

Greenbank Connections



February 2026

Issue 740

Scottish Charity SC011325



Christingles at the evening service on Christmas Eve

Greenbank Parish Church, Edinburgh

Online version: www.greenbankchurch.org/about/the-newsletter/

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Letter from the Locum



For Such A Time As This

It is generally accepted that you and I are living in tense times.

Suddenly, it is much harder to predict what will happen tomorrow on the global stage. Much orderliness has receded and we are regularly surprised by the news headlines.

Many commentators have compared this time with the 1930s when: "Democratic processes were manipulated, checks and balances hollowed out. Executive overreach became the order of the day. The nation I am talking about is Germany;" These are the words of Hanna Reichel, a German/American award-winning Professor of Theology at Princeton Seminary. Her most recent book is titled, *For Such A Time As This*, an emergency devotional (2025).

She has previously written about Karl Barth, a Swiss theologian, active as the Nazis came to power.

He was brave enough to stand up and speak out urging caution (in Hanna's words), "against the theologies of greatness and purity, of nationalism and militarism." She offers two helpful things for all of us to consider:

1. When is the time to stand up and speak out?
2. Empathy is a muscle. Strengthen it. On 2) it is easier to shut down and switch off. She suggests that we allow ourselves to be affected by the world around us. Allowing ourselves to feel some discomfort, even scariness as we are affected by troublesome news. Give yourself permission to feel your feelings. Doing so requires time and space; it requires attention and some care.

She suggests using two prayers to help:

*"God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference."*

(attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr)

and from Argentina

*"The only thing I ask of God
Is that I may never become indif-
ferent to injustice*

*That arid death may not find me
empty and alone, without having
done enough."*

(Leon Gieco and Mercedes Sosa)

Prayer and action are vital for Christians young and old.

Reflectively, Ian

**Ian Gilmour
Locum minister**



'Flight into Egypt', by Arty Church

Thought for the Month

Willing to journey, unsure about settling

As part of a church that is seeking to grow young (The Growing Young programme encourages empathy for today's young people), I thought it might be helpful to highlight a remarkable and insightful small book that came out last year written by a young woman*. Lamorna Ash takes a personal journal of self-discovery as she explores Christian faith in a myriad of different places. Her journey takes her from participating in the Christianity Explored course to her local Quaker gathering, to a Jesuit Monastery in North Wales, to a High Anglo-Catholic shrine at Walsingham to Iona Abbey and back to a liberal parish church.

Her investigation into the rise in spiritual curiosity in our culture begins when she hears that two comedians have converted to Christianity and were now looking to become Anglican priests.

She pulls no punches as she starts by acknowledging that

"At twenty-six, I knew that miracles and religious experiences were not real. That prayers did not do a thing. That churches were as useless and beautiful as dinosaur bones. And that the

end of life was synonymous with finality: to imagine otherwise was a hopeful and misplaced delusion."

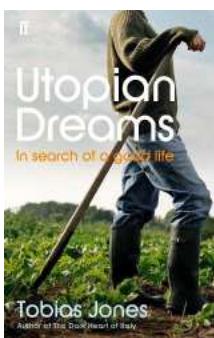
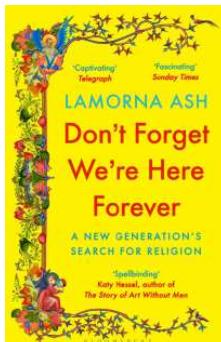
By the end of the book, although still on a journey, she is a regular church goer and her life has been transformed. She, like Jacob, has wrestled all night long with God and has found herself blessed.

This highly readable book is split into small chapters mirroring perhaps her view of her life –

"My time is measured out in days and hours and molecular moments. The idea of putting down roots in anything for a full twenty years was anathema to me..."

Ash describes life as exhausting and like so many of her generation her own sexuality and poor mental health act as lenses for her religious discoveries.

Reading this book reminded me of another brilliant questing book



'Utopian Dreams' written by Tobias Jones in 2007**. Jones visits several different religious communities in order to encounter God through the authenticity of the love as expressed in and through community.



Guild

Happy New Year!

After an excellent Christmas Party in December—a splendid afternoon tea and lots of singing!—the Guild started the New Year with a very cheerful coffee morning. It was good to catch up with friends and hear about their Christmas and New Year celebrations.



At the Christmas Party



Our first meeting will be on 20th January when Michael Cunliffe will be telling us about the work of the RNLI; then on 3rd February we will learn about Project Hope, the project we are supporting this year. It is based on helping a very deprived Christian group in Egypt to improve their housing and is in line with the current Guild Strategy *Let Us Build A House*. On 17th February Rev Liz Henderson will update us on the progress of Richmond Hope.

If you are interested in any of these topics, you are very welcome to come along. We always finish with tea, biscuits and time to chat.

Our meetings are at 2.30pm in the Braid Room.

Edith Armit

/Thought for the month

Interestingly, unlike Ash he travels with his wife and young daughter and he stays longer in each place.

Numerous researchers have found in recent years that young people are more likely to pray and to seek God than those of an older genera-

tion. May we be ready to be good travelling companions!

Peter Wood

*Lamorna Ash, 'Don't Forget we're here forever' Bloomsbury Books, 2025

**Tobias Jones, 'Utopian Dreams' Faber & Faber 2007.

Christmas Gifting

Thank you for your very generous donations of presents and vouchers at the Christmas gift service. There were 164 presents for children and young adults and there were 101 ever popular gift vouchers totalling £1,825.

Thanks again to the Work Party for the sack loads of knitted clothing. The projects we support are community projects supported by Northwest Kirk and Barnardo's Children's Centre, HMP Edinburgh.

There is a heartwarming video from the Barnardo's Centre on our Church Facebook page.

The basic summary is of a room stacked full of gifts, sorted by age and ready to distribute. The former prison officer has been coordinating the gift collection for 25 years and has already said he'll continue doing this although retired.

A member of one of the other congregations which supports Barnardo's says:

"My prime motivation is that as many children as possible have received something in Christmas wrapping paper which they can talk about. It can allow them to join in the general experience of discussing their toys with their peer group."

The photograph is of Santa giving out gifts at one of the special Christmas parties at HMP Edinburgh.

Hazel McLachlan



Transitioning to Net Zero 2- where to get help

This is the second of two articles on going fully electric. In the first, I explained what we have done. In this article, I cover some of the things to consider before going electric and how to obtain financial support.

While you may already have some knowledge of heat pumps, home insulation and solar panels, there is no substitute for conducting some research, both online and elsewhere. A good place to start is the website of Home Energy Scotland

www.homeenergyscotland.org/

They provide expert advice on saving money on energy bills and making your home greener. They are managed and delivered by the Energy Saving Trust and funded by the Scottish Government.

Another obvious source of information is by speaking to anyone you know who has a heat pump and/or solar panels to find out what living with them is like. Home Energy Scotland also issue a quarterly newsletter giving energy saving advice and examples of real-life experiences.

There is useful guidance on finding renewables installers on the UK Government's website.

[www.gov.uk/guidance/
find-a-heat-pump-installer](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/find-a-heat-pump-installer)

and at the Energy Saving Trust

energysavingtrust.org.uk/

You should choose a Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) installer if you want to apply for a government grant. MCS installers must also be registered with a consumer protection scheme, so you are protected in case anything should go wrong.

The government is encouraging people to make their homes greener and more energy efficient by offering a grant for a range of home energy improvements. Find out more here at the Home Energy Scotland website.

www.homeenergyscotland.org

Before you start, you will need to check:

1. that your home is suitable for a heat pump/solar panels;
2. if you are eligible for a grant;
3. whether more home insulation is required;
4. if you should upgrade your electricity supply;

and

5. whether you need planning permission.

**Neil Ross
Eco-Group**

Gleanings from *The Scotsman* archives

Part 1 – The Minister goes to War

In a recent browse through past numbers of *The Scotsman*, available online from the National Library of Scotland, I came across various references to the Rev David H C Read, minister of Greenbank from 1939 to 1949, and in particular to his correspondence with the congregation during his time as a prisoner of war in Germany.

Unanimously elected at a congregational meeting held in July 1939, David Read was called from Coldstream West to succeed the Rev T Ratcliffe Barnett, who had been minister at Greenbank since 1914, and was inducted on 5th October 1939, just a month after the outbreak of the Second World War. The photograph accompanying *The Scotsman*'s report shows David Read in the uniform of an Army Chaplain. He had been a chaplain in the Regular Army reserve and had been called up at the beginning of the war. Addressing the new minister, the Rev Dr A K Walton referred to "the very special circumstances which compelled him, in the very moment of his induction, to leave his congregation and to undertake another service for the Church." The determination of the congregation to press on with their call to him, in spite of the prospect of imminent separation, was, Dr Walton suggested, "the most powerful sign of their trust in him, their confidence in what he could do for them, and their steadfast purpose to receive from him the whole counsel of God."

Nearly a year later, in August 1940, *The Scotsman* reported that although he had been reported missing a couple of months previously, the Rev David H C Read was now a prisoner of war, one of more than 10,000 members of the 51st (Highland) Infantry Division captured by the Germans after surrendering at St Valery-en-Caux in mid-June.

David Read's affection for his congregation may be felt in a letter dated 13th October 1940, but only reported in *The Scotsman* on 11th January 1941:

"We've been given permission as padres to write an extra letter to our churches...

"It has been a strange beginning for my ministry among you, yet I am not sure that it will not turn out eventually for the best after all. I feel that I am learning much that will help me in the task of ministering to you all in future days.

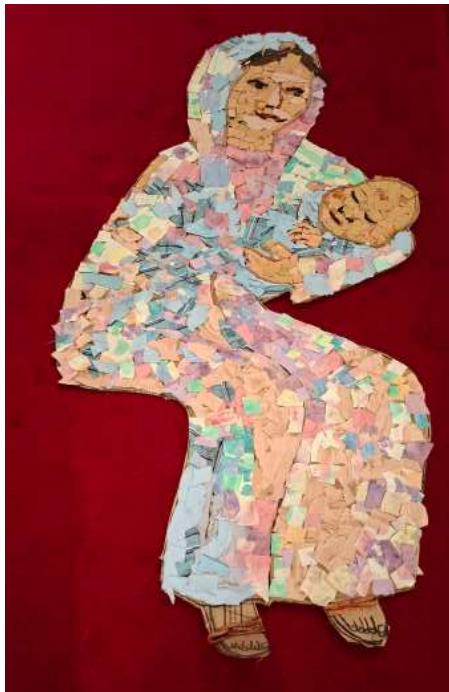
"We are full of life here and there is plenty for me to do. If we are able to send a regular letter, I hope to tell you something of our doings."

After an expression of warmest greetings and good wishes for the welfare of the congregation, the letter concludes: "I keep in excellent health and we are all in good spirits. Communication with home is still slender, but I've had one or two letters now."

Peter Graham

Arty Church

Arty Church returned to Greenbank on Saturday 17th January. A splendid seated Mary holding baby Jesus was made to go with the donkey made at a previous event. See Page 3.



The Local Ecumenical Service for the World Day of Prayer On Friday 6th March 2026

Theme: "I Will Give You Rest: Come" (from Matthew 11:28)

This service has been written by Christian women of Nigeria.

Our local WDP service will be held this year in Morningside Parish Church at 10.30am, followed by refreshments.

An invitation is extended to all at Morningside Parish Church as well as to Greenbank Parish Church and St Peter's RC Church and it is hoped that as many as possible will be able to attend.

10 Days of Prayer lead up to the World Day of Prayer. These prayers begin on Tuesday 25th February and will be posted on the Scottish WDP Committee website:

www.wdpScotland.org.uk

and Facebook.

A list of other WDP services in Edinburgh and further afield will be available on that website under 'Service Arrangements'.



Fresh Start

Thank you to all who donated to the Fresh Start Festive Food Collection last month. The food received was used to help make up an amazing 425 Christmas Food Hampers!

Thanks also to those who have donated to the Cookers for Christmas 2025 campaign which has reached 143% of target at £14,350. The money raised will be used throughout the year to provide cookers and other white goods to those who need them.

Thank you – your help towards the success of these Christmas campaigns is much appreciated.

As we head into the new year, if you have any household items, kitchenware or small electrical items in good condition which you would like to donate to Fresh Start, please either contact me to arrange a convenient time for collection or to drop off items locally or if you prefer, you can take items directly to Fresh Start on Ferry Road Drive (see website for address and further details of items which can be donated)

Eileen MacKinnon

www.freshstartweb.org.uk



Friendship Club

On the 11th February Eric Melvin will take us on a *Journey to Japan* and on 28th we will hear about *Renegade Monk and Runaway Nun*.

Guests are welcome at all our meetings. A £3 donation is requested.

**David Allan
Gillian Sweetman**



The combined Singing Group and Friendship Club Party

Interested in Helping to Lead Worship?

Members of Greenbank's congregation have always helped to lead worship. That has happened more in the last few years, with a wider range of people reading the Bible, leading prayers and taking occasional services. As part of the "Grow Greenbank" aim, we would like to involve more people, as a way of reinforcing our ministerial team. There are two ways that members could help to do that.

David Allan would be glad to add to his list of members willing to read or lead prayers (whether using a text provided by the minister, or composing their own prayer).

Rev Ian Gilmour and Rev Tony Rose (a retired Church of England vicar who has recently moved to

Greenbank) have offered to lead a series of four informal seminars about aspects of leading worship. The plan is to meet for an hour fortnightly on forthcoming Sunday afternoons - 8th and 22nd February, and 8th and 22nd March. Each seminar is on a different topic. So it's unnecessary to come every week if you can't manage to. If you're interested (and you can be sure of a warm welcome!) please email one of us or speak to Ian.

**Anne Kinnear
Duncan Macniven
Discipleship Group**

Christingle Service

There was a packed church on Christmas Eve at 4.30pm for the Christingle Service.

All the children (and some of the adults) enthusiastically made their own Christingle orange to light up.

See the front page.





Scottish Love in Action's 25th birthday

On 15th-16th November, SLA celebrated its 25th birthday with a coffee morning, ceilidh and church service. The service was well attended, with many visitors present to mark this celebration.

What a service it was, with many glimpses of SLA – past, present and future. We are grateful for the Minister's help in preparing for the service.

Colin McRae demonstrated the longterm relationship of Greenbank and SLA in his inspirational "childrens' address", with the children distributing red hearts – to those who went on the first trip to Tuni, then to others who travelled to India, then to all those who had supported SLA in any way over 25 years.

Brian Barron, who together with Gillie Davidson led the first trip to India, read the lesson from 1 Corinthians 13 – "And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

We heard about SLA's early trips to India, SLA's current work in India, and the development of a dairy farm to support SLA's work. The Minister kind-heartedly curtailed his sermon to short, inspirational points, focusing on the message in



Corinthians and the work of SLA in representing this love.

For many the highlight of the service was Gillie's inspirational prayer, giving thanks for the unconditional love of God, saying that "All of our

lives are so enriched as together we continue to reach out to give education, hope, independence and love to the children of SLA."

After the service, we enjoyed a cake and sang Happy Birthday to SLA.

An uplifting experience for all present.

Sheila Cannell and Janet Edwards



Anya's Mary Goes Skiing

Retiral of David Reid from the Kirk Session

David Reid has indicated that he wishes to stand down from active eldership at Greenbank after many years serving Greenbank as an elder. We are very sorry to see David leave us and wish him well.

David was ordained as an elder and admitted to the eldership in Greenbank in 1985. He became the elder for District 31 from 1985-1996 when he took on the role of Session Clerk, which position he held for 12 years, before taking on Districts 6 and 7 as District Elder.



David served as Treasurer for Greenbank Pre-School for 27 years before retiring very recently.

He served on the church board and various committees over his years as an elder, including the role of leader in our former Springboard section and the 123 Club for young teenagers. David will be much missed in the Session, but we continue to look forward to seeing David in and around church.

Rona Sommerville



From the archive: David Reid helping David Allan wearing a Bah Humbug hat

Welcome Teams

February

- 1 tba, Keith Clark, Elizabeth Htet-Khin, Isobel Thom, Charles Black
- 8 Caroline Kehoe, Ian McWilliam, Anne Kinnear, Kathryn Sangster, Rosemary McLeod, Lyndsay Kennedy
- 15 Christina Morrow, Edith Armit, Louise Coghill, Susan Black, Nora Kellock, Margot Gillon
- 22 Ian Thomson, Kathleen Patrick, Diana Teasdale, Jill Powlett Brown, Karen Young, Heather Kay

March

- 1 Communion
- Stuart Sanders, Moira Davidson, Julia Dunbar, John Murison, Alison Murison

Coffee Rota

February

1 Niall Morrison	Scouts
8 Neil Ross	D24
15 Hazel Macaulay	D89
22 Diana Hastings	

March

1 John Ferguson	D60
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Congregational Register

The Ministry Team can be contacted directly

Locum Minister: Rev Ian Gilmour
phone: 07794 149852
email: IGilmour@churchofscotland.org.uk

Administrator: Jackie Wilson-Tagoe
phone: 0131 447 9969
email: office@greenbankchurch.org

To make contact with any organisation featured in Greenbank Connections, please use the telephone number or email address given, if there is one. Otherwise contact the Church Office.

Website: www.greenbankchurch.org

Postal address:
Greenbank Parish Church
Braiburn Terrace,
Edinburgh EH10 6ES

Items for the Weekly Newsletter should be sent by Thursdays to:

greenbankweekly@gmail.com

Material for the March issue of Greenbank Connections should be delivered to the Editors' Pigeonhole by **Sunday 8th February** or sent by e-mail by 8pm on **Thursday 12th February** to:

greenbankconnections@gmail.com

Flower Rota

provided by delivered by

February

1 Isobel Thom	Alison Offer
8 Louise Coghill	Janet Edwards
15 Grace Maweu	Marcia Rankin
22 Chrissy Munro	Rosemarie Crawford

March

1 Alan Ramage	Jill Mundy
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Holy Corner Booksale 2026

Saturday 9, Sunday 10, Monday 11 May

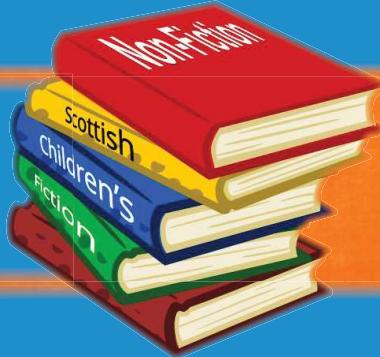
WANTED!

Book Donations

- We will be accepting book donations from Wednesday, January 14 until Saturday March 28, 2026
- No home pick-ups, drop-off only, to:
Morningside United Church, Chamberlain Road entrance, at the following times:
Wednesdays 10 am - 12 noon
Saturdays 10 am - 12 noon

We Want

- Non-fiction
- Scottish books
- Paperback fiction
- Children's books



We Cannot Accept

- Encyclopaedias
- Reader's Digest
- Books in poor condition, due to mould, water-damage
- CDs, DVDs

(These won't sell, and would incur disposal costs.)

Morningside United Church, Holy Corner, EH10 4DJ

In aid of Christian Aid: Charity No. SC039150

Booksale website: <https://holycornerbooksale.wordpress.com>