

Blackbraes and Shieldhill
Parish Church
linked with
Muiravonside Parish Church
Easter 2015



www.bsandm-church.org.uk
Tel 01324 717757
louise.mcclements@virgin.net
Charities Numbers SC 002512 and SC 007571

**From the Manse
Spring 2015**



Jesus said, 'Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms, if it were not so I would have told you.' John Ch14, v1 and 2a.

Dear Friends,

As I write this letter I am aware that I am just starting to gain strength and renewed energy following the sudden death of my father last September at the age of 65. This was followed by my mother being ill for a sustained period of time and of course in the midst of all of this our probation minister Amanda moved to pastures new - as Associate minister at Camelon Parish Church. We were all delighted for Amanda but couldn't help but feeling sad too as she was such a blessing and enrichment to our linked charge and the wider parish for the fifteen months she was with us.

For myself the last six months have been a time of loss, change and readjustment. It is very difficult to support and minister to others when you are grieving yourself therefore I am indebted to several of my colleagues who have supported me throughout this period and allowed me to continue at work rather than having to take time off. Christmas was especially difficult this year and I was strengthened by the presence of Rev Rhona McDonald who assisted me in the Watchnight service at Muiravonside and of course Rev Monica MacDonald who assisted me in the Bereavement services held in both churches last month.

I thank you all for your care and concern shown to myself, my mother and my family. We appreciated so much the cards, phone calls, visits, and prayers as it has given us strength in the midst of a very sad and difficult time.

I remember reading a very special and poignant book when I was at university entitled 'The Wounded Healer' by Henri Nouwen. Nouwen recognised the truth that ministers were as wounded as everyone else but that their wounds could become a source of healing for others. This is not just true for ministers but for everyone. Experiencing pain and loss, tragedy and hardship within our own lives can make us more

sympathetic and understanding to the pain of others. Our personal experience and insight can help others through a difficult time and result in them finding wholeness and healing.

I hope that if any good can come out of my loss it is that it will make me a better minister in that I will have more insight and understanding in relation to the grief of others. I am also aware there are others in our congregations who too have experienced loss recently and we have been able to help and support each other.

In relation to my faith, I sense it has gone deeper. For myself it is simply intolerable to think that this life is all that there is. I do not understand what happens after death - as I say often at funerals - it is something of a mystery. But I choose to trust the God who created us, and the promises of Jesus.

God calls us to trust, not in a futile hope and in wishful thinking, but in the unseen reality of his presence which we feel within our heart. We can't prove this to the sceptic, because it's something we experience deep within and when I look at the alternative of having no faith and no hope of eternal life - it just leaves me feeling cold and empty.

With this in mind I look forward to our churches celebrating Easter - that joyous time in the church's year when we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. I sense that this Easter the services will be even more poignant and meaningful for me. Please come along if you are able and celebrate with us during the Braes Holy Week services and also on Easter Sunday. Come and experience for yourselves the joyous hope and promise of life eternal and find strength and support from others who share in our faith.

***God's richest blessing be upon you this Easter,
Your minister and friend,
Louise***

Recordings of Services

If you are unable to attend the **Easter Sunday services** then a CD recording can be delivered to your home. Please contact:

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church - Mr Bill McKinnon- tel 636639

Muiravonside Parish Church - Mr Jackie Napier- tel 713258

Baptisms

'Whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name, welcomes me.'

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Niomi Mary Boa
infant daughter of Louise and Zac
on the 1st of February 2015



Tea, coffee and a chat
are always available in
the hall after services.
Please stay if you can.



Funerals

'The Lord will protect you as you come and go, both now and forevermore'.

Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish

Mr Bill Braes
Mrs Helen Bryce
Mr Charles Penman
Mrs Sadie Sneddon
Mrs Elizabeth Bowes

Muiravonside Parish

Mrs Janet McLellan
Miss Lily Jack
Mrs Margaret McLeod
Mrs Christina Davies

Minister's Book recommendation

'Archbishop' written by Michele Guinness

- a brilliant novel from Christian speaker and writer Michele Guinness which is set in the year 2020 and the first female Archbishop of Canterbury has just been appointed. The book is her story and how she came to be appointed with lots of honesty, twists and turns. An engaging and moving read.



Easter Services 2015



Holy Week

Monday 30 March at 7pm - Slamannan Bowling Club

Tuesday 31 March at 7pm - Wallacestone Methodist Church

Wednesday 1 April at 7pm - Polmont Old Parish Church

Thursday 2 April at 7pm - Laurieston Parish Church

Friday 3 April at 7pm - Brightons Parish Church

Easter Sunday

Sunday 5 April at 8am - Wallacestone Methodist Church - early morning service at Wallacestone Monument.

Sunday 5 April at 10am - Easter Family Celebration at Blackbraes and Shieldhill Church

Sunday 5 April at 11:30am - Easter Family Service with Communion at Muiravonside Parish Church.

Colour me in!





Guild



On two occasions recently some young people have provided an evening programme for our congregation. In early December, we enjoyed a Christmas musical evening and in January at a Guild meeting, together they gave an interesting and informative talk about the National Youth Assembly (NYA) with which they are involved.

The “Woman’s Guild” as it was then funded the first National Youth Assembly, twenty years ago. Today the Guild is still continuing to develop a close working relationship with the NYA, the NYA being the first appointed “Honorary” group within the guild. For the last two years, Guild National Conveners have attended Youth Assemblies in August. The two organisations have been exploring how they can work together in different situations.

As part of a Guild team, I met with members of the NYA in Allan Park Church Stirling on 24 January. We were welcomed by the youth and we enjoyed chatting over lunchtime before the business began. The group discussions and plenary session identified twenty areas where we might be involved together and an exchange of skills was identified as being important. The youth have much to give of their IT skills and they were keen to learn more of traditional craft skills. It was encouraging to meet with these enthusiastic young people. We share their faith and they were obviously committed to moving the church forward in the 21st century. The Moderator of the NYA concluded the discussion relating to Psalm 71 saying “The Gospel message must carry on. We must take ownership of that message”. I left the hall uplifted by the exchanges of the afternoon and questioning myself. We the older generation may have a wealth of experience but the young people are enthusiastic and willing to learn. Perhaps we could learn from each other about the different expressions of church.

This year Sophie McClements and Victoria McClements NYA John Haston at present NYA Clerk and Shahan Gohar representing Falkirk Presbytery will be attending the General Assembly in May. We should be proud of our young people.

Lorna Coulter



Drew's
view

Gee, what a Cute Cow!



One day when I worked with the ships, my boss got me into his office. We knew that something must be happening because his phone had kept ringing and judging by the amount of calls it must be quite urgent. There was one drawback though. My boss had a sense of humour that was legendary and sometimes you didn't know when he was being serious or just playing out an elaborate joke on his unsuspecting staff.

This was one of those occasions. After pleasantries were exchanged he paused for a moment, then his face adopted a very serious expression. Finally, in hushed tones he announced,

"Andrew, I want you to go right away to Edinburgh to find a lady!"

I was expecting something to do, but nothing like this. I thought about it for a second and my mind came up with three options as to what I should reply.

Option 1 - Simply answer with great enthusiasm, "Yes Sir!" Then rush out the office. Hotfoot it to Edinburgh at maximum speed before he changes his mind. Perhaps it was all a secret conspiracy to marry me off!

Option 2 - Reply something along the lines of, "There's thousands of them. It's a big city! Which one would you like me to find?"

Option 3 - Nod as if I knew what he was talking about. Say nothing. Look very interested and perhaps he would elaborate on what he had in mind.

I chose Option 3 and this turned out to be the correct one. Seeing that I wasn't in the least bit fazed and knowing I enjoyed doing unusual tasks, he smiled and let me in on the secret. "You are actually going to look for a very special lady."

Apparently, one of the cruise ships had been berthed at Leith for a couple of days and on this morning, buses had taken most of the passengers on a tour of the city which included all the famous

landmarks. A final stop was always made at the castle for the folks to look around and take in the fabulous view, before heading back to the ship. It would then sail soon after to head for Lerwick in the Shetland Islands. The great thing about it was that the passengers would be able to actually see their cruise ship from this high vantage point. As a result, lots of photos were always taken, showing both the city and the ship in the background. Only this time, one passenger had not returned!

My boss told me a little old lady had gone missing. This lady genuinely was like the little old lady you used to see in those airport disaster movies that were so popular in the seventies, where Burt Lancaster always looked very worried! They really do exist in real life!

Something had gone wrong on the bus and they had miscounted the amount of returning passengers. Somehow they thought everyone was accounted for. This was back in the days when security was much less sophisticated and people didn't have to go through stringent checks. A quick headcount would probably have been done on the bus and the ship would just assume everything was OK when the tour company returned it's passengers and reported nothing amiss.

As a result, the ship was just about to sail when they finally discovered the lady was missing. It was not possible to wait much longer because of the tide. When she was eventually found, she would have to stay overnight in Edinburgh. She would then be put on the first available flight to Lerwick which was the next day.

The cruise company had given my boss some background information about her and even more embarrassing was the fact that she was one of their best customers. She regularly booked their most expensive suite, as she enjoyed this particular cruise which took her all around Britain and Europe. When she was in Scotland, she loved visiting its historical buildings, and had a particular soft spot for churches. This was music to my ears as I would have this one thing in common with her and could show her some fine ones.

I was to make sure this lady made it safely to her hotel and until her flight for Lerwick departed tomorrow afternoon, I was to act as a sort of ambassador for the cruise company. If she wanted to go on a sightseeing tour, I was to take her. If she preferred to visit a historical

building or church, I was to accompany her. I had been given in effect, *carte blanche* by the cruise company to make her stay in Edinburgh nothing less than fantastic, in a bid to try and restore her faith in the company.

My first and most important job was to locate her. This wasn't as difficult as it might sound. We knew her last known location was at the castle. From past experience, we found that people tended to not stray too far if they were in an unfamiliar city. She would most likely still be there. Sure enough, I was just approaching the city when I got a call on the very large piece of equipment that passed as a mobile phone back then. She had apparently approached a tour guide in the castle. Then she had pointed over in the direction of Leith where the large ship was slowly swinging round in the harbour basin and announced, "Say, I think that's my cruise boat over there and it looks like it's going away!"

When I arrived, she was sitting in a small room in the castle offices, poring over some postcards which were on a table with her back turned towards me. A really nice lunch had been provided for her from the castle restaurant. I was actually quite nervous about meeting her. In fact, I feared the very worst, expecting her to be either absolutely furious or totally distraught. I was relieved to find I couldn't be further wrong. When I opened the door, she turned round and smiled such a sweet smile. Then she held up a large postcard which featured a very fierce and extremely shaggy looking highland cow. Instead of a tirade, there was simply a sense of wonder in her voice and the very first words she said to me were:

"Gee, what a cute cow!" I nodded vigorously and with a smile informed her, "I can take you to meet that very cow!" This made her double up with laughter. She also looked absolutely delighted. Then she said softly, "I'm Aida. Thanks for coming to rescue me. I'm so sorry about this." I knew I had made a friend.

After outlining how we were going to reunite her with the ship tomorrow night at Lerwick, she asked if I happened to know in what street the oldest building in Edinburgh was located and what type of building it was? I had a flash of inspiration. Knowing she had a soft spot for churches and old buildings I said ,

"Aida. What would you say, if I told you I can take you to see the oldest building in Edinburgh...that it is only one moment away from where we are right now...and...it happens to be a church!

She was absolutely thrilled. "That would be nothing short of miraculous! Please lead on!

St Margaret's Chapel, situated within the castle and built in the 12th century also happens to be the oldest building in Edinburgh. It was empty at this time of the afternoon not long before closing time. It is a very small chapel and there is such a feeling of peace and gentle splendour within it's beautiful interior. Aida sat on one of the small pews and asked, "Are you a religious man Andrew?"

I replied "Yes."

"Would you like to join me in prayer?"

"I'd be delighted to."

I sat in the next pew, soaking up this beautiful tranquillity in the heart of the busy city. Aida prayed first. I have never heard such a beautiful prayer. She started off by thanking God for being given the opportunity to visit this beautiful country and for the welcome she had been given by its generous and caring people. She went on to tell God about what a privilege it was to be before him in this beautiful church and in her thoughts were the thousands of people who had sat at those very pews over the years. She gave thanks for the comfort these folks had been given in this quiet sanctuary, just like she was experiencing now.

She also asked God to send his love and blessings to everyone else who will visit this little chapel in the future and may they know that God is always with them and they can turn to him for help, even when they have left the comfort of this sanctuary. She told him about her love for the little piece of Scripture from 1 Peter Chapter 5, verse 7 where it says, "God cares for you, so cast all your anxiety on him." She thanked God for all his care and added it was only through his grace that she had the privilege of sitting here before him. Last of all, she asked him to come close to anyone who is lonely or suffering and surround them with his loving presence.

The thing that struck me about this lovely prayer was that Aida spoke to God like a close friend and confidant. I could actually feel him with her. I love to pray, but up until then, when I was younger, my prayers had always been very formal. It was as if I was speaking to an unseen boss, rather than a friend I could confide in and take great comfort from. I now realised what I had been missing and how easy it is to open up to God. I used to pray as if God was very far away. I realised I had been communicating with him as if I was calling up a long distance radio station that was thousands of miles away.

I was so glad I had met this lady. On that afternoon without knowing it, she had taught me how to pray.

It was now my turn to pray and for the first time ever, I talked to God like a long lost friend. My prayer was not a patch on Aida's but she sat, listened intently and looked on with the air of a person who felt so privileged to be there while this was happening. I felt such deep satisfaction because I knew from now on, I would develop a much closer relationship with God and today I had taken that first step.

We sat a few moments more enjoying the peace and stillness that God's presence brings, then it was time to take Aida back to her hotel.

The next morning, I picked Aida up bright and early at nine o'clock. Her flight to Lerwick wasn't due to depart until five in the evening, so I had great plans for a magnificent tour of the city. When I told her about all the wonderful places we were going to see, she said: "That's splendid, but I can always see them next time back. There's one place though I'd really love to visit". She then produced the postcard with the very shaggy highland cow.

"You said yesterday you could take me to meet this cutie. Is it far to go?"

I did a quick calculation and replied, "No. Not too bad. It's about sixty miles away at a little place called Kilmahog...and the cow's name is Hamish!"

She looked really excited and replied " You've just made my day. I'm from Arizona and we drive two hundred miles just to visit our friends! That's what I love about Scotland. Everything's so close!"

During the drive which was very pleasant, Aida told me that she had been brought up on a huge ranch in Arizona. In her teens, she had spent many wonderful days riding around the ranch's vast area with her father and his crew. She loved the animals and seeing this cow on the postcard had absolutely enchanted her and brought back some really good childhood memories. We made good time and when Aida first caught a glimpse of Hamish in the field beside the Trossachs Woollen Mill car park, she was absolutely thrilled. She managed to coax him right over to the fence and I was able to take a few photographs which I promised I'd forward onto the ship.

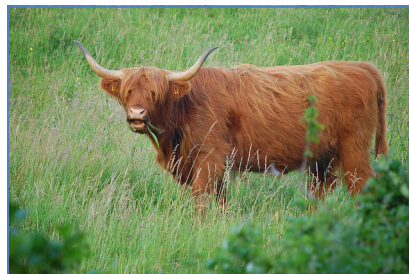
We had an excellent lunch in the Woollen Mill Cafe, but the highlight of the trip came in the souvenir shop. I showed Aida some "Hamish the Highland Cow" soft toys which let out a resounding "Moo!" when squeezed. She bought half a dozen for nieces and nephews, but I think one was really for her!

After that, the time had come to drive her to the airport. It was almost time to say goodbye and I told her that the cruise company was so sorry she had been left behind for a couple of days. What she replied touched my heart. Here was a lady that had travelled all over the world. She must have seen so many of it's grandest and most beautiful places. Yet, she told me that by taking her to see the highland cow, I had taken her back in time and it brought back memories of an absolutely wonderful time in her life when so many of her loved ones, including her dear father were still alive. She said she would always be grateful to me for that.

I was so sad to learn that Hamish the Highland Cow died a few months ago. I know one little old lady from Arizona who loved him very much. After we said goodbye, I had one last job to do. Aida had given me a dozen large postcards for friends and relatives which had a picture of a certain exceedingly large, very shaggy highland cow and asked me to post them for her.

Each card had exactly the same thing written on the part where you could write your message. It simply said:

"Gee, what a cute cow!"



The Little Tupperware Box

I am a little yellow Tupperware box.

I am very small. Half a pound of butter would just fit inside. My owner travels all over the world. I accompany her, gently placed with love in her handbag. I have shared many happy times with her and sad times too. Nobody has ever tried to steal me. I look so plain you see. Just an ordinary little Tupperware box that no one ever notices.

But my owner loves me more than her most precious jewels.

She opens my lid and takes such comfort when she is far away from home or feeling sad. When good things happen I'm the first to know. I love to hear the happiness in her voice. I have shared her good times and bad times. I've been there when she was filled with absolute joy. I was also there to bring hope whenever she was in deep despair and her tears dropped inside.

I am just a little yellow Tupperware box. But I am so proud. You see, the reason is that I contain all the things that bring her closer to God.

There is a little cross her mother and father gave her when she was a child. There is also a tiny framed painting of Jesus. Her grandmother gave her that. The painting is faded now, but the comfort and treasured memories it brings are still as strong. Last of all, there is a little piece of paper. It is very small - much smaller even than I. The paper is all wrinkled with being held, because it is treasured just as much as all the other items.

It says:

"I will never leave you. I will never abandon you." (Hebrews 13: 5)

I am so proud that she entrusted me - a little yellow Tupperware box - with the things that bring her closest to God.

God lives inside me and we both live in her heart.

By Drew Robertson



Gardening Thoughts

How lovely it is to enjoy early snowdrops, crocuses and daffodils bursting into new life, Springtime in our gardens brightens up each day.



Many people tend to rush far too early when buying plants for borders, baskets and containers from Garden Centres, wasting time and money by doing so.

Remember that old saying “Never plant out till May is out”, so let the earth warm up before planting out in your garden.

Perhaps I’m lucky having a greenhouse where I sow many varieties of French Marigolds, which don’t require any heat. Also lots of my Begonia Corms do fine from April onwards in peat based compost.

Whatever plants and flowers or vegetables you grow, enjoy the peace and beauty nature beholds.

Johnny Robertson

National Stewardship Programme

Here are the latest free will offerings for Blackbraes and Shieldhill Parish Church:

	2013	2014
Oct	£1424	£1424
Nov	£1392	£1636
Dec	£2346	£1527

Ministries and Mission for 2014 was £1694.50 per month.

The cost of our wet rot repair was £2976.

Christine Jones

Breakin Rainbows

He wis jist a wee lad
dibblin in a puddle
glaur fae heid tae fit,
enjoyin haen a guddle.
He nicht hae been a poacher
pu'in salmon fae the beck
He coulda been a paratrooper
swamp up tae his neck.

Onywey he wis faur awa
deep wandered in his dreams.
It richt sobered me tae mind
a dub's no whit it seems.
An while ah watched an grieved
the loss that maks a man a mug,
alang the road fair breenged his Maw
an skelpt him roon the lug.

Janet Paisley



Website

Our magazines are now available on our website www.bsandm-church.org.uk. If anyone would prefer to access them this way, instead of paper format, please let your Church Elder know.

As well as saving paper, and trees, you would receive the magazine in colour. It could also be enlarged if you need to see it in large print.

You can also find photos, news and the Minister's Blog on our website.

Tales from a Shieldhill Garden



“Test us for ten days,” he said. “Give us vegetables to eat and water to drink”. Daniel 1: 12

When the ground was still frozen, the small, white, nodding snowdrops held the promise of spring being just around the corner. The crocuses are ready to burst into bloom along with the very first daffodils herald the arrival of warmer days-we hope.

With the longer days thought turns to the vegetable garden; the things that we hope to grow this year. In order to extend the amount of vegetable growing space, I have been growing some veg in tubs and bags. Growing veg in tubs also makes vegetable growing available to people whom have small gardens or have little fertile space.

Potato growing kits, bags and refill packs of potatoes are readily available in garden centres and from all the seed companies. I have grown some potatoes in bags for a number of years and have had some good results. I find that it is best to choose early potatoes, as they appear to produce better crops. The variety “Swift” is one of the best varieties to grow in a sack as it is one of the fastest growers and has short foliage. Garden centres and the seed companies all sell bags in which potatoes may be grown. You can use one of these bags or use a large bag such as empty compost sack-cut some holes for drainage on the bottom of this.

Potatoes in Sacks

Choose your sack and the potatoes. Earlies are better and 3 will be enough. Put some compost in the bottom; place your potatoes on top. Cover with compost.

As your potatoes grow, add compost to cover them until the bag is full. You can add a general fertilizer and remember to water them.

I put my first bag of potatoes in the greenhouse and this provides us with fresh, new potatoes a little earlier.

During the summer months I like to have a constant supply of salad plants. These mixed bags of lettuce can be grown in a big pot. The seed companies all produce packets of salad leaves seeds and they are quite easy to grow.

Salad leaves in pots

Fill your pot with compost and sprinkle the seeds thinly on the surface. The pot needs to have a diameter of around 12inches/30cm. Lightly cover with sieved compost.

Water your pot when the weather is dry. You may have to watch out for and deal with slugs.

I snip the leaves off with scissors and, without feeding the pot, it is possible to harvest the leaves 3 or 4 times. A pot planted up once a month – eg. May, June and July - will provide leaves throughout the summer months. You can feed the leaves with lawn fertilizer or green houseplant food.

Other vegetables

Both runner beans and French beans have dwarf varieties. Since we had a very windy summer, I have grown the dwarf varieties of these vegetables. My runner beans were growing up a net and cane construction and making a very impressive green wall until a strong gust sent them tumble over the path. The varieties that I now grow are Hestia - a dwarf runner bean and Delinel - a delicious, stringless French bean. These will grow in a big pot, tub or window box. Unfortunately these have to be grown from seed and so, if any of our readers would like to grow beans, get in touch with me and I will give you plants.

One of my moans is the number of seeds that one gets in a packet of seeds. Bean seeds are large and so I sow just what I need. There are always lots of seeds left which I store and use over the next two or three years.

Courgettes

Like beans, one courgette plant will give you lots of courgettes. Courgette plants are usually available in the garden centres in the springtime. These plants need to be protected from frost - I plant mine out from the end of May. They will grow in a big pot, tub or grow bag and I grow mine inside tyres. They like good compost, tomato food and do not like to be too wet and two plants will keep you supplied all summer.

Most herbs will grow happily in a pot. I have a selection at the back door so that I can just pop out and snip off whatever I need.

As I said earlier, most seed packets have lots of seeds in them. I keep left over seed in a tight, lidded biscuit tin and seed will be viable for a year or two. Ideally, I would like to get fewer seed in each packet.

Lets hope for a good summer and enjoy the veg from your garden.

Rena Moore



Mothering Sunday - a History

Mothering Sunday brings smiles to the faces of mums everywhere but our familiar celebration has more mundane origins that are widely believed to lie in the sixteenth century. At that time young children sometimes as young as 9 or 10 years old often left their family homes to go and work in the big house elsewhere in the country. For these young workers it was a hard life with low wages and no holidays and no contact with their family which was often miles away. There were no holidays except one known as Laetare Sunday, taken from the Latin word for rejoice. It was the fourth in Lent. On that day of the year instead of worshipping in your local church the young workers and others were obliged to return home to their so called Mother Church to worship there. Happily for them it was also a once a year opportunity to visit their families and as they were children especially their mothers. On their way they would often pick flowers from the roadsides to give to their mothers when they got there.

Laetare Sunday was quite often the only time when the whole family would have the chance to get together again. Mothering Sunday also became known as Refreshment Sunday as the normal fasting rules for Lent were relaxed on that day. Through the years the day off became a holiday and became known as Mothering Sunday as it morphed into a day when young servants were allowed home to visit their mothers. Some scholars believe that the origins lie even earlier - in pre-Christian times when the Romans would celebrate the feast of Hilaria dedicated to the Mother Goddess. The feast followed two weeks of fasting like Lent.

Through the centuries though as work patterns changed the holiday began to fall out of fashion. People had more time to visit their families when they wished. By the 1920's the holiday had fallen into disuse. An American woman Anna Jarvis decided to revive Mother's Day to honour her own mother who had died. She worked hard to have a special day to put aside for mothers and this was recognised in the U.S. Inspired by Jarvis' efforts Constance Penswick-Smith daughter of the then vicar of Coddington in Nottinghamshire created the Mothering Sunday movement in Britain. The celebration of a special day for mothers was spread even further by the stationing during the wars of soldiers and sailors who would send gifts home to their mothers. People generally started to buy presents for their mothers and soon businesses saw this as an opportunity to increase their business by supplying specially made cards and gifts for mothers everywhere. Commercialisation of the event had begun.

Though they did not start from the same place the American Mother's Day and Mothering Sunday are now inextricably linked even though the American day falls on the second Sunday in May it is still celebrated on the fourth Sunday in Lent.

A Special Woman

You may be familiar with the image of Mary Slessor on a £10 Clydesdale Bank note. However for many years her story as a pioneering woman missionary was not as well known as David Livingstone. Yet to the people of the Calabar region of Nigeria her legacy lives on today as what she established there was based on her strong Christian faith and her love for the people.



This year marks the 100th anniversary of her death at the age of 67. A foundation was set up around the millennium to keep her legacy alive and re-establish links between Scotland and Nigeria. She was born in Aberdeen and had a difficult childhood. The family had to move to Dundee when she was 11 and she had to begin working 12 hour shifts in the local jute mill. She was influenced by her mother's strong Christian faith and began to teach in the local mission and was inspired by the tales of David Livingstone's missionary work. She applied to become a missionary candidate and was accepted by the United Presbyterian Church. In 1876 this 27 year old woman set sail for West Africa.

In an age when women were not treated as the equals of men she was definitely an advocate and example of women in leadership. Her determination and doggedness was a hallmark of her remarkable life and her ministry to the people of Calabar was such that her name is still revered there to this day. She saved the lives of numerous twins who would have died as a result of local superstitions which she overcame. She also introduced basic medical assistance and encouraged trade and the local economy. She became known as the White Queen of Calabar. Writing to a friend shortly before her death on hearing about the start of WW1 she said "If you saw the lovely pearly sky in the dawn! The earth all refreshed and cooled, and all the hope and mystery of a new day opening out, you would enjoy it as I am doing. With you and our poor army and navy it will be darkness and cold and probably fog, besides all the nerve racking strain of war and long watching. With us it is all brightness and beauty with the long summer months opening out before us. God is always with us in his world and is always giving the sunshine although for reasons of his own it is sometimes within limits obscured. It will break out again and Light shall triumph.

The children in the Sunday School have been looking at the life and work of Mary Slessor over the last few weeks. Some of them have entered a competition organised by the Church of Scotland's World Mission Council. The young folks had to display on a postcard what injustice in the world they would like to see end or be challenged. They could do this in either words or pictures or both. This will then be judged and the entries displayed at an exhibition being held in Dundee from April telling the story of Mary Slessor, setting her life within the scene of a poverty stricken Dundee and the dangerous jungles of Calabar where disease posed as much a threat as the violent tribes. The exhibition can be seen at Verdant Works, Scotland's Jute Museum. It is hoped that we will be able to take the children and young folk to see the exhibition at some time in May.



David McClements

	FILM NIGHT	
	7PM	
BLACKBRAES AND SHIELDHILL		
Frozen		28 March
award winning Disney interpretation of The Snow Queen		

Messy Church Falkirk Presbytery

A Falkirk wide mission event is being organised by Falkirk Presbytery in the lead up to Easter. The outreach event will be based on the Messy Church concept and will take place in the Howgate on Saturday 28th March from 11am - 3pm. It is open to all families and you will be able to dip in and out of it as suits. It has been called Easter Cracked Open. The activities will include a video of the entry into Jerusalem and there will be crafts, a story corner and worship with the Brightons Worship Group. 14 other churches from across the Falkirk area are involved. Please spread the word and drop in if you're in or around the Howgate on that Saturday.