

The Stewartry of Strathearn

# THE BANNER



**ADVENT 2009**

## Congregational Record

### **Baptisms:**

13/09/2009 James Christopher Sharp and Jessica Rachel Sharp,  
Alloa in Dunning Church

### **Marriages:**

29/08/2009 John Ritchie with Alix Doe in Forteviot Church

17/10/2009 Andrew Cunningham with Katriona Smith  
in Forteviot Church

### **Deaths:**

27/08/2009 Mr William Sinclair Fletcher, Dunning

08/10/2009 Mr William Kettles, Dunning

## **Data Protection**

In order to comply with current legislation please note that the office bearers of our church keep personal data about members for purposes of congregational management. Should individuals wish to see the information stored on them, they are asked to contact the Office and arrangements can be made to view the specific records kept. Our office bearers are aware of their responsibility for keeping information confidential and current. If you have any questions on data protection please contact the Office Administrator or the Session Clerk.

## **Small Groups/ House Groups**

In many parishes people meet together in small informal groups during the week for fellowship, Bible study, prayer and support. Some groups follow a structured study programme; others have an open forum for discussion once a week or once a fortnight—it depends on what people want to do!

Over the years groups like this have met in different parts of The Stewartry ; for example in recent years there have been Lent study groups that a number of people have attended for a specific time and purpose. Currently there is one House group that regularly meets once a week in Dunning. It may be that you would like to join a House group or simply come along one evening and see how it would feel! If so, please get in touch with Pamela Bain or Deirdre and come along to one of the regular meetings and try it out.

As one person has put it: “If you’re going to make it in life, you can’t do it alone.” Many people gain greatly from the mutual encouragement of a small group setting.



Dear Friends,

This is likely to be my last letter to you as your Interim Moderator as it is hoped that an Interim Minister will be introduced to The Stewartry by the end of January.

Although nothing is yet set firmly in place, it is anticipated that there may well be a Service of Introduction of the Rev John Oswald as your Interim Minister on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> January at Forteviot. This will open yet another new chapter in your story, or a new path on your journey – one that will be important in taking forward your story and in your travelling further along the way towards obtaining permission to call your own minister to the charge.

However, as I say, there is still a road to travel. Not least a road towards your becoming one congregation, rather than four. You may have been a Union since June 2000, but this appears to have amounted to little more than in name, without development of any real sense of being one. I know that the four existing places of worship have been important to many people, but I have to say that, looking to the future, the maintaining of four places is quite impossible, unless with significant lay involvement in both worship and pastoral care. This is not something unique to the Stewartry; it is a challenge to the whole of the Church of Scotland: we have to move away from the clericalism of reliance on an ordained ministry. After all, was the Reformation not about the ministry of all believers? Huge challenges therefore lie ahead – for us all!

Let me conclude by wishing you well in the future and for thanking you for my time with you, albeit a brief time. There are good things happening in the Stewartry, and I wish you God's blessing as you move into the future, remembering that it is God's mission we serve and not the mission of one place of worship, or even one congregation, or even one denomination.

I wish you a wonderful Christmas and health and happiness in 2010.

**Derek**

## Prayer Corner

### What happens when we pray?

(Extracts from John Houghton: The Search for God – Can Science Help?)

How do we relate to God?

An important way in which we relate to God and thus connect with His activity in this world is through prayer. . . We believe that God knows about, cares about and can take action regarding the matters being prayed about.

#### Informal Prayer

Paul's injunction to pray without ceasing highlights the importance of prayer in the life of the Christian. . . . Informal prayers are those prayers often short ones often expressed silently which we send up to God from anywhere at any time. . . They may express thanks or adoration for something particularly good or beautiful; they may be requesting forgiveness for some failure or shortcoming. More often, however, they are 'asking' prayers pointing up a particular problem or a particular need of our own or of someone else.. In any case, these informal prayers represent a continual attitude of mind. They are very much the way in which our relationship with God, as children dependent on a heavenly Father, is expressed and worked out in our daily lives.

#### Corporate Prayer

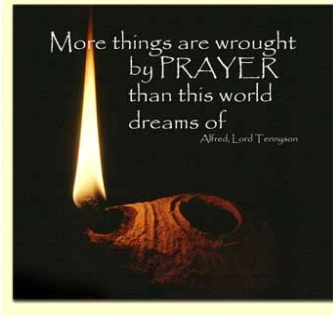
Jesus also emphasized to his disciples the special value of corporate prayer. 'If two or three of you on Earth agree about anything you ask for,' he said, 'it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them.'

### The Prayer Chain

The Stewartry's Prayer Chain exists to give prayer support to those with physical, emotional or spiritual needs. For each individual request prayer is offered up to our Lord daily by sixteen people.

We have been heartened by many answers to prayer and by the grateful thanks for what this service has meant to so many.

Over the last two years a number of the original "prayers" have left the Stewartry. More people are needed. Do you feel this might be a ministry you could undertake? If so, or if you would like more information, please contact me . **Pamela Bain 01764 684373**



Lord Jesus Christ,  
Come and dwell in our hearts this Christmastide  
So that our home may have you in it  
And be full of joy and peace.  
May no ill-temper, impatience, envy or jealousy  
Spoil the gladness of your birthday,  
But may love shine in our midst,  
Bringing light to all our hearts and minds.

J. McDougall Ferguson

Almighty God, Mary gave birth to a Son  
Who offers salvation to the whole world.  
May we, like Mary, both treasure Him in our hearts and bring Him to all  
men, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Father,  
Make me watchful  
Keep me faithful  
Bring me to repentance  
Give me love  
That in love and with joy I may encounter you anew  
And welcome you afresh  
When Christmas Day dawns once more.

Joyce Huggett.

## **Birth: The Visited Planet**

An extract from Philip Yancey: *The Jesus I Never Knew*

“In [J.B.] Phillips’s version [of Christmas], a senior angel is showing a very young angel around the splendours of the universe. They view whirling galaxies and blazing suns, and then flit across the infinite distances of space until at last they enter one particular galaxy of 500 billion stars.

‘As the two of them drew near to the star which we call our sun and to its circling planets the senior angel pointed to a small and rather insignificant sphere turning very slowly on its axis. It looked as dull as a dirty tennis-ball to the little angel, whose mind was filled with the size and glory of what he had seen.

“I want you to watch that one particularly”, said the senior angel, pointing with his finger.”

“Well, it looks very small and rather dirty to me”, said the little angel. “What’s special about that one?”

When I read Phillips’s fantasy, I thought of the pictures beamed back to earth from the Apollo astronauts, who described our planet as “whole and round and beautiful and small,” a blue-green-and-tan globe suspended in space. Jim Lovell, reflecting on the scene later said, “It was just another body, really, about four times bigger than the moon. But it held all the hope and all the life and all the things that the crew of Apollo 8 knew and loved. It was the most beautiful thing there was to see in all the heavens.” That was the viewpoint of a human being.

To the little angel, though, earth did not seem so impressive. He listened in stunned disbelief as the senior angel told him that this planet, small and insignificant and not overly clean, was the renowned Visited Planet.

*“Do you mean that our great and glorious Prince . . . went down in Person to this fifth-rate little ball? Why should He do a think like that?” . . .*

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*The little angel’s face wrinkled in disgust. “Do you mean to tell me,” he said, “that He stooped so low as to become one of those creeping, crawling creatures of that floating ball?”*

*“I do, and I don’t think He would like you to call them ‘creeping, crawling creatures’ in that tone of voice. For, strange as it may seem to us, He loves them. He went down to visit them to lift them up to become like Him.” The little angel looked blank. Such a thought was almost beyond his comprehension.’*

It is almost beyond my comprehension too, and yet I accept that this notion is the key to understanding Christmas and is, in fact, the touchstone of my faith. As a Christian I believe that we live in parallel worlds. One world consists of hills and lakes and barns and politicians and shepherds watching their flocks by night. The other consists of angels and sinister forces and somewhere out there places called heaven and hell. One night in the cold, in the dark, among the wrinkled hills of Bethlehem, those two worlds came together at a dramatic point of intersection. God, who knows no before or after, entered time and space. God, who knows no boundaries took on the shocking confines of a baby’s skin, the ominous restraints of mortality.

“He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation,” an apostle would later write; “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” But the few eyewitnesses on Christmas night saw none of that. They saw an infant struggling to work never-before-used lungs.

Could it be true, this Bethlehem story of a Creator descending to be born on one small planet? If so, it is a story like no other. Never again need we wonder whether what happens on this dirty little tennis ball of a planet matters to the rest of the universe. Little wonder a choir of angels broke out in spontaneous song, disturbing not only a few shepherds but the entire universe.”

## **HOST UK**

Unit 8 Water House, 8 Orsman Road, London N1 5QJ

Telephone: 020 7739 6292 Fax: 0207 033 6539

[www.hostuk.org.uk](http://www.hostuk.org.uk)

Registered Charity No. 327592

Registered Company in England and Wales No. 2179430

### **A Stranger for Christmas**

Visits from strangers at Christmas began with the arrival of wise men from a foreign land. You could carry on this tradition, by inviting an international student to spend Christmas in your home. HOST is a well-established charity, backed by the Foreign Office and many universities, which links adults studying in the UK with hospitable volunteers throughout Britain. Guests come from all over the world, including many from China. They speak English, are keen to share their own culture, while longing to know more about our way of life. They are prepared to travel to stay with a host far from their university.

Welcoming a student who might otherwise spend Christmas on a deserted campus, fosters international understanding, and will make Christmas special. See [www.hostuk.org](http://www.hostuk.org) or call HOST's volunteer regional organiser in this part of Scotland, Brian Conn, on 01224 733073. HOST arranges visits throughout the year, so if your 'inn' is full this Christmas, you can still offer an invitation at another time.

### **Stewartry Sale**

Plans are already afoot for the Stewartry Sale next November. Anyone who would like to donate knitted garments, e.g. Socks, hats, scarves, mitts, etc. please contact May Byron 01764 684885 or Liz Piggott 01764 684194 .



I'm sure you'd agree that's a pretty empty greeting—empty, because that which gives it any meaning at all is missing!

But then, isn't that exactly what we have done with .....mas? We've taken Christ out of it. And in many greetings card outlets you are hard pressed to find even one pack showing a Nativity scene. Snow scenes, robins and cheery Santas—some in quite ridiculous get-ups—dominate the scene.

However, even more disturbing is the underlying cultus we have built up around . . . . . mas

- that it is a time for over-indulging ourselves and our children;
- that spending extravagantly is the acceptable order of the day;
- that the big meal, the trimmings and the decorations are of supreme importance.

And somehow, in the midst of it all “he” has been lost along with all he was and came to do.

“He” came to a bare cellar used by the domestic animals, asking nothing for himself, lived the simplest of lives and preached a Gospel of freedom from the materialism that so enslaves us;

“He” extolled the riches of growing sound character—”true riches” - and the wealth that was to be found in giving—especially to the truly needy;

“He” gave the ultimate proof of his integrity in the giving of himself in selfless love.

Perhaps today in a time when a teetering economy—the result of reckless spending and greed—has come under serious threat of collapse it is time to put the Christ back into Christmas; time to make of Advent an opportunity to prepare for his coming and to discover afresh its meaning and the life-changing experience of living the Christ-ian life—life with him at its centre.

May God bless you this Christ-mastide. “Happy Christmas!”

Your friend,

**Ray Gaston**

† Dear Friends,

The Stewartry certainly can't be accused of treading water during this period of 'vacancy'. Many new and different ways of being church in this Parish especially within the set up of the Kirk Session are now in active service. Recently the three parishes in the Lower Earn Valley, Abernethy linked with Glenfarg, Dunbarney & Forgandenny, and The Stewartry of Strathearn (LECT) met together for a service of re-dedication for the elders within our respective Parishes – this in Dunbarney Church where the Rt. Revd. David Chillingworth Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld & Dunblane and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church preached. In his sermon he spoke about the unique ministry of the elder in the Church of Scotland and how much he would value a similar office in his own denomination. He encouraged us, in turn, to value and support our elders in the wide range of skills and gifts they offer for the common good. Please pray for the Kirk Session and in particular your own district elder.

Last week we met in Forteviot Village Hall to undertake training for Pastoral Visitors on behalf of our respective churches. Ron Harrison, Convenor of the 'Caring for Each Other' cluster group, organised this successful and encouraging day. This time members of Stanley & Redgorton, Abernethy & Glenfarg, Dunbarney & Forgandenny and ourselves shared training led by the Presbytery's Adult Trainer Mrs Renee Riddell (who is also the Session Clerk at Auchterarder Parish Church.) The four Parishes recognised the need for a group of Pastoral Visitor's – elders and non-elders alike - who would supplement the work of the Minister or, as in our case, Ministry Team.

We speak easily enough, in our tradition, of the Priesthood of all believers, perhaps what we do not achieve with either ease or understanding is the practical/spiritual outworking of this common ministry. Perhaps, in the past lay people have not felt they have been given permission to be who they are called to be. Perhaps church members have felt that a visit was only ever a 'proper' visit, a real visit, when The Minister called. Perhaps, we all need to recognise that as the singer Bob Dylan did that "the times they are a changing'.

The Justice and Peace group who work under the auspices of the 'Church in the Community' cluster have organised a series of Sunday lunch time discussion groups which have opened up fascinating insights into subjects we rarely get the time or opportunity to bring our Christian faith to bear upon, as well as an occasion to sit round table together. The Manse working party continues to do sterling work around the Manse itself and policies, spider's webs have mysteriously disappeared (along with spiders) and professional painters and decorator's work alongside members of the Parish to ensure that The Manse is fit for purpose and ready to welcome a new Minister and family. Aberuthven Church hosts a weekly Friendship Group for adults in the village as well as providing a 'home' for the local mother and toddler group.

These are just some of the way in which we , working together in Christ's name, seek to communicate The Good News in this congregation and Parish. We have much to be thankful for .....Every blessing

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**Deirdre**

### **Enquirers' Group**

Would you like to know more about the Christian faith? Or investigate the question of full membership of the Church and what that entails? Or is it a long time since you became a member and you would appreciate a “refresher course”?

Then come and be part of the Enquirers' Group when we hold our first meeting just after the new year break. If you would like to know more or be contacted in due course with details of date, time and venue then please let Ray or Deirdre have your details. We hope to be able to team up with similarly interested folk in neighbouring parishes in the Earn Valley. So contact us—and become part of the wider picture!

**Ray Gaston, Locum**

### **Caring Christmas Trees** (extract from Life & Work)

Five charities, through an innovative seasonal project called Caring Christmas Trees, are offering you the opportunity to gift the hope of a better future, better life, better care.

Caring Christmas Trees is an initiative allowing people to buy, choose and collect trees in a simple and convenient way. The process, which can be conducted online or over the phone, allows every purchaser to choose their preferred tree size, collection point and collection date in December and as the operational costs are kept to a minimum, all the resulting tree sale profits will be used to support the work of the charities.

The five charities participating in the scheme this year are Bethany Christian Trust (Edinburgh, Fife & Aberdeen), Kibble (Paisley), Impact Arts (Glasgow), Gowrie Care (Dundee & Perth) and King's church—the Jericho Road Project (SE London). The Marketing Manager at Bethany Christian Trust says: “Bethany runs life-line homelessness services providing for the most basic of human needs: shelter, warmth, food and a listening ear, but the problem is raising enough funds. The Christmas trees scheme makes so much sense. If people are going to buy a Christmas tree, they may as well buy one that will help someone out this winter. It's a really festive and fun way to show you care at Christmas.” To buy your tree, call 0845 111 8733 or visit [www.caringchristmastrees.com](http://www.caringchristmastrees.com).

### **Church in the Community**

Well first of all who or what is Church in the Community? No it is nothing to do with the erstwhile government initiative Care in the Community – though you may be forgiven for getting it confused! Church in the Community is the name chosen by the cluster group that was set up by our Kirk Session to look after activities that relate to the wider community – anything in fact that we do that is concerned with caring for people who aren't necessarily church members. It is concerned with the church's work on things such as foreign mission, outreach, all children, justice and peace.

Okay so now you know what Church in the Community is, you might well ask "what has this group been doing?" If you're really interested you might be asking "how can I help?" Hopefully you'll get answers to both questions if you read on.

When the group was set up, it took on responsibility for a number of existing groups – including the Sunday Club in Forteviot, the Tuesday Club in Dunning, the Justice and Peace Group, World Mission, the Friendship Club in Aberuthven. All of these groups continue to exist and have provided a valued service to their respective participants since their formation.

Within the past year, the Justice and Peace group started running "Third Sunday" discussions. If you haven't been to one of these meetings yet they are a great way to find out more about how Christianity relates to modern day issues. As the name implies they are run on the third Sunday of each month (though we will have a break for December). They start with an informal gathering for lunch, generally soup and sandwiches, and there is an invited speaker who gives a talk on the topic for the day, normally followed by questions and discussion from those present. Topics covered so far have ranged from asylum seekers, through homelessness to assisted suicide.

Also this year we have seen celebrations to mark the Centenary of St Paul's Church in Dunning. Festivities in September included a superb concert, a display of children's artwork, and a special service led by the Moderator of the General Assembly. Trophies to mark the centenary were also presented to organisations in Dunning. The events were a great success and the team that put so much planning and effort in are to be congratulated.



What else is being planned and how can you get involved? The Church in the Community group are considering the following initiatives for the near future – if you feel you would like to get involved in any of them please either talk to the contacts given or let the church office know:

**Children's work** – we're hoping to get two new initiatives running for children. The first is a group that we hope to start to run at lunchtimes in Forteviot School. This has very much been planned in response to the low numbers attending Sunday Club at Forteviot. If you feel you can help with this, please contact Cathie MacLeod.

**All Age Family Worship** - The second children's initiative is that in conjunction with the Ministry Team we hope to start having family friendly services initially at Dunning approximately once a month. This is still at an early planning stage but, as well as offering a Young People's Address during worship, we would hope to provide some activities in the hall for children who might be too young to be involved for the whole service. If you feel you can help on an occasional basis with this, please speak to Doreen Dunbar.

Please note for all children's work, the safeguarding officer will require checks and disclosure of any volunteers.

**Social Activities** – following on from the success of the centenary celebrations in Dunning, we would like to form a parish wide working group to consider what other social activities the church should hold and to set about organising them. For example one suggestion received is for a summer barbecue. We really want people on this from all the different parts of the parish – if you can come up with good ideas or would like to help organise events please contact Alan Duff.

**Link with Malawi** – Some members of this cluster are also investigating the possibility of fostering a link with Malawi and may have some more news on this soon.

***Alan Duff***

***Cluster Convener***

### **Smartie Tube Campaign Thank you! . . .**

to everyone who participated to help with the Stewartry finances. We've had a fine selection of coins along with a variety of notes and cheques.

Smartie tubes continue to come in via the Offering bags; to date you have raised **£1,411.33** and we confidently predict this sum to be higher by the time all the tubes are returned. It's a great contribution and will help to 'balance the books' for this year.

### **Christian Aid**

We are glad to announce that a total of £432 was donated to Christian Aid following the Harvest Thanksgiving service.

### **St. Paul's Dunning Centenary Celebrations**

Over the week-end of celebrations, donations for the Palliative Care Unit (PRI) amounted to the sum of £300. A letter of thanks has been received from Macmillan Cancer Support.

### **Pastor's Business Card**

A new pastor was visiting in the homes of his parishioners. At one house it seemed obvious that someone was at home, but no answer came to his repeated knocks at the door.

Therefore, he took out a business card and wrote 'Revelation 3:20' on the back of it and stuck it in the door.

When the offering was processed the following Sunday, he found that his card had been returned. Added to it was this cryptic message, 'Genesis 3:10.'

Reaching for his Bible to check out the citation, he broke up in gales of laughter. Revelation 3:20 begins 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock.' Genesis 3:10 reads, 'I heard your voice in the garden and I was afraid for I was naked.'

Remember when the funniest jokes were the clean ones?

They still are! Pass it on 'A cheerful heart is good medicine' (Prov. 17:22)

Submitted by **Roger Ward**



**November**

- Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> Reign of Christ the King  
Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> Forteviot School Assembly 9.30 am  
Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> Aberuthven School Assembly 1.20 pm  
Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> Dunning School Assembly 10.30 am  
Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> First Sunday in Advent Promise of the Messiah  
Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> Joint Lower Earn Valley Churches Advent service  
in Abernethy Church 6.30 pm

**December**

- Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> Second Sunday in Advent : Bible Sunday  
Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> Third Sunday in Advent.  
Teas after the service in Forteviot village hall  
Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> Dunning Community Trust Carols  
in Duncrub Chapel  
Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> Forteviot School Assembly 9.30 am in the Church  
Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> Dunning School Assembly 2.00 pm in the Church  
Friday 18<sup>th</sup> Aberuthven School Assembly 9.15 am in the Church  
Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> Fourth Sunday in Advent.  
All age family worship in each of the four churches  
Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> Carols round the streets in Dunning 7.00 pm  
followed by refreshments in Dunning Church hall  
Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> Aberdalgie Church service at 11.30 pm and  
Dunning Church service at 11.30 pm  
Friday 25<sup>th</sup> One service of Worship at Dunning at 10.00 am  
Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> First Sunday after Christmas: Service of  
Remembrance.

**Future Events: Wadi Weekend**

Friday 29<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2010, Atholl Palace Hotel, Pitlochry  
Cost £80

Join the Church Adult network for a weekend away to renew our body and soul, exploring issues of faith, life and culture in 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland. A weekend away offering a breathing space on the journey. A journey by road or rail, a pause on arrival. A place of welcome and simple hospitality. A time of silence for pondering, wondering, reflecting, marvelling. A chance for refreshment and thoughtful conversation.



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Address: The Stewartry of Strathearn Church Office Aberdalgie Perth PH2 0QD

Office staffed Tuesday & Thursday 0900—1300 01738 621674

### Sunday Services

Aberdalgie 11.15 am

Aberuthven 12 noon+

Dunning 10.30 am+\* +Disabled access and facilities

Forteviot 10.00 am\* \*Sunday Club during term-time

Interim Moderator: Revd Derek Lawson LLB BD, 22 King St Stanley, PH1 4ND  
01738 828247 [dglawson@talktalk.net](mailto:dglawson@talktalk.net)

Locum: Revd Ray Gaston, Hamewith, 13 Manse Rd Dollar FK147AL 01259  
743202 [raygaston@onetel.com](mailto:raygaston@onetel.com)

Pastoral Assistant: Mrs. Deirdre Yellowlees, Ringmill House, Gannochy Farm,  
Perth PH2 7JH 07920 805399 [d.yellowlees@btinternet.com](mailto:d.yellowlees@btinternet.com)

(Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday)

Administrator: Mrs. Pat Paterson

Treasurer: Mr. Russell Mann (Attends office Tuesday mornings only)

Session Clerk: Mrs. Pat Robb 01738 625163 [patrobb@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:patrobb@yahoo.co.uk)

Session Minute Clerk: Mr. Duncan Dow 01764 684520

### Convenors

Caring for Each Other: Mr. Ron Harrison 01764 684104

Church in the Community: Mr. Alan Duff 01764 684635

Communications: Mrs. Catriona Harrison 01764 684104

Fabric: Mr. Graham Ross 01764 684275

Finance: Mr. Peter Thomson 01738 812483

Worship: Contact Ministry Team

### Children's Ministry

Dunning Tuesday Club Mrs. Jean Young 01764 684640

Forteviot Sunday Club Miss Cathy McLeod 01738 621511

Safeguarding Coordinator Mrs. Jean Young 01764 684640

Prayer Correspondent Mrs. Pamela Bain 01764 684373

Justice & Peace Group Mr. Raymond Young 01764 684640

Health & Safety Officer Mrs. Doreen Dunbar 01764 684728