

## OFFICE BEARERS

**MINISTER:** Rev. Stuart Davidson 01786 473716

**Deaconess:** Mrs Jean Porter D.C.S. 0772 931 6321

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**Property Convener:** Mr. Hugh Stewart

01786 464706/ 0783 163 1972

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**Roll Keeper:** Vacancy

**Gift Aid Convener:** Mr. Eddie Mann 0785 625 4101

**Safeguarding:** Mrs Jean Porter & Mrs Lynne Swanston

0772 931 6321 / 0791 862 6177

## Groups

**Home Group / St Mark's @ Sainsburys:** Contact Minister: Stuart 01786 473716.

**1<sup>st</sup> Castlevieview Cubs & Beavers:** Mark Wright 0781 777 9269

**Ladies Discussion / Alternativity/Eyewitnesses Social History Groups:**

Contact our Deaconess: Jean 0772 931 6321

Email: [eyewitnesses4u@gmail.com](mailto:eyewitnesses4u@gmail.com)

**Youth Club:** Contact the Minister or Mrs. Lynne Swanston

01786 473716 / 0791 862 6177

**Raploch Fruit Barra:** Mrs. Morag Letford 01786 464941

Email: [moby.bookpeople@gmail.com](mailto:moby.bookpeople@gmail.com)

**Friday Club:** Mrs. Mary McKinlay 01786 463387

**Homestart:** Tel: 01786 476782 Email: [admin@homestartstirling.co.uk](mailto:admin@homestartstirling.co.uk)

A.A. ....See local press for details

St. Mark's Parish Church of Scotland Registered as a Scottish Charity No. SC005432



Connecting the people of St. Mark's Issue 5 2015

Christmas Bumper Issue



### Inside this Issue:

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St. Mark's Parish (Church of Scotland) Stirling is a Registered Scottish Charity  
(Charity Number SC 005432) CCL No. 317644

# Christmas @ St. Mark's



**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> Dec. Advent Communion**  
**Bereavement Service 3 p.m.**  
Refreshments provided following services



**Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> Dec. St. Mark's@ SAINSBURYS**  
With Celebration Meal 5.30 p.m. – 7 p.m.  
PLEASE NOTE: this is the LAST meeting of the year.

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> Dec. LESSONS & CAROLS 10.50 a.m.**  
With special guests CLACKMANNAN SILVER BAND  
Retiral Collection in Aid of Strathcarron Hospice

**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> Dec. Christmas Home Group**  
5.30 p.m. - 6.45 p.m. in the Small Hall

**Wednesday 16<sup>h</sup> Dec. CHRISTMAS SINGALONG**  
2 p.m. Tea & Mince Pies afterwards

**Friday 18<sup>th</sup> Dec. RAPLOCH PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION 9.45 a.m.**  
Hosted by St. Mark's FAMILY & FRIENDS WELCOME

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. NATIVITY SERVICE 10.50 a.m.**  
A Service for all the Family

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> Dec. FAMILY CHURCH 7 p.m.**  
A "Christingle" Service for all ages  
**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> Dec. WATCHNIGHT SERVICE**  
11.15 p.m. Community Carol Singing  
11.30 p.m. Watchnight begins

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> Dec. CHRISTMAS DAY**  
Please note this service is at 11 a.m.

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> Dec. CAROL PRAISE SERVICE**  
**10.50 a.m.**

St. Mark's Parish Church of Scotland: Stirling is a Registered Scottish Charity (Charity Number SC005432)

Congratulations to our friend, **Nerys Brown** on her ordination as a Deacon in the Episcopal Church. You may remember Nerys as she has helped with our Holiday Clubs since our very first.



The Service of Ordination took place in St. Ninians Cathedral, Perth and was conducted by the Most Reverend David Chillingworth. Nerys was delighted to see Stuart, Lesley and Lynne at the service, representing St. Mark's. We wish her every blessing as she begins the next stage in her journey of faith. Please continue to pray for her.

Please email any articles, news or celebration articles for inclusion in the next exciting issue of **link** to [JPorter@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:JPorter@churchofscotland.org.uk) or give hard copies to John Murie.

Copies of the latest edition of **link** are available on the church website [www.stmarksstirling.org.uk](http://www.stmarksstirling.org.uk)

For the latest news: follow us on Twitter or visit our Facebook page. There are links from our website weekly news page.



### **RAPLOCH COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION**

Raploch Community Campus  
(formerly the Edzone office)

This office is open  
TUESDAY & THURSDAY  
each week from  
11.30 a.m. – 2.30 p.m.

### **CORNTON COMMUNITY CREDIT UNION**

Cornton Community Centre  
Open every MONDAY  
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. and  
FRIDAY from 4 – 6 p.m.

Both Credit Unions serve our Parish

All enquiries welcome  
with a view to Membership

### **RAPLOCH** **friday club**

The Club meets twice a month at  
2pm in St. Mark's Church small  
hall and we look forward to  
seeing some new faces along to  
enjoy this gathering.  
Watch local press for details.



### **Remembrance Day 2015**

We gathered once more in the Village Square as a community - to remember all who have given their lives in the cause of freedom and peace – to remember all who have been injured and are now having to re-think their future. -to remember our armed forces, emergency services and their families.

The congregations of St. Margaret's R.C., St. Mark's and the Salvation Army were delighted to be joined by members of the local community; Raploch Nursery; Our Lady's and Raploch Primary Schools; Wallace High School and a choir drawn from the Big Noise musicians led by Simon Rennard.

# View from the Manse



In writing this 'View from the Manse' for the late November edition of the Link let me begin by wishing you and yours a very HAPPY CHRISTMAS when it comes.

Sunday 29th December is the 1st Sunday in Advent in the Christian Calendar. One of the things that we'll do in Church on this morning is to light a candle, a candle that reminds us of the promises of God.

Together we'll hear the words:

"Loving God, our world is darkened by shadows of despair, hopelessness and wrongdoing. Your faithful people wait expectantly for the ancient promise of a Saviour, who will bring light to the shadows."

As You reveal to us Your love and purpose in Jesus this Advent, we light a candle, ready to go with Him, to carry love and hope into the dark corners of life. As we watch and wait, give us Your courage to serve others."

For me this first Sunday of Advent has become more and more important. Yes, I've been thinking of what to say over these weeks of Advent, choosing bible passages, preparing services - but there is something about making a beginning. Something about turning our eyes towards the God of Promise who in His Son gave to us the greatest gift of all - the promise of knowing God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit by faith, by believing upon Him.



This Christmas, may you and I begin to know that even before we were born, before we started to think of God and consider drawing near - HE loved us and the promises of the Good News revisited this Advent is that He comes and reminds us that HE STILL LOVES US and wants what is best for all of His creation.

May you enjoy reading this Link magazine and in enjoying it find yourself joining the family as we gather together over these Advent weeks to light a candle in the darkness.

Let us pray shall we...

"We pray for churches as a place of God's welcome and hospitality in Advent and at Christmas, that the light, hope and peace that the Christ child came to bring may be found there."

God be with you in your homes and as we gather, together in His name to be a light in our world.



Davidson, Minister - 7th November 2015



December/ January	SUNDAY DUTY TEAMS	2015/2016
DATE	TEAM	MUSIC BOX
6/12/15	2	Eddie
13/12/15	3	Fiona
20/12/15	1	Lesley
27/12/15	2	Lesley

3/1 /16	3	TBC	
10/1/16	1	TBC	
17/1/16	2	TBC	
24/1/16	3	TBC	
31/1/16	1	TBC	

### DUTY TEAMS

**Thanks to everyone who shares in this valuable ministry**

TEAM 1: R.MARSHALL/ L.DAVIDSON/M.MCKINLAY/J.MURIE

TEAM2: I.ASHER/M.LETFORD/E.MANN/I.HENDRY/L.SWANSTON

TEAM 3:

D.RUSSELL/F.RUSSELL/E.FERGUSON/S.MALCOLM/D.MCKINLAY

### COMMUNION

shall be celebrated on the following dates during 2015/16

**SUNDAY 6th December 2015**

**YOU are invited!**

## Family Fun Puzzles



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### SOUND OF THE SIXTIES ANSWERS

1. SITTING ON THE DOCK OF THE BAY – Otis Reading
2. DAYDREAM BELIEVER – The Monkees
3. WALK ON BYE – Dionne Warwick
4. NIGHTS IN WHITE SATIN – The Moody Blues
5. ALBATROSS – Fleetwood Mac
6. APACHE – The Shadows
7. JUST ONE LOOK – The Hollies
8. DOWNTOWN – Petula Clark
9. PICTURES OF MATCHSTICK MEN – Status Quo
10. GOOD VIBRATIONS – The Beach Boys
11. EVERYBODY'S TALKING – Harry Nilsson

### AND A FUN SONG FROM THE 70'S

The male and female Cockney born Actors who had a hit with their version of “You are the one that I want.” - Arthur Mullard & Rita Webb

**How many did you get?**



## Fruit Barra fanfare

### Raploch Fruit Barra



**Every Friday**  
**from 9.00 – 11.00 a.m.**  
 held in St. Mark's Church Hall  
**For orders: phone 01786 473716**  
**Before 2 p.m. Thursday**

# Chance to Thrive



Can I begin by thanking Fiona Russell for preparing what you'll read below and for ably chairing our meeting on Tuesday 29th September. A thank you also to James Stewart for the photo of St Mark's.

The details below are an update on where we have now arrived in our 3-year journey with Chance to Thrive.

### Meeting with selected architects for Future use study

"Earlier this year the Chance to Thrive group developed a brief for a Future Use Study for our Church and Buildings. You can see this brief in the recent edition of Link. We sent the brief to four architects' firms recommended by our mentor, Robin Watson. Over recent weeks, we have visited some examples of the work of some of these architects.

All four firms sent us responses to our brief and we decided that we would like to interview three of these firms in order to make a decision about which one would best meet our requirements. On Tuesday 29 September a small team from the Chance to Thrive Group met with representatives of these three architecture firms. Robin Watson was on our panel and provided us with very useful guidance.

We asked all the firms to give us a 20-minute presentation on their response to three questions laid out in a letter to them. We had another 30 minutes available for general discussion with each group thereafter. The table at the end of this report summarises our experience of the evening (not included).

4 At the end of the session the panel's clear and unanimous preference was for the first firm we met, Page and Park. If you can, have a look at their website to see some of the projects they have done in the past: <http://pagepark.co.uk/projects>.

"We will make time to speak to the referee provided by Page and Park and if the Board is in agreement, we will advise the Church's General Trustees of our decision and ask for confirmation of their funding of the study. This should be forthcoming on Tuesday 6 October. We will then commission Page and Park to do the study."

The content of the last paragraph having been carried through, I can confirm that Page and Park have been commissioned to work with us. We are due to meet with them on the 10th November. More news to come.

*Stewart*

Davidson, Minister, 7th November 2015.



## A Prayer Memory Aid – A.C.T.S.

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**A**doration – Come into God's presence with praise. Read a Psalm or a praise passage from the bible. E.g.

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is in me, bless his holy name"  
(Psalm 103)

**C**onfession – Bring to God your own shortcomings. Read a few verses of *reassurance and forgiveness*. E.g.

"If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1John 1:8 & 9)

**T**hanksgiving – Thank God for his gift of forgiveness and move on to thank him for blessings and gifts.

**S**upplication – Pray for friends, family, and neighbours. Pray for your church and minister. Pray for those who have power or influence. Pray for the sick, needy and hungry. It may be helpful to keep a list.

The Home Group over the last few months has focussed on various aspects of prayer and has been extremely useful. Stuart has taken us through several categories of prayer, the most recent being “Praying Through Suffering”. We looked at Psalms 27, 42 and 43 to see how David prayed in moments of intense frustration. We were reminded how Jesus prayed Psalm 22 on the cross when he cried out to God who seemed to have forsaken Him.

We moved on to look at Romans 5: 1 – 5 where we read that, however difficult it is at the time, suffering can have a purpose in our lives. Like gold in a refiner’s fire, our faith and character become more like Christ under intense pressure. If you are going through a time of suffering just now, ask God if there is something he wants to teach you through it. In our study we saw that there are often two ways of dealing with pressure and suffering: one is to become hard and thick-skinned; the other is to seek God and ask for inner resources to cope.

*Since we have been made right with God by our faith, we have peace with God. This happened through our Lord Jesus Christ, who through our faith has brought us into that blessing of God’s grace that we now enjoy. And we are happy because of the hope we have of sharing God’s glory. We also have joy with our troubles, because we know that these troubles produce patience. And patience produces character, and character produces hope. And this hope will never disappoint us, because God has poured out his love to fill our hearts. He gave us his love through the Holy Spirit whom God has given to us. (Romans 5: 1-5)*

Lesley Davidson (Prayer Promoter)

# The Promised Land

We live in times when many are searching for the Promised Land. That land can take many forms. For some it involves economic wellbeing, for some it is to hope for a better life for their children and for others it is the desire to escape the terror of war. This picture (right) was taken from the top of Mount Nebo in Jordan earlier this year. The lines point towards Bethlehem, Jerusalem and other places.



This was the view Moses would have seen when he looked out onto the Promised Land. (Deut. Ch. 34).

In these past months, we have witnessed images of refugees struggling to walk huge distances and those facing the danger of sea and border crossings in the hope of a better life either for themselves or their families.

Stirling council hosted a Summit on the 2nd October in the Albert Hall to discuss the Syrian refugee Crisis. At least 100 people from various bodies including schools, NHS, Christian churches and many other organisations as well as individuals attended.

We heard of how the national government are hoping to smooth the way so that those who will be welcomed into Scotland can go to places where the resources and expertise are available to best meet their need.

When I was in Jordan in April, we visited a Baptist Church and heard first hand of those who are living in the countries that neighbour Syria, countries like Lebanon and Jordan, the struggles they face, and the hope they have that one day they can return home.



6 Such camps and countries are literally swamped with need and their infrastructures cannot cope. The people need a safe haven.

One thing that struck me recently at a meeting of two others and myself with our local MP was how hard people are trying to help. The problem may be huge when we hear of Christians and other vulnerable groups under threat of death, kidnapping, fleeing from their homes. It is easy to be overwhelmed.

But we can pray that those who need a safe haven will be rescued. We can pray for the Church in Jordan as they struggle to help and support refugees on a local level, the need is great and the resources few. If you'd like to hear about how you might pray and support those who go on our behalf and those who may come to Stirling. You might wish to contact me.

*Stewart*

Davidson, Minister, 7th November 2015.



## Canine Partners

### Adventures of Canine Partner Cookie

Hello, I would like to introduce myself. I am the latest member of St. Marks, Canine Partner Cookie.

I am a Black Labrador cross Gold Retriever, aged 18 weeks old. I have been with my puppy parent, John, for the last 10 weeks.

So far in my training I have been on a train a couple of times, on the bus a few times, attended St. Mark's services, a couple of birthday parties and been at training.

Every one that I have met things that I a cute, beautiful, wonderful, so who am I to argue? I forgot to mention modest. I love meeting new people and going to different places, so if you see me out and about please say hello. I have also been asked to tell you all about Warwick and Kayleigh.

Warwick is now working with his partner and helping him with all his day to day activities. Kayleigh is in advanced training , and although suffering a small case of doggy distraction, we are very hopeful that she will very soon also be helping a disabled person.

Hopefully we can give you some good news next time.

As for myself, I must close now, and have a small sleep as I have been working very hard the past few days. My love to you all.

Cute Adorable Cookie



## Greetings from the Youth Group

On Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> November, the Youth Group had their silent auction (which was not exactly silent). A great deal of enjoyment was had by all. For those who have not yet heard, the grand total of £655 was raised. £80 was also sent off to Pudsey bear (children in need). We are expecting a certificate to arrive shortly, thanking the children for their effort. My special thanks go to the whole Youth Team, plus parent helpers who all played a part in the evening being such a success.



This happened partly because it was so evident on the night, that there was no "I" in the word "Team". Thanks again to all who helped in any way.



Special thanks go to our head auctioneer, David Russell, and his able assistant Alan, both who did extremely well considering there were over a hundred lots. Baxter, the black Labrador and Orca, the Whale were the star attractions.

The biggest thanks of all go to everyone who donated to and bought from the auction. To my Youth Group helpers my last few words would be, watch this space. What can we do next?

## Den Building Day

On Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> October a bunch of us from St. Mark's braved the heavy rain showers to organise a family Den Building Competition for local residents on a neglected green space between Ivanhoe Place and Menzies Drive. We were joined by WildSpace and Stirling Low Carbon Future who helped us recycle wood for dens and even make Den name plaques. We used branches, tree stumps and tarpaulin amongst other materials to create dens in a competition to see who could build the best one.

The competition was won by the Perfect Princesses' team who made an excellent "tipi" style den. We were very thankful for donated prizes including a steak pie from Bella's, an autumnal display from florist Loncera and a box of chocolates from Sainsbury's. All participants enjoyed a great BBQ supplied by the Sunlite Café before all materials were recycled and the land cleaned up.

It was a fun event that not only got us as a church outside enjoying ourselves together, but also gave us a chance to serve our neighbours by clearing the land of dangerous litter and providing a positive and fun experience. One passer by from Duncan Buchanan Court, said: "I've never seen anything like this done before on this space, it would be nice to see more events here."

As a church we are hoping to move forward alongside other local partners to see how we can help develop use of this space (and perhaps others like it in Raploch) to encourage community, good neighbourliness and fun! Come along on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> November to the Fruit Barra in St Mark's Church Hall to tell us what you think about this!

Emma Tomlinson

## 8 Speak Out! What do you think the Church should be doing to make Scotland and the World a better place?

I would like to ask you to imagine that it is 2035. Scotland is a fairer, more equal and more just society set within a fairer, more equal and more just world. What role have we the Church played in making this a reality? In the gospels we are told much about what the kingdom of God is like; the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed, starting small but growing to provide shelter and shade for those who need it<sup>1</sup>, it is like yeast working its way until it permeates every part of the dough<sup>2</sup>. We are told that the kingdom of God belongs to the poor<sup>3</sup>, it belongs to the children and those who are like them<sup>4</sup>, it is a place that is difficult to enter if we cling on to our wealth and our status<sup>5</sup>. Most of all we are told that the kingdom of God is not something distant, it is “in our midst”<sup>6</sup>, something we take an active part in and it is something we are told to pray for here on earth.

Within the Church of Scotland the Church and Society Council works to engage on behalf of the Kirk in the national, political and social issues affecting Scotland and the world today. Working for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, the council wants to walk in service with the people of Scotland to help bring something of God’s kingdom into our society, into our communities and onto our streets. But we need your help. This year we are trying to get over 10,000 responses to the question “*For you, what one key issue needs addressed and how?*”

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<sup>1</sup> Luke 13:19

<sup>2</sup> Matthew 13:33-34

<sup>3</sup> Luke 6:20

<sup>4</sup> Mark 10:14

<sup>5</sup> Mark 10:23

<sup>6</sup> Luke 17:21

We have been sending out postcards to various groups, giving talks at presbyteries, talking to folk at meetings and trying to get a sense of what the Church can do to help make Scotland a fairer, more equal and more just.

So what’s your idea? It doesn’t have to be big, or grand, or completely thought out. Perhaps it is just a passing thought, an inkling or even a concern or a hope. What might start out as a small note on the back of a postcard could grow into something big that changes lives. If we hold back in our corner how can we begin to be like the yeast working its way through the whole dough. So fill out a postcard, send us your response. We promise to look at every single one in turn and together we can work out what role the Church can play in ensuring His Kingdom come, His will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Perhaps together we can speak out.

Andrew Tomlinson is the Associate Secretary for the Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland and a member of St Mark’s Church. He lives in Raploch with his wife Emma and three chickens. His hobbies include reading, running and rock climbing.



*St. Mark’s Youth Club Silent Auction – The Highest Bids are announced!*