

December 2022

# MAXWEST CONTACT



**Maxwelltown West Church - Dumfries**  
[www.maxwelltownwest.org.uk](http://www.maxwelltownwest.org.uk)



The Church of Scotland



# MAXWELLTOWN WEST CHURCH

## Our Mission

*Maxwelltown West Church seeks to be a place of welcome to all in our parish; a centre of Christian worship and fellowship.*

*We seek to provide a framework for family life and a place where young people may be nurtured in Christian values.*

## SUNDAY SERVICES – 11 am

Communion Service: Sunday 4th December - 11am

## CONTACTS

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**Fabric Convenor:** (*Volunteer required - please call the Session Clerk if you can help!*)

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**Front cover:** MaxWest Pilgrims at the Isle of Whithorn - Feature page 14

**Above:** Durham Cathedral at dusk - Article page 12

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# Rev Johannes



**“Happy New Year!”** – Of course, regarding the calendar year we have to wait until the 1st of January, but that is different with the church year. The liturgical year begins traditionally with the first Sunday of Advent. A new beginning is always something promising. It is an invitation to leave the beaten track with all its mistakes behind and to start with a clean slate. That is especially the case with the Advent season. The Latin *“adventus”* means **“arrival”**. As a term for the liturgical season, it is related to the coming of Jesus. People often understand this as referring to an event of the past, when Jesus arrived on this earth as the child of Bethlehem. And, of course, in the season of Advent we are busy with the preparations for Christmas. But the term **“Advent”** also refers to the present reception of Christ in the heart of the believer as a personal arrival of Christ and to his future Second Coming as the judge of the world. In this sense, the Advent season is the time when we prepare

ourselves for his coming that he will find us ready.

Therefore, a classical Advent text is the account of John the Baptist’s appearance in the desert and his call for repentance: **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”** (Matthew 3:2) Jesus adopts this message when he begins his public ministry with the call: **“The time has come, the kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”** (Mark 1:15).

Jesus’ appearance marks the end of the time and the world we know. Through his death and resurrection, he has opened a way out of the darkness into the light of the new heaven and the new earth. And he will come back to take the believers with him to his father. But how do we notice his coming? Perhaps he is already here, and we have failed to see him! That is why the Advent season is traditionally a fasting period. When we reduce the things we consume in this dark season of the year, we may become more sensitive to the things that are around us. That can help us to identify Jesus.

**“The Light of the World”** is a famous painting by the English artist William Holman Hunt (1827-1910). The original version can be seen in the side chapel at Keble College, Oxford. A copy that was painted by him toward the end of his life hangs in St Paul’s Cathedral.

The painting shows Jesus knocking on an overgrown door. This refers to Revelation 3:20: **“I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.”** ►



► The door symbolises the human heart. There is no handle, it can only be opened from the inside. The weed on the door suggests that this door has not been used for a long time. But the light of dawn heralds the end of the night and the beginning of the new day. This is the situation of Advent. The time has come. Jesus has come. He knocks at the door of our heart. Do we hear him? Do we let him in? Do we receive him in his “Advent”? That would change everything. For Jesus is not just a normal guest. The crown shows that he as the king of the cross is the son of God. The father has given everything to him: **“He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”** (John 1:11-12)

Our heartbeat can remind us of Jesus’ knocking. Normally we are not aware of our heartbeat, only if we attentively focus on it, we recognise the activity that keeps us alive.

And could it not be that in every heartbeat Jesus knocks at our heart?

Do we still sleep, following the accustomed routine where new things quickly become old?

Or do we open ourselves for the end of everything we know and the start of the new day that is without end: **“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”** (Isaiah 9:2)



## ✠ CHURCH REGISTER ✠

### Baptism

Joseph Blair Dixon  
on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October

~~~~

Our condolences to the family  
and friends of:

Dr Sandy Christie

9.08.22

Mrs Amy Howitt

7.10.22

Mrs Janet Mattinson

12.10.22

Mrs Muriel Gatheral

12.10.22

Ms Wilma Black

8.10.22

A special friend of

Maxwelltown West Church

~~~~ May they Rest in Peace ~~~



# A New Year - a New Faith Course

## “Sermon on the Mount”

In the new year we will start with a new faith course. This time we will look at the Sermon on the Mount that can be found in Matthew, Chapter 5-7. This sermon serves as a summary of Jesus’ teachings and as a basis for Christian ethics. Such important texts like the Beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer are part of it. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount we hear that the crowds were amazed at his teaching (Matthew 7:28). Hopefully we will be likewise amazed!

The new faith course will start on Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> January, and will take place in the Centenary Hall every Wednesday at 7pm until the end of March

The course is based on a booklet from the Lifebuilder Study series. That is recommended to everyone who wants to take part in this course. The booklet can be obtained at the first meeting for £5.

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| 11 January  | Unexpected Blessings (Matthew 5:1-12)                 |
| 18 January  | God’s Way to Make a Difference (Matthew 5:13-16)      |
| 25 January  | The Importance of Obeying God’s Law (Matthew 5:17-20) |
| 1 February  | What’s Wrong with Private Sins? (Matthew 5:21-30)     |
| 8 February  | Faithfulness in Marriage & Speech (Matthew 5:31-37)   |
| 15 February | How to Really Love Your Enemies (Matthew 5:38-48)     |
| 22 February | How Not to Be Religious (Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18)        |
| 1 March     | A Pattern for Dynamic Prayer (Matthew 6:7-15)         |
| 8 March     | What God Thinks of My Ambitions (Matthew 6:19-34)     |
| 15 March    | Relationships That Encourage (Matthew 7:1-12)         |
| 22 March    | Detecting the Lies of Our World (Matthew 7:13-20)     |
| 29 March    | Making the Choice of a Lifetime (Matthew 7:21-29)     |

## LONG SERVICE CERTIFICATES

At the Harvest Thanksgiving service on Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> September, Long Service Certificates were presented to

Elder Tom Bryden, for 46 years of service.

Deacons:

Neil Collins for 55 years;

Fred Birkbeck for 35 years;

Margaret Newlands for 33 years, and

May Bryden for 31 years.

At a later date, Long Service Certificates were presented to the following Elders who could not attend the service: Jock Mackinnon for 42 years and Gordon Little for 37 years, and to Deacon Patricia McKenzie for 30 years.

All were thanked for the years of dedicated service that they have given to Maxwelltown West Church.

*Jane Marchbank - Joint Session Clerk*

# Guild Report

## by Anne Dunbar



Following our Annual Gathering in the General Assembly Hall in Edinburgh the Guild season is in full swing with the new National Convener Helen Eckford installed into office.

This year's theme **"Wee Seeds Big Trees"** was the focus from the main speaker Moderator Rt Rev Dr Ian Greenshields. He reflected on his personal journey from childhood in Drumchapel Glasgow through his ministry in various charges and charity involvement both home and around the world.

Referring to the Guild as most members would grow through Sunday School many progressing into church activities. Now as Guild we can be like big trees encouraging growth and help in this changing time for our Church. The Moderator was undoubtedly an inspirational speaker.



The opening afternoon meeting of Max.West Guild on 4<sup>th</sup> October was very well attended. The speaker was Rev. Johannes Wildner who gave an interesting talk on his life as a young person in Berlin and his life journey to Dumfries.

By the time you read this we will be looking forward to Guild 2023 continuing with all afternoon meetings 2-4pm. Everyone is welcome, men and women, so please come along and find out what we do. And yes tea will be served.

### Looking forward to the 92nd Year of Maxwelltown Guild:

**January 10<sup>th</sup>** Veteran Robin Hood will tell how he walked to London pulling a 20-stone statue of a WW1 soldier for a veterans charity.

**February 7<sup>th</sup>** (*Programme to be advised*).

**March 7<sup>th</sup>** Our Project **"Star Child"** in Uganda . This project hopes to tackle the stigma of children with learning disabilities who rarely leave home and receive no education. So far a new school is partly built and with Guild money completed offering education for all.

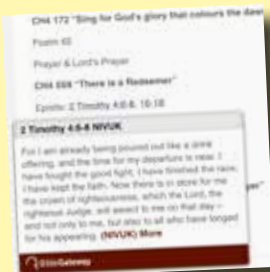


**We've introduced some exciting changes to enhance your enjoyment of the Maxwest website at [www.maxwelltownwest.org.uk](http://www.maxwelltownwest.org.uk).**



### **+ Translation**

Should you know someone whose first language isn't English, direct them to the top of any page on the site, where they can choose to translate the contents instantly into German, French, Italian, Spanish or Gaelic. Please let Margaret Newlands know if you'd like another language added.



### **+ Live Bible verses**

If you hover over any Bible reference on the site an NIV UK version of the first few verses will appear automatically. Clicking on the 'more' link takes you to the full text on the Bible Gateway website. Once there, as a bonus, by clicking the loudspeaker icon you'll hear the chapter read by 'Poirot' star David Suchet, who has recorded the whole Bible. (If the first few verses don't appear, just click on the underlined Bible text.)

### **+ Email updates**

Care to receive an email alert whenever new articles or videos appear on the website? Just pop your address into the simple form which appears at the side of every page and click Subscribe. Or give your email address to Margaret and she'll sort it out for you. Your information won't be used for any other purpose and you can stop receiving the alerts at any time. It's the easy way to be notified immediately when Orders of Service, worship recordings and other news go online.



## **Flower Ministry Appeal**

**If you would like to donate to this on a special anniversary or birthday, please speak to Anne Dunbar. (01387 251455)**

# Brownies

Jill McEwan  
reports



Returning after the summer holidays, the Brownies have been working on the “Have Adventures” theme. Our Unit Meeting Activity cards have included “Disaster Strikes” and “First Aid in the Field”.



Linzi and Ann have started working on their Adult Leadership Qualification. One of their first activities was to make a Promise snake.

We did not know our Promise was about to change with the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth on 8th September. We held a two minutes’ silence to mark the Queen’s passing. Our photograph, which Maxwelltown West Brownies have had for many years, was on display. The Brownies then shared their thoughts about Her Majesty and how she had kept her own Guiding Promise throughout her life.



## The Brownie Promise is now:

*I Promise that I will do my best:  
to be true to myself and develop my beliefs,  
to serve the King and my community,  
to help other people and to keep the Brownie Guide Law.*

A Promise Celebration for Amelia and Sapphire was held in October. They were our first Brownies, since 1952, to make their Promise to serve the King.

The Brownies have displayed their entries for the Pencil Express badge in the Church Hall. This was an opportunity for them to express themselves under headings: “**Me as an Individual**”; “**Me in my Community**” and “**Me in my World**”.

Before the end of our first term, the girls enjoyed making and eating a “smore”. This is melting a marshmallow over a tealight and then squashing it between two chocolate digestives. The “Six of the Term” was awarded to the “Ghillie Dhus”! Because our numbers have increased during the term, we are hoping to bring back the “Sprites Six” who were put on hold when numbers were low. **Any other girls who would like to join our Unit would be made very welcome.**





## - The Last Supper -

This astonishing creation is by Scottish artist Silvy Weatherall. She works with multimedia, her work is defined by the material she uses. A hater of waste, she works with objects that have become obsolete and worthless, whether it is smashed china or other broken things destined for landfill.

The exhibition, which includes a number of other deeply emotive and sensitive works and narratives can be seen at the Gracefield Arts Gallery until December 17th.

## Good Companions

After a long break due to Covid, the Good Companions met for lunch at the Edenbank Hotel on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> October. The members thoroughly enjoyed meeting up again and it was agreed that we would meet monthly at the Edenbank Hotel. New members would be made welcome and anyone interested in joining should speak to me.

Eileen Riddick Tel: 263019

## Parish Visitors Group

This group has continued to keep in contact with our housebound members. If you know of anyone who would like to have a visit, then please speak to your Elder or contact me.

Eileen Riddick Tel: 263019



The Visiting Group took some of their members out for Afternoon Tea at the Edenbank Hotel on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> October (paid for by the Church).

Unfortunately, very few of the people we visit were able to attend, so there were more visitors than people visited, but those that were there really enjoyed themselves.

### *- Dates for Your Diary -*

Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> November: **Scots' Night - 7-10pm**

Sunday, 4<sup>th</sup> December - **Holy Communion**

Friday, 9<sup>th</sup> December - **MaxWest Movies night - 7pm**

Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> December - **Nativity Service**

Sunday, 24<sup>th</sup> December - **Christmas Eve Service**

Sunday, 25<sup>th</sup> December - **Christmas Day Service**

Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> January - **MaxWest Movies night - 7pm**

Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> February - **MaxWest Movies night - 7pm**

# CHRISTMAS MEMORIES AND TRADITIONS



Buying a new decoration for our Christmas tree each year with my daughter and remembering where all the baubles on the tree came from.



Arranging all the pieces in the pottery Nativity scene...



In the lead up to Christmas I remember so many lovely smells in our kitchen with Mum baking cakes, mince pies and shortbread, and making ginger wine. The house was small, yet somehow ten or more family members managed to squeeze in round the living room table for their Christmas dinner, and we all stopped whatever we were doing to listen to the Queen's speech. We didn't have a lot, but our parents made sure our home was filled with warmth and love and we knew it was where we belonged. Love truly did come down at Christmas.



Going to Max West Christmas Eve service and remembering when my son set his Santa hat on fire...

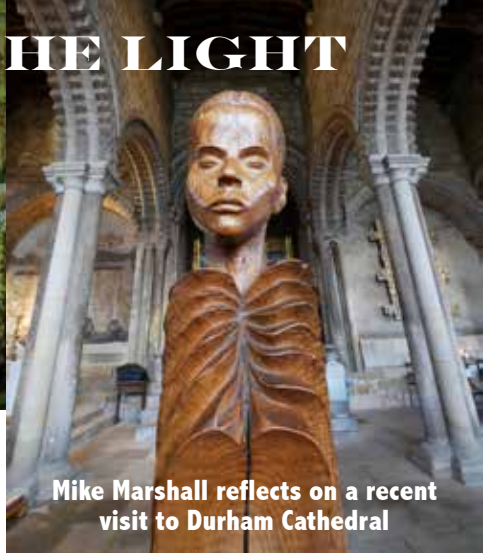


Every Christmas Day when I was growing up, without fail, my father said, "There might be a family who has eaten as good a Christmas dinner, but there's definitely not one who has eaten a better one". And he was right as my mother was a wonderful cook...





# NOT SEEING THE LIGHT



**Mike Marshall reflects on a recent visit to Durham Cathedral**



So when I learned of *'Lux Muralis'*,

a touring sound and light show that was to take place in Durham Cathedral for a few nights, I made sure to make my own personal pilgrimage to this historic shrine of Saint Cuthbert. I was glad that I went early to the place in the daytime, long before the evening's event started – already I'd realised the cathedral would need more than just a single visit. The sheer scale of its Norman architecture takes your breath away. You have to marvel at how masons and sculptors created this stunning building over several centuries with just the simplest of equipment, tools and handed-down skills. The cathedral choir was rehearsing for the Sunday morning service, and the effect was electrifying. Organ, voices, and the soaring ribbed pillars and vaults all contributing to an overpowering sense of spirituality.

Visitors there were in plenty, as you might expect in a UNESCO World Heritage Site, but nothing could prepare you for what was to be revealed in the evening. Queues had begun to form in the deepening dusk, nobody quite knowing what to expect. All ages from babes-in-arms to the elderly and infirm. Was this to be some new kind of pilgrimage, a new Santiago de Compostela? Inside, we followed one another, not quite sure which way to look. The lofty interiors had been filled with projected light shapes and transforming patterns which moved, revolved, cascaded and continually changed colour. Specially composed music emerged from different sources. As a piece of technological wizardry, created by a sculptor and a composer, it was indeed impressive. The three thousand or so people who filed through the cathedral that night probably thought so too.

But, as we shuffled for twenty minutes with our smartphones held high in pop concert style, I puzzled if there was any message. Faith, no matter what creed, just didn't get a look in. With no detectable storyline, the spectacle was just that. Nothing more. A great pity, for Durham Cathedral, along with Saint Cuthbert, the Venerable Bede and all those masons of centuries ago, had the best story of all to tell.





# MATHIA NEWS

from Anne Dunbar

Our Mathia Faith Share Partners celebrated the Dedication of their “New Church” following very many years of saving and building to reach this point.



A special Service took place in September to coincide with a Presbytery visit. Our gift of a CCTV system

is now in place with grateful thanks from the Elders and congregation. Funding came from the WCT account.

Priority over the years has been to support Mathia student's bursary funds. We receive many letters of thanks and details of their progress with over 30 now graduated and many found good jobs. Our Christmas Appeal will go out again this year as 7 new students are in place.



Latest news states Rev Wachera is on leave so they have a student minister filling in. New toilets and washrooms are in place with an extended altar area, all of which have been painted and installed with disabled access in mind.

We were delighted to receive a video from the Mathia congregation showing the celebrations, and which we used in a Sunday service here at MaxWest. This was followed soon after by a further 'Thank You' video made by the Elders, with one or two familiar faces taking part! Elder John Njeru has been keeping us updated with messages:

“Good evening and praise God brethren. The people were very happy on seeing your video message. Back here at our Parish, we did the Annual church leaders and deacons' elections. I was retained as the Minister's pairing Elder. Groups elected their leaders and we are believing that we will have a good and successful church year ahead. Secondary schools final year candidates are due to do their national examinations - currently we have five students who will be joining university next January; one of them is an orphan. We have three more who will graduate.

The situation is worsening every day due to the current drought and many people are going without food. Cows and even wild animals have died due to lack of water and grass but we trust God in all this. The drought has severely affected food security in the country and thus raising inflation rates on recurrent expenditure items and food. Our country just got a new president just a month ago. The elections were peaceful and we thank God for that. The election was very exceptional as such peace has not been experienced before in other elections. Kenyans are hopeful for better times ahead.

We continue to pray for you and wish you all the best.”

*There are two pilgrimages — one external and one internal.  
The external reaches its destination : the internal never does.*



## IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF NINIAN -

A PILGRIMAGE DESCRIBED BY DAVID JOHNSON

Pilgrims coming to Whithorn and nearby sites associated with St Ninian are walking along routes which were established at the very least 1200 years ago. The Venerable Bede's *History of* 731 A.D. tells us: "Before Columba's time, the southern Picts were converted by "Ninia" who was the most revered bishop and holy man of the British nation, who had been instructed at Rome."



The first church that we visited during our day on the Machars peninsular was Cruggleton Old Church (*above*), which sits spectacularly behind trees in the middle of a farmer's field. The church was once used as a potato store! Here we experienced what a complete Romanesque church was like. The church was probably built in the 1100's by Fergus of Galloway, Lord of Cruggleton Castle. There is just one service held in the church each year at 3pm on the first Sunday of September.

Onward to the Isle of Whithorn, a beautiful and tranquil harbourside fishing village four miles away, and lunch which awaited us at the St. Ninian's Hall and Tearoom, along with our host Rev. Alex Currie, (*photo R*) minister of the Isle Church and St Ninian's Church, Whithorn. The Tearoom has one of the best views in Scotland, out over the natural harbour towards the Kingdom of the Isle of Man. The soup isn't bad either!







The Isle Church is in a remarkable location on the foreshore. This is not the church by the sea, but the church in the sea! Inside, many alterations have been carried out over the years and now the church also houses the fascinating and informative Maritime Heritage Exhibition which tells the story of the church today and Isle of Whithorn village life and its characters, as well as its inextricable and sometimes tragic links with the surrounding seas.



Located on the harbourside is “The Steam Packet Inn”, home to its own “Five Kingdoms” microbrewery. Why “Five Kingdoms”? From the Isle on a clear day you may see the Kingdoms of Scotland, the Isle of Man, Ireland and England. But that’s only four Kingdoms. The fifth Kingdom? Look up to the Kingdom of Heaven!

Beside the path to St. Ninian’s Chapel stands the Witness Cairn, erected in 1997 to commemorate the arrival on these shores of Ninian. He actually got here 166 years earlier than Columba bringing Christianity to Iona! Pilgrims are encouraged to place stones with personal messages onto the rock cairn. Here Johannes led us in worship with a prayer and some verses from “For all the Saints who from their labours rest”.





► Not far from the Witness Cairn are memorials to the seven young fishermen from the district who died when their scallop dredger the *Solway Harvester* sank off the Isle of Man on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2000. John Masefield's epitaph - *And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over* - provides a poignant view across to the Isle of Man.



St. Ninian's Chapel was first built in the twelfth century for the benefit of both local worshippers and pilgrims to St. Ninian's shrine at nearby Whithorn. The chapel we see today was repaired and partially rebuilt in 1898 by the Marquis of Bute, with its essential features being preserved. It stands amid a wild and windswept setting evoking the many souls who have trudged up from the shore and asked God for their safe passage. At Whithorn we walked in the footsteps of countless pilgrims to reach the shrine of St. Ninian. As one of Scotland's earliest Christian sites it has brought travellers, traders, pilgrims and royalty to Whithorn for more than 1000 years. Little of the Priory survives today, but at the east end of the church is St. Ninian's shrine.



Whithorn Parish church is situated just to the north of the ruined Whithorn Cathedral Priory and is a simple



rectangular structure with a squat low tower. One of the eye-catching stained glass windows in the interior depicts St Ninian praying, with the "Candida Casa", the White House, in the background.

Our day of pilgrimage was drawing to a close, and we will have to return next spring for the final part of the Whithorn Way from Whithorn to St. Ninian's Cave.

***"The external reaches its destination: the internal never does."***

*My thanks to all those involved in a most enjoyable and informative day following in some of Ninian's footsteps. To Mike and Jean Marshall for all the behind the scenes organising, to Linda and staff at the Isle Tearoom, to Rev Alex Currie for his time and kind hospitality, to Johannes who led our service and to all footstep followers.*