

MAXWEST CONTACT

December 2023



Maxwelltown West Church - Dumfries
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 3rd December - 11am

CONTACTS

Rev. Johannes Wildner 01387 257238

E: JWildner@churchofscotland.org.uk

Session Clerks:

David Johnson: 01387 261627 E: sessionclerk@maxwelltownwest.org.uk

Jane Marchbank: 01387 254416 E: sessionclerk2@maxwelltownwest.org.uk

Clerk to the Deacons' Court: E: deaconsclerk@maxwelltownwest.org.uk

Organist: Stephen Crosbie: 07540 419905 E: organist@maxwelltownwest.org.uk

Church Officer: Tommy Jardine, 07974 104021

E: churchofficer@maxwelltownwest.org.uk

Fabric Co-ordinator: Patricia Lilly, 01387 254964

The Guild: Anne Dunbar, 01387 251455 E: guild@maxwelltownwest.org.uk

Editor MaxWest Contact: Kathleen McMillan 01387 257946

E: editor@maxwelltownwest.org.uk

Church Website: www.maxwelltownwest.org.uk

#MaxWestChurch Tel: 01387 255900

Scottish Charity Reference: SC 015925; CCLI: 1194718

The Maxwelltown West Church defibrillator has now been commissioned, and a plaque in memory of Miss Ida Sandison, whose generosity enabled this vital and publicly accessible piece of equipment, has been placed alongside.



Front cover: The Ruthwell Cross at Christmas

MaxWest Contact is published four times a year by the congregation of Maxwelltown West Church of Scotland,
5 Laurieknowe, Dumfries DG2 7AH - Issue No 278 December 2023. Magazine design: Mike Marshall



Rev Johannes

At this time of the year, we can stumble over angels almost everywhere. They look at us from shop windows and advertisements, normally as beautiful, winged humanoids dressed in white. Perhaps we find it hard to believe in supernatural beings. Nevertheless, in a world where the news bulletins daily remind us of the brutal heaviness of reality, the image of an angel with its childlike innocence, purity and lightness

can bring warmth and solace into our hearts. Especially at Christmas we like to dream of a better world, a peaceful world, an angelic world.

Angels are mentioned in the biblical Christmas story in Luke, chapter 2. We hear that an angel appeared to the shepherds bringing the good news of the newborn saviour. “Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests.’”

The word “angel” derives from Latin “angelus” which means “messenger”. And that is precisely the main task of an angel in the Bible: to bring God’s word to the people. No wonder that the word “angel” is part of the word “evangelist”. An evangelist is an angel without wings. ►

On the Third Day -

Evening on Deeside after Storm Babet



► The appearance of an angel in the Christmas story proclaiming peace on earth symbolises the coming down of heaven – but where can we see this reality? Has anything really changed in the world through the birth of Jesus? How can the story of Jesus give us hope when even in his story we are confronted with a harsh reality? For example, there was no guest room available for his parents. Mary had to lay her child into a manger, a place for feeding animals and not for babies. And later in his life Jesus faced strong opposition. He was finally tortured to death like the worst criminal. That is anything but a lovely story.

The birth of Jesus does not mean that anything had changed visibly in this world. But it changes our vision. Whereas we tend to look away from all the misery in the world since it is too much to bear, the Christmas story shows us that God does not look away. He in fact became a human being sharing our vulnerability and weakness. The almighty and eternal God became a helpless baby, totally dependent on his parents. He experienced even the deepest despair as the son was forsaken by his own father on the cross, thus taking on him all the dire hopelessness of this world. When there is anything that Christmas teaches us, then it is compassion. Do not look away but get involved and mourn with those who mourn. Christmas day is not a happy day in the sense that we forget everything that makes people sad; it is a happy day because we know that God has seen our situation and that he has come into our situation living our lives. Since Christmas we know that no place on this earth is godforsaken.



A true angel does not point away from the reality. On the contrary, as we can see on the painting “the Wounded Angel” by Hugo Simberg, a true angel helps us to open our eyes for the brokenness of the world. If we really want to follow Jesus on his way to the cross, then we have to accept our own brokenness and weakness. We are not the helpers; we are in need of help. But God came in Jesus to save us! **Merry Christmas!**

Johannes Wildner

MATHIA NEWS



*from Anne Dunbar -
World Church Team*

We received an email from John Njeru sending warm greetings and hoping we are “doing well in the Lord”. The Mathia Church is doing well and their students are doing well with their studies – some will be graduating by the end of the year. However, because the Kenyan government has reduced the amount of money given to the university by half, they greatly need any help we can give them. They trust that God will provide a way to cope with the challenges of this economic hardship. Sadly, John’s wife lost her sister-in-law recently, so he asks us to keep them in our prayers and ends by thanking the World Church Team for their support.

AUGUST SETS SAIL - SIXTY DEGREES NORTH!

On the first Sunday of October I set off on my little adventure to Shetland: taking the bus to Aberdeen, and then the overnight ferry to Lerwick, arriving early on the Monday morning. I wanted to visit Shetland and its college which is part of the University of the Highlands and Islands, and to meet with a course coordinator to see if that could be a possible location for my studies after school. There are some really superb facilities there - based on 'Mareel', Shetland's impressive cinema, music and creative industries centre, located on the waterfront. Thinking of the popularity of the crime series 'Shetland', I used the few hours left to explore the town of Lerwick and the beautiful landscape around it, before catching the ship back to Aberdeen. I was very lucky with the weather, which turned out to be sunny and dry all day long, and I was impressed by the kindness of the people that I met. It's a beautiful but at the same time a very remote place. I will definitely consider the islands as an option for my university studies.

August Wildner



Mareel, Lerwick



DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Sunday 19th November: Songs of Praise 4pm - 4.45pm
in Maxwelltown West - with New Abbey and Lochend Churches

Sunday 3rd December:
Communion Service 11am



Sunday 17th December: Nativity Service 11am

Sunday 24th December: Christmas Eve Service 11am
& Candlelight Service at 7pm



Monday 25th December: Christmas Day Service 11am



Sunday 31st December: Communion Service 11am

The After Eight Group.

On Saturday 7th October seventeen of us met up for another afternoon tea at The Crichton Central Cafe.

The gathering was a chance to catch up with some of the ladies we have not seen for a while, and it was good to meet up socially like this.

Our next get together will be in December for a Christmas lunch. Date and venue still to be arranged.

If you would like to join our group please contact Anita Stott, (Secretary) on 01387 255080.

✚ CHURCH REGISTER ✚

Our condolences to the family and friends of:

Mrs Jessie Johnstone
5th August 2023

Mrs Marion Astley
8th August 2023

Mrs Margaret Little
14th October 2023

May they Rest in Peace

Guild News



Our Minister Rev Johannes opened the first meeting with the subject “I Have a Dream” and played the Abba song familiar to all. He referred to the effect dreams can have personally and how God spoke to Moses and others in the Bible, then finished with a meaningful folk song “Street of Dreams”

We also welcomed Margaret Shanks and Agnes Ross, friends from Bengairn Guild which sadly is closing. This Guild has been our Link for many years visiting their events and enjoying fellowship together. Following an invitation to accept their small cross and embroidered tablecloth, both made by their Guild members, we humbly accepted these, (photo R) promising to treasure and use them. Rev Johannes dedicated the items with prayer. We hope these ladies and others will come to join MaxWest for any meetings and celebrations.

Our project chosen this year, called “Beat”, aims to support and educate families with eating disorders and mental health problems. This is a massive problem affecting people of all ages often leading to mental health issues in our area and nationwide. Beat have support teams working with families, developing courses and now have a helpline with experienced people in attendance. We plan to support them with a concert next year. Details will be announced later. You may remember last year we raised funds for “Home for Good” aiming to find suitable homes for vulnerable children. The latest



Enjoying a wee refreshment at The Guild!

national Guild fund for this is £70,500 and rising with great results.

Following our Christmas party in December, on January 9th we have David Miller who worked on Dumfries House; February 6th: John Nelson’s Journey with a Clydesdale Horse and on March 5th Mrs Lynda Mackie with the History of Laurieknowe.

All meetings are at 2-4pm and everyone is welcome.

Anne Dunbar

JOYS OF THE WINTER GARDEN

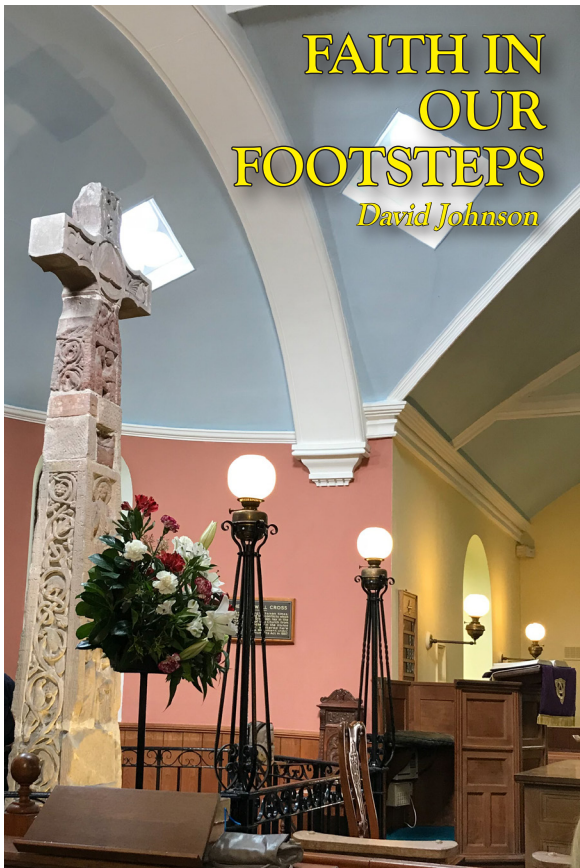
Elwin Campbell believes that this time of year can be just as enjoyable in the garden as in the heady days of summer.



As the garden begins to take a back seat after the busy days of summer, we should do the same! Put your feet up, enjoy the wonderful autumn colours and perhaps make plans for next year. Don't "tidy" in the autumn but delight in the varied seed heads until the spring and insects will benefit too, finding a cosy nook to spend the cold winter months. Of course the bonus is plants will self-seed and fill any spaces the following summer and you may notice quite a few surprises too including some wild flowers which should not be labelled weeds. You will save a fortune too! Just let it go naturalistic and see many more bees, butterflies, moths and birds next summer.

FAITH IN OUR FOOTSTEPS

David Johnson



Friday August 25th saw the third of our summer “Faith Walks”. This time Ruthwell Church was our starting point, and after a short service, which included extracts from “The Dream of the Rood”, we set out for a walk

towards the Solway shore. There had been a violent thunderstorm that afternoon and it had looked as if our walk would not be possible. However, by 6 p.m. the sun was out and the view from the churchyard over towards the Solway looked promising.

Sixteen of us from MaxWest, along with friends and visitors, met at Ruthwell Church, the oldest public building in south-west Scotland still in regular use: it’s a white rendered rubble-built kirk which began as a long narrow medieval church. Now it houses one of the most famous and sacred Anglo-Saxon monumental sculptures in existence anywhere in Scotland – “The Ruthwell Cross”, which Sir Nikolaus Pevsner describes as “...one of the greatest achievements of that date in the whole of Europe.”



The Cross is first mentioned in 1642, when it stood inside the church, but in 1644, following a decree of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Cross was pulled down and smashed. In 1802 the minister of Ruthwell, Dr Henry Duncan, re-erected these pieces in the Manse garden. In 1887 the Cross was moved into a newly constructed apse added to the church.

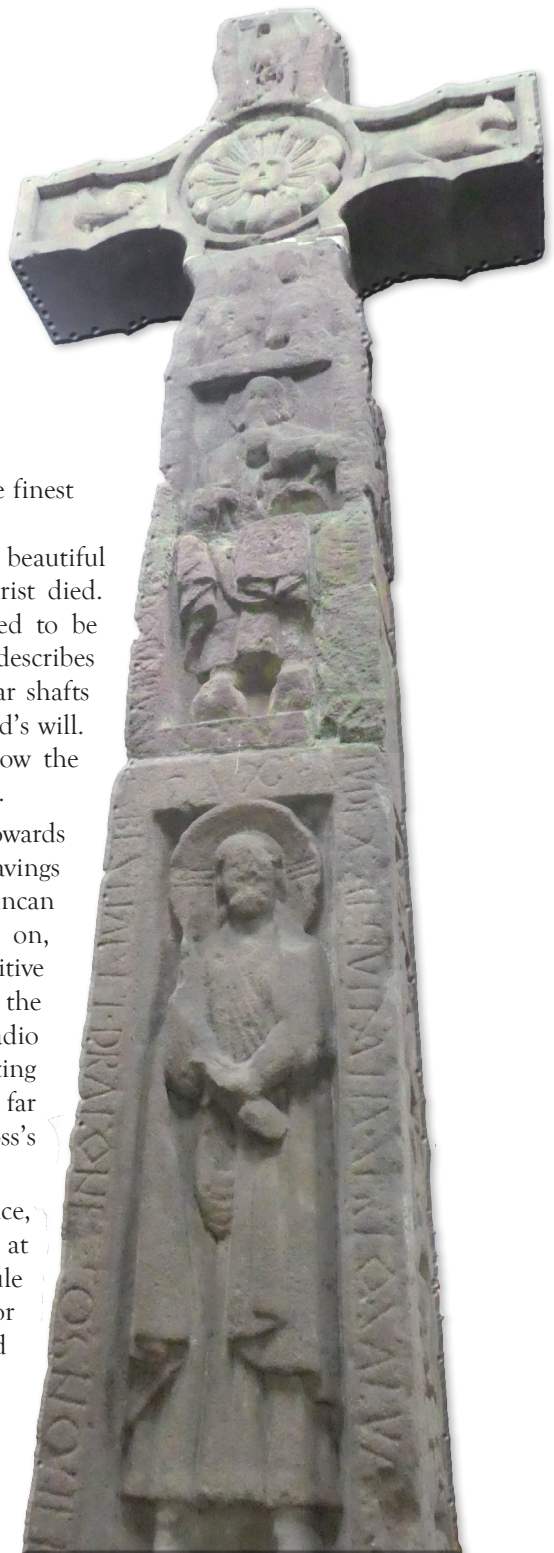
Each of the main faces of the Cross bears a ladder-like grid of borders, carved with Latin inscriptions which frame carved panels with scenes depicting the Crucifixion, the Annunciation, Our Lord healing the blind man, the penitent woman washing Jesus' feet, Mary and Martha and an archer. Other panels relate to the Christian life: obedience to God's call, conversion, penitence and action and contemplation.

On the sides are runes which spell out a version of an Anglo-Saxon poem "The Dream of the Rood". It is one of the finest religious poems in the English language. In a dream, the unknown poet beholds a beautiful tree - the Rood or Cross on which Christ died. The Rood tells him its own story. Forced to be the instrument of the Saviour's death, it describes how it suffered the nail wounds, the spear shafts and insults along with Christ, to fulfil God's will. Once blood-stained and horrible, it is now the resplendent sign of mankind's redemption.

Leaving the church at sunset we walked towards Ruthwell village, passing close by the Savings Bank Museum with its Rev. Dr Henry Duncan connections. All was quiet as we walked on, stopping at Thwaite Farm with its inquisitive cows. As darkness fell, the red glow of the hundreds of lights on the Anthorn Radio Station masts, a NATO VLF transmitting station, brought us back into a world, far removed from the time of the Ruthwell Cross's stonemasons.

My thanks to Johannes for leading our service, and to Alistair McEwan, a "weel-kent" face, at the organ. Thanks also to Rev. Gerald Moule and his Senior Elder at Ruthwell Church for allowing us to hold our service there. And to the band of "Faith Walkers" - I hope that you found, just being in the presence of the Ruthwell Cross, as awe-inspiring as I did.

David Johnson



Brownies

Jill McEwan
Brownie Leader
reports



After returning from the summer break, we have enjoyed another busy term. We have been working on our Brownie programme and cards have included **“Respect the Ref”** and **“Magic Moving Postcards”** when the girls learned new skills. A badge night was held and badges earned were “Aviation”, “Grow Your Own”, “Jobs”, “My Rights”, “Painting and Performing” - showing the range of topics covered.

This term we welcomed four new Brownies and have held two Promise Celebrations. The first one was in the Church Hall with the theme being “Music and Dance” and the second one was held in Catherine Street Park. After the Promises were made, there was time to play in the park and then to make “smores” - toast marshmallows then squash them between two chocolate digestives. Delicious!

A Saturday was spent at a Girlguiding Dumfries and Galloway event at Park Farm. Although the weather was a little damp and breezy, the girls had great fun. Activities to try included bungee trampolines, an inflatable slide, a fun house and an escape room. We ate our lunch then enjoyed ice cream and candy floss - all inside a large tent.

“Six of the Term” was awarded to the Kelpies, just before we finished for the October holiday.



We asked members of our congregation: "Where in Dumfries & Galloway, Great Britain and the Rest of the World are your favourite places?"

LOCATION No. 3

CARRICK SHORE: I have loads of happy memories holidaying here as a child – learnt to swim in the sea. Stunning scenery, quiet. My happy place.

LOCATION

WEST COAST OF SCOTLAND: Especially on a clear sunny day when you can see all of the islands. Spent many fun times sailing here with friends. Even in the rough weather – memories to treasure.



LOCATION



REST OF THE WORLD: Any ski slope. High in the mountains, first thing in the morning, after a fall of snow, freezing cold, navy-blue skies. Nothing beats the first run down feeling. Love it!

From Lasagne to Chocolat!

The Social Group and MaxWest Movies joined together to provide us with a fun evening in September. With lights draped around and tables displaying Italian colours, we were served delicious lasagne & salad, followed by tiramisu, in true Italian fashion. The showing of 'Chocolat' - not forgetting the accompaniment of some special hand-made truffles – linked a delicious meal and movie perfectly.

There was much laughter when the famous 1957 BBC April Fool film of the "spaghetti harvest" was screened, along with excerpts from the coming season's films. Everyone enjoyed this entertaining evening. Sincere thanks were expressed to all who had contributed and attended, in the hope that another similar evening might take place in the future.

Jean Marshall



MAXWEST MOVIES

Helping you get through the dark days of winter!

ALL SHOWS START AT 7pm

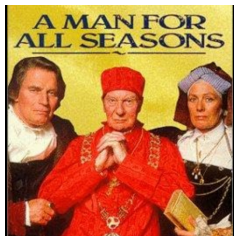
There is no admission charge to our screenings – but you are always free to make your own donation. This helps us offset the cost of film licensing through the GCLI scheme.



Fri 12 Jan: SPREAD YOUR WINGS [DONNE-MOI DES AILES] (FRANCE 2019) This fantastic adventure film is based on real-life, and a magnificent ode to nature. 14-year-old Thomas would love to spend his holidays playing video games, but his mother sends him to his father in the Camargue. A scientist, he is researching an endangered species of wild geese and has a crazy plan: his son should help him show a flock of young geese the safest flight route from Norway to France. Despite initial scepticism, Thomas makes friends with the creatures – and is about to experience the greatest adventure of his life.

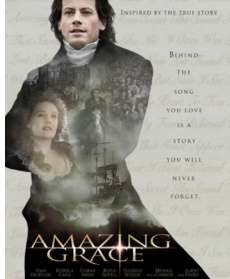
Fri 16 Feb: CHARIOTS OF FIRE (UK 1981)

Hugh Hudson's memorable portrait of British athletes as they prepare for the 1924 Olympic Games. Harold Abrahams and Eric Liddell are gifted fast sprinters, but approach running and how it fits into their respective lives differently. Harold, the son of a Lithuanian Jew, lives a somewhat-privileged life as a student at Cambridge and uses being the fastest to overcome what he sees as the obstacles he faces in life as a Jew despite that privilege. Eric Liddell, a Scot born to Christian missionaries in China, is a devout member of the Church of Scotland who hopes to eventually return to that missionary work. He sees running as a win-win: the notoriety of being fast gives him an added outlet to spread the word of God, while he sees his speed as being a gift from God, and he wants to run to honour God and that gift.



Fri 15 Mar: A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS (UK 1966) This is sixteenth century England. But men like Sir Thomas More, who love life yet have the moral fibre to lay down their lives for their principles, are found in every century. Concentrating on the last seven years of the English Chancellor's life, the struggle between More and King Henry VIII hinges on Henry's determination to break with Rome so he can divorce his current wife and wed again, and good Catholic More's inability to go along with such heresy. More resigns as Chancellor, hoping to be able to live out his life as a private citizen. But Henry will settle for nothing less than that the much respected More give public approval to his headstrong course.

Fri 12 Apr: MRS HARRIS GOES TO PARIS (UK 2022) A humorous heartwarming tale about Ada Harris, a widowed cleaning lady living in 1950s London, who finds herself bewitched by one of her clients' couture Christian Dior gowns. She embarks on a long journey of scrimping, saving and scheming, hampered by ill-fated setbacks and helped by the odd stroke of luck, until she has enough to make the trip to Paris and purchase something equally beautiful for herself. On arrival the clash of worlds and social classes provides all the right conditions for a comic triumph against the odds, Mrs Harris becoming not so much the princess as the Fairy Godmother – her pragmatism and charm put to good use in sorting out the lives of those she meets. Her irrepressible charm just might end up saving the whole House of Dior in this uplifting story of how an ordinary woman becomes an extraordinary inspiration by daring to follow her dreams.



Fri 10 May: AMAZING GRACE (UK 2006) In 1797, William Wilberforce, the great crusader for the British abolition of slavery, is taking a holiday for his health even while he is sicker at heart for his frustrated cause. During this he finds a soulmate to share the story of his struggle. With few allies such as his mentor, John Newton, a slave ship Captain turned repentant Priest who penned the hymn, "Amazing Grace"; future Prime Minister William Pitt and an erudite former slave turned author, Wilberforce fights public indifference and moneyed opposition determined to keep their exploitation safe. Nevertheless, Wilberforce finds the inspiration in new found love to rejuvenate the fight with new ideas that would lead to a great victory for social justice.

Thank you to all our filmgoers! – Mike Marshall