December/January 2025/26 Issue 172

The Link



The magazine for the linked congregations and communities of the West Kirk of Calder and Polbeth Harwood.

www.west-kirk-polbeth-harwood.co.uk

Minister

Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald

27 Learmonth Crescent West Calder EH55 8AF

Mobile: 07846 539841

Email: minister@west-kirk-polbeth-harwood.co.uk

Ordained Local Minister

Rev Alison Quilter Mobile: 07741 985597

Email: AQuilter@churchofscotland.org.uk

West Kirk	**Polbeth Harwood**
Session Clerk	
Alison McNaught	Thomas Griffin
01506 871617	
sessionclerk@westkirkofcalder.co.uk	sessionclerk@polbethharwood.co.uk
Treasurer	
Neil Webster	Sandra McCabe
07732 553027	01506 872593
webstern65@gmail.com	
Safeguarding Coordinator	
Douglas Horn	Eleanor Davidson
01506 419656	01506 873590
West Kirk of Calder (Church of Scotland)	Polbeth Parish Church of Scotland
Charity SC004703 Congregation 020161	Charity SC017373 Congregation 020156
Copyright Licence No. 218743	
Link Editor:Sandra.dixon71@gmail.com	

Letter from the minister



Dear friends

There is no time like the Christmas season to remind us that the light of Christ always shines in our lives – even when it is very dark around us.

Jesus said: “I am the light of the world”. And that is what I think of every single time I see Christmas lights in people’s windows, in the shops, and in the streets. The beautiful Christmas lights bring more than just light though – they bring warmth, and an atmosphere of joy and peace. There might be people in the world who see these lights as mere decorations, but we know the *real* reason these lights shine – because at this time of year we celebrate the birth of the “Light to the world”. So, as you get yourself ready for Christmas this year – don’t feel harassed because you

have so much to do, or because you have to listen to *Rudolph the red nose reindeer* over and over again while you try to get your shopping done, or because so many people have no idea what Christmas really is about…

Rather, take a deep breath, focus on the lights, and remember what they represent: Jesus, our Saviour, the light of the world. Let's not allow the commercialised version of Christmas take the joy out of this most special time in the life of a Christian – let's look deeper, let's see through it – and notice Jesus Christ at the centre of it all. Because this world would be a very dark place without the light Christ brings. Let's ***see*** the light, and if that is not possible, let's ***be*** the light this Christmas – let's allow Christ to shine his light of love through every single one of us…

May God bless you all this Christmas and in the new year.

Nanda

Introducing Gillian Couper, Candidate for Ministry



Hello everyone! It's been such a pleasure to meet many of you these past few weeks at West Kirk and Polbeth Harwood, over tea after the services and during community events. For those of you I have not met, my name is Gillian Couper and I am a Candidate for Ministry with the Church of Scotland (i.e. trainee) on placement with Nanda's supervision.

I drove home after my very first Sunday feeling very warmly welcome and excited about my time "out West". I live in central Edinburgh with my husband and our bouncy dog (see pic!), where I've been involved with Greyfriars Kirk and its social enterprises for a number of years. My first placement as a Candidate was "out East" in North Berwick. I'm delighted to get the chance to spend time in all the Lothians during my training.

My placement will be for around six months, during which I will spend 10 hours a week participating in church life (i.e. trotting around after Nanda and trying to be useful to her and some of you!). I've already enjoyed a pastoral visit, school services, various meetings and assisting in worship services. I look forward to joining in as many aspects of church life as I can in the coming months. I will be at one or two "meet me at the manse" if anyone would like to come along and say hello! Dates to be planned.

Placements are incredibly valuable experiences (we do four placements in total), which help us Candidates experience what ministry and church life is like in different places with different people. So, thank you all very much for having me, and making me feel so welcome.

Much warmth, Gillian

Reflection – John 1:12, 13 (NRSV)

12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

RSVP – four letters which we ask people to indicate their acceptance of an invitation or otherwise. It's a way of politely asking the recipient not to put the invitation away and forget about it, or to delay their reply until the very last minute, but to respond as soon as possible.

There is a sense in which we see something similar in the events of the birth of Jesus, and indeed throughout his life and ministry. First, it was Mary, asked to respond to God's word pronounced by Gabriel, and her response was swift and unreserved: 'I am the Lord's servant. Let it be to me just as you say', Luke 1:38.

Next, it was Joseph challenged to think again about breaking off his engagement to Mary, his response too was equally prompt: 'After waking from his sleep, Joseph did as the angel of the Lord had instructed, taking Mary as his wife', Matthew 1:24.

Then, it was the shepherds, told that a Saviour had been born to them in Bethlehem, and from them too there was no hesitation: 'They came with haste, and found Mary and

Joseph, and with them the baby, lying in a manger', Luke 2:16.

Finally, there were the wise men, seeing the star in the east and immediately following it. 'They knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their gifts, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh', Matthew 2:11.

The coming of Christ was an invitation to respond, and it is an invitation that God continues to extend today – to you, to me, to everyone. It's no use just receiving it and then putting it away; no good thinking we can put off a decision until some other time, for God is asking you, as he asked so many all those years ago and he asked so many since: RSVP.

Prayer

Gracious God, teach me that I need to go on making my response to the good news of Christ; that it is not a one-off thing, once done and then forgotten, but an ongoing commitment. So, once more, I bring you my service and I dedicate my life to you in his name. Amen.

Rev Alison Quilter

Special Events in Church this December

Bereavement Service

Polbeth Harwood Church

December 7th at 15:00

A special service dedicated to those we have loved and lost.

An open invitation to everyone to come along and take a special moment to remember.





Gift Service

9:30 West Kirk

11:15 Polbeth Harwood

Anyone wishing to bring along a gift to this service is invited to put the gift under our tree to support those in need.

All are welcome with or without a gift.

More information on the specific charities each church are giving to can be found in each church notice board.

Evening of Christmas Music

14th December 19:00

West Kirk



Relax into the spirit of Christmas at our evening of Christmas music. With special guests!



A great mix of all your favourite songs, carols and hymns! Fun, friendly & free!

Remember your Santa hat and lights, not essential but fun!

Open plate for donations at the end to a local charity.

Light refreshments served in the hall at the end.

United Nativity Service



21st December 10:00

West Kirk



The nativity story told by a group of carol singers. This service is led entirely by children from both churches.

Christmas Eve Family Service



24th December 18:30

Polbeth Harwood

All age family service, remind the wee ones the real reason for the season.

Everyone welcome.

Watch Night Service

24th December 23:30

West Kirk

Join us for a time of carols, quiet reflection, and community, as we welcome the moment of Christ's birth.
We look forward to sharing this holy night with you.





United Worship

28th December 11:15

Polbeth Harwood

4th January 9:30

West Kirk

May the true spirit of Christmas shine in your heart and light your path

The Bridge  '16 to 25+ year olds'

'The Bridge' for young folk aged 16 to 25+ years old is held quarterly. A get together and have a blether, sharing a meal or light snack and explore our faith and discuss things that matter to you as young folk in 21stC. If you are interested, please get in touch with me or Nanda and bring a friend along too!

We meet in Polbeth Harwood Church Café Area on a **Wednesday at 7pm.** Our next scheduled meeting will be on **Wednesday 17th December** for our Christmas get together.

The Bridge let's stay connected! Look forward to seeing you there!

Nanda, Sandra and Alison

Dates for your 2026 Diary



A United "Scottish Themed Service"



Sunday 25th January 9:30 in the West Kirk

This is when we will have "Weel-kent" music, & hymns.

Bible & drama readings in modern day Scots.

We invite everyone to wear a wee bit tartan, tae blend in and bring along a pal!

After the service there will be "Scottish fayre and a cuppa" in the hall to which everyone is warmly invited.

"A Service to Celebrate the Gift of Love"



Sunday 15th February @ 9:30 in the West Kirk

& 11:15 in Polbeth Harwood Church

As the Sunday nearest St Valentine's Day the focus of this service is on the theme of Love.

Married in this Kirk – or elsewhere – this gives an opportunity to reflect on your years of love & commitment together.

Married - or single – this also gives an occasion to thank God not only for the love which lies at the heart of all our relationships but also acknowledge that God is the source of all our loving and that he wants to help us strengthen our love for one another whatever the connection.

The warmth of love is further celebrated with "Bubbly & Cake" in the halls after the services.







To all Families in Our Community

We believe that children are a vital part of our church family. That's why we're so excited to invite your children to join us for Sunday Club, JAM Club, and Bible Class on Sunday mornings.

We have a dedicated team of volunteers who help and guide the children by playing games, making friends, doing crafts, and learning about God's love for us all, in a fun and modern way.

Some special events in which the children take part during the year are - Harvest Thanksgiving celebration, Remembrance Day service, and our much-loved Christmas Nativity service.

These moments are so important in the lives of our children, and our churches, and we can't do it without you and your support. Your presence and support, whether big or small, are a powerful encouragement to our children and to our team of volunteers.

We hope you'll encourage your children to come along and join us.

SUNDAY CLUB: West Kirk – Meet in church at 9:30am or in the hall at 9:45am.

BIBLE CLASS: West Kirk – First Sunday of the month, same times as above.

JAM CLUB: Polbeth Harwood – Meet in the church at 11:15am.



Please Note: The above groups break for the holidays on 21/12/25 and resume on 11/01/26.

Echoes of our Past, From the Kirk Archives

Recently at the West Kirk we held a Church mouse event for children and adults to come and explore the church like never before.

It was very well attended, and, as an extension of this we enjoyed a very special service on September 14th during which, we shared some interesting facts about our church.

We have some really interesting, and very old artefacts which, tend to be stored away and forgotten about. So we have decided to share some of these on a regular basis in the church magazine. We are starting off with an article which appeared in a newspaper in the early 1950's giving a brief insight into the origin of West Calder.

The second item is one of our oldest copies of a Parish Newsletter dated March 1897.

This letter was written by Dr. James A. Anderson who was the minister from 1894-1927, the second minister of the new and current West Kirk of Calder. John D GRANT was the last minister of the old Kirk and the first minister in the new church. 1870- 1894



THE ORIGIN OF WEST CALDER.

The decision of the Parish Council to carry out some improvements in the old churchyard carries one back to the time when West Calder grew up around the church which is now a ruin. The church was built in 1643 and West Calder was what was called a "kirk toon," or in other words it grew up within the shadow of the church. The oldest portion of the village therefore is to be found in the Causeway, where there is a house which was built in 1678. The date is to be seen on the lintel above the doorway. Doubtless there were older houses but this is the only one we can trace. In those days there was a malt close by, and at Knowe Tap behind the Post Office the village market was held. The early population of the village was largely composed of tradesmen, weavers, malsters, and farm workers. The salary of the parish minister at that time was £44, 8s. 1d., but it was eked out by gifts of meal and potatoes from the farmers. The first minister was Patrick Shields, who was ordained in 1645, two years after the church was built. For taking part in the struggle against Prelacy he was evicted from his charge in 1665. He was beloved by his people however, and for three years they kept him in hiding and supplied him with food and clothing. During this time he held conventicles where his people came secretly and heard the Gospel preached in the manner in which they desired it.

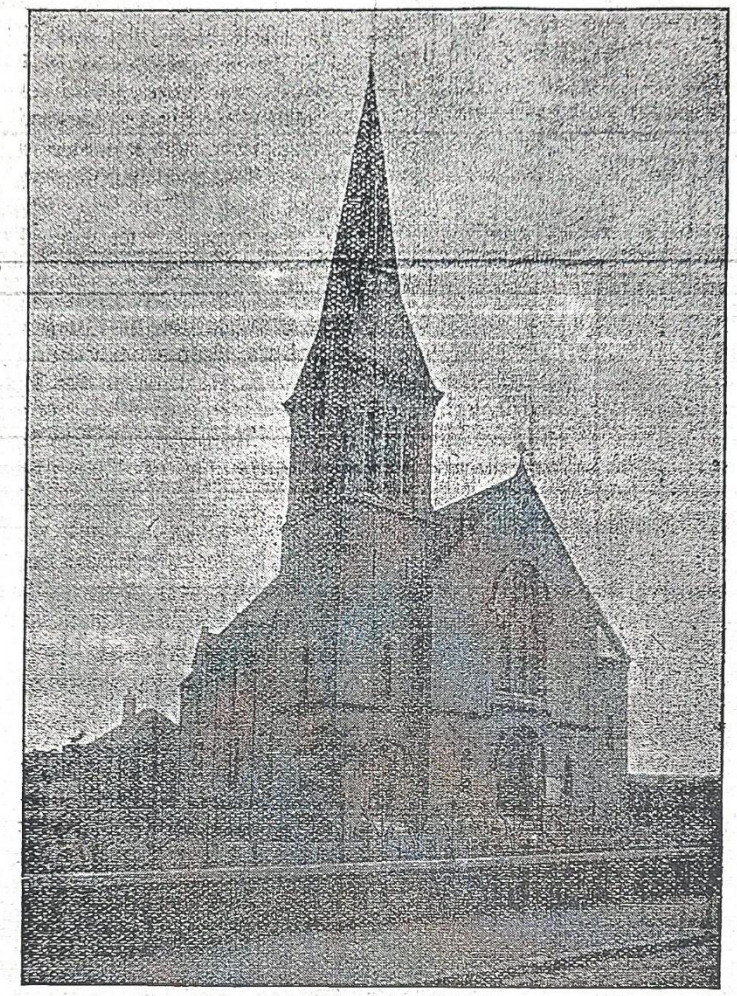
After the battle of Rullion Green many of the Covenanters found refuge in West Calder parish. One of the Sandilands was fined £1200 Scots for refusing to give them up. It is known that some of Cromwells Ironsides were in the parish in 1650, and there is a tradition that the soldiers stabled their horses in the church. There were no seats in the area of the church in those days. A weaver named John Bryce, belonging to the village, was arrested for being a Covenanter, and was taken to Mauchline, where he was hanged. Patrick Walker, who compiled "The Lives of the Martyrs" married his first wife, Margaret Kinloch, at West Calder. Patrick was the character delineated by Sir Walter Scott in "The Heart of Midlothian" as the Laird of Dumbiedykes.

WEST CALDER
PARISH MAGAZINE.

No. 8 MARCH 1897. No. 8

EDITED BY - - - THE REVEREND THE PARISH MINISTER.

Ubi Christus Ibi Ecclesia.



THE following are the ten Districts into which the Parish has been divided with the Elders appointed to each:

(1) *Muirhall and West* — Mr Robert Thomson.

(2) *Harburn and Camilty*—Mr Richard Meikle.

(3) *Limefield and Hermand*—Mr James Potter.

(4) *Seafield* — Mr George Ferme.

(5) *Gavieside and Breich* — Mr Robert Wardrope.

(6) *Gavieside Village* —Mr Alex. Kinsman.

(7) *Mossend* — Mr Alexander Crombie and Mr Andrew Main.

(8) *Happy Land and Tenants' March*—Mr Thomas Seggie.

(9) *West Calder (West end to Union Street)*—Mr Thomas Strang and Mr J. F. Milligan.

(10) *West Calder (East end from Union Street)* — Mr Alex. Sifton and Mr Thos. Blackwood.

KIRK SESSION.

Mr ALEXANDER SIFTON, Glebemount, West Calder.
,, JAMES F. MILLIGAN, Main Street, ,,
,, THOMAS BLACKWOOD, ,, ,,
,, JAMES POTTER, ,, ,,
,, ROBERT WARDROPE, Gavieside Farm.
,, ROBERT THOMSON, Rusha.
,, ALEXANDER KINSMAN 66, Gavieside.

Mr ALEXANDER CROMBIE 27, Mossend.
,, THOMAS STRANG 57, Mossend.
,, ANDREW MAIN 45, Mossend.
,, RICHARD MEIKLE, junior, West Torphin.
,, GEORGE FERME, Seafield, by Bathgate.
,, THOMAS SEGGIE, Burnhouse.

Session Clerk—Mr JAMES POTTER, Main Street, West Calder.

Sabbath School Superintendent, - - Mr THOMAS SEGGIE, Burnhouse.
,, *Secretary*, - - - Mr J. F. MILLIGAN, Main Street, West Calder.
,, *Treasurer*, - - - ROBERT WATSON, Main Street, West Calder.
,, *Librarian*, - - - Mr THOMAS BLACKWOOD, Main Street, West Calder.

Organist and Choir Master.
VACANT.

General Treasurer for Church Funds.
Mr THOMAS GRANT, Main Street, West Calder.

Convener of Missionary Association.
Mr THOMAS BLACKWOOD, Main Street, West Calder.

Convener of Committee for distribution of "Life and Work" and "The Mission Record."
Mr ALEXADER SIFTON, Glebemount, West Calder.

Church Officer—Mr WILLIAM WARDROPE, Dickson's Buildings, West Calder.

Pastoral Letter.

MY DEAR FRIENDS—Since I last addressed you in these pages, little worthy of special notice has been taking place in our Church life and work. We still continue to be blessed with the usual outward tokens of prosperity and success. The various departments of our Church work are in a healthy and vigorous state and we are encouraged to believe that the present year will mark a steady advance in every department of Christian work in connection with the Church and throughout the Parish.

Owing to my recent indisposition our weekly services were, for a time, seriously interrupted, but they are again resumed; and the attendances, which had considerably augmented from the beginning of the winter, are, at present, very stimulating and encouraging. There are yet many, however, in the immediate neighbourhood whom we seldom if ever see present. May I again appeal to all such to take an interest in the meetings by attending themselves and inducing others to come. Permit me, in this connection, to express my cordial thanks to the many kind friends who, by letter and otherwise, expressed their sympathy with us in our recent trouble. Let me assure you that it was a great comfort both to Mrs Anderson and myself to receive these tokens of your esteem and regard.

And now what shall I say of Mr Nicol's *visit?* It has been the most notable feature in our Parish life during the past month. He is the accredited agent of the Church of Scotland for Temperance and Evangelistic work. He came to us for a single week, but owing to the inclemency of the weather and other causes the meetings were not nearly so largely attended as we could have wished. One encouraging feature of the meetings, however, was that on each night Mr Nicol addressed an almost entirely different audience. In this way a much larger number heard the Gospel message than would appear if we were to judge by the attendance at any single meeting. Mr Nicol's addresses were excellent of their kind. They were simple, earnest, and pointed presentations of Gospel truth, full of thrilling illustrations which he had gleaned in the prosecution of his work. He focussed the light of the Gospel on the drink, the social, and other evils, and earnestly appealed to his hearers to embrace Christ as their only Saviour. We have reason to believe that the meetings have been a means of blessing to some in our midst. This mission has impressed me more than ever with the conviction to which I have already given expression, that what we need above all else in our Church and Parish is a *mission to Christians.* Apart altogether from any novel or fanciful theory on the subject of sinless perfection, there is, I hold, solid sense in the idea that what we need is a *truer consecration and a richer and deeper piety* among our Church members. This is our *great desiratum* and would do more for the cause of Christ in our midst than anything else. If our professing Christian people would only separate themselves from certain forms of amusements prevelant in our midst, and which, if not positively sinful are at least of a very questionable kind; and make their religion, not *a mere form*, but *a power* in their every day life, the careless and indifferent would soon begin to see in them *a something* which they themselves did not possess; they would see embodied and expounded *a life* which they ought to be living, but are not; they would feel *outside* so to speak. The average life and experience of our Church members, even where there is undoubted faith in Jesus Christ, is lived far below the line of duty and privilege. "*What do we more than others?*" is a question which might be very pertinently put to multitudes of Christians among us. You can't distinguish them in their life and conduct from the world. What we need is to be lifted out of the *commonplace*, baptised afresh with the Holy Ghost and inspired with new enthusiasm for Christ and his cause. If our Church members were only separated more distinctly from the world, and more wholly consecrated to the service of Christ, the careless and indifferent would very soon be won for Christ and the Church. But as the case stands the vast majority of our so-called Christians are only "*a comfort to Sodom.*" They serve but to encourage the sinner in his unbelief and carnal indifference. I appeal to you who have professed allegiance to Christ at his holy table to give this matter your very prayerful and serious consideration. If this profession of attachment to Christ and his Church be worth anything to you it is worth everything. A Hindu once said to an Englishman: "*You are not like your book (meaning the New Testament.) If you were equal to your book we could not resist you.*"

Ever yours sincerely,

J. ALEXANDER ANDERSON.

THE MANSE OF WEST CALDER.

1st March, 1897.

2026 Holiday Club



Looking for a fun time next summer with an amazing team of volunteers and a brilliant group of kids? A week not to be missed! Get the date in your diary now as you plan your 2026 holidays. Week commencing August 3rd, 2026.

Church of Scotland Guild

A Christmas concert with Rebecca Pennykid in aid of CrossReach (charity number SC011353)

CROSSREACH
Care you can put your faith in

Date: Saturday **6th December** 2025

Time: **2pm**

Venue: **East Calder Church**

Price: Suggested minimum **donation** of £5 Per Person

Teas and coffees will be served

All are encouraged to come and would be very welcome.

Rebecca Pennykid is a Scottish mezzo-soprano and educator. Having graduated with First Class Honours from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, she now enjoys an active and varied career as a musician and teacher. With the National Youth Choir of Scotland, Rebecca has performed worldwide as a soloist and chorister, including in New York's Carnegie Hall, London's Royal Albert Hall and Edinburgh's Usher Hall.



East Calder, Kirknewton and Ratho Church of Scotland – Scottish Charity No. SC006973

Blythswood Care Shoebox Appeal 2025 Update

Thanks to all the efforts of the congregations of The West Kirk, Polbeth Harwood, Limefield UF Church, Community friends and groups including the West Calder Cubs for supporting the Annual Appeal.

A Total of 102 Boxes were filled and have already been through the Sorting Centre and are on route by road to Eastern Europe in time to reach their destinations for distribution by Christmas Day. £120 in monetary donations was forwarded on to support the transportation costs.

Many of you are interested to know how many boxes of each category were made up.

So for this year.....

Boys (3 - 7 years) = 12

Boys (8 - 12 years) = 7

Teen Boys = 3

Men = 16

Girls (3 -7 years) = 19

Girls (8 - 12 years) = 12

Teen Girls = 6

Women = 25

Older Women = 2

The Charity appears to be having issues recruiting volunteers to support collecting donations from Groups in the Lothians. Please keep this vital work in your prayers as without this service, it becomes very challenging for those of us co-ordinating the project locally to try and resolve getting the boxes to the Sorting Centres at short notice in the working week.

Lets spare a thought as the Sundays in Advent pass, to think of the difference the boxes received in those weeks will have made to the person opening them. The **Joy** of the colourful wrapped box, the array of practical gifts within, the message of **Love** that someone who doesn't know them took time to fill the box to show they care enough about them in particular and finally the **Hope** in the Christian message that our Lord's Birth brings to the whole world.

Thank you one and all for your support.

Watch out in 2026 for maybe some new approaches to helping the project to meet the needs of the changing stage in our Congregations approach to the project.



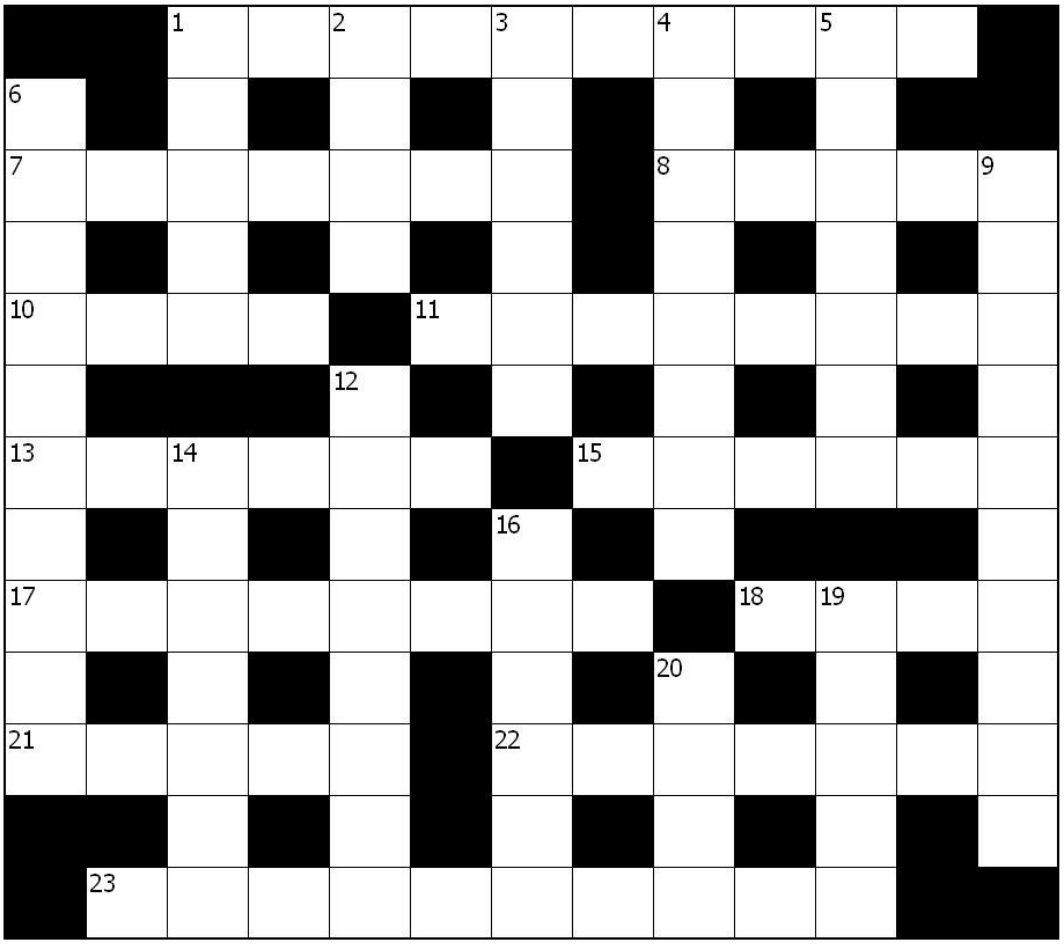
Jingle & Mingle

On Thursday 18 December, West Calder High School would like to invite retired people from our communities to join them for an afternoon of Christmas Cheer!

1:30–3:00pm

There will be food, entertainment, and fun – all arranged by the young people themselves.
Let's support them with this venture!

Please RSVP to Nanda by 12 Dec:
07846539841 or
JGroenewald@churchofscotland.org.uk



Across

1 Provisional meeting place of God and the Jews (Exodus 25:9) (10)

7 David's third son, killed when his head got caught in a tree during a battle with his father (2 Samuel 18:14,15) (7)

8 They ruled much of the west coast of South America in the 15th and early 16th centuries (5)

10 Small deer of European and Asian extraction (4)

11 Seized control of (Numbers 21:25) (8)

13 Terror (Luke 24:5) (6)

15 First World War heroine shot by the Germans in Brussels, Nurse Edith …. (6)

17 Stormy (8)

18 A bitter variety of this, together with lamb and unleavened bread, was the Passover menu for anyone unclean (Numbers 9:11) (4)

21 Arson (anag.) (5)

22 How John Newton described God's grace in his well-known hymn (7)

23 Habitation (Isaiah 27:10) (10)

Down

1 …. and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8) (5)

2 The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as … as a lion (Proverbs 28:1) (4)

3 One of the exiles, a descendant of Parosh, who married a foreign woman (Ezra 10:25) (6)

4 He escaped from Nob when Saul killed the rest of his family and joined David (1 Samuel 22:19,20) (8)

5 City and lake in Central Switzerland (7)

6 Offer your bodies as living …. , holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1) (10)

9 Pouches carried by horses (Genesis 49:14) (10)

12 One who accepts government by God (8)

14 Aromatic substance commonly used in Jewish ritual (Exodus 30:1) (7)

16 He asked Jesus, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38) (6)

19 Are (Romans 13:1) (5)

20 You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will … his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21) (4)

Answer from issue 171

A**CROSS:** 1, Jehoiachin. 7, Endured. 8, Eased. 10, Rash. 11, Startled. 13, Easier. 15, Rubric. 17, Impurity. 18, Feet. 21, Eye at. 22, Ready to. 23, Holy Spirit.

DOWN: 1, Judas. 2, Harm. 3, Is duty. 4, Cheerful. 5, Insular. 6, Jezreelite. 9, Dedication. 12, Secretly. 14, Supremo. 16, Stir up. 19. Egypt. 20, Hair.

What a year! As we approach Christmas and the end of the year 2025 (already - I know!), I would love to take this time to reflect on the year we've had and the children and families we've been able to support through your generosity and partnership. Looking to the churches we've journeyed with, the friendships formed and families uplifted I'd love to share with you some of the joy seen in both number and story form...

In the year 2025 we have seen **64 children supported** in Edinburgh and the Lothians through befriending, because of your support, volunteering, praying and giving! That's **35 families** alone and isolated who have had the opportunity to flourish through friendship, support and knowing that someone else cares.

Across Scotland, we have seen **37 new volunteers** trained to support families through befriending or hosting and join us on the journey to reach even more children and families. There have also been **36 new enquiries** from individuals, couples and families exploring what it could mean for them to become a foster carer, adopter or supported lodgings host. Around **80 churches** across Edinburgh and the Lothians are partnering with us, considering what it means to engage deeper with the needs of children and families in their local communities through volunteering, prayer, exploring fostering/adoption and through training, enabling the church to feel equipped in their outreach and mission.

Each of these numbers represents an individual. A family life transformed, a prayer partner so faithfully bringing needs to God, a volunteer giving of their time and finding joy in the families they've journeyed with, the stepping stones towards creating space for a child in the family through fostering, a home opened up to invite the outcast in. We have seen churches responding to the need by uplifting adoptive families and language surrounding the care system welcomed in, and by feeling equipped through training to support additional needs within their kids ministry. In these numbers there are countless stories of hope, and I'd love to share just one with you now…

We recently supported a mum and her son, Charlie*. Mum had recently moved to escape from an abusive relationship, and this had been difficult for the whole family. Charlie was matched up with one of our male volunteers, David*. Over time, they began to form a friendship, and our volunteer would take him to the skatepark which he loved. On the way home, Charlie asked where David would be going for dinner, and David said his family were eating at a church dinner tonight. Charlie asked, "can I come with you!?" Charlie, his mum and his little brother all came along to David's church that night – it was mum's birthday and she felt so welcomed into the church, even going along to the toddler group over the next few weeks after a church member invited her. The church gathered around the family and bought a bike for Charlie to use when out in the skatepark with David!

For me, this depicts the power of the church in action, working collectively to welcome, to support and to love children and families in their community, offering beacons of light in the darkness, and showing them Jesus through their words and actions. I love that they gathered around the family and the volunteer, each playing a part in bringing hope.

If you are interested in finding out more about **church partnership** and how we can support you in seeing children and families thrive in your church and your community please do get in touch! I would love to hear from you and explore what it might look like in your church family and your context.

Finally, we love that you are praying for and with us. Let's thank God for the joy we have witnessed this year and the stories of hope we have seen! Let's continue to pray that He would transform the lives of children and families, volunteers and host homes, foster carers and adopters, and of the church as a collective whole. It is through God that we see transformation happen, and so we bring our requests before him, remembering all that he has done and rejoicing in His goodness!

That's all from me - as always do get in touch if you would like to explore this further - and when it comes...
Happy Christmas!

With love and blessings,
Caitlin and the team at Safe Families and Home for Good

THANK YOU.

I would like to say a big thank you to everyone for the lovely flowers, cards, text messages, phone calls and visits that I have received during my recent spell in hospital and recuperation at home, it has been very much appreciated.

Thankfully, I am now on the road to recovery and hopefully will be well enough to meet up with everyone at some of the events leading up to Christmas.

Once again a huge thank you and Season's Greetings to everyone.

Margaret Hogg

WEST KIRK OF CALDER UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EVENTS.

The Fundraising Group at the West Kirk are holding a Christmas Coffee Morning on Saturday 6th December from 10am - 1pm. Tickets priced £5 for adults or £3 for children can be purchased from fund raising members or you can pay at the door on the day. Stalls will include home baking, craft, bottle stall, lucky dip and a raffle for a hamper filled with seasonal goodies.

The group are also hosting a Winter Warmer on Saturday 17th January from 12 noon until 2pm when soup and sandwiches will be on sale.

Please come along, bring your friends and perhaps meet up with someone you have not seen for a while and have a chat.



The Quiet Service

The next quiet service in Polbeth Harwood will be held on **Wednesday 17th December at 3:30pm**, followed by **Wednesday 28th January 2026 at 3:30pm** in the 'quiet room'. All are welcome to this short service followed by tea, coffee, biscuits and a 'blether'. Entry via the Ramp Door.

Anyone who would like to come and needs assistance with transport should call Sandra Dixon on 07855861223.

We look forward to seeing you there.

Sandra and Alison



Reflection – Ecclesiastes 11:7 (NRSV)

7 Light is sweet, and it is pleasant for the eyes to see the sun.

How do you greet the thought of another year? Does it thrill you with a sense of new beginnings or does it bring an uneasy sense of time passing faster than you'd like it to?

Hopefully it's the former, but on occasions over the coming months we'll probably all see a time as a foe rather than a friend. When life is good, we want it to stand still so that we can hang on to it for ever – only, of course, we can't, and those special moments soon become distant memories.

When life is busy, we want more time, for there simply isn't enough to go around. When life is dull, bringing yet more of the same old routine, time drags…….For a host of reasons we can end up yearning for extra time or wishing it away, and in each case we fail to appreciate the time we have.

How, then, do we escape from the impasse? Perhaps the following: firstly, no matter what our responsibilities, we must learn to take things at a more leisurely pace, building into each day a few moments to be still in the presence of God.

Secondly, we need to take things as they come, letting go of worries about the future or regrets concerning the past and remembering that each moment is God's gift.

Thirdly, we must remember that we live in the context not simply of our brief human lifespan, but of God's eternity. In other words, quite literally, as the song goes, we have all the time in the world, and more! Yes, we'll occasionally end up chasing our tails, wishing we could stop the clock or wondering why its hands seem to move slowly, but we'll have also learnt to appreciate life to the full.

Rev Alison Quilter

Parish Record

Baptism

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as them."

23rd September – Robyn Jean Johnston Griffin, infant daughter of Mark and Nicola, nee Pew

Deaths

Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life."

To all who have lost a loved one we extend our sincere sympathies and prayers.

15th September – Ian Forrester, Burngrange, West Calder

16th October – Dorothy Campbell, Kingshill View, Forth

20th October – John Greer, Peacock Nursing Home, Livingston

21st October – Janet Walker, Dickson Court, West Calder

23rd October – Robert Boyd, Mungle Street, West Calder

30th October – Karen Burns, Langside Gardens, Polbeth

15th November – Elizabeth 'Betty' White, Limefield Avenue, Polbeth

Here, there,

without, within,

in shadow, in light,

amid storms, in the centre of calm

... there is always a place, God abides beside us.

in the heights, and in the depths,

nothing can separate us from the love of God.



December 25

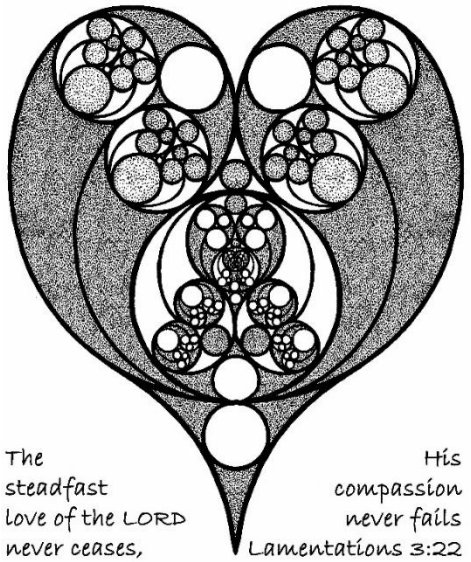
Saturday	6th	Festive Kirks' Cafe	West Kirk	10.00
Sunday	7th	Holy Communion	West Kirk	09.30
			Polbeth Harwood	11.15
		Bible Class	West Kirk	09.30
		Annual Bereavement Service	Polbeth Harwood	15.00
Wednesday	10th	Wednesday Warblers	West Kirk hall	11.30
Thursday	11th	Beyond Kirk Walls services	Dickson Court	13.45
			Burngrange Home	15.00
Sunday	14th	Lessons, Carols and Gift Service	West Kirk	09.30
			Polbeth Harwood	11.15
		Jak's Den Concert	West Kirk	14.00
		Evening of Christmas Music	West Kirk	19.00
Wednesday	17th	WL Council Christmas Service	West Kirk	10.00
		Quiet Service	Polbeth Harwood	15.30
		The Bridge	Polbeth Harwood	19.00
Thursday	18th	Bellsquarry PS Service	Polbeth Harwood	10.00
		Jingle & Mingle	West Calder High School	13.30
Friday	19th	Parkhead PS Service	West Kirk	09.30
Sunday	21st	Nativity Service	West Kirk	**10.00**
Wednesday	24th	Xmas Family Service	Polbeth Harwood	18.30
		Watchnight Service	West Kirk	23.30
Sunday	28th	United Worship	Polbeth Harwood	11.15



January 26

Sunday	4th	United Worship	West Kirk	09.30
Thursday	8th	Beyond Kirk Walls services	Dickson Court Burngrange Home	13.45 15.00
Sunday	11th	Morning Worship	West Kirk Polbeth Harwood	09.30 11.15
Wednesday	14th	Wednesday Warblers	West Kirk	11.30
Saturday	17th	Winter Warmer Event	West Kirk	12.00 – 14.00
Sunday	18th	Morning Worship	West Kirk Polbeth Harwood	09.30 11.15
Tuesday	20th	Meet me @ The Manse	Manse	14.00 - 15.00
Sunday	25th	United Scots Service	West Kirk	09.30
Tuesday	27th	Meet me @ The Manse	Manse	14.00 - 15.00
Wednesday	28th	Quiet Service	Polbeth Harwood	15.30
Friday	30th	Youth Group		19.00

Special Note –



In February, there will be a "Service to Celebrate the Gift of Love" on Sunday 15th (the Sunday nearest St Valentine's Day)

There is the promise of "Bubbly & Cake" following each service.



CHURCH UNION

On Sunday the 23rd of November we had congregational meetings in both our churches to consider a basis of union between the West Kirk of Calder and Polbeth Harwood Church.

The outcome of the vote was positive, which means that from 1st of January 2026, we will be one church under the heading of **West Calder and Polbeth Parish Church of Scotland**. We will, however, keep our two original buildings which shall remain as West Kirk of Calder and Polbeth Harwood Church.

From then on, we will have one Session, but we will still have worship services in both our buildings on a Sunday with some united services throughout the year as we have had for some time now.

May God bless us in this new chapter!

