

CONNECT



**Church services held weekly.
See back page for details.**

All are welcome!



From the Minister.

Dear Friends,

As I write this, we are only a few days from the start of Advent. This year seems to have just flown by because it has been so busy. This will be the third time I will celebrate the Christmas season with you, as I became your Minister at the start of Advent in November 2023, but it will be the last time I celebrate the birth of our Saviour with you as your minister, as I have decided to retire on 6 April next year, which will mark the 20th anniversary of my ordination as Minister of Word and Sacrament. As you may imagine, this was not an easy decision to make because I have enjoyed working with all of you and getting to know you.

One of the reasons I was drawn to apply to be your minister was the very fond memories I have of Aberlady and Gullane from a brief time I spent living here as a child. Those good memories have only been reinforced by the time I have spent here again. This is a truly beautiful area of the world to live in, and I will take even more precious memories with me of this area and of all of you when I leave.

I told the Kirk Session a while ago about my decision and I felt it was best for the news to slowly spread rather than making an announcement that might come as a shock. So, many of you will by now have heard my news, but perhaps some of you will not yet have heard the very good news that Presbytery are thinking of allowing Aberlady and Gullane Church to call a full-time minister again after I leave. We will have confirmation of this after the next Presbytery meeting on 3 December.

The Kirk Session is progressing all our plans for our buildings and for future ideas of mission and hopefully we can bring you some news about these in our next issue of Connect. We have also reviewed the introduction of a second joint service every month and we feel that this is going well, so we will continue with this into the New Year.

I am presently in the process of registering to solemnise same sex marriages. This has taken quite a length of time since the initial enquiry I had about conducting a same sex marriage. Unfortunately, we couldn't take the booking for that wedding because we did not know how long the process would take. Once I have confirmation of my registration then both our church buildings will be registered as places where same sex marriage can be solemnised.

There are only eight weeks now until Christmas, and almost four weeks to the start of Advent. We have already had a planning meeting for our next All Age Worship Nativity service on 14 December and we hope it will be as well received as our Harvest Thanksgiving service because everybody has told me how much they enjoyed that service and the planning too. These services are a wonderful way for us all to get to know one another better, no matter what age, and to worship our Lord together.

Tempus fugit – time flies – “Everything on earth has its own time and its own season. God makes everything happen at the right time. Yet none of us can ever fully understand all he has done, and he puts questions in our minds about the past and the future. I know the best thing we can do is to always enjoy life, because God's gift to us is the happiness we get from our food and drink and from the work we do. Everything God has done will last forever; nothing he does can ever be changed. God has done all this, so that we will worship him.” (Ecc 3:1 & 11-14).

As we come to worship Christ the new-born King (Hymn 324) I hope you have a lovely Christmas time and that you are all truly blessed in the New Year.

From Rev Lis.

From the Presbytery office.

Hello, everyone. When was the last time you were invited to something?

You may find it hard to believe but those who have looked into it suggest each of us sees between 6,000 and 10,000 adverts per day. Each of these is an invitation to buy something we don't have, change something for something better or be something that we are not. They all start from the same place that something is missing from our lives. Our materialistic society depends on us repeatedly buying more things or the demand for goods stops which in turn affects jobs and so on. That of course means the things we are encouraged to get are not designed to last forever. This is a very simplistic view because for instance, our bodies are fed by the food we buy whilst our minds are fed by the books we buy. If we just bought them and did nothing with them, they would do us no good. A lot of things in life are essential to live and we cannot do without them. Always though we are invited to consider what more can we have so that our lives will be better.

The question of invitation lies at the heart of our Christian faith. We invite people to come to church with us because we want them to share in the joy of worshipping God. We invite God to heal, accompany, bless and be with people through our prayers. God invites us to be part of his family and in turn invites us to be salt and light in this world, making his Kingdom a reality. Invitation is part of the DNA of faith.

Invitation is of course only one side of the equation because with invitation comes either acceptance or refusal. Isaiah 55:1 "Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!" is reflected in Matthew 11:28 where Jesus says, "Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" yet we have no idea how many actually responded. Invitation is our business, response we leave to the individual and to God.

With that in mind, we are encouraging everyone who attends our churches to invite someone else every week. Is that something you could do? Likewise, we invite everyone to pray for the people of this world with all the difficulties it contains as well as for situations closer to home. Pray that God would send His Spirit. One of the most beautiful things about the invitation to be part of God's family is it will not wear out or run out; it is eternal. God Bless.

Norman Smith, Presbytery Clerk.

Church Finances - Treasurer's update.

I am sorry to report a low balance in our finances. I am very grateful to everyone for their generosity in continued donations. I am grateful for your continued support in your giving through your offerings and for the increases in donations. The current balance in our account is rather low with two full months until the end of the financial year. We are about to incur the high utility bills we all endure during the winter and spring.

I have been able to add to our investments in recent months due to the improvement in the Stock Market This will help with the expenditure we face with future projects in both churches.

Our 2024 accounts have been submitted to OSCR, our regulatory body for their scrutiny and received their approval.

The Kirk Stables have some more users during the week, History and Conservation Society, French classes and Meditation. These help us defray the costs of our premises. The Stables is also available for meetings, private family events, birthday parties etc. Contact the Church secretary for availability.

Please continue to support our church. You can do so by cheque or by Standing Order via the bank. You are also able to put your donations in the plate as you enter the church, preferably in your offering envelope in cash. Should you wish to donate using Gift Aid you should contact me for Aberlady or Morag Black for Gullane and we can supply the appropriate form. For further information, please speak to me by phone.

All the finances are held in accounts in our joint name with one treasurer. I am grateful to the Finance Committee for their help, advice and acting as signatories.

I hope you enjoyed the recent excellent weather of an Indian summer and feel refreshed from a holiday. The children are back in school, and the dark nights are with us already.

Kaye Macaskill, Treasurer.

Christian Aid.



In September we donated £440.00 to Christian Aid thanks to Michael Black who very generously gave his Retirement present donations to this very worthy Charity.

In this Country we are generally blessed with fair weather for our Harvest, but The Climate Crisis is destroying Harvests and threatening food security in many countries. This is shown in Sierra Leone, as crop yields fall, farmer Maryama (pictured below) is pushing back to provide for her family. By joining a Christian Aid funded community savings and loans project, Maryama has found financial stability and unity. She says "It's a blessing for us ...this will help us support our kids to be educated "

This kind donation along with money we have raised over the year will help fund this and many other important projects.



Thank you all for your continued support to Christian Aid.

Carol Yarrow.

Pastoral Care.

We are now on the run down to Christmas, and the darker nights and shorter days are definitely here! We know that Christmas can be a difficult time for some people, but having said that, none of us are immune to the challenges of life and we all need some help and support from time to time. The Pastoral Care Team have reformed and completed training through the Church of Scotland to help us respond to people who are facing difficulties. We work with Lis, our minister, and within the Church of Scotland Safeguarding guidelines to offer a listening ear and faith connection through a phone call or home visit. Please contact Carol Murray in confidence via AGPCPastoralCare@outlook.com to refer yourself, or someone you are concerned for.

Carol Murray

Did you know?



Last Royal Mail Posting Dates for inland services (Christmas 2025)

Wednesday 17 December	2nd Class
Friday 19 December	Royal Mail Tracked 48®
Saturday 20 December	1st Class
Sunday 21 December	Royal Mail Tracked 24®
Tuesday 23 December	Special Delivery Guaranteed®



The Scottish Ornithologists' Club (SOC) headquarters at the west end of Aberlady Main Street is open 10am-4pm Wednesday-Sunday. It has a brilliant library and is a warm and welcoming space to sit, chat, read or look at the view.

JAM Club.



We welcome all ages from babies through primary school and we aim to structure the sessions to allow every age to get something out of it. If you are looking to come along for the first time and have any questions/allergies/dietary requirements please feel free to get in touch.

We've had some lovely JAM sessions this autumn with great involvement from the children. We have been mostly talking about Paul, which has allowed us to have good discussions about the themes of mercy and valuing each other. We have been working on the children using the Bible as a "tool belt" for times we are in need of help.

The Harvest Crafting event in Gullane involved 23 children from both villages spending an hour painting, sticking, creating and playing together with church volunteers. Fran Goodman led a storytelling session about thankfulness and then children, adults and helpers shared a meal together.



The Nativity Service is scheduled for 14 December in Gullane. There will be a Christmas Crafting event for children in Aberlady Kirk Stables on 30 November.

Keep an eye on the JAM Club WhatsApp group for future JAM Club dates.

And remember, even when there's not a JAM Club, children are always welcome in the church. There are toys, books and some crafting materials at the front of the church in Gullane and at the back in Aberlady.

Greetings and Hope from Kumargram Pastorate!

I last wrote about our twinning partnership with the Kumargram Pastorate, from the Church of North India, in the Diocese of Eastern Himalaya, back in 2021 when we were not able to worship together and Covid was affecting every corner of the world.

Since then Rev Swarup Mushahary and I have only had occasional contact via WhatsApp, as we all emerged from the lock downs and he took leave for 2 years to study. However, we have always exchanged messages at Christmas, and it has been wonderful to see the renewed energy within his Church, and particularly the growth in their Youth and Sunday School Fellowship.

Two weeks ago, I was in a church in Stornoway, where the congregation were celebrating the opening of their new hall. for which they had been praying, planning and fundraising for a number of years, when I received a message from Swarup. As it isn't Christmas yet, I was curious to see what had prompted his contact! Much to my surprise, Swarup was sharing photographs and great news..... ' The long awaited dream of the Chengmari-Marakhata congregation was joyfully fulfilled with the dedication of the newly built Memorial Church on 2nd October 2025. It was a blessed moment of great joy, gratitude and thanksgiving as the community dedicated their own worship centre, a symbol of dignity, unity and self-respect, after years of prayer and perseverance'.



Swarup shared photographs of the Rt Rev Roshan Thapa, Bishop of the Eastern Himalaya Diocese, and a long list of dignitaries and people who had contributed

to the work and observed the Bishop unlocking the door for the first time. The excitement in his message was palpable and completely in keeping with the atmosphere in Martin's Memorial Church, Stornoway, where there was much celebration and anticipation about their new premises too. I am well aware that here in Aberlady and Gullane Parish Church, we are also praying and working towards improvements and upgrades for our premises. We too wish to be better equipped to worship and support local activities across both villages, so I was grateful to have this opportunity to share the reminder that with our prayer and perseverance, we will get there!

Carol Murray.

Over the church wall.

It's been a tremendous time, whilst I've cleared up weeds. I've not pulled out anything Joy or Ruth have planted. Well, I hope not.

It's now tidy up time, the volunteers are doing a great job with those pesky leaves 🍁.

The sunflowers have been something else. Across the village they have been admired. Those beautiful golden yellow flowering heads. They will be a feast for the birds. One of the stems had 17 flower heads. Planted in the faith they would flourish. Visitors have really enjoyed them.



When pottering and chatting to those enjoying a rest on our benches, I've again had the opportunity to show those who expressed interest inside the church to see the beautiful windows we have in Gullane. We are totally blessed with the Murray windows, which are a sight to behold whatever time of day or the weather outside.

As winter approaches, the roses have been deadheaded, the little crab apple tree is shedding its fruit and the garden settles to rest, revive and renew itself to flourish come the spring.

Dementia Singers.

Once again we had the pleasure of the choir Anne and Fergus support coming to church for our Wednesday coffee morning. The singing was super, everyone enjoyed it. Thanks to Douglas Donaldson for doing the AV. Whilst all our Wednesday regulars and a few other church members were there, it would be encouraging for the singers to get more support. Outreach is a focus for us as a church to bring in and engage in our community.

The Bill Sessions.

Our Wednesday coffee on 22 October had a very special guest. Bill Nisbet came along to play his guitar, sing us songs and put in his one liners. The coffee crew had a fantastic time. The songs were very familiar, many brought back memories of films seen in the past with Doris Day, Cliff Richard and many more. The best part was we all knew the words. Sincere thanks to Bill, his humour, singing & guitar playing made our usual coffee catch up so much more fun. We hope to schedule another "Bill Session- come along!



Muriel.

Autumn.

Season of Mists and mellow fruitfulness. Leaves falling, geese flying overhead, apple harvests, chestnuts falling though no longer hanging on strings to challenge our friends in competition.

We have recently celebrated Harvest Thanksgiving and are so privileged to be able to genuinely give thanks.

Autumn leads us on to Advent and one of my favourite Advent Poems is by John Betjeman. Look it up if you haven't read it.

That leads me on to Christmas and a memorable talk given to the Guild in Oban by our Session Clerk who had gone, with a C.O.S observation group, to the Holy Land and actually celebrated Christmas in Bethlehem. He spoke of watching people queue for hours to get through the barriers to get to their work and of their team being chased by men with guns who suspected them of being spies and of the children in Palestine whose families couldn't afford to provide education or musical instruments for them. His son was a talented musician and they did manage to provide instruments. Where there is a will there is a way...

That memory is from so many years ago and it saddens me that nothing much has changed in the intervening years. Happily, as I write this, it seems that, at last, we have turned a corner. But, if nothing else, Christmas is a time to celebrate. Not necessarily with expensive gifts, tinsel and Christmas trees but with the memory of that child born in a stable for us. Christmas Blessings to all.

June Campbell.

P.S. I am remembering the Phineas Phinn story of some primary school children being asked What was the name of the baby in the manger?

A Child immediately raised his hand and said WAYNE. When asked why he said " Well we sing a Wean in a Manger"

Local Issues.

East Lothian Foodbank provides a crisis food and essentials service. It continues to see consistently high levels of need throughout the year from people in our community who have been left without enough money to live on. We need your donations.

Aberlady and Gullane Parish Church are proud to support East Lothian Foodbank.



This year our Harvest Thanksgiving Services donated 158kgs of food items and £75.15 in cash to the Foodbank.

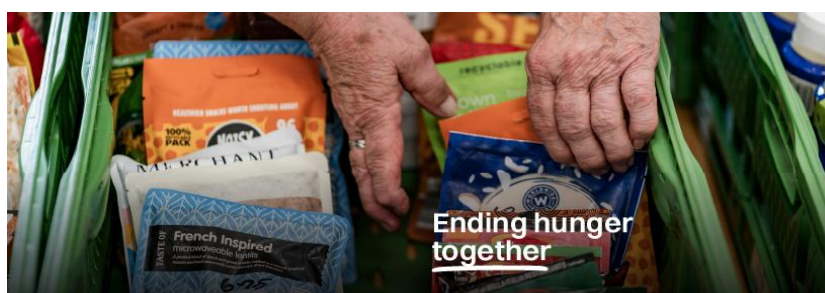
Thank you to all who donated.

DID YOU KNOW East Lothian Foodbank also offer a MONEY ADVICE SERVICE. With 2 advice workers and a Financial Inclusion Officer based at the Foodbank overseeing the project. In the financial year 24/25, 269 people were supported, giving 216 people more money to live on. A total of £195,006 back in people's pockets.

East Lothian Foodbank's Vision for the future is a community FREE FROM POVERTY where everyone has HOPE FOR THE FUTURE. Their mission is to provide emergency food and daily essentials for those without enough money to live on; to work with the community partners in providing effective advice and support for those living with financial hardship; and to influence policy towards the eradication of poverty in East Lothian.

Volunteers uplift donations for the Foodbank from Gullane and Aberlady Churches, Aberlady Community Hall, Gullane Library and Gullane COOP during opening hours. There is also a collection point at North Berwick Tesco. All donations are taken to the warehouse in Tranent where they are sorted and made into 3-day emergency food parcels. Parcels are delivered throughout East Lothian.

For more information see the website www.eastlothianfoodbank.org.uk



Harvest photos (spot the scarecrow).



Usefulness.

Let's have a look at Paul's letter to Philemon verses 10 and 11.

'I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me'.

I enjoy puns. Here are a couple of examples:

'I used to be a banker but I lost interest'.

'I'm an archaeologist and my life is in ruins'.

In the above verses from Paul's letter to Philemon there is a pun, but it's not obvious. It has to do with the bondservant Onesimus, who was in the process of being returned to Philemon, a wealthy Christian living in Colossae. Evidently Onesimus had stolen money or property from Philemon, fled to Rome, heard the gospel through Paul and become a believer in Jesus. In this short letter Paul appeals to Philemon to take Onesimus back not as a *bondservant* but as a 'beloved brother in Christ'.

Where's the pun? Crucially, the meaning of the name Onesimus is *useful* and Paul is appealing to Philemon to take him back because he is now *useful* having been *useless*. We don't know the end of the story but I'd like to think that Onesimus was received by Philemon with open arms. We don't know if Onesimus ever had opportunity to read Paul's letter but if he did he would have been delighted and thankful to be described as useful given the back story.

I wonder if we see ourselves as being useful. The temptation is to equate usefulness with practical abilities and skills, to think of usefulness in purely utilitarian terms. In church life it's easy to view others and their gifts as being more important than ourselves. It's tempting to write ourselves off because we can't (fill in the blank) like (fill in the name).

I don't believe that God sees usefulness in those terms. God looks beyond the external and looks at the heart. It's not primarily about what we do as much as who we are becoming in

Christ. Rather than compare myself with others and their gifts perhaps I could ask myself questions like:

‘Am I learning to love God with all my heart soul and mind?’

‘Am I learning to love others?’

‘Am I learning to follow Jesus on a daily basis?’

‘Am I learning to be available to God?’

‘Am I learning to pray?’

I’m using the word *learning* intentionally – it underlines that we are in *process*, not yet the finished article and sad to say we tend to focus on what we *are not* and what we *don’t have*, rather than on the person God has made us to be and the gifts he has given us. Often, our default position is to write ourselves off because of our age, our background, our gender, our personality type or our education. (Add your own perceived disqualification!) We need a different mindset.

Like Onesimus, each of us is useful in Christ and we should remember that *God doesn’t call the qualified, he qualifies the called.*

Bill Nisbet.

~~~~~



**Normalise second-hand gifts.**

Spread the cheer even further this year by making Christmas more eco. Most of us know that charity shops are good places to buy pre-loved gifts. Did you also know about the following?

- Vinted (An app, with fixed prices);
- Buy Nothing Aberlady/Gullane/Longniddry Facebook Group (free gifting, receiving);
- LiL’s Reuse Festival on 22 November in Haddington Scout Hall.

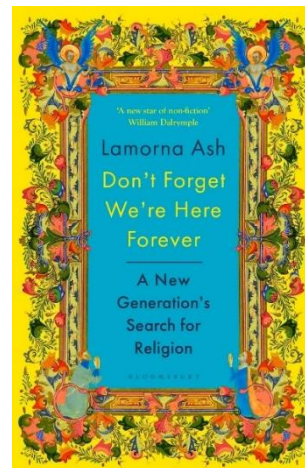
There must be many more. Please share for future issues of Connect.

**Katie McM.**



## Book review.

Barefoot in a burn, under the stars in Iona, in the silence of a Quaker meeting or surrounded by intricate artwork and ritual in an Orthodox cathedral, the interviews and pen-portraits in this new book chart the many and unexpected ways that young people are discovering or rediscovering their Christian faith in the UK today. Published earlier this year by Bloomsbury, *Don't Forget We're Here Forever* is a beautifully written and insightful memoir of the author's travels around the country and her own wrestle with faith. There are signs that some young people are turning away from materialism and individualism and looking for something (and someone) greater that has been missing from their lives. I found so much beauty in this book and also so many challenging questions. The author asks: 'if they never enter a church, how will the next generation discover what it might do for them.... and... just because we don't need them all the time [like a hospital or fire station], it doesn't mean [a church's] community role becomes defunct'. Previous generations all had the opportunity to opt into or out of Christianity. A question that vexes me is: what of the young British people today who miss out on any opportunity to experience anything of the Christian faith that was so available to previous generations?



I recommend this as a Christmas gift for anyone who likes beautiful, well-researched writing and thinking about the future. Do you have a book review or recommendation you would like to share? Send it in!

**Douglas McM.**

## ~~~~~ **Make Christmas sweeter.**

According to Oxfam, up to 9 out of 10 Ghanaian and Cote d'Ivoire cocoa farmers don't earn a living income, so it's commonplace to rely on child labour. They grow about 70% of the world's cocoa. That means we've all almost definitely eaten chocolate made by child labour. What can we do? Where possible buy value-added-at-source chocolate (i.e. where it is processed in country, keeping more benefit for the local people). Buy Fairtrade (but don't be fooled by generally unfit own-brand sustainability schemes. Where possible avoid the mega multinationals – Lindt, Mars, Mondelez (Cadburys, Terry's, Toblerone), Nestle and Ferrero. Consider [www.meaningfulchocolate.co.uk](http://www.meaningfulchocolate.co.uk) for advent calendars, Easter eggs and more that include the Christian Message. **Katie McM.**



**Congregational Roll**  
**Aberlady and Gullane Parish Church**



**Funeral Services**

Isabella Cameron 1 September

Jessie Kilgour 2 September

Anna Maria Hope 19 September

**Weddings**

Auden Reiss and Rhona Finlay 16 August  
Helen Black and Paul McLaughlin 18 October

**DIRECTORY**

|                           |                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Minister                  | Rev Lis Stenhouse <a href="mailto:estenhouse@churchofscotland.org.uk">estenhouse@churchofscotland.org.uk</a> |
| Session Clerk             | Barry White                                                                                                  |
| Depute Session Clerk      | Hazel Phisatory                                                                                              |
| Treasurer                 | Kaye Macaskill                                                                                               |
| Christian Aid             | Carol Yarrow                                                                                                 |
| Communications            | Douglas Donaldson                                                                                            |
| Church Office             | Morag Black                                                                                                  |
| Church Website            | Rachel Wallace                                                                                               |
| Flower Convenors          | Anne Dobie                                                                                                   |
|                           | Liz Forsyth                                                                                                  |
| Gift Aid                  | Morag Black                                                                                                  |
| "CONNECT" Editor          | Douglas McMillan                                                                                             |
| Presbytery Elder          | Joy Grey                                                                                                     |
| Roll Keeper               | Barry White                                                                                                  |
| Safeguarding Coordinators | Val Morrison                                                                                                 |
|                           | Win Wright                                                                                                   |
| JAM Club                  | Lauren Solvedt                                                                                               |

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Thanks.

Douglas McM.



| <i>Sunday</i> | <b>DATES FOR YOUR DIARY</b>                                                                                                                    |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 30 November   | 11.15am Joint worship service at Aberlady Church for St Andrew's Day with the <b>Ceilidh Band</b> and Ruthanne accompanying, conducted by Lis. |
| 7 December    | 9.45am Joint worship service at Gullane Church conducted by the Worship team.                                                                  |
| 14 December   | 9.45am Joint Christmas <b>Nativity</b> service at Gullane Church.                                                                              |
| 21 December   | 4pm Carols on the Green, Gullane                                                                                                               |
| 24 December   | 6.30pm Family Christmas Eve service at Aberlady Church conducted by the Worship team.                                                          |
| 24 December   | 11.30pm Christmas Eve Watchnight Service at Gullane Church conducted by Lis.                                                                   |
| 24 December   | 11.30pm Christmas Eve Watchnight Service at Aberlady Church conducted by Barry White.                                                          |
| 25 December   | 10.30am Joint <b>Christmas Day</b> service at Gullane Church.                                                                                  |
| 28 December   | 11.15am Joint worship service at Aberlady Church.                                                                                              |
| 4 January     | 11.15am Joint worship service at Aberlady Church conducted by the Worship Team.                                                                |
| 11 January    | 9.45am Sunday worship at Gullane Church.<br>11.15 Sunday worship at Aberlady Church.                                                           |
| 18 January    | 9.45am Sunday worship at Gullane Church.<br>11.15 Sunday worship at Aberlady Church.                                                           |
| 25 January    | 11.15am Joint worship service at Aberlady Church conducted by Lis.                                                                             |
| 1 February    | 9.45am Joint worship service at Gullane Church conducted by the Worship Team.                                                                  |
| 8 February    | 9.45am Sunday worship at Gullane Church.<br>11.15 Sunday worship at Aberlady Church.                                                           |
| 15 February   | 9.45am Sunday worship at Gullane Church.<br>11.15 Sunday worship at Aberlady Church.                                                           |
| 22 February   | Joint worship service at Gullane Church conducted by Lis.                                                                                      |
| 1 March       | Joint worship service at Aberlady Church conducted by the Worship Team.                                                                        |