

# Park Church Stirling

## Newsletter

### Autumn 2025



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# Message from the Minister



*Dear Friends,*

The last days of summer are always a curious mix: the sunshine, when it chooses to grace us, is cherished all the more for being scarce, while the cool mornings and early sunsets hint at autumn's arrival. Our gardens, fields, and parks shift from the lush green of July to the golden and russet tones of October. The seasons move forward, and so do we.

Nature's changing rhythm reminds me that God often works in seasons in our own lives too. Some are bright and brimming with growth; others feel

like harvest, gathering in the fruit of past labours. There are also seasons of rest - and yes, even seasons that seem dormant - when nothing obvious is happening, but God is quietly preparing us for what's next.

The book of Ecclesiastes says it so simply: *"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven"* (Ecclesiastes 3:1). These words have been a comfort to many of us in times of change. They remind us that God's timing is perfect, even when ours is impatient.

Think of the trees along the River Forth in Stirling. By November they will be bare, stripped of their leaves, yet their roots remain strong, drawing life from deep underground. We too are called to stay rooted in Christ through every season. As Paul wrote to the Philippians: *"Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 1:6).

If you are in a joyful season, thank God for His goodness and share that joy with others. If you are in a season of waiting, know that you are not forgotten; your roots can grow deep in prayer and faith. If you are in a season of challenge, take heart that the Lord walks with you, step by step.

Over the coming months at Park Church, we will have moments to celebrate together, to learn together, and to serve together. Each gathering, whether in worship, fellowship, study, or outreach, is a reminder that the seasons of faith are not meant to be walked alone. We journey side by side, encouraged by the presence of Christ and the companionship of one another.

Therefore, I thank you for being part of this wonderful Park Church family. We warmly welcome new members among us, praying that you will quickly feel at home here. I am also deeply grateful to everyone who, in whatever way, helps keep the 'mechanics' of church life running - from the quiet acts of service behind the scenes, to the more visible roles in worship and leadership. All of these practical tasks, when combined with the work of the Holy Spirit, enable our ministry and mission to flourish. I know that you will enjoy another edition of this newsletter, which is filled with interesting articles, photos, and upcoming events. Many thanks to our editorial team!

My prayer for us all this autumn is that we remain open to God's work in our lives, whatever season we find ourselves in. May we have eyes to see His blessings, ears to hear His leading, and hearts willing to trust His timing.

With gratitude for each of you, and for the privilege of serving God and you.

Your friend and minister,

**Rev Attie van Wyk**



**New Elders (L to R) - Sam McLean, Ingrid McLean, Peter Brown, Sharon Singleton-Bruce, Dianne McNaughton, Brenda Smith, Alasdair Smith**



New Elders receiving the right hand of fellowship from existing Elders

Bill Cunningham, Moira Parry, John Magrath and Brian Walker with their long service certificates



# Kirk Session Update

The Kirk Session last met on 4<sup>th</sup> June, but there has been considerable activity and encouraging progress in several aspects over summer months.

We continue to review our agreed action plans with the top two priorities; to enhance a range of worship (which will be a gradual process) and to increase resilience and support for the office-bearers and minister.

We have welcomed new elders joining the session, Peter Brown, Sharon Singleton Bruce, Sam and Ingrid McLean, Dianne McNaughton, and Alasdair and Brenda Smith; and celebrated over 30 years' service from Bill Cunningham, Sheila Keddie, John Magrath, Moira Parry and Brian Walker. We have several more volunteers helping with audio-visual support, Bible reading, garden squads and help with Sunday coffees and the Thursday morning Coffee Club.

The contribution of younger members is invaluable. Session has joined a Presbytery-wide, two year "Growing Young" programme, seeking with others to share learning to promote an inter-generational church. It is great to welcome the twenty or so younger adults meeting monthly in the Church on Sunday evenings, and all who attended the service on 20<sup>th</sup> June, led by several of them, were enriched by the passionate and insightful sharing of their faith as well by the lovely music.

Session approved the draft annual accounts for 2024, which will be shared on the website and at a congregational meeting this autumn. Voluntary giving has risen, but expenditure even more, due to necessary work on the manse kitchen and car park last year and other property issues. The new audio-visual system is starting to show its worth - both in services, but also for school initiatives and end of term events and other hires.

Property colleagues have been ensuring a comprehensive survey of the buildings and facilitating essential work on the roof, lightening protection and electrics. Session agreed that during **Stirling Open Doors'** weekend, the church will be open to visitors, with opportunities for a tour of the tower for the most agile, music, teas and coffees, and organisations using the church will be invited to have stalls in the hall.

**NB. Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2pm - 4pm in your diary.**

We are very grateful for the continued encouragement, leadership and commitment of our minister Attie, but also appreciate the invaluable contributions of so many volunteers in different ways. Thank you all.

**Peter Murdoch**  
**Session Clerk**

## In Loving Memory - Adriaan van Wyck



As many will know, Attie's father, Adriaan, passed away after a long illness on 30<sup>th</sup> July. We give thanks for his life of encouragement, love and faith. Some of you will remember him with warmth from his visit to Stirling and Park Church in 2022.

Attie and the wider family have appreciated the prayers and messages of sympathy and love from members and friends; and we assure him of our continuing support.



# Note from General Assembly 2025

Together with Attie, I was privileged to be a commissioner at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland this year, the annual gathering of almost 500 delegates, around 70% of whom attended in person.

The theme of the 2025 Assembly chosen by the Moderator, the Right Rev Rosemary Frew, was “God’s Extravagant Love”, based on Ephesians 3:14-19; and a commitment to move forward in faith to share that love despite many significant challenges was evident throughout the six days of meeting together. I can only mention some of my personal key points and highlights.

Firstly a clear sense of working together with other denominations wherever feasible. The Lord High Commissioner (the King’s representative), Lady Elish Angolini, the first Roman Catholic to hold that position, spoke powerfully of her experiences of working together for the common good, and Archbishop Leo Cushley attended most sessions, including the communion service, and encouraged working together with Christian brothers and sisters wherever feasible. The Anglican Bishop of Jerusalem spoke powerfully of the suffering in the Holy Land.

Some of the challenges - falling membership and income and numbers of ministers. Charges will be expected to cover costs of ministry, apart from exceptions in areas of deprivation. This has resulted in redundancies in Church offices at “121”, closure of many unsuitable church buildings, closure of the Life and Work magazine and an ending of associate minister posts (though this was extended until the end of the year).

There was a long and respectful debate on assisted dying. The church had produced a detailed report trying to outline the theological and other arguments, and range of views for and against. In discussion, which included powerful accounts of personal experience, there was general agreement that current palliative care and other community support were inadequate and the current legislative proposals flawed. Whilst recognising and respecting the range of sincerely held views, the Assembly supported a counter motion, which I had seconded, saying that the Church reaffirmed its historical opposition to assisted dying. I had requested in advance to speak, but was not called. I would have pointed out the difference between treatment primarily to end life, as opposed to ongoing assistance and caring for people who are dying to relieve distress and other symptoms, the need for realistic medicine and for honest and frank discussion with people about their wishes.

Other snapshots - the Local Church Review process is being replaced by self-filled checklists, potential ministerial applicants from overseas will need a familiarisation period before applying for charges, a reminder that ministers need days off (many do not have this) and a reminder of the importance of good maintenance of churches and manses. Good reports about the vital role of Forces’ chaplains, the work of Crossreach and the £500,000 raised by the Guild for good causes in recent years. To cut costs and to attract more delegates of working age, the General Assembly next year will be 4 days only from a Friday to Monday. Hopefully shorter and less wordy reports and debates.

More importantly, there was an obvious desire to share learning and build on those congregations that are reversing trends and attracting younger people. Younger delegates made welcome and constructive input into several debates - more than in previous years. There was a conference session exploring the vision of a more welcoming and inclusive church, sharing its faith in word and action and making a real difference to their communities. There is evidence in Scotland and the rest of the UK of growing numbers of younger adults seeking answers to life and enriching churches.

Overall, despite major challenges within the national church, as it seeks to be fit for purpose and adapt to meet its reduced resources in our increasingly secular and troubled world, I came away encouraged not only by the worship, but also by the keenness of many to wake up, get up and go forward in God's strength and extravagant love.

**Peter Murdoch**  
**Session Clerk**



## Good Samaritan Prayer

*God of love,  
May we always see the world through the eyes of the Good Samaritan and be filled  
with your deep compassion.*

*Help us to be merciful neighbours even when it is inconvenient, when we don't have  
time, or when we have other responsibilities to attend to. Grant us the insight to see  
the need in those around us, the wisdom to know how to respond, and the strength to  
do so willingly.*

*We pray for those we might cross the road to avoid - the poor, the vulnerable and the  
marginalised. Those, who in many and various ways, have been stripped, beaten and  
left for dead. We pray for all who call from us more than we feel we have to give.*

*Open our eyes, that we might not cross the road from human need. May our love of you  
and love of our neighbour call us to be people of peace and justice in the world.*

*And may we, like the Good Samaritan, always 'go and do likewise'.  
Amen.*

# UPDATES FROM SUMMER 2025

## Newbies' Afternoon Tea

The 'extended welcome group' hosted an afternoon tea on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> June for people who were new to the congregation in the last year.

More than 40 attendees enjoyed tea, cake and getting to know each other – (and a quiz!). It was a very enjoyable occasion with much laughter and conversation. As a Church, we are fortunate to have so many new people joining us.

Thanks to all those who contributed delicious baking, helped with setting up, serving and clearing up, and provided beautiful posies for the tables.

**Nancy Turnbull**



## Christian Aid Week 2025

Christian Aid Week in May raised £2,625.10, ie. £2,156.10 + £469 in Gift Aid in the Church from the envelopes. The Just Giving website raised £450, giving us a grand total of £3,075.10.

Unfortunately, this website has increased its interest rate quite a lot, so I feel it is not now suitable for Christian Aid collection and will be looking for another method.

## Christian Aid Quiz

The winner of the Christian Aid Quiz this year was Mrs Marion Taylor. A big thank you must go to Suzy Dalglish for selling the Quiz forms.

## Christian Aid Coffee Morning

This will take place on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October in Park Church and I hope you will support it as generously as you have Christian Aid Week.

**Helen Reid**



Sparks had their annual Teddy Bears' Picnic at the end of June. Unfortunately the weather was not kind and it had to be held indoors. In spite of that, a good time was had by all - children, their adults and even the helpers!

**Moira Parry**



# Popcorn and Cake

During the morning of Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> and all day Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May we had the pleasure of welcoming 78 young people from Primary 7 classes at St Ninians and Allan's Primary Schools to learn about the meaning of Pentecost, a lesser-known festival for children in the Christian calendar.

We presented the material around this challenging concept through the "Popcorn and Cake" programme, which allows the children to discover more about the importance of Pentecost to the Christian Church. Through a similar format to the other programmes, of interactive games, quizzes and activities, the link between popcorn, cake and Pentecost became clearer. The emphasis is always on the two aspects of Pentecost, namely "change" and "celebration", with the popcorn representing a change in appearance, texture and taste as it is heated and changed beyond all recognition from its original state, and the cake representing the celebration of the birthday of the Church. As often happens, after evaluations from last year's Primary 7s, we made some changes to the programme which helped make things run more smoothly. Evaluations from staff and children indicated that some of these were appreciated in helping to make events more enjoyable.

As always, each of our programmes finishes with a reflective time and in this one the young people are asked what changes they would make in our world to make it a better place. If you were in church on Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> June you would have heard in our minister's final prayer about some of their thoughts, which reflect the depth of feeling in some of our young people.

Once again, an enormous thanks goes to all those in both our own church and St Ninians, who help to set up and dismantle the programme and who give so willingly of their time to help engage with the children. We are delighted that our new contingent of helpers who came along to Easter Journey returned to support this latest and last programme of the year. We are sincerely blessed with such a generous group of committed helpers.

**Joy Macfarlane**  
*Youth Committee Convenor*

**On Friday 30<sup>th</sup> May, P7 went down to the church and had a wonderful time doing Popcorn and Cake! The activities were fun and we learned new things we didn't know such as : the church has a birthday and what Pentecost is!**

**We especially loved the game 'Cat and Mouse!' Nobody had played it before and it helped us understand how change can sometimes be a good thing (the mouse can flee from the cat) and can sometimes be a bad thing (the cat gets the mouse). Even though it taught us about change it was also a bit of fun!**

**We also loved decorating the cake boxes! This involved some arts and crafts that helped us to remember the theme of celebration linked to Pentecost. We really enjoyed it and the art supplies were very good quality and fun to use!**

**Overall we enjoyed this event very much and we hope that you do it again!**

**Written by Lucia Ordóñez-Sanz**



# WHAT'S ON - AUTUMN 2025

## The Christian Calendar

### Season of Creation (1<sup>st</sup> September – 4<sup>th</sup> October 2025)

The Season of Creation runs from the World Day of prayer for the Care of Creation until the feast of Saint Francis of Assisi, and is a time to renew our relationship with our Creator and all creation through celebration, conversion, and commitment to caring for our one planet home.

### Challenge Poverty Week (October 2025)

Challenge Poverty Week is an opportunity to highlight the injustice of poverty in Scotland and to celebrate what you are doing to challenge poverty locally.

### Remembrance Sunday (9<sup>th</sup> November 2025)

The Sunday closest to 11<sup>th</sup> November.

**You are warmly invited to join us in**  
**THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION**  
**on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> September at 11am in Park Church**





We will be holding an Evening Service of Praise on 26<sup>th</sup> October at 6pm in St Mark's Church, Drip Road, Stirling.

All are welcome to join us.

**Willie Troup**

***Park Church Representative***



**Christian Aid Coffee Morning**

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

**10am - 12 noon**

**Park Church Main Hall**



## Coffee Club

Coffee Club continues weekly on Thursdays, 10.30 - 11.30am, in the main church hall.

All are welcome, including young children, for whom there will be toys to play with while the adults chat over a cuppa, biscuits and home baking!

If anyone would like to volunteer to bake and/or serve at the Coffee Club on a rota basis, please contact Rae Scott or Sarah Murdoch.



# Stirling Kirks Together

## All-Age Friendship Lunches

These continue to be held on the **2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday** of every month as follows:

**10<sup>th</sup> September**

**8<sup>th</sup> October**

**12<sup>th</sup> November**

**10<sup>th</sup> December - Christmas lunch with carol singing**



**Time: 12 noon - 1.30pm**

**Place: Park Church Main Hall**

**Cost: £3 donation (*Optional*)**



**Conversation**

**Soup & Rolls**

**Tea, Coffee and Home Baking**

**ALL WELCOME**

For further information, please contact **Johan Stirling on 01786 461571**

# Park Church Ladies' Group

## Autumn Syllabus

The Ladies' Group meets in the Main Hall at 7.30pm on alternate Monday evenings from September until March.

We are a welcoming group meeting for fun and fellowship, we are open to all and are not restricted to members of the congregation.

We start our new session on **Monday 15<sup>th</sup> September** at 7.30pm with a musical presentation from Jennifer Barker, titled "Sounds and Sights: From Ayrshire to Alaska". We would be delighted to see you all there to find out what's behind this intriguing title.

On **29<sup>th</sup> September** we welcome Mia Noquet with a talk on the Doddie Weir Foundation.

On **13<sup>th</sup> October** Cat Perkington will present her photographs of the Aurora Borealis.

On **27<sup>th</sup> October** - will be confirmed in due course.

On **10<sup>th</sup> November** we look forward to Marie Muir telling us about the celebration of 100 years of the Guide Hut.

On **24<sup>th</sup> November** we will be hosting a Christmas Craft Evening, with a variety of stalls selling handcrafted gifts.

On **1<sup>st</sup> December** we will be going out for a Christmas Meal.

A very warm welcome is extended to everyone to join us at any or all of these events.

**Rae Scott**  
*Secretary*



### **\*SAVE THE DATE\***

The annual Christmas Concert by Strathcarron Hospice Singers will be held on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December at 3.00 pm.



# Join our Autumn ART CLUB

Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> August - Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> October

at: PARK CHURCH

from: 2pm - 4pm

cost: £2 per session

NO experience necessary

More info: Kate 07971 529485

**NB. The Winter Art Club will run from Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> October to Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December, except on 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> October.**

## Unforgettable Musical Experiences

This summer has been filled with unforgettable musical experiences, beginning with a week-long tour to Madrid with the University of Aberdeen Chapel Choir. Over the course of the trip, we took part in four events - three services and one concert.

Our first performance took place the evening after our arrival: Compline (and Cava!) at the Anglican Church of St George, led by the Reverend Canon Sal McDougall. The service followed the traditional Compline liturgy and was followed by a get together with the congregation, which included members from across the UK, Europe, and further afield. The evening also featured a special event for university alumni now residing in Madrid. The third day was our busiest, with two performances at the Catholic Cathedral of Santa Cruz. We began with a concert featuring works by Sumsion, Bairstow, and McKie. This was my favourite event of the trip - not only because the music was so varied, but also because I had family in the audience, which made the occasion all the more special. Later that evening, we sang Harold Darke's *"Mass in E"* during a Catholic Mass, concluding with my favourite Chapel Choir piece: *"Evening Hymn"* by Henry Balfour Gardiner. On our final day, we returned to St George's to sing in a Eucharist service. Our own university chaplain gave the sermon at this. It was a wonderful trip and would never have happened if it wasn't for our Conductor Stuart Muir and Organist Andrew Forbes.

Just a week later, I joined the University Chamber Choir for a second musical trip, this time to Malta. Over a week, we performed in two concerts and one Mass. Our first concert took place at Our Lady of Victory Church in Valletta, a charming and intimate building that lent itself perfectly to our repertoire, which included works by Holst, Meallor, Parry and by some of our choir members. This was my favourite concert as it was sold out and halfway through the concert a festival parade passed, providing much laughter. We repeated this programme at the Anglican Church of St Paul's Pro-Cathedral. On our final day, we had the privilege of singing during a Mass at St John's Co-Cathedral. It was an amazing opportunity, and the acoustics of the cathedral were amazing.



Outside the Usher Hall,  
Edinburgh

On 2<sup>nd</sup> August, as part of the National Youth Choir of Scotland, I took part in the opening concert of the Edinburgh International Festival, titled *"The Veil of the Temple"* by John Tavener. It is an eight-hour piece sung in five languages. The performance draws inspiration from many of the world's major religions and stands as a monumental, universal prayer. The performance brought together 250 singers from three choirs: The Monteverdi Choir, The Edinburgh Festival Chorus and NYCoS. Conducted by Sofi Jeannin and directed by Thomas Guthrie, the event was a monumental success, receiving 5-star reviews from The Telegraph and fantastic reviews from other major news outlets. It was lovely to sing in this concert, especially with some of my closest friends. NYCoS's second concert of the summer is titled *"Illuminaré and Spirituals"* at St Giles' Cathedral on 22<sup>nd</sup> August.

**Lucas Cuthbert**



University of Aberdeen Chapel Choir  
Catholic Cathedral of Santa Cruz, Madrid



University of Aberdeen Chamber Choir  
Anglican Church of St Paul's Pro-Cathedral, Valletta

# Orkney Visit

I have wanted to visit Orkney for many years. I had many misconceptions about the islands: flat, windy, wet, no trees, stone age Skara Brae, Scapa Flow and scuttled German warships from WW1. The opportunity to test these assumptions came this year when I went with my brother, Mike and my good friend Hugh. Another reason for going is down to my Grandfather. He visited probably in the late 1800s or early 1900s, and he drew a pencil sketch of the famous views of the prehistoric settlements. I wanted to see if his view was accurate and indeed if I could still see it.

The first challenge was to get there. Hugh lives in Birmingham, so he went by air to Aberdeen and then flew up to Kirkwall. Being a mean Scot, I was keen to find a cheaper route and the obvious one was the ferry from Gills Bay to Saint Margaret's Hope.

My brother joined me in Stirling and we went by car up to Gills Bay. A very pleasant journey in glorious weather. On our way up the A9, we visited the shop at the Dalwhinnie distillery, where I was amazed to see a bottle of Port Ellen whisky on sale for £15,000! This bottle came from the last production of Port Ellen on Islay before it was closed for rebuilding. Apparently the rarest editions of Port Ellen whisky are priced at even more than that. It's an amazing cost for what is fundamentally a poison. I'm told that the taste is worth it, but someone else would have to pay for the privilege of my opinion.



Further North, beyond Inverness, we stopped at Helmsdale for the night and had a look at a statue of the emigrants by Gerald Laing. It was erected in 2007 in memory of the people of the north of Scotland who emigrated after the clearances. It is a moving depiction of bravely facing an uncertain future and looking back with longing and loss to what is left behind.

The following morning, in warmth and sunshine, we moved on to Dunbeath and saw a statue of "Kenn and the salmon" from the book "The Highland River" by Neil Gunn. It is a tale of a boy's struggle with a large salmon and his ultimate victory. A pivotal event for Kenn. The tale goes on to recount later experiences in Kenn's life including traumatic experiences in WWI and his life as a physicist. It is both a personal and universal story about growth, memory and the enduring influence of one's origins.



It was an enjoyable and scenic drive up the Northeast Coast of Scotland from Inverness. I can imagine that it is a less pleasant trip in bad weather.

If you go that far north, it's obligatory to visit John O' Groats and stand underneath the fingerpost that tells you how far it is to various other parts of the world.

John O'Groats is named after a 15<sup>th</sup> Century Dutchman called Jan de Groot who operated a ferry to Orkney. There is a sculpture near the sign post depicting the rapid and powerful currents that go through the Pentland Firth, which move large rocks at some speed across the seabed. I suspect this is at least part of the reason why harvesting energy from the tides in the Pentland Firth has been a difficult task.



This photo comes from the Orkney.com website

The ferry trip was about 90 minutes and blessedly calm, although the surface of the water was quite turbulent indicating the powerful forces at play. We drove to Kirkwall travelling over the “Churchill Barriers” erected in WW2 to prevent submarines entering the naval anchorage at Scapa Flow.

Over the next three days, we did a whistlestop tour of the famous sites, starting with Skara Brae.

On one level, we all know about Skara Brae, but people have lived on the Orkney islands from about 9000 BC. So Skara Brae is relatively modern, since it dates from about 3000 BC; 1 thousand years before the birth of Christ. The settlement was continuously and peacefully inhabited between 3100 BC and 2500 BC, about 600 years. That would be the equivalent of 100 years more than the time of King James IV and the Battle of Flodden to the present day.

As I write these facts, they probably sound dull, but at the visitor centre they have a timeline walk that takes you to the Skara Brae site. It is a short walk and at appropriate places on the walk, there are posts representing the time in history when significant events occurred. Examples include the great pyramid at Giza (2500 BC) and Stonehenge, which took 1000 years to build starting about the same time as Skara Brae.

Alexander the Great was conquering Asia and parts of India in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. By comparison, just yesterday!



The site itself is recognisably domestic with fireplaces, storage areas and sleeping places. The community lived off fish, shellfish, domestic animals such as sheep, cattle and pigs. They also hunted for deer. They had time to do stone carving and make ornaments. I got a real sense that people like you and me lived there.

It appears that they were probably forced to move because climate change and erosion made it more difficult to farm, as salt spray affected the land and the beach approached their settlement. There is no evidence of disease or invasion.

We spent the afternoon in Stromness where we walked through a well preserved town with a harbour and very old houses extending down to the harbour side. We enjoyed the Stromness Museum, which has a very diverse collection of artefacts, including stuffed animals from the arctic brought home by explorers and employees of the Hudson Bay Company. At one point, 70% of employees of the HBC were Orcadian. A famous explorer from Orkney was Dr John Rae, who explored the NW passage and parts of Canada. He discovered what happened to the ill-fated 1845 Franklin expedition to find the NW passage. A remarkable man. I had never heard of him but reading about his exploits filled me with awe for his endurance.



My brother looking serious next to Dr Rae's statue

The museum also holds information about the RN presence in Scapa Flow, along with information about the German fleet scuttled at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War.

We visited some of the ceremonial monuments such as the Ring of Brodgar, the Stenness Stones and we saw Maeshowe in the distance. With exception of Maeshowe, the open air sites are easily accessible, although if there is a cruise ship in Kirkwall, they can be crowded. We were far from the only tourists on Orkney.

The highlight for me was a visit to the Burial mound known as Maeshowe. It is essential to book in advance. Access is limited to parties of 20 with a guide, because you have to go through a 7m tunnel to get into the tomb. The guide makes all the difference, as they explain the history and the events in the life of the mound up to the present. The entrance tunnel lines up with a gap between two hills rising to between 1300 and 1600 feet on the island of Hoy. At the time of the midwinter solstice in December, the sun shines from beyond the hills, through the entrance tunnel and lights up the back wall of the chamber. It is a fascinating place with more to say about it than I can give you in this short article. If you go to Orkney, do book a visit to Maeshowe and hear about the construction and the Norse graffiti.

When compared to another illustration from the late 1800s, my grandfather's sketch (on the right) is a mostly accurate view across Maeshowe towards the hills of Hoy. It was a great pleasure to connect with him in this way.



Kirkwall is a busy town with good restaurants, a museum and its famous cathedral - well worth a visit. It has been in existence since the 1137, when it was established by Earl Rognvald in memory of his uncle Magnus.

Magnus Erlendsson was Earl of Orkney, but had a disagreement with his cousin Hakon with whom he shared the earldom. Hakon killed Magnus. Magnus was a holy man and miracles were attributed to him, so Rognvald decided to build "a great stone minster" in honour of Magnus. The bones of both Magnus and Rognvald lie within the walls of the choir.

It is a magnificent building and well worth visiting.



Finally, on our way home, we stopped by the Italian Chapel, which lies close to one of the Churchill Barriers. The chapel was constructed from a Nissen hut which was part of a POW camp housing Italian prisoners. It is a lovely bright space, which must have meant a lot to prisoners so far from the warmth and sunlight of Italy.

I haven't done justice to all there is to see and experience in Orkney. It is a place where ancient history sits beside modern history and amongst it all, the Orcadians are comfortable in their Northern islands and very welcoming to visitors.

**Ian Ritchie**

# Stirling Guide Hut's 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday

Many members of Park Church will be familiar with Stirling Guide Hut in Glebe Avenue, either from their own time as Rainbows, Brownies, Guides or Rangers, or as parents. This year we are celebrating the centenary of the opening of the hut, which was opened on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1925 by the Chief Guide Olave, Lady Baden Powell, wife of Lord Robert Baden Powell, who was the founder of both the Scouts and the Guides. Lady Baden Powell's visit that day also included a reception by the Provost of Stirling at the Smith Museum, and a 'Grand Rally' in the Drill Hall in Princes Street, attended by 1,000 young members.



The total cost of the building work was £1,000, and the companies involved in its construction were Wm Somers (Joiners), J & J Duff (Plumbers), H Miller (Electrician), Messrs Ronald (Builders) and the architect was Mr Greig. The building was described as a wooden structure erected on a concrete base with a tiled roof supported by iron girders (or 'a shed on bricks' as a structural engineer referred to it more recently!).

In her speech that day, Lady Baden Powell said the hall would be a real home for the girls, and it is still welcoming Brownies, Guides, Trefoil Guild members as well as meetings and training sessions for Girlguiding volunteers and other community groups.

A major refurbishment was carried out in the 1970s, which included the installation of a suspended ceiling and brown carpet in the main hall along with 1970s style wallpaper and curtains. Then around the new Millennium another refurbishment was done, when we swapped the carpet for a wooden floor, created a disabled toilet and updated the décor. We are now looking to the future and trying to raise funds to insulate and clad the exterior.

We are grateful to the determined committee of women who were responsible for raising the money and building the hall, and for their many successors who have kept it going since 1925 in so many ways – including many members of this congregation.

On 20<sup>th</sup> September 2025, we are holding an Open Day, which will include an exhibition of archives, some old and new activities and refreshments. We are hoping to recreate one of the photographs taken in 1925, so we have sent invitations to the Provost and some of today's senior Girlguiding volunteers. We are also trying to contact as many former Guides and Brownies as we can, in the hope that it will result in a few reunions throughout the day. If you can help with this, please let us know!

**Marie Muir and Helen Reid**

**Members of the Guide Hut Management Committee**

*(Marie is also a Guide Leader and Helen is a member of the Trefoil Guild)*

A vertical poster for the Stirling Guide Hut's 100th anniversary. The background is dark blue with a pattern of colorful geometric shapes (triangles, circles, stars) and symbols (a magnifying glass, a compass, a star). At the top, the text 'Stirling Guide Hut' is written in a white cursive font. Below it is a circular logo featuring a brown wooden hut with a white roof and a small white square with a 'G' on it. The logo is surrounded by a ring of colorful dots. Below the logo, the text 'Stirling Guide Hut' is written in a bold, sans-serif font, followed by 'Centenary Celebrations' and '1925 - 2025'. The main text 'is 100 years old!' is written in a large, bold, white sans-serif font. Below this, the text 'We would love you to come to our open day to help us to celebrate.' is written in a smaller, white sans-serif font. Further down, the text 'Refreshments available, activities to participate in, finishing with indoor campfire.' is written in a smaller, white sans-serif font. Below that, the text 'Saturday 20 September 2025' is written in a smaller, white sans-serif font. Then, the text '11.00am to 4.00pm' is written in a smaller, white sans-serif font. Below that, the text 'Stirling Guide hut, Glebe Avenue, Stirling FK8 2HZ' is written in a smaller, white sans-serif font. Then, the text 'W3W: ///gates.burn.twigs' is written in a smaller, white sans-serif font. Below that, the text 'All welcome!' is written in a smaller, white sans-serif font. At the bottom, the text 'Email: [stirlingguidehut@gmail.com](mailto:stirlingguidehut@gmail.com)' is written in a smaller, white sans-serif font. Below that, the text 'Facebook – Friends of Stirling Guide Hall' is written in a smaller, white sans-serif font. At the very bottom, the text '<https://www.facebook.com/groups/2953918618050507/>' is written in a smaller, white sans-serif font.

# Church Garden Update

A busy year in the church garden, in particular, the development of a longer term plan to enhance the variety of planting and colour across all flower borders and the seasons of the year.

Early in the year, we worked with the property group to have a contractor trim the height and breadth of the large beech tree, for a number of reasons, and to remove dead branches from other trees. This has reduced some of the thirst of these mature trees, for any rains that come and deprive the parts of the memorial garden below.

We have continued to tend and improve this garden that reminds us of the service of Charlie Croall and John McDowell on behalf of the church. We have added flowers and shrubs in the four areas on the embankment - directly across from the church front door - and while most of these have matured these past few years, we have continued to respond to the impact of the overhang of trees.



In spring we refreshed the rose border at the top car park and this already creates fresh colour and perfume.

We also continued the annual planting of the borders to provide welcoming colour on front and side entrances to the church.

Our resources have been boosted this year through a donation to create an additional memorial area within the overall garden. This has enabled the long side flower borders, adjoining the side wall and railings, to become enhanced perennial flower borders in memory of Archie and Sonia MacCallum, and Sheila writes on the opposite page about her parents who faithfully served in this church for many years. The photographs highlight this significant development within the church garden.



The Garden Team is led by a strong belief that the garden is a vital witness of our careful management of the resources that God has provided and speaks of the beauty of His creation. We are regularly encouraged by the favourable comments of many passers-by, in addition to church members and friends. The bench at the side door has been renovated and provides an accessible and welcome spot to take in the beauty of the plantings. We know people who stop here, some bring a picnic! The church is well served by the grass cutting team for the foreground and background that the carefully cut lawns create.



The team has been challenged this year by the predominantly dry weather conditions, but we have enjoyed gathering, pottering and friendships we create. While we have weekly sessions during the growing season, the number varies week to week, we work flexibly as a team, each bringing different skills and knowledge to bear. I thank each team member for their commitment and dedication to this service, as it makes the garden what you now see. We hope that you agree that the results speak for themselves.

If you have an interest in our work – and we are open to welcome new members to join the team and get to know us - please contact ([sam.mclean1@btinternet.com](mailto:sam.mclean1@btinternet.com)) or speak with me, or any of the Garden Team.

We encourage you to take time to walk your church garden, enjoy it, reflect on it and look ahead with us to the growth and development of the new planting as this matures in the next year or two.

**Sam McLean**

**Garden Team Members** - Maureen McArthur, Wendy McLean, Sheila MacCallum, Marie Muir, Alan Semple, Peter Langley, Ian Hickey, Iain Wesley.

## MEMORIAL BORDERS

In the Summer of 2024, I offered to donate and plant up the two long, narrow, side borders in memory of Mum and Dad, who were members of St Columba's as was, for over 30 years, and contributed to the church in many ways during that time.

Dad was an Elder, Communion Convenor, Choir member, Convenor of the group that organised St Columba's Centenary Celebrations and Appeal in 2001, served on several nominating committees, and was well known and respected around the church. Mum supported the Coffee Club, Ladies' Group, Friendship lunches, and she baked shortbread for numerous events at the church over the years. It became legendary and she was often referred to as "the shortbread lady"!

Mum and Dad worked together to raise hundreds of pounds every year for Christian Aid and church funds, by selling hundreds of cuttings they potted up from plants in their own garden (eg. hellebores, nerines, kaffirs, lily of the valley), many of which still flourish in the gardens of members of the current congregation. This made me realise that planting borders in their memory would provide a fitting and lasting memorial.

I was keen to create borders that would provide colour, structure and interest throughout the seasons, trying to remember everything I'd learned from Mum and Dad over the years! I researched and created a master spreadsheet of flowering times, heights and spreads, species and planting aspects of some of Mum and Dad's favourite plants, sketched planting plans on long strips of lining paper and received invaluable input and advice from Wendy and Maureen. In the first tranche, and with great help and support from them, we selected and planted over 40 shrubs and perennials, which you'll have seen flowering over the summer. We've left the labels attached to all the plants, so you can easily identify them. The borders will take some time to fill out, but during September and October I'll be adding late autumn, winter and spring flowering plants, which will include hellebores, one of Mum's favourites.

Having really struggled to come to terms with losing Mum and Dad within a year in 2021/22, creating and planting these borders in their memory has been a labour of love and helped me feel closer to them. They received much love and support from the congregation over the years, and I hope the borders will provide much enjoyment for members of Park Church congregation, visitors and passers-by for many years to come.

**Sheila MacCallum**



# The Biblical Portrayal of Weeds

Following a few days recently in Germany at our second granddaughter's school "graduation," I returned home to ponder the perennial (pun intended) question of why God allows weeds to grow faster than flowers.

My research (if Mr. Google can truly be called such) into the phenomenon, led me to the following AI (Artificial Intelligence) response. I should explain that my new found enthusiasm for, but scant knowledge of, AI is also courtesy of said granddaughter.

"In the New Testament, Jesus frequently uses agricultural metaphors, including weeds, to teach spiritual truths. One of the most notable parables is the Parable of the Weeds, found in Matthew 13:24-30. In this parable, Jesus describes a farmer who sows good seed in his field, but while everyone is sleeping, an enemy sows weeds among the wheat. When the plants sprout, the weeds also appear. The farmer instructs his servants to let both grow together until the harvest, at which time the weeds will be collected and burned.

This parable is explained by Jesus in Matthew 13:36-43, where He identifies the field as the world, the good seed as the sons of the kingdom, and the weeds as the sons of the evil one. The enemy who sows the weeds is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age. This teaching emphasizes the co-existence of good and evil in the world and the ultimate judgment that will separate the righteous from the wicked.

Weeds, as depicted in the Bible, serve as a reminder of the pervasive nature of sin and the spiritual vigilance required of believers. They illustrate the reality of spiritual warfare and the presence of evil influences that seek to undermine the growth of God's kingdom. The imagery of weeds also underscores the importance of discernment and perseverance in the Christian life, as believers are called to remain steadfast in their faith amidst the challenges and temptations of the world.

In summary, the biblical portrayal of weeds is rich with spiritual significance, offering insights into the nature of sin, the reality of spiritual conflict, and the hope of ultimate redemption and purification at the end of the age."

I just wish that some greater thought had been given to getting rid of them, but perhaps there's an AI answer to that too?

**Duncan Crombie**



## Young Adults' Group

From six of us gathered in the manse for a Bible Study to leading a service in church, the Young Adults' Group has come a long way since its inception! The young adults were thrilled to have the opportunity to lead worship at church on the 20<sup>th</sup> July. Eilidh brought forward the idea of a service conducted entirely by the Young Adults a few months ago, and we met this with enthusiasm. After a planning period where Eilidh and Attie devised the concept and logistics of our service, it was up to Eilidh to rally the troops. She was faced with the organisational task of ensuring that everyone knew their roles for the big day and that we had prepared our parts.

The service had no sermon, and instead a series of reflections served as the core to the structure of the service. Also included were prayers, hymns, and reflection music. We all like Attie's blessing at the end of his services and so thought that it would be appropriate to write our reflections based on this. For myself, I found it far more difficult to write a personal reflection on my faith than I thought it would be. And I think I can safely speak for all of us when I say that we were quite nervous to read our reflections in front of the congregation. But, despite the nerves, it ended up being a wonderful way for us to worship the Lord and it was truly a fantastic experience which we all greatly enjoyed.

In truth, we were nervously hoping that we would win the approval of the congregation and that no one would not be too upset at the change in their regularly scheduled programming. But we needn't have been nervous. Everyone was absolutely lovely before, during, and after the service. Your encouragement and kind words meant so much to us. We don't think Attie is out of a job just yet, but we are excited for the next opportunity to give back to this wonderful church that has given so much to us.

A big thank you goes to Attie for affording us this opportunity and trusting us to lead his congregation in worship. And to Eilidh for a fantastic idea brought to fruition by her excellent leadership.

### Susie Dalglish



Andrew, Eilidh, Hannah, Nana, Elanor, Susie and Tom



# 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the End of the Second World War

2025 marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War. VE Day was celebrated on 12<sup>th</sup> May 1945 and VJ Day on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945. It seems fitting to consider the impact of the war on the congregations which make up Park Church.

The former St Columba's Church has no casualties recorded on the war memorial and the Kirk Session minutes for the war years are missing. However, it is safe to say that members of the church, both men and women, will have served in the armed forces, and those left at home will have suffered the privations of war while worrying about their loved ones on active service.

Although the other two congregations have war memorials for WW2, some names are fairly common with multiple casualties of the same name, and without corroboration, it is difficult to assign details to the names on the memorial. It is not possible to retrieve service records unless for a close family member. The Commonwealth War Graves' Commission database often has next of kin details for casualties, and so I have been able to identify some with a degree of certainty. More research is needed for this. What I did find was that there were casualties from all areas of conflict. Their ages range from 19 to 45.

The former Allan Park Church has 13 names on a memorial for WW2.

**Lance Corporal Robert Auchinvole** of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders was killed in Tunisia in 1943.

**Captain John Thomson Horsburgh** of the Malay Regiment died in 1942 and is buried in Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore.

**Lieutenant John Kendal McCall** of the Seaforth Highlanders also died in 1942 and is buried in Madagascar.

**Major William James Adamson Murray** of the Royal Engineers and the Bengal Sappers was killed in Tunisia in 1943. He was awarded the Military Cross.

**Lieutenant Alexander Gray Adams** of the Royal Artillery died in 1940 and is buried in Stirling. His son **Private Alexander Gray Adams** of the Royal Army Ordnance Corps was killed a few months later and is buried in France.

The former South Church has a combined war memorial with seven names on the WW2 section.

**Sergeant Duncan Watt Marshall** of the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve died in 1941, but has no known grave. He is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial.

**Private Charles McEwan** of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders is commemorated on the Singapore Memorial in Kranji Cemetery. Many of the casualties on the memorial have no known date of death and are accorded a date when they were known to be missing or captured. Charles's date of death is given as 1942. The men died during the campaigns in Malaya and Indonesia, or in subsequent captivity, many of them during the construction of the Burma-Thailand railway, or at sea while being transported into imprisonment elsewhere.

**Sergeant Alexander Thomas Begg Rough** of the Hampshire Regiment died in Italy in 1944. His father, Alexander, and uncle, Thomas Begg, were killed at Arras on the same day in 1917.

**Lance Corporal William Alexander Whyte** of the Royal Scots was killed in the Netherlands in 1944.

**Sandra Muir**

# Remembrance 2025

The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VJ Day (Victory over Japan) took place on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2025, commemorating the end of the Second World War.

While VE Day (Victory in Europe) marked the end of the war in Europe in May 1945, many thousands of Armed Forces personnel were still engaged in fighting in the Far East. Victory over Japan would come at a heavy price, and Victory over Japan Day (VJ Day) marks the day Japan surrendered on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945, which ended the Second World War.

Fighting in the Asia-Pacific took place from Hawaii to North East India. Britain and the Commonwealth's principle fighting force, the Fourteenth Army, was one of the most diverse in history – more than 40 languages were spoken, and all the world's major religions represented.

The descendants of many of the Commonwealth veterans of that army are today part of multicultural communities around the world, a lasting legacy to the success and comradeship of those who fought in the Asia-Pacific.



## The Poppy

The poppy is a universally recognised symbol of Remembrance and hope for a peaceful future since it was first worn as an act of Remembrance and to raise funds for the British Legion more than 100 years ago.

It unites us in remembering all those from the British and Commonwealth Armed Forces who have served and sacrificed; and do so today, to defend democracy and freedom.

The poppy also acknowledges the wider impact of conflict.

It represents the contribution of civilian services and uniformed emergency services that contribute to national security in times of war, conflict or terrorism and acknowledges innocent civilians who have lost their lives at such times.

### The Royal British Legion website



# The Gutenberg Bible

The city of Mainz, in Germany, has a Museum of Printing that we've been lucky enough to visit a couple of times. Star of the show is, undoubtedly, the reproduction Gutenberg printing press, the oldest and first of its kind in Europe, conceived, designed and built by Johannes Gutenberg and his partner and on which was printed the **Gutenberg Bible** in around 1455. *(It is believed that an earlier example of this movable, metal type, printing press existed in Korea about 78 years prior to the Gutenberg press, but the Gutenberg was Europe's first.)*

I had assumed, stupidly and without much forethought, that the Bible was printed in German, however, somewhat obviously, it's in Latin, in three volumes and in a 42 line, double column per page format. The actual number of copies printed has been lost to antiquity, but it is thought that around 40 copies still exist today, although some of that number may be, or are known to be, incomplete.

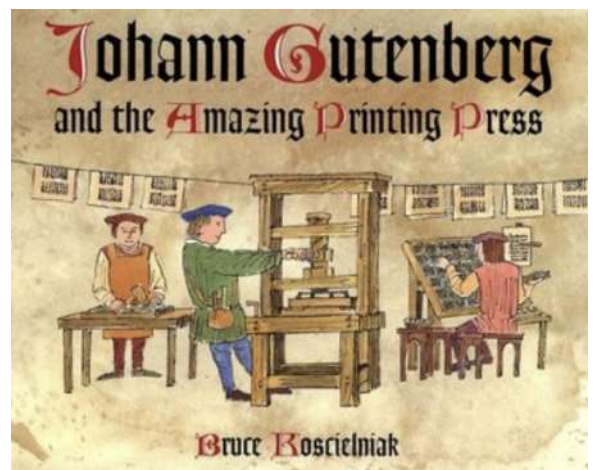
I have read, somewhere? that prior to modern times, it was an offence – punishable by death – to print any part of the Bible in anything other than Latin.

The Mainz Museum has two copies in its vaults, the British Library has a copy, as has the Library of Congress in the United States and an original copy, 570 years old, has just gone on temporary display in the National Museum in Warsaw.

The ubiquitous museum shop in Mainz sells facsimile copies of pages of the Bible in their original 'Latin' format or in a German translation. I couldn't find an English translation and since my Latin never progressed much beyond *amo, amas, amat*, I may have to speak to 'Mr Google' about that.

For further reading, type "Museum of Printing Mainz" into any search engine and there's reams of it (in English!).

## Duncan Crombie



# Music in Park Church



Music students from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland



String Quintet - 'Delta' - finale of the Three Rivers Festival



Hannah (flute) and Elanor (piano)



Kat (recorder) and Attie (piano)



Hannah and Elanor

## The Alto's Lament

It's tough to be an alto when you're singing in the choir,  
The sopranos get the twiddly bits that people all admire,  
The basses boom like loud trombones, the tenors shout with glee,  
But the alto part is on two notes (or, if you're lucky, three).

And when we sing an anthem and we lift our hearts in praises,  
The men get all the juicy bits and telling little phrases.  
Of course the trebles sing the tune – they always come off best;  
The altos only get three notes and twenty-two bars' rest.

We practice very hard each week from hymn book and the Psalter,  
But when the conductor looks at us our voices start to falter;  
"Too high! Too low! Too fast – you held that note too long!"  
It doesn't matter what we do – it's certain to be wrong!

Oh! Shed a tear for altos, they're the Martyrs and they know,  
In the ranks of choral singers they're considered very low.  
They are so very 'umble that a lot of folk forget 'em;  
How they'd love to be sopranos, but their vocal cords won't let 'em!

And when the final trumpet sounds and we are wafted higher,  
Sopranos, bases, tenors – they'll be in the Heavenly Choir.  
While they sing "Alleluia!" to celestial flats and sharps,  
The altos will be occupied with polishing the harps.

*(Written by "Bob" the organist and discovered behind the vestry door of All Saint's Church, Four Oaks, Sutton Coldfield, and voted "number one" in Classic FM's One Hundred Favourite Humorous Poems.)*



## PARK CHURCH CHOIR



Church Choir practices will resume on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> September at 7.30pm in the main church hall, under the new leadership of our organist, Alasdair Smith.

Anyone wishing to sing in the choir is very welcome to come along and join us!



# CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to **Callum McDonald**, who competed in the under 23 World White Water Racing Championship in Solkan, Slovenia, this July, as part of the GB team. He came 7<sup>th</sup> in C1 (one person, one paddle) and 5<sup>th</sup> in C2 (two people, one paddle each).



Next year he aims to get into the senior Team GB squad so he can represent his country in even more competitions around the world.

Congratulations to **Jess McNeil** who celebrated her 80th birthday recently with a large gathering of family and friends at the Birds & Bees. A great time was had by all, especially the birthday girl!



Jess is very grateful to all those who so generously donated to Crohn's & Colitis UK in lieu of birthday gifts, and is delighted to announce that just over £900 was raised.

***Please remember to let the Editor if know there are any special celebrations, events or achievements you would like to share with the congregation.***

# Church Roll

## In Loving Memory

It is with sadness, but great thankfulness for a life well lived, that we share the news of the death of the following members of Park Church:

- John Young
- Maureen Dawson
- Tom Wilson
- Amy Morrison

## New Members

We are delighted to welcome the following new members to Park Church congregation:

- Janice Ogilvie
- Marcella McLennan

## New Elders

We are delighted to welcome the following as new Elders at Park Church:

- Peter Brown
- Ingrid McLean
- Sam McLean
- Dianne McNaughton
- Sharon Singleton-Bruce
- Alasdair Smith
- Brenda Smith

## NEW CONTRIBUTIONS ALWAYS WELCOME

Please submit any items for the Winter 2025 Newsletter to the **Editor**, Sheila MacCallum, at [parkchurchnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:parkchurchnewsletter@gmail.com) by 5pm on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2025, to enable material to be formatted, reviewed, and proofread before being printed in time for Elders to distribute from 23<sup>rd</sup> November, two weeks before Communion on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

Articles, notices and other content should be in **WORD** format.

Please submit photos in **JPG** format to allow re-sizing as appropriate.

Handwritten copies will be accepted, typed up and returned for your review prior to being included, as long as sufficient time is given.

We reserve the right to edit or hold over copy if necessary.

The Winter edition will cover December 2025, January and February 2026.

If you have any queries, please contact Sheila on the above email.

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**Church Administrator  
& Roll Keeper:**

Mrs Sheena Tait

Office Tel: 01786 462400 (*messages can be left on this number*)

**The office is open Tuesday to Friday, 9.30am to 12.30pm**

Email: [parkchurchstirling@gmail.com](mailto:parkchurchstirling@gmail.com)

Church website: [www.parkchurchstirling.org](http://www.parkchurchstirling.org)



## Park Church Stirling (SC001414)

We warmly welcome you to join our activities and events.

Each Sunday we gather together at 11am for worship and fellowship.

Our mission is to share the love of God in a modern world.

Website: [www.parkchurchstirling.org](http://www.parkchurchstirling.org)

Instagram: [@parkchurchstirling](https://www.instagram.com/parkchurchstirling)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/ParkChurchStirling](https://www.facebook.com/ParkChurchStirling)