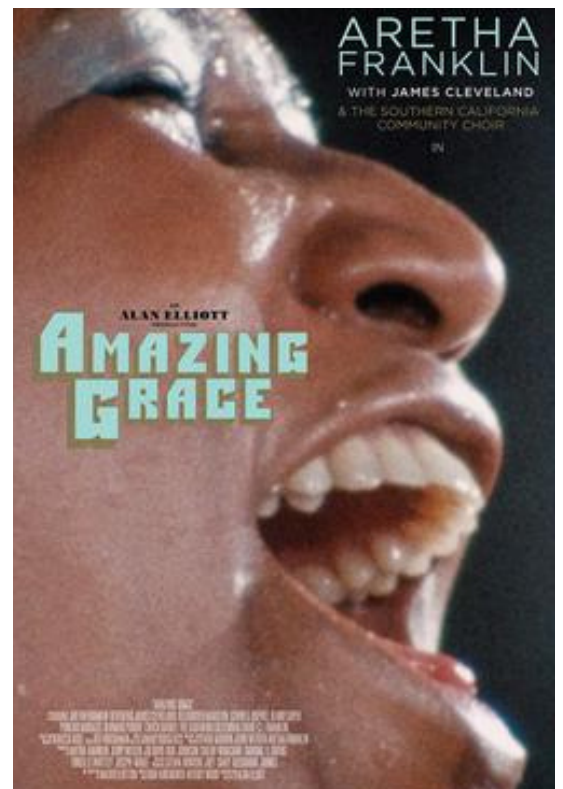


# Avoch Linked with Fortrose and Rosemarkie Church of Scotland

Quarterly Newsletter Issue 15 March 2023

Anyone who has watched *Amazing Grace*, the documentary of Aretha Franklin's 1972 recording of the hymn in the cinema in 2018, or more recently on Netflix, is unlikely to forget it.

The writer Rhidian Brook certainly won't. In a Radio 4 *Thought for the Day* in 2019 he described the film as *a rare example of something that lives up to even the most hyperbolic praise*. He commented on how the filmmakers make you feel as if you are there, in this badly lit, poorly ventilated church with its cheap seats and tacky mural and adds *There is, of course, that voice, voted by Rolling Stone magazine as the greatest of the 20th century*. Then there's Aretha's dignified presence at the pulpit, the hum of celebrity low in the mix as she gets down to the serious business of praising the God she so truly believes in. *The background noise of her troubled upbringing only adds to the authenticity. When she sings the title track, we believe her; she isn't so much performing as testifying.*



*So what is this grace and what is so amazing about it? It's a lovely word. How sweet the sound.....It's rooted in a beautiful concept, that of God's love coming among us, free of charge, no religious hoop-jumping, no proving your worth. It's an invitation that extends to a wretch – like me.*

*Receiving something we don't deserve is hard. In a world based on merit we expect to earn it. As if aware of this inbuilt resistance to receiving unmerited gifts, Jesus chose to describe grace rather than explain it; in parables full of topsy-turvy values, where prodigal children are generously welcomed home, the sun shines on good and bad alike, and the least limp over the line first.*

*He never used the word, but his own words were so full of grace, their spirit lives on in words and song. The reaction in the cinema suggested to me that there is a great hunger for grace, especially now. The echo of a tune we have not heard but recognise when we hear it. It is too much for some people, but that's the point. That is the amazing thing about grace.*

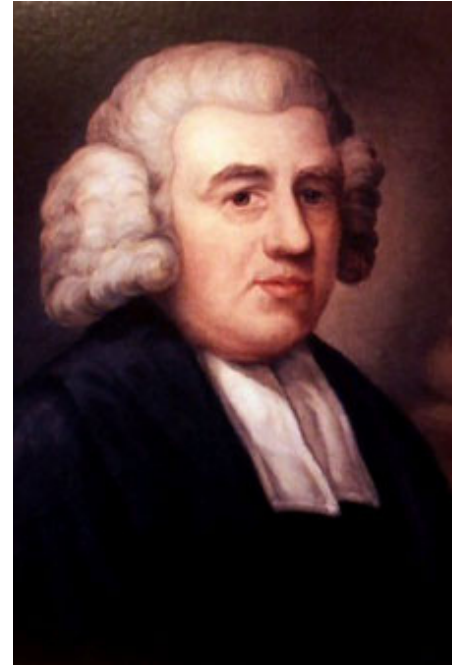
**From *Godbothering* Rhidian Brook Radio 4 Thought for the Day 24/05/2019**

# Amazing Grace and the President



A few weeks ago, at the start of 2023, my curiosity was piqued when an image popped up on my screen about the 250th anniversary of “Amazing Grace.” It was a prompt from a radio station that I listen to occasionally from the religion department and even more intriguing (as it’s located in Europe) was the image on the prompt which was clearly a picture of Barack Obama, the former President of the United States of America.

The prompt led me to a podcast that summarised the story of John Newton (right). It rehearsed succinctly and dynamically Newton’s extraordinary journey from slave trader to Anglican vicar – through his response to a storm that lasted days. The storm was extremely dramatic with members of the crew being swept into the sea and it pushed Newton to prayer. From his first urgent prayer to God in distress Newton went through a kind of “epiphany” experience to a deep and lasting faith that sustained him, not only for Anglican ministry, but that led, remarkably, through “amazing grace” to his participation in the abolitionist movement. By the end of that spiritual journey, a person who had been described as a “delinquent” mired in a life of “debauchery,” had found that their life was radically and deeply transformed.



The very next day, I discovered that “*Songs of Praise*” (8th January 2023) had also featured the story of John Newton. It captured the impact of that pilgrimage from slave trader to Christian vicar and Newton’s sense of awareness of what God had done:

Amazing Grace! how sweet the sound  
that saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found  
was blind but now I see.

“As his faith grew, so did his sense of horror at his behaviour, and so, when he came to pen his most famous hymn, years later, he undoubtedly saw himself as the wretch that sought such undeserved salvation.” Moving from traditional versions of the hymn to gospel music, the programme explored the way in which, “After 250 years, John Newton’s words still speak to the heart of the Christian experience.” They interviewed, as an example, a young man who found faith, following the experience of addiction and despair.

It was this dynamic understanding of God’s grace that Barack Obama was evoking, delivering the Eulogy at the funeral of the Rev. Clementa Pinckney. Pinckney, a pastor and senator, had died in a shooting where people from the African-American community had been singled out as targets in Charleston.

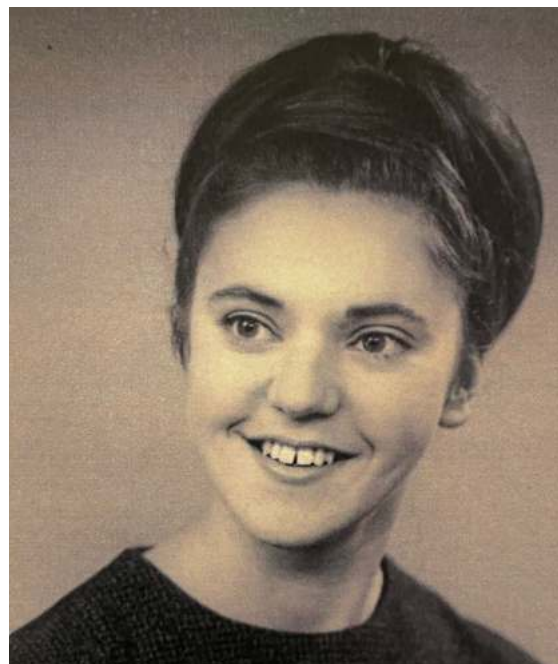
Obama was sharing about the possibility of change and reached the words “Amazing Grace” which he repeated slowly before pausing. Then, to the obvious astonishment of those listening, he went from speaking those words slowly and quietly to singing the words of “Amazing Grace” – an expression of hope against hope that change could be possible even across the racial divide in the United States. The congregation somewhat stumbled to their feet to offer moral support to the former President, then joined in with his singing, as if drawn inexorably into the song and its sentiments. This event reminds us that all those years later, Newton’s words still connect and still have power to speak of the possibility that individual lives and communities can be changed by the “amazing grace” of God.

Warren

## **A Thanksgiving for the Life of Jane Elizabeth Ann Bryant 11 March 1940 - 14 December 2022**

The Service of Thanksgiving for the Life of Jane Bryant on December 29th featured her love of music and tributes from family members. Her son Nick spoke of the 5 ‘Fs’ he associated with his mum: Friends and Family, Faith, Fairtrade, Fun and Forgiveness and Sarah shared fond memories of childhood and camping holidays in France.

However, the main tribute was delivered by her husband Anthony summarised as follows.



*Jane and I met when I was asked to sign her into Fowey and Gallants Sailing Club. I asked her for her full name, address and where she was staying in Fowey. I only really needed the latter and she knew what I was up to. So she gave me the lot - Jane Elizabeth Ann. I soon discovered she was known as Ann within her family but became known to me as Jane from that moment on. She readily accepted an offer to have a sail in my boat ‘Freyja’ and I learned two things about her that delighted me on that first sail. She didn’t mind getting wet and she could row a boat. After that she was always in the crew.*

*As we sailed together in the following weeks, so our feelings grew too. She was with me sailing ‘Freyja’, attending Sailing Club parties, dancing in the streets and so on. It was a wonderful time. We actually only had one conventional date when we went out for a meal with two friends. As I saw her walk up from the railway station, I realised I wanted her to be ‘my girl’ and I needed to do it soon. I had no idea if she had other boyfriends back in Manchester, nor did I know for that matter what she really thought of me after just over three weeks since we met. So, leaving it to the last minute (just in case she said, ‘No!’), I asked her if she would marry me. It was a crazy thing to do. But she was just as daft as me and said, ‘Yes!’*

*Two days after she had gone home, I received the first letter from her and, in the same post, a letter asking if I would like to return from Cornwall to Chatsworth only 30 miles from Jane instead of 200.*

*Better still, if I had a wife to share it with, I could have a house. Surely an opportunity not to be missed!*

*We married on 5th June 1965 and, as much as I'd loved my four years in Cornwall and never dreamt there could be anything better, of course married life truly was! Jane applied for a teaching job in nearby Brampton and brought her creative talents to the school, adapting the opera 'Amahl and the Night Visitors' for children and delivering a smash hit for the Christmas parents evening.*

*My job at Chatsworth came to an end and I was appointed to a job with The National Trust for Scotland which necessitated a move to Limekilns in Fife. Jane got a job in the local school with a head teacher who encouraged music and the arts. She chose 'The Daniel Jazz' and, just as at Brampton, her production was sensational. 'Jonah Man Jazz' and 'Christmas Jazz' soon followed. The children loved it and there is now a Facebook entry about it and all that Jane did.*

*In time it became obvious that we were not going to have children of our own and we decided to apply for adoption. It was a long process and wait until, in the middle of the 'Christmas Jazz' production, we were called to meet Nick. All the village were nearly as excited as we were! Jane gave up work to be a full time mum, another role she delighted in. Two years later we welcomed Sarah into our family.*

*When a Crusader Group was set up in the village, guess who volunteered to help? Jane's natural skill with children and her creativity and depth of knowledge in children's music allowed her to introduce more complex works, 'Jerusalem Joy' being followed by the most ambitious of them all, 'Saints Alive' in which I had the role of creating an 'orchestra' with the children who could play musical instruments. At home, Jane was our 'clerk of works' keeping everything going but she still found time to set up a Bible study group and form a church choir.*

*In 1986 I was invited to manage the Trust's Highland Region which meant another move, this time to Fortrose. At the age of 52 something started to trouble Jane. We teased her that it was gout and she shouldn't drink so much port, although Jane didn't drink at all! But soon, we learned it was no joke. Jane had rheumatoid arthritis. Far from stopping her, she became a Trustee of the Puffin Pool in Dingwall and she continued to encourage the church choir – we even reached the heights of performing the Fauré Requiem in Dunfermline Abbey. Jane took up singing lessons and her solos were wonderful: not for the first time I was full of pride for all my wonderful wife did.*

*But the progress of her rheumatoid arthritis could not be ignored. We had discussed our planned retirement project: we would travel. Now, instead of abandoning the plan, Jane wanted us to start at once. We started with two Traidcraft Study Tours to Kenya and India which proved to be a revelation and inspired a passion in Jane to promote Traidcraft, a commitment that lasted over 30 years. Unfortunately, the condition worsened leading to treatment, joint operations and even a heart bypass. But still, she would not give in.*

*Now you'll understand how much she meant to me, how I never doubted that those 3.5 weeks led to the right conclusion. My love for her will surely never die.*

**Anthony Bryant**

# In Loving Memory - Agnes Macbeth

**1st August 1924 - 3 November 2022**

*Rosemarkie Church was packed on 14 November for Agnes's funeral as family, friends and community bade farewell to a much-loved mother, granny, great-granny and friend to many.*

Agnes was born in Fyvie, Aberdeenshire on 1st August 1924, second child of nine born to Isabella and Willie Beaton. Willie was a farm hand and his work took him and his family to Milltimber, Aberdeenshire and then Bonar Bridge, Lairg and, latterly, Findon on the Black Isle.



Agnes left school at 14 and started work as a housekeeper at Balmeanach Farm House, just below Culbokie before she – and her sister Beldie – joined the Forestry Commission at Blackstand above Rosemarkie. She met her husband Bert, who was also a Forestry worker, at a dance in Resolis Hall and they went on to marry at Resolis Parish Church, settling at Blackstand in former RAF housing left over from the then secret Black Isle airstrip. Two children followed, Albert in 1952 and Isobel in 1957. Family life was happy and Agnes was a caring and cheerful mum. Holidays were mostly spent in Scotland as Agnes wasn't one for a lot of travel but she did go down to London with Beldie and some friends in 1978. But she phoned Albert every morning to make sure he was up for work!

As was the norm in those days, Agnes stayed at home to look after the family but as Albert and Isobel grew old enough and after they all moved to Waterfurrows in Fortrose in 1967, Agnes started work at The Merrythought Café, better known as Mario's. Agnes was at Mario's for well over 30 years and treated as one of the family by Mario and Carla. She is fondly remembered by many customers and generations of Fortrose Academy pupils. With the high volume of young people coming in daily, Agnes is still widely remembered for calling the boys Tom, Dick and Harry and the girls, Suzie, Jessie and Mary – or whatever name came to her mind at the time!



Tragically, Bert was killed in an accident at work in January 1977, leaving Agnes, then still only in her early fifties, on her own for over 45 years. It took Agnes a long time to come to terms with her loss but she continued to work at Mario's, finding comfort in her work, her friendships and her faith. In 1981 she moved to a bungalow on Anderson Drive. In 1979, Agnes's first grandchild Graham was born followed by Craig, Steven, Debbie and Scott. A generation on, Agnes became a great granny eight times over, 'Nanny' to them all, remembered as always being relaxed, cheery and never known to raise her voice.

Agnes continued to work at Mario's until 1999, retiring at the grand age of 75. But she soon found that she had too much time on her hands and became a home help to Molly who was actually younger than her. She also helped others with shopping and gardening but her own grass didn't get time to grow as she mowed it every few days. She was even found weeding the stones with a screwdriver – it was no surprise that Agnes regularly won 'Best Kept Garden' prizes.

She also enjoyed meeting up with her friends to play whist or at the weekly lunch club. She attended Fortrose Parish Church regularly. Agnes enjoyed walking for miles every day, often away from the house for hours as she chatted with every 'Tom, Dick and Harry' on the way. She always put others before herself, helping people with gardening, shopping and visiting – including regular visits to people she knew at Marine House in Rosemarkie. It did not go unnoticed and in 2004, Agnes received a 'Good Neighbour Award' from Highland Council at a ceremony in Dingwall where she was presented with a certificate and a commemorative plate.

Sadly, in 2019, Agnes had to leave her much-loved home on Anderson Drive to become a resident at Shoremill Care Home where she was happy to meet and make new friends, and settled in well. The 2020 lockdowns were a struggle for Agnes and in 2021 the family were delighted when she was able to move back to Fortrose, where she'd lived for over 50 years, to the beautiful new Eilean Dubh Care Home. She was particularly delighted that quite a few of the staff knew her and made her most welcome, sharing stories, memories and laughs from her Mario's days.

Agnes was extremely popular at Eilean Dubh and was given loving care and attention by all the staff. She enjoyed getting her hair done and joining in with the singing activities. But she was happiest when sitting outside in the garden in the sunshine. Agnes lived to the grand age of 98 and is dearly missed and forever loved. She was one in a million and always had a huge smile for everyone.

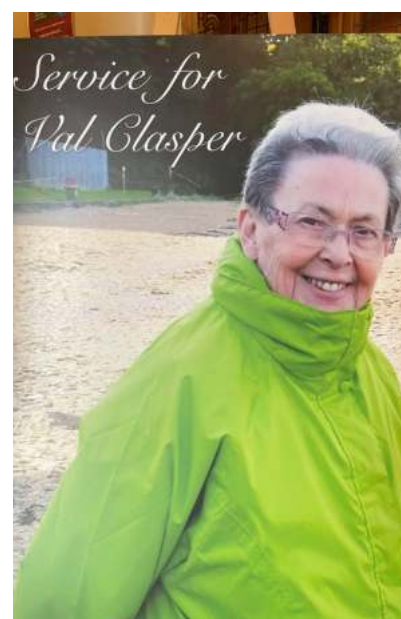
**Agnes's Family**

## **Remembering Val Clasper 1936 - 2022**

Although she spent her final years closer to family in England, Val Clasper is well remembered in Rosemarkie and also Cromarty, Invergordon and Tore where she was primary head teacher. At her memorial service in Rosemarkie Church, her son Iain and granddaughter Cat paid warm tributes to a very special person in their lives.

*For the last 58 years I have spoken to Mum every single day. She was always there, always supporting, always on my side and always the best sense of humour. Even as dementia sadly became a greater part of her latter years, we still all laughed with her brilliant ability to see the funny side, often at her own expense.*

*Although born a Lancastrian it was not Bolton, her birthplace, where she felt most at home. It was here on the Black Isle. We lived in Cromarty and Fortrose as a family but it was in Rosemarkie that she settled for her retirement following a few years in Peebles. As her health deteriorated, the community here supported her so well it proved to have been a very wise choice. A big thankyou to everyone who supported her before moving to a care home close to us, where we could play a far*



*more active role in her last few years.*

*Food always showed her colourful side. She was ahead of the curve putting dried fruit in every casserole – not Persian style by any stretch but pure Val! On trips to Rosemarkie we often pondered on the journey north about what innovative meal we would all have together squeezed around the smallest table in the Highlands on Mum's stool collection – sourced over the years from various bric-a-brac shops and auction houses that she scoured for bargains.*

*She was always a beautifully eccentric individual. It was mum who painted stones in her garden at both 'Val's Pad' and 'Craggan' - all the colours of the rainbow, hence our choice of coffin for her cremation service, a multi coloured Wicker coffin. It could not match her car with flower stickers along the side like some hippy from the 60's. You may remember she also had some of the oddest choices of wallpaper and carpets in both 'Craggan' and 'Val's Pad'.*

*But – and it is a big but - Mum was always there for everyone else – particularly myself, Sho and all the grandkids. Supportive does not seem a strong enough word. It is easy for memories to be focussed on the wonderful idiosyncrasies that made her a joy to be with but this ignores the attributes that made Mum such a great parent. It hides the fact that she was the main bread winner way before Dad abruptly passed away, a woman who then had to manage sorting out all the complications following Dad's accident while managing her own career and, at the same time, supporting me through University and Shonaid into Nursing.*

*It's only now as a parent that has gone through that journey with a partner to support me that you realise how selfless she was throughout and how hard that must have been to do by yourself. Her support never stopped once she had set us on our own paths. She was always there as the sounding board, the shoulder to cry on and the non-judgemental ears that were always there to listen and support as Sho and I have had our journeys through life – with our own mistakes and bad judgements at times.. She may have left us physically but spiritually she will be with us all for ever.*


#### **Iain Clasper**

*I remember feeling like a 'grown up' when Granny first gave me the job of walking up to the Spar at 8 in the morning to choose the best rolls for our picnic lunch on the days we went to Landmark. I remember 'her' parking spot under the big oak tree in the carpark (I didn't realise for years that it was a disabled spot - just thought it was always empty because everyone knew it was her spot). I remember her giving us our 'holiday watches' and telling us to meet her back at the car when the hand pointed to 12. I remember walking the wood trails looking for red squirrels. Then granny would go and sit with her dogs Henry or Scrappy at the bottom of the water slides, patiently waiting to see us come racing down, only to do it over and over again for hours. When I visited Landmark earlier this year - for the first time without my granny Val - I stayed for an hour. It turns out that the magic of Landmark wasn't actually in Landmark, but in my little 4 foot 10, Granny Val.*

*One winter we got snowed in at Granny's - she handed us each one of her tea trays and we used them as sledges to slide down the hill across from her house. During the summer we would walk along her beach to 'her' stone - I remember her making us speed boats in the sand, or collecting crabs with us.....*

*Granny Val was an active member of this community throughout my childhood. She volunteered at*

*the Beach Cafe - enjoying the chit-chats and watching over her favourite beach. Granny also attended this church regularly. I remember always choosing to sit upstairs in the gallery at the front - where we would be handed paper and crayons to draw whatever was being talked about. She loved church, and her Christianity was very prominent throughout her life. I remember when we would wake up at Granny's we would run to the kitchen to grab some biscuits from the biscuit tin, before we would all squish into her bed and nibble them whilst she read her morning chapter and prayed. Granny Val loved church - especially the songs and hymns. I remember in the car we would always be singing. Whenever I now sing those songs or attend church, I remember her and it feels almost as if she's there for that split second.*

*One of the many songs Granny Val would sing to me growing up, was 'Somewhere over the rainbow'. She would sing it with such joy and passion. Now, I like to think of her as my sunshine - seeing her in each and every sunset. So, Granny - you are now my sunshine.*  Cat

## **In Loving Memory of Rita Cumming 1925 – 2022**

Margaret MacKenzie, known as Rita, was born at 32 High Street, Rosemarkie on 19 March 1925, a second daughter to Margaret and Charles MacKenzie. Rita attended Rosemarkie Primary School on Courthill Road and then to Fortrose Academy.

In 1933 her father built a small hotel, known to the family as The Boarding House, and called it *Marita* after his two daughters, Marie and Rita. On leaving school, Rita worked there until it was taken over during the War years.

Rita met Kenneth Cumming at a dance and they were married in *Marita* on her grandparents' 70th Wedding Anniversary. Ken, as he was known, was a butcher to trade and took over the old Co-op building on the High Street to start his own butcher's business. By this time, there were four children in the family, Sheila, Charles, Muriel and Isobel, followed by Kenneth in 1960. In the late 60s, they built *The Meadows* in Gollanhead Avenue.

Although Rita did not work in the shop, she did her bit by fetching supplies from Inverness or Dingwall both for the shop and the mobile butcher's van which Ken ran from Avoch to Cromarty and all places in between – a lifeline for many. On late night runs, Rita and the girls had to wash out the van, sometimes as late as 10pm which did not go down well when there were dances to attend!

Rita enjoyed knitting, gardening, the local WRI and, in retirement, Spa Coach bus tours. She was also a keen baker and the kettle went on as soon as someone visited.

As time went on, the children flew the nest but returned with 10 grandchildren and 17 grandchildren. Her grandchildren were her pride and joy and had a whale of a time playing in her garden but woe betide them if flowers were flattened by a football or after a game of hide 'n' seek. It was not unusual for Rita to have 6 or 7 grandchildren at the lunch table, all happily eating knowing that there was a reward of a coin at the bottom of the plate if they finished their meal.



When retirement loomed for Rita and Ken, the butcher's shop was sold. *The Meadows* garden got too much to maintain and a smaller house, *Roseisle*, was built on part of the ground kept when *Marita* was sold to Abbeyfield as a residential care home. Rita was again in her element planting up a new garden at *Roseisle*.

When she was fit, Rita also enjoyed walking the beach to the caves or across to the lighthouse. She was an Honorary Member of Rosemarkie WRI and entered their annual Bulb and Baking Shows in Dingwall, where she won many gold stars for her bowls of bulbs. She would have at least a dozen large bowls of different bulbs having to be moved from heat to cooler conditions in her house every other day in order to obtain perfect blooms for Show Day.

Ken passed away in 2005 and Rita lived independently until October 2020 when she became unwell and was admitted to Raigmore Hospital and then Invergordon Hospital before becoming the first resident in Eilean Dubh Care Home. It was a difficult time for all concerned as Covid restrictions meant Rita was confined to her room for two weeks with no access to indoor visitors. Understandably, Rita took time to adjust to life in Eilean Dubh, but was well looked after by staff and seemed more settled in her last 8 months before taking unwell again at the end of November and unexpectedly passing away two days later.

Rita's funeral was private at her request but the mourners were invited to retire to *Roseisle* and Rita's kettle was put on for the last time.

**Rita's Family**

## **The Dorcas Window - Avoch Parish Hall**

Many years ago the ladies of Avoch Parish Church Guild decided to install the Dorcas round window in the gable wall above the front door of the hall. They chose the story of Dorcas because she was a woman of love and compassion, known for helping others, using her talents in service to her community and following the teachings of Jesus.



Recently the Parish Church were given a donation for the hall in memory of a lady from our Guild and it was decided that a backlight to highlight the window, in the darkness, would be most appropriate and a fitting tribute to this lady, Mrs Jessie Smith.



Jessie (pictured left with her good friend Catherine Patience) was a much loved member of our Church Family. A Family that was nurtured and strengthened by the ladies of the Guild and their faithful committee. Jessie worked tirelessly for the Church, serving on the Guild Committee and the Congregational Board for many years. She took part in all the Guild activities – Daffodil & Christmas Sales, Blythwood Boxes, fund raising for Ekwendeni School and Hospital, Malawi and

the first to make the Christmas wreaths. The Guild teas <sup>was</sup> were always a highlight of the evenings and we all enjoyed Jessie's tasty scones. The Church Soup 'n' Sweets (her tasty, parsnip soup & raspberry coulis!), Open Garden Days at Aldernaig (dressing-up for The Good Old Days' theme) and not forgetting the Annual Spring Clean of our Church and Hall.

But our memories are more than this. We remember her friendly chats, her interest in everyone, her good advice and help when asked for and her love for us all.

Jessie enjoyed a very happy family life at Woodside, Avoch with her husband David and daughters Janice, Margaret and the late Vida. Added to by sons-in-law, grandchildren and great grandchildren. She cherished them and was loved by them all. Jessie passed away peacefully in the Eilean Dubh Care Home on 11 October 2022, aged 99 years.

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### **Dorcas is one of 187 women mentioned in the Bible. Can you name the following six?**

- Her husband died after only seven years of marriage and, thereafter, she dedicated her life to service of the Lord in the temple. Aged 84, she was present when Jesus was blessed by Simeon.
- She was the wife of Chuza, Herod's chief steward, and one of the three women who visited Jesus's tomb early in morning and found it empty.
- They were Timothy's mother and grandmother. Paul spoke well of them both
- She was renowned for her hospitality and was the one who informed Paul of quarrels among believers in Corinth.
- She and her husband, Aquila, are mentioned six times in four different books of the New Testament. Like Paul they were tentmakers. Interestingly, in four of the six mentions, she is named first when they are referenced.

If you need further help, you'll find the answers via texts on the second last page.



## In Tune with the Bays of Harris

In the last newsletter Douglas Willis explained the source of the tune Crimond, so closely associated with Psalm 23, while expressing a fondness for the tune Orlington with its powerful repeated line.

Another contender, growing in popularity, has more recent origins and was composed by Rev Alex Muir, minister to the linked parishes of Canisbay and Keiss in Caithness in the 1980s. In a widely shared piece of correspondence, Rev Alex explains the tune's origins.

*In January 1986 I was invited to conduct meetings in Harris where I stayed in the home of a man of prayer, Alasdair Mor Campbell. It was an unforgettable experience. I heard first-hand accounts of earlier revivals and in the evenings we had meetings where the Lord truly met with us around the Word in worship and prayer.*

*One morning – I think it was my last morning there – as I was playing my guitar in Alasdair's kitchen, I began to sing the words of Psalm 63 and a new tune began to emerge with the words. It's a psalm of intense longing for God:*

*Lord, Thee my God I'll early seek,  
My soul doth thirst for Thee;  
My flesh longs in a dry parched land  
Wherein no waters be:*

*That I Thy power may behold  
And brightness of Thy face  
As I have seen thee heretofore  
Within Thy Holy Place.*

*The psalmist feels his need of God who is as essential for spiritual life as water is for physical life. His longing is so great that it's compared to being thirsty, not in normal circumstances, but in a waterless desert. In his weakness he feels the need for a touch of divine power. But what he wants is not life and power in themselves but as they are related to a personal meeting with a personal God, the brightness of whose face is as the sunlight to him.*

*As I sang this psalm, I felt this longing very deeply. For me, it was a fitting conclusion to those days of blessing and a pointer to the way future days should continue to be. I was moved to tears and said to Alasdair, 'I've a new psalm tune here. It should be given a local name.'*

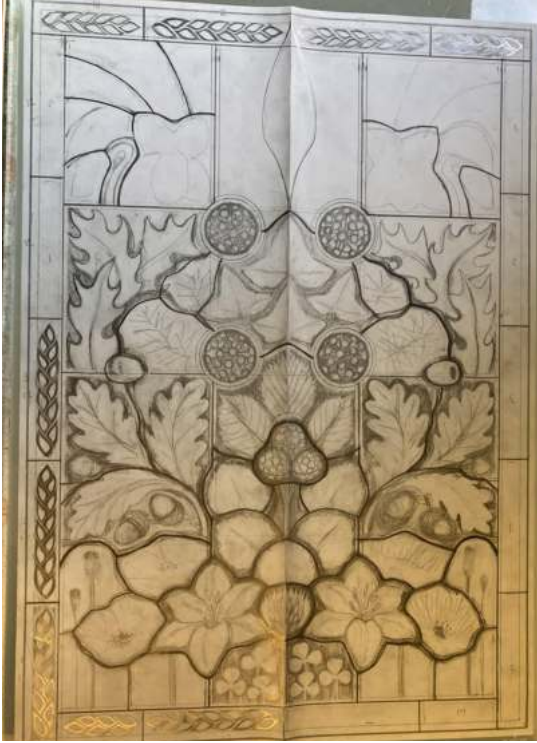
*The immediate districts are difficult to pronounce in English so I asked him what the area of Harris was called. Standing near the window, he made a sweeping motion with his hand and answered, 'The Bays'. Alasdair has now gone to be with the Lord but I like to think of the 'Bays of Harris' as a kind of memorial to him, a big man with a big faith, a big love of God and for others, a worthy representative of the men and women of the old revivals whose spirituality was God-revering, Christ-centred and Biblical.*

**Footnote:** For anyone who watched the Service of Thanksgiving for the late Queen at St Giles, Cathedral, Edinburgh and marvelled at Karen Matheson's Gaelic singing of Psalm 118: 17 - 21, the tune was the *Bays of Harris*.

# Rosemarkie 200

A piece of stained glasswork by Erlend Tait was commissioned for the 200th Anniversary of the current Rosemarkie Church Building. It is a beautiful piece of work. Below Erlend describes his intentions and inspirations for the work.

## Work in progress



*To celebrate the church's bicentenary, I thought of the idea of using flowers and plants found locally which have symbolic Christian meanings.*

*These have been organised into the four seasons of the year, representing the passage of time; the number twelve is repeated in the border and in the number of different plants and refers to the twelve months of the year and the Twelve Apostles.*

*The overall layout of the cross echoes the pattern in the upstairs gallery windows and that on the Pictish Rosemarkie Stone.*

*Starting with Summer at the base, the flowers and plants grow upwards through Autumn and Winter towards heaven, with Spring at the top, the season of Easter, to symbolise rebirth and Christ's Resurrection.*

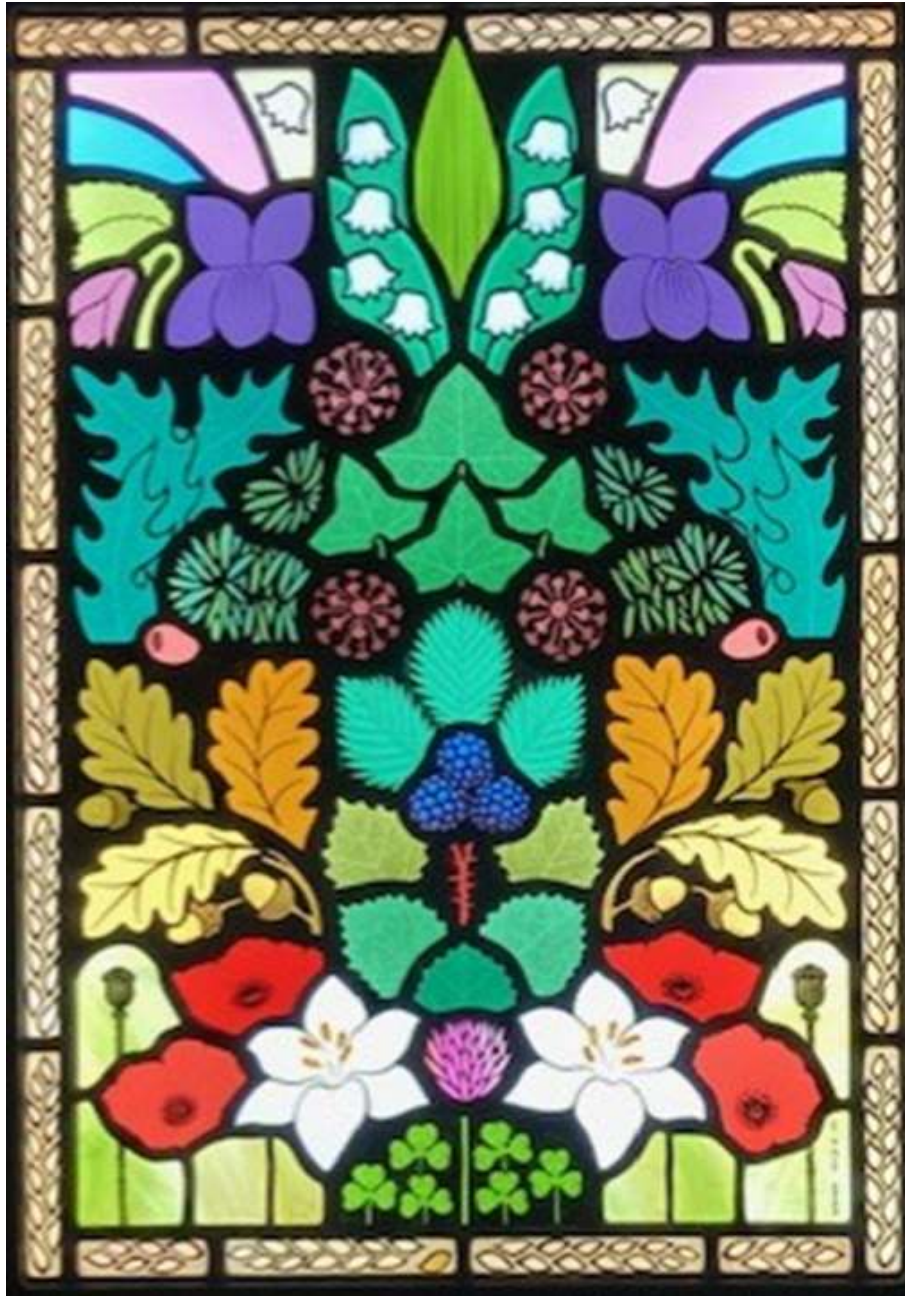
***“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.”***

**Matt. 6:28-29 ©NIV**

**Work in progress cont.**



**The finished piece:**



The Minister hopes to preach a Series of Sermons drawing on the themes represented in the Stained Glasswork in the summer months of July and August 2023.

## **Rosemarkie Church Library**

Another addition to Rosemarkie Church is a small library in the area beside the sound and video control equipment. The idea is that the congregation donate to the library any Christian books which they have read and enjoyed (or even those which they have bought or received and will never read!) so that others can borrow and benefit from them. No set period for borrowing, no fines for late returns! Contribute if you can, borrow and read if you wish!

**Jack Kernahan**



# Women at the Well

Picture the scene from the air above. The setting is land-locked Malawi at the height of the dry season. Seemingly endless, desiccated bush country stretches away towards distant, blue-tinted volcanic hills, vast cloudless skies and a land parched by lack of rain and the intense African heat. Here and there, the glint of sun on a tin roof gives away the presence of a little village, a cluster of small homes almost indistinguishable from the open dry ground on which they sit. A cloud of red dust billows out behind a moving white vehicle as it travels along the rough track below.



The 4x4 is out from Ekwendeni Mission Hospital, many miles away, to visit vulnerable families in the outlying HIV/AIDS Outreach Programme. Beside the driver in the much-dented vehicle sits our Malawian friend, Esther, known for her years of dedicated work at the hospital. My wife and I are in the back as the vehicle rattles and jolts along, doing our best to maintain something resembling an upright position on the two bench seats. The combination of shiny surface and the seats' alignment from front to back sends us sliding back and fore at every bump, especially as we cross a stone-strewn dry river bed.

By the side of the track, we slow down at the sight of a woman cranking a shiny metal handle up and down to pump up her family's daily water supply. The red plastic bucket on the ground is brim-full of safe, clean water from the shallow well that has been sunk a year or two before by the hospital's primary health care outreach team. (In fact, one of these same shallow wells was once part-financed by our own church and community here). In the back, the two of us, unsuccessfully trying to avoid breathing in the red dust that has managed to get inside, have been sharing the floor space with small polythene bags of salt, packets of sugar, bars of pink soap and an assortment of children's clothes. They are destined for vulnerable families out in the villages whose home life is being lived under the shadow of HIV/AIDS, with all the disruptions and challenges which that brings with it.



*Woman at the well but not the one in the article.*

Esther asks the driver to stop and gets out to talk. She seems to know the woman. The shy young mother's much worn and faded *chitenge* hints at particular difficulties in home circumstances for her. The head of a tiny infant can barely be seen, tucked away inside another *chitenge* made to form a sling on her back. 'Her baby is only a few days old,' Esther informs us, before going round to open up the back door. Out of the little pile, she picks out two items of baby clothing and takes them over to the young mum. The latter looks somewhat bemused as she receives the highly

unexpected but clearly much appreciated and, it seems, much needed gift. In a moment, one of the items is being fitted on to the infant. This done, the baby is returned into the fold of the sling, and with the heavy water-filled bucket now balanced on her head, the young woman sets off homewards to light the outside fire and cook the evening's family meal, nsema, the traditional maize porridge, in a big pot.

Late that afternoon, in the mission at Ekwendeni, I happened to be walking past one of the red brick hospital wards. The light was fading fast, a big guard dog growled threateningly and some guinea fowl scurried past towards their roost for the night. As I mulled over the earlier incident at the well, I couldn't help but be reminded of another woman, albeit in a different time, a different place. The Samaritan woman in the Bible, 'the woman at the well', as she is sometimes referred to, also was to have a surprise encounter: an unexpected meeting with someone who had a key message to give about 'living water,' and who was able to remind her of some facts about her personal life.

It happened that she, too, was on that same routine task of fetching the day's water, probably lowering down a leather bucket, or an earthenware pot, in time-honoured fashion on the end of a rope. The setting and the means of raising water at the two wells may have been quite different, but for both women a very ordinary sort of day had brought a rather out of the ordinary encounter. For one, it was to be a real life, challenging face-to-face with Jesus. But for the other it surely represented a meeting with him too, in that moment of compassion when the hands of outreach were extended, in his name, to her and the others in need of support that day. **Douglas Willis**



## Pi (π) Day – 14 March

Even those of us who had a troublesome relationship with maths at school, may remember the Pi symbol,  $\pi$ , the 16th letter of the Greek alphabet. We may even remember that it refers to the number 3.14 and, pushed further, we may recall that, if you divide any circle's circumference by its diameter, the answer is always 3.14. And it doesn't stop there. The number goes on and on with no recognisable pattern: 3.1415926535987932284664338279502882197169399375105820974.....So how far does it go?

In 2016, Swiss mathematician and evangelical Christian Peter Trüb's computer spent 105 days calculating Pi out to approximately 22.4 trillion digits. As of 2021,  $\pi$  has been calculated to 62.8 trillion digits by Team DAVIS of the University of Eastern Switzerland. and still not reached the end. Pi is profoundly simple but at the same time hugely complex.

Pi has been known about for over 400 years. Check **I Kings 7:23** and you'll find the huge basin built at Solomon's Temple was constructed using Pi as a key part of their calculations. In our own day the wonders of mathematics can lead us to consider not only our own limitations, but also the greatness of the mind of an eternal God and the astonishing fact that in his limitless love we are not just a number. So, on 14 March, enjoy a Pie and ponder on the power of Pi! **Contributed**

# Desert Island Discs with Dannie Reid

I have recently celebrated my 99th Birthday and am so well blessed to be able to look back on a full life which has been so enriched by the enjoyment of wonderful music.

My earliest musical memories of my Avoch childhood are of course the weekly services in the Chapel where the hymns were sung with great gusto. My cousin Marie Jack was the organist there for many years and she amused us all when she said that if she had a pound for every time she played Handel's *Ombra Mai Fu* as part of the voluntary she would be a wealthy woman! There were also perhaps three or four family weddings a year where after the service a musical evening was held at the home of my paternal grandmother who lived in Begonia Cottage in Rose Street, Avoch. My Uncle George often played the accordion and Auntie Katie Ann was a very accomplished pianist. Uncle Jimmy and Auntie Katie Ann always gave a song or two in their wonderful rich voices. Happy memories.

My first desert island disc comes from a little later in my childhood and marks the wonderful moment when I was introduced to the world of classical music. The year was 1936 when I was twelve years old and was invited by my brother Sandy and his great friend George Sutherland (later to become an eminent Classics scholar in Glasgow and Paris) to George's house to listen to the BBC Proms Concert broadcast on the radio. We didn't have a radio at home in the Factory buildings so there was huge excitement as we all gathered round to listen to Berlioz's *Symphonie Fantastique* which is my first chosen disc. We were all enthralled and it remains a favourite of mine to this day.

My second disc takes me to my early twenties when I had been discharged from my navigator service in the RAF and I was working in Edinburgh Castle in the War Department. The second Edinburgh Festival in 1948 proved a wonderful opportunity to attend so many concerts. Sandy and George came down to Edinburgh for a week during the festival and on the 24th August 1948, I met them at the station and, after a quick meal, we went to the King's Theatre and took our seats in the front row of the upper circle for the Glyndebourne premiere of Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* which is my second disc. It was a magical evening and our first taste of live opera. In subsequent years my younger brother David joined us and he also loved the concerts.

In 1954, I moved to the island of Lewis to take up a new job and there I met my wife Kay, a Lewis girl and a native Gaelic speaker, and we married in 1958. Through Kay I was introduced to Gaelic music and song which remains very dear to me today. While living there we became acquainted with the wonderful tenor from Harris, John Murdo Morrison a former Mod Gold medallist. My third disc is his superb rendition of *I'll Walk Beside You* sung in Gaelic. This has been an annual birthday request by the family for me for some years on Radio nan Gaidheal and brings me much pleasure.



Kay in more recent times



I have now been living in Kilmarnock in Ayrshire for over forty years and am pleased to report that in my late 90's I am still very much enjoying concerts although now from the comfort of my armchair rather than the concert hall. I have recorded many of the BBC Proms concerts and am able to watch them all with a front row seat! My fourth desert island disc would have to be *Mahler's First Symphony* played by the Lucerne Festival Orchestra conducted by Claudio Abbado. This is a wonderful performance and never fails to impress and is available to all on YouTube!



My final disc is the lovely hymn '*There's a land that is fairer than day*' anticipating the joy of Heaven. I have chosen this particularly for the line of the chorus,

*In the sweet by and by*

*We shall meet on that beautiful shore.*

Last year in August I lost my dear wife Kay who died peacefully after a short illness in her 91st year. We had been married for 63 years. This hymn always brings such great comfort.

And now to my luxury item which has to be my trusty harmonica which I still enjoy playing from time to time. With it I will be able to re-create all the lovely tunes that didn't quite make the cut!

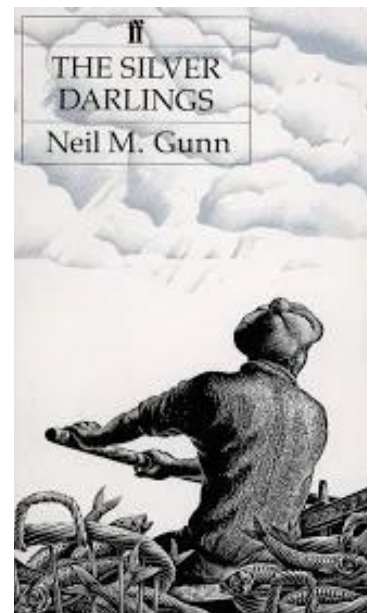


My book is *The Silver Darlings* by the Scottish author Neil Gunn, set in a Highland fishing community at the beginning of the herring fishing industry bringing back so many memories of my own childhood in Avoch.

I am thankful to have enjoyed wonderful health throughout my life and perhaps this photograph taken shortly after my 99th birthday bears this out.

**Dannie Reid**

It certainly does, Dannie! Ed.



## **Punctuation Matters!**

A near sighted minister glanced at the note Mrs Brown handed to him for the prayers of intercession: *George Brown, having gone to sea, his wife asks for the prayers of the congregation for his safety.* Not noticing the punctuation, he startled the congregation by announcing, 'George Brown having gone to see his wife, asks for the prayers of the congregation.'

# Amazing Grace in a Small African Town



For over 20 years, Libby and I had the privilege of leading short-term missions to East Africa. This was with **Sharing of Ministries Abroad** (SOMA) and the last trip was in 2017. During this period from 2002-2005 I worked full-time with SOMA as their Associate Director helping organise mission teams to

Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and S. Sudan. The main focus was to bring Bible-teaching to church leaders – mainly in the Anglican Communion – to help further contemporary Christian ministry in their own churches.

Much of it was deeply humbling and I'm sure we learned as much from the inviting host churches as they did from us. We were inspired by many wonderful, faithful people.

As well as the huge amount of preparation and work involved, I always took a sketchbook and some very simple pens, watercolours and sometimes pastels. There were special moments drawing people both in meetings and also in spare moments trying to record some of the beautiful moments in the villages and communities where we stayed.

During that last visit I was leading a wonderful team to the Kiryandongo Refugee Camp in Uganda, with a particular focus on the refugees from South Sudan fleeing the civil war. The teaching theme was 'Faith for the Future, S. Sudan!' We stayed in a small town nearby called Kigumba which had a very noisy, pot-holed main-road carving through its middle.

Somehow despite intense heat and noise there was a chance on the last day to spend a couple of hours doing some sketching in the town. It was a very special time of involvement in the community, trying to feel its heart and sharing that in the sketches. It was entrancing to see the really special way everybody was going about their business, selling fruit, carrying loads or sitting in the shade talking. Commercial advertisers were also doing their best with the different phone networks vying for attention.

The setting is similar to many areas visited by SOMA where traditional ways of doing things are connecting with the wider world. On the left side under an awning is a beggar, as a reminder of the

the acute poverty prevalent and not least in the refugee camp where we were providing teaching each day. That original sketch was from Nairobi in Kenya and the gloriously-named 'Amazing Grace Hotel' was from western Uganda.

During the 2020 lock-down came space to try and do something with those sketches. So with the help of a number of other drawings from different SOMA trips I put together the attached painting. It is oil on canvas, 75x100cm.

Many paintings are visual prayers so in many ways this is a prayer for Africa, for Sudan, for Uganda. It is a prayer for the many people familiar with suffering but living out their faith without glamour or fanfare. May we learn from them and join with them in our shared journey of faith as we attempt, with them, to follow Jesus and his amazing grace.

**William Mather**

[www.williammatherart.com](http://www.williammatherart.com)

## **A Favourite Hymn**

There are so many to choose from, it's hard to make a single choice. Then there are hymns that remind me of different parts of my life.

For example, *Jesus Loves Me* takes me straight back to Crossford Church Sunday School and *Mary's Boy Child* by Harry Belafonte to Youth Fellowship 1962 - 63 and Watchnight Services.

*A Little Child the Saviour Came* was sung at the baptism of all my children:

*He who, a little child, began  
to show the world God's loving plan,  
proclaims from heaven the message free.  
'Let the little children come to me.'*

*We bring them, Lord, and with the sign  
of sprinkled water name them thine:  
their souls with saving grace endow;  
baptise them with thy Spirit now.*

After Communion I loved singing Paraphrase 35, *Twos on that night .....* from verse 3:

*'My broken body thus I give  
For you, for all, take eat, and live.  
And oft the sacred rite renew  
That brings my wondrous love to view.'*

*Then in his hands the cup he raised,  
And God anew he thanked and praised,  
While gladness in his bosom glowed,  
And from his lips salvation flowed.*

*'My blood I thus pour forth,' he cries,  
'to cleanse the soul in sin that lies;  
in this covenant is sealed,  
and heaven's eternal grace revealed.*

*With love to man this cup is fraught;  
let all partake the sacred draught;  
through latest ages let it pour,  
in memory of my dying hour.'*

Another is *When peace like a river...* sung at Praise Evenings with Abie and Christine Skinner at the Avoch Gospel Hall.

*When peace like a river attendeth my way  
When sorrows like sea billows roll  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast me to say  
It is well, it is well with my soul*

*It is well (it is well) with my soul (with my soul)  
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

Then there's music. Elgar's **Nimrod**, for example - absolutely beautiful. I could go on but would not be able to choose a single piece - so many link to different memories.

**Ethel Urquhart**

# Arriving in Jerusalem

The Old City from St Andrew's Guest House

*As Easter approaches and our attention turns to Jerusalem, Douglas Simpson describes the first impressions of a modern pilgrim.*

A visit to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories is an opportunity for the ultimate sensory stimulation!

You've landed at Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv, ultra-modern, immaculate, efficient. It's surprisingly stress free and soon you're on a bus heading for Jerusalem. The countryside is flat and fairly understated at first but, gradually, the road begins to ascend as we head towards Jerusalem which sits on the mountainous central spine of the Holy Land.

The landscape becomes increasingly arid and you begin to notice two distinctive types of communities, one modern, organised, tidy, quiet, the other scruffy rundown, litter-strewn, ramshackle, lively. The former is an illegal Israeli settlement built on Palestinian land in contravention of international laws, the latter a Palestinian community deprived of basic essentials like water and electricity and hemmed in on all sides by walls, fences, security posts. Questions - which will only increase as the days go on - will begin forming in your mind.

It's onwards and upwards until, after 20 miles or so, you arrive at Jerusalem, a modern bustling city like any European capital. If your destination happens to be the Church of Scotland's St Andrew's Guest House, then you've made a great choice. Situated on a hill about 400m, from the Old City with panoramic views over Mount Zion, it's a warm, welcoming home from home.



After a good night's sleep and a hearty breakfast on the guesthouse patio, it's off to the Old City on foot. It's only a short walk but, once inside, you're in a different world as you explore a maze of enclosed, shop-lined alleyways and souks.

Soon you're on the Via Dolorosa following the route Jesus carried his cross on his journey to Calvary. You'll join the throngs at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, believed by many to be the site of the Crucifixion.

Afterwards, it's a short 10-minute walk to the Wailing Wall, the focus of Jewish aspirations and pilgrimage followed by a stroll around the Old City's most significant landmark, the magnificent Islamic shrine known as the Dome of the Rock.



The Wailing Wall



Dome of the Rock

From there you can look over to the Mount of Olives and down to Gethsemane about a kilometre away. Pause a while and you can readily imagine Jesus walking, talking, teaching, praying, weeping on that very hillside. With so many biblical landmarks all within walking distance, it's a fascinating and awe-inspiring place.

Tomorrow you might decide to descend 4000 feet on a 20 mile drive to the Dead Sea, the lowest point on the surface of the earth. You might then follow the course of the Jordan valley, heading north to Nazareth and the Sea of Galilee where Jesus spent so much of his life. But that's for the next newsletter.

**Douglas Simpson**

## A Holy Land Story in Two Photos 😊

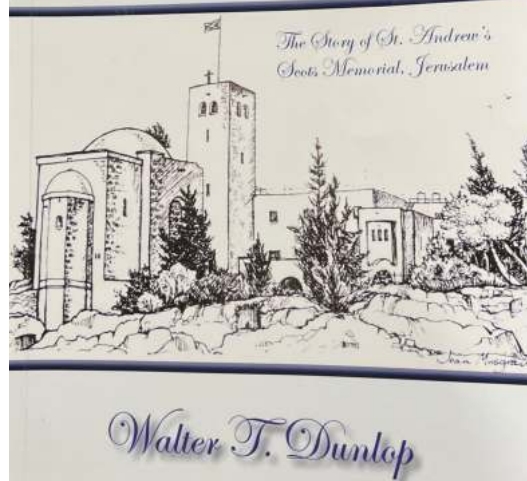


# Our Church in Jerusalem



That there is a Church of Scotland in Jerusalem is not widely known back home in Scotland. St Andrew's Scots Memorial Church, as the name suggests, is also a war memorial making it 'our church' in a much wider sense than a denominational one.

The story of its origin goes back to WW1 when the Suez Canal was a key route for Australian, New Zealand Indian troops and also for supplies. It led to a sustained attack by Ottoman (Turkish) forces. The British pushback from Suez rolled through modern Egypt, Israel, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Gaza, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria.



Over 40,000 lives were lost across both sides with many more wounded. The Scots dead are commemorated in a series of plaques within the church and in annual Remembrance Services on November 11th. The church sits on a small hilltop just outside the Old City and was caught in the crossfire that erupted after the end of the British Mandate in 1948. Less than 20 years later, the church again 'saw action' during the 1967 Six Day War. The 'war wounds' can still be seen in scars on the outer walls.



The story of how the church and adjacent guest house came to be built 1927 - 30 is chronicled in fascinating detail in *Faith Rewarded* by Walter T Dunlop.

Inside the church is beautiful with marble from Iona in the altar and beautiful Hebron glass in the stained glass windows. But it's the seats we want to highlight. An appeal went out before the church opened for parishes to donate seats. Over 150 responded including Avoch and Cromarty. And the seat to the right is the one contributed by Avoch Women's Guild for 'our church' in Jerusalem. It's a small world!



*Thanks to Jane Patience for locating the photo, identified by Nancy Forsyth, Aldernaig, Avoch as the 'Avoch chair'.*

# Fortrose and Rosemarkie Financial Report 2022

The accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022 have now been completed. The income is almost the same as 2021, this stability being due largely to the number of donors giving by bank standing order. Accordingly, we have been able to meet the full costs of ministry and mission as required by The Church of Scotland and pay for all local costs, principally the maintenance and upkeep of the Church building at Rosemarkie. Costs have also remained consistent with the previous year, but there were 'one-off' payments for the stained glass item marking the 2021 bicentenary of the present building, a donation to the Church of Scotland Ukraine appeal and the essential replacement of the manse boundary fence. All costs are kept to the minimum required for the efficient and safe running of the Church and congregation. An excess of receipts over payments of £4,887 was achieved for the year, but it has to be borne in mind that our cost for the ministries and mission contribution has been lower than in previous years as it is based on the congregation's income when the level of giving was much lower than it was in this year. This year's surplus has enabled the congregation to make donations to Christian and local charities and to continue to restore deficits in earlier years which had eroded reserves. The unrestricted general funds carried forward at 31 December 2022 amount to £40,966. Funds continue to be gathered in the hope of undertaking modernisation to the interior of Rosemarkie Church, but no progress on this has been made during the year due to The Church of Scotland's requirement that no such works can be authorised at this time.

2022 has been an exceptionally challenging year for investment markets which have been impacted by such events as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the direct impact which this has had on energy markets, rising price inflation, the continuing impact of the worldwide coronavirus pandemic and United Kingdom political upheavals and policies which have impacted on capital values. Accordingly the congregation's invested capital, all held in funds with The Church of Scotland Investment Trust or by the General Trustees, has suffered a reduction in the year of £17,361. The invested funds have a market value at 31 December 2022 of £150,521, which is £17,412 in excess of their original cost.

The Kirk Session again expresses its gratitude for the continued giving of members and adherents.

There were no major items of expenditure on fabric during the year and Rosemarkie Church continues to be kept in good repair.

**Jack Kernahan**

## Women of the Bible Quiz - Sources

1. **Luke 2:36-38**
2. **Luke 8:1-3, Luke 24:4-12**
3. **2 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 3:14-15**
4. **1 Corinthians 1:10-11**
5. **Acts 18:26; Romans 16:3**

## John Stott on Grace

- *Faith's only function is to receive what grace offers.*
- *Grace is love that cares and stoops and rescues.*
- *God does not love us because Christ died for us; Christ died for us because God loved us.*

## Do you know someone in need locally?

**The Seaforth Mortification**, a bequest or 'mortification', was granted in 1680 by Barbara, Countess of Seaforth, for the benefit of the indigent poor of what are now Avoch, Rosemarkie and Fortrose. It is now simplified in that all the capital is invested and a regular annual income is available for distribution to deserving cases in the area served by our congregations. The trustees are the minister and the session clerks of the two linked congregations of Avoch and Fortrose & Rosemarkie.

It is difficult to identify cases of need, and, of course, a matter which involves great confidentiality. At this time when we are all aware of the steep and unexpected rises in the cost of living it is very likely that there are potential beneficiaries of whom the trustees are unaware. If any readers of this newsletter are aware of folk in difficulty who might welcome financial help, please contact the minister, in complete confidence of course, to see whether help can be made available.

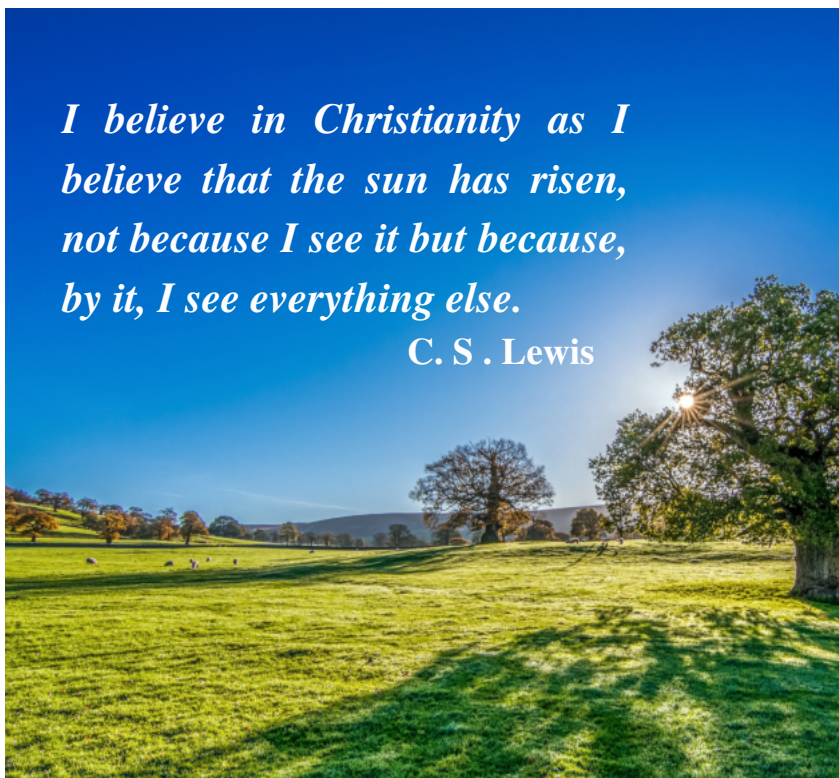
In addition to the Seaforth Mortification there are other, smaller, funds available to make payments of similar grants.

**Jack Kernahan**

### ***Be On the Lookout***

*If you don't truly have God  
within you,  
you will know -  
you'll always  
be looking  
for him somewhere  
else.....*

***Meister Eckart's Book of the Heart***



*I believe in Christianity as I  
believe that the sun has risen,  
not because I see it but because,  
by it, I see everything else.*

C. S. Lewis

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**As with all previous newsletters, huge thanks to all who contributed articles or gave permission to share personal memoirs and tributes. Thanks also to all who read the newsletter and suggest articles for future editions.**

**It is really very much appreciated.**

**CMS**