang out, eat lunch together, and get competitive with games. We are

currently seeing an average of 25 students every Tuesday - the energy is fantastic!

Friday Night Club: Welcoming P7s

Big news for our younger cohort - Friday Night Club is now officially open to P7 students. If you know a P7 who is looking for a great way to kick off the weekend, send them our way for an evening of fun and community.

LOOKING FOR A HOME

This Yamaha electric organ is being offered by a member of the congregation to anyone who would be able to collect it from Dunoon. If you know someone who would be interested in receiving this instrument, please contact the Administrator: admin@cowalkirk.org.uk

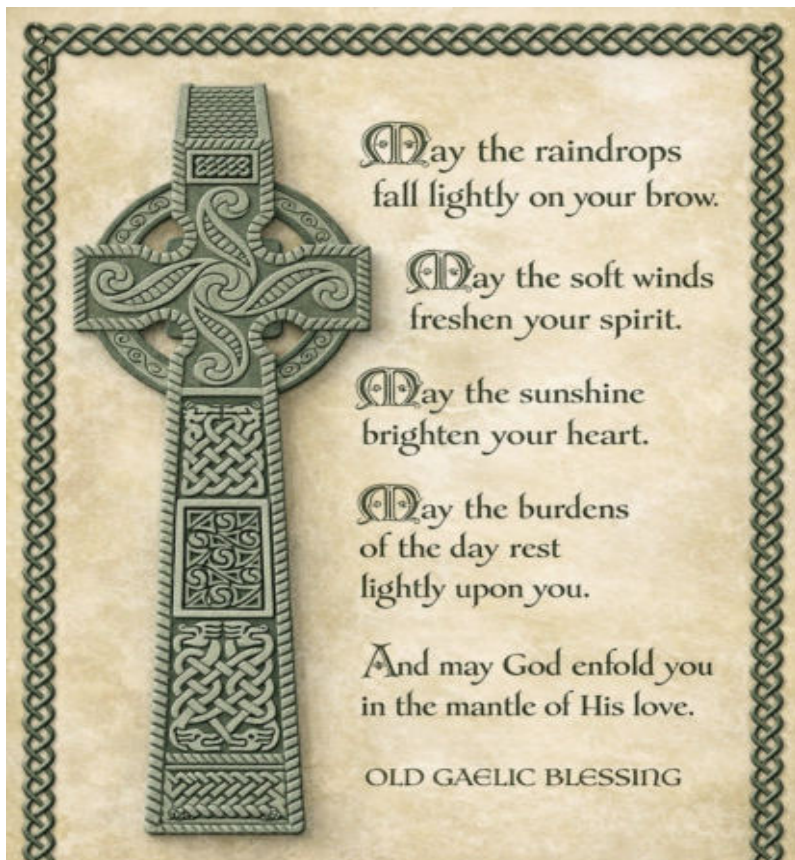


PREACHING ROTA

**1st February
8th February
15th February
22nd February
1st March**

**St. John's
Toward & Innellan
St. John's
Kirn & Sandbank
Toward & Innellan**

Founder's Day



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Please note: **Last day for March Newsletter contributions : 22nd February**

Please email these to EDITOR as above – thank you.