



# INSPIRE



**MANNOFIELD CHURCH**

Scottish registered charity SC 001680

# CHURCH CALENDAR

## SEPTEMBER

Wed 2	10.30am	Midweek Service
Sun 6	10am	Morning Worship
Wed 9	10.30am	Midweek Service
Sun 13	10am	Morning Worship <b>GIFT SUNDAY</b>
	6.30pm	Evening Worship
Wed 16	10.30am	Midweek Service
Sun 20	10am	Morning Worship
Wed 23	10.30am	Midweek Service
Sun 27	10am	Morning Worship <i>Harvest Thanksgiving</i>
	3.15pm	Craigielea Gardens
	6.30pm	Evening Worship <i>Café Church</i>
Wed 30	10.30am	Midweek Service



## OCTOBER

Sun 4	10am	Morning Worship <i>Sacrament of Communion</i>
Wed 7	10.30am	Midweek Service
Sun 11	10am	Morning Worship
	6.30pm	Evening Worship
Wed 14	10.30am	Midweek Service

## OCTOBER

Sun 18	10am	Morning Worship
Wed 21	10.30am	Midweek Service
Sun 25	10am	Morning Worship
	3.15pm	Craigielea Gardens <i>Songs of Praise</i>
	6.30pm	Evening Worship <i>Café Church</i>
Wed 28	10.30am	Midweek Service

## NOVEMBER

Sun 1	10am	Morning Worship
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## Flower Calendar

### SEPTEMBER

6	Miss S. Quin
13	Mrs M. McLeod
20	Mrs C. Black
27	Miss N. Cheyne



Aster  
September's  
flower

### OCTOBER

4	Mrs G. Stalker
11	Miss A. Farquhar
18	Mrs R. Wright
25	Mrs S. Taylor



Marigold  
October's  
flower

### COFFEE STOP

Venue to be announced on  
screen intimations

**Tuesdays 8 and 22 September**

Come along and enjoy a coffee,  
companionship and fine baking!



Dear Friends,

Psalms 84 describes the Temple of Solomon as a magnificent monument to God's abiding presence in creation.

*How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord of hosts!  
My soul longs, indeed it faints for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God. **Psalm 84 (1-2)***

No expense was spared in the construction of this resplendent cathedral of faith. This included a covering of gold that not only finished off the building with a lavish testimony to the importance of the Temple in the lives of the faithful, but also allowed the sunlight to be reflected for miles and miles as if radiating the very love of God itself.

The Temple was a place of pilgrimage and scholars suggest that pilgrims sang Psalms joyfully, such as Psalm 84, as they made their way to the place within which God Himself dwelt.

Mannofield, in its soon to be refurbished state, will no doubt provide a statement for those who worship here and those who frequent the halls which tells of how much this 'place' means to us. We know, of course, that God is not contained within any one physical place. Nonetheless we intend that those who spend time within our finely refurbished building will discover God and His Spirit within our worship, relationships, activities and the outreach that originates here, but which touches people far and wide.

Psalms 84 reminds us of the effect that an encounter with God's Spirit has on people.

*Happy are those who live in your house,  
ever singing your praise. **Psalm 84 (4)**  
They go from strength to strength **Psalm 84 (7)***

Pilgrimage may take people to a church such as ours as they seek sanctuary, inspiration and relationship and we hope many will come to our doors to join in with the exciting witness of our Church in the years to come. Pilgrimage and the search for the 'Holy' takes people much closer to home too. As our consciousness has evolved and as our understanding of God's place in the world and in human life becomes clearer, we recognise that God dwells not only in physical places but also within each one of us. Paul calls our bodies the 'temples of the Spirit of God'.

When we seek a Holy encounter we can find that in the church and the activities of congregational life. We find it in many other places too within our world for God's Spirit roams free. Most importantly of all perhaps, when we seek God, we will find him very close to home – for He dwells in each of us and that Holy place inside us all is a very special place indeed.

Best Wishes

Keith

[minister@mannofieldchurch.org.uk](mailto:minister@mannofieldchurch.org.uk)



## GREAT NEWS

Work on the refurbishment of our buildings should start by 1 October. This excludes the new build community café extension.

The generosity and enthusiasm for this project has been astonishing and fund raising has reached around £1.2 million. It is anticipated that the cost of the contract will be around £1.4m as unexpected but essential repairs to the roof and steeple were identified by our Conservation Architect with an approximate cost of £220,000.

The decision to start is taken on the back of the offer of financial help from The Church of Scotland General Trustees who have offered a loan, should we need it, to meet any shortfall as we continue to fundraise towards the total required. However through a direct appeal to members by way of a Gift Sunday on 13 September and ongoing fundraising, we hope to be in a position where such a loan will be unnecessary.

It is our vision to see Mannofield at the heart of the Community. Our intention is to use the gift of our building and its situation to make our church a 'centre of care' for the whole community and all generations. With the help and support of many individuals, trusts and funds, we are very close to realising this vision.



### **Mannofield Indian Summer Picnic Drum Castle**



Come along and join us at Drum Castle to enjoy an old fashioned day out.

There's lots to see and do at Drum for all ages.

Bring your own picnic and we will bring some fun activities.

**Sunday 13 September  
12 noon start.**



### **Prayer**

We give thanks, O God,  
that Your nature is Love.  
Whenever we hurt You,  
You forgive us.  
Whenever we try to push You away  
You reach out to draw us closer.  
Whenever we forget You,  
You remain by our side in readiness.  
For Your capacity to love  
is beyond measure.  
Enfold us in Your Love  
that we might find the strength  
to love others,  
as You love us. AMEN

### **Blessing**

Never forget:  
You are ...  
adored,  
cherished,  
treasured,  
by God. AMEN.

Acknowledgement :This extract is taken from "Living Stones : Pray Now 2015" and is used with permission. "Living Stones" publications are available from [www.standrewpress.com](http://www.standrewpress.com)

# WAKE UP CALL



I'm not in the habit of reading Papal Encyclicals, but I came across a worthwhile exception recently. "On Care For Our Common Home" is not just for Roman Catholics. Pope Francis "would like to enter into dialogue with all people about our common home".

Starting with pollution, waste and the throwaway culture, the Encyclical studies massive topics such as climate as a common good, water, biodiversity, the breakdown of society and global inequality. Weak responses come in for a hammering. "This is the way human beings contrive to feed their self-destructive vices: trying not to see them, trying not to acknowledge them, delaying the important decisions and pretending that nothing will happen."

In "The Gospel of Creation", an examination of Old and New Testaments leads to the thought that, "From the beginning of the world, but particularly through the incarnation, the mystery of Christ is at work in a hidden manner in the natural world as a whole, without thereby impinging on its autonomy."

Next, a look at the human roots of this ecological crisis. Technology has played a large part – "we do need to slow down and look at reality in a different way". Chapter 4 shows how environmental, economic and social ecology are closely interrelated, examining local culture, decent housing, transport, morals, etc.

Chapter 5 (Lines of Approach) is typically forthright. At international, national and local scales, "there is urgent need for politics and economics to enter into a frank dialogue in the service of life, especially human life". Religions must be in dialogue with science.

At 180 pages, the Encyclical is not just a religious tract, although that's how its final chapter concludes. There are bits with which we Protestants would profoundly disagree, but far more on which to agree. The planet is in danger and it's about time that everyone woke up to the fact and did something about it. A good start might be to read the Encyclical.

*Alistair Stark ,Convenor, Eco Congregation Committee*

## **Pastoral Care Group**

We have been notified by Disclosure Scotland that those in the Pastoral Care Group previously requiring to be PVG checked because of their role in the 'Group' no longer require to be so. I take this opportunity to thank all members of the 'Group' for giving of their time which is very much appreciated by the persons they are in touch with. Hope you have had a good summer despite the weather.

*Jean Anderson (Convenor)*



We've had a couple of busy terms at Rainbows, working on the Roundabout Badges "Roundabout All About Me" and "Roundabout Get Healthy", and doing some challenges about Malawi to earn another badge.

Just before the Easter holidays, we went for our very first Rainbow Overnight at Headquarters where we enjoyed activities on a penguin theme. Those who survived the night were awarded a badge - including our Leader, Helen, who completed the award to allow her to take us away for overnights.

We've created a summer beach scene collage to display in the Centenary Hall - we hope you have seen it - and in May we had a visit from the "Critter Keeper" which was interesting and fun.

*Helen Keith ,Rainbow Leader ( ☎ 01224 781391 )*

## ARCHIE IN AFRICA



When asked the question “What are you doing at the weekend ?” it is not often that the reply is “I am visiting Uganda to open the first operating theatre and ward dedicated for use in operations on children”. That is exactly what I did in April 2015 in my role as Chairman of The Archie Foundation, and this was to be my first ever journey outside the UK. There are people who questioned my wisdom of making this journey at all, let alone as my maiden trip abroad.

Why were we making this journey? It had been brought to our attention by one of our trustees, Professor George Youngson, the overwhelming need for an operating theatre in Uganda dedicated for operations on children as until now operations on children were carried out as and when an adult operating theatre was available.

The Board of Trustees unanimously decided this was something we should seriously consider and, if at all possible, help with, and raise the funding for this much needed facility. After some discussion it was agreed to involve schools and youth organisations in Aberdeen and the North East in the fund raising firstly from an education aspect with the teachers giving lessons on Uganda and the huge lack of adequate medical facilities in a country with a population of over 40 million people with over 55% being younger than 15 years of age and where the life expectancy is not much more than 50 years at best. The second aspect was to show our children how much better off they are in medical terms and in living conditions and how by doing some fundraising they could each give a little which would have an immense impact on the lives of the children in Uganda. As we say in the North East “every mickle maks a muckle”.

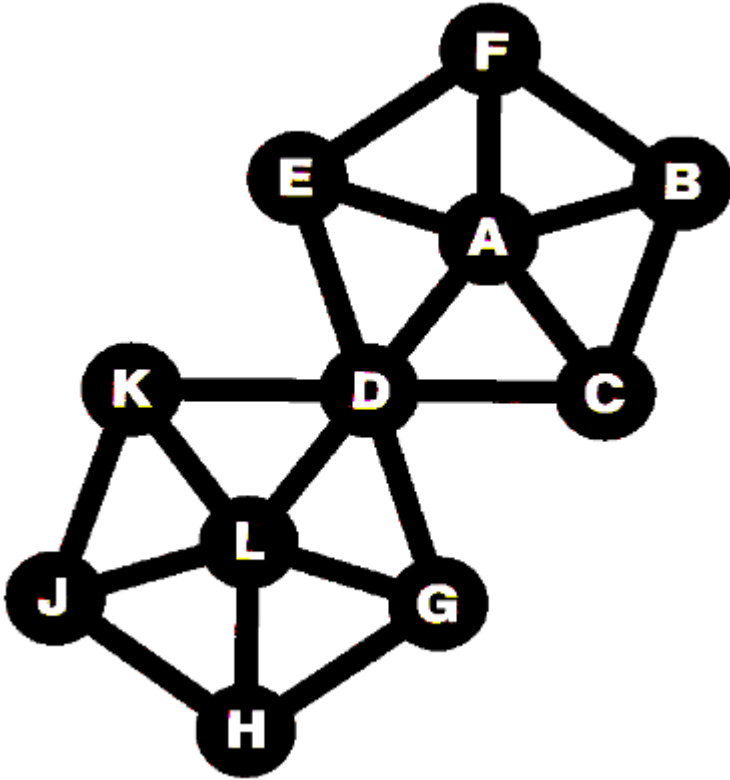
Accompanied by Professor George Youngson, eminent paediatric surgeon, and David Cunningham, CEO The Archie Foundation, I travelled to London for the eight plus hours, and then over four thousand miles flight from Heathrow to Entebbe Airport in Uganda. Arriving there just before midnight their time, we went through immigration and even had a gun like apparatus pointed to our forehead without any explanation as to why. This turned out to be testing our body temperature on the lookout for Ebola virus. That over, we were met by a driver from our hotel in Kampala and set out on the ninety minute journey from Entebbe to Kampala. It was dark and we were tired so we didn't see much of the sights as we travelled but we were set for a better view during our visit and when we were leaving. On the first day in Kampala the hospital was visited by The Honourable Minister for Health in Uganda, whom we met and who was well impressed with the new facility.

In Uganda there are three surgeons qualified to operate on its population of 20 million children and until now not one dedicated operating theatre. In Scotland we have twenty three surgeons and twenty five operating theatres for our population of one million children, a staggering statistic!!



The first scheduled operation didn't take place, as sadly the young boy wasn't strong enough to see it through the night and died before he could be operated on. The first operation to take place in The ARCHIE Foundation theatre was on Godwin, a baby boy of six days old, who was unable to keep down his food and it was suspected he had a blockage in his intestine and an exploratory operation was necessary to decide what surgery would follow. The baby had been carried in to the hospital by dad after a lengthy walk, in the hope something could be done to save his son's life. Life saving help was at hand and young Godwin who was lying in another room was carried by his dad to the operating theatre because there weren't any nurses available. On arriving at the theatre, he handed his son over to the caring arms of Dr John Sekabira whose skill, assisted by Professor Youngson, would save this boy's life.

*(Continued on page 12)*



The floor plan of a building consists of two connected pentagons. Each of the inner corridors (AC, AD, etc) is exactly one hundred metres long but, because of the pentagonal shape, each of the outer corridors (BC, CD, etc) is one hundred and sixteen metres long.

What is the shortest distance you would have to walk in order to pass along all corridors at least once?



## Find the words in CAPITALS

A	R	C	S	O	N	M	H	D	D
S	E	K	I	B	W	O	D	I	W
D	H	B	R	E	A	T	H	E	U
A	T	P	E	C	A	D	G	D	J
I	O	N	R	L	H	O	U	S	E
L	M	B	I	A	I	W	D	T	T
L	Q	V	J	B	Y	H	Q	H	K
Z	E	I	X	O	V	E	R	E	N
D	L	I	H	C	F	E	D	A	S
E	O	Y	G	R	E	U	M	W	P

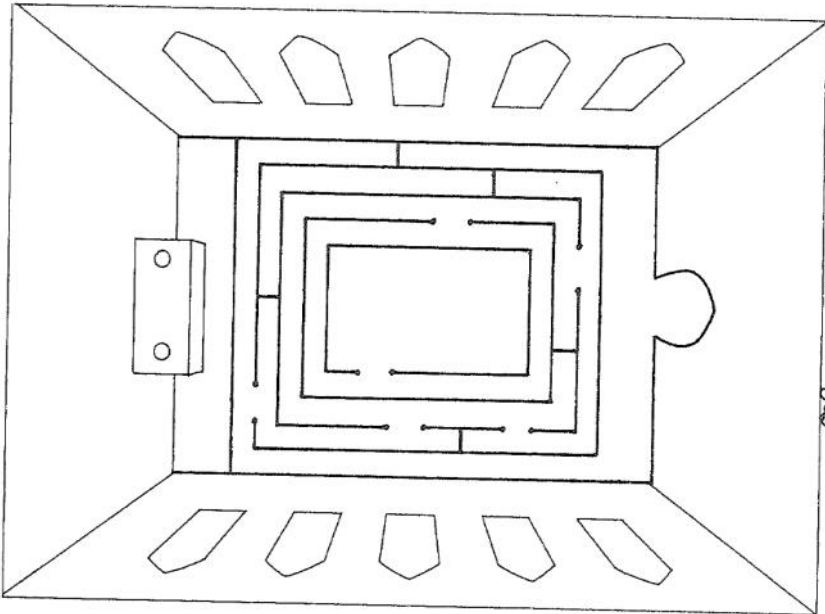
The SON of a WIDOW got ILL and DIED. ELIJAH was staying at the HOUSE at the time. Elijah PRAYED and stretched himself OVER the child THREE times. The CHILD started to BREATHE again. Elijah brought him to his MOTHER, "Look," he said, "your son is ALIVE!"

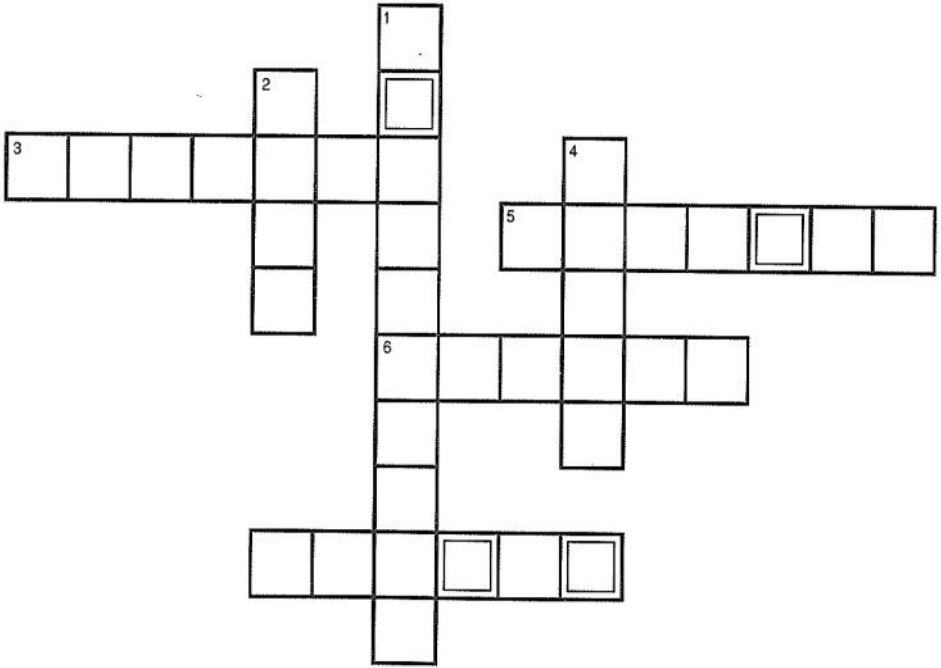


How many children in the crowd  
around Jesus? (Some are hiding)



Bring the children into the centre of the church





**ACROSS**

- 3 What was the angel's name?
- 5 What was Zechariah burning?
- 6 What was Zechariah's job?
- 7 Which prophet would Zechariah's son be like?

**DOWN**

- 1 What would Zechariah's son be filled with?
- 2 What would Zechariah's son not be allowed to drink?
- 4 What appeared to Zechariah?

Rearrange the letters in the  boxes to find out what Zechariah was told to call his son.

**the mouths of babes**



**June answer:** He takes the goat alone on the first trip, returns empty then takes the wolf across but brings the goat back. He then takes the cabbage across, returns empty and finally takes the goat across for the second time.

## West End Community Police Team

In my last submission to the Easter InSpire, I talked about bogus workmen and doorstep callers. On this occasion I'd like to talk about general home security. Though still in relatively small numbers, thefts from insecure homes or vehicles still affect my area which includes Airyhall, Ashley, Braeside, Broomhill, Craigiebuckler, Ferryhill, Mannofield, Ruthrieston and Seafield.



Without a doubt the simplest way to deter thefts from vehicles is to keep your car doors locked and belongings out of sight - **Hide it, Lock it or Lose it.**

In my experience, minimum effort will always be the preference for thieves, because they don't have to carry tools or risk leaving DNA on breaking glass etc. If they can just open a door and pocket a phone or money, they will.

The very act of locking your car encourages the thief to move on to an easier target. If everyone on your street or neighbourhood does likewise, then the chances are the thieves will move on to other areas. It really is that simple.

On a lighter note, we've been given use of a couple of bicycles to patrol the West End CPT!! Whilst "Bobbies on bikes" clearly isn't new technology, it's a first for the West End. Our CPT is made up of many residential streets, lanes and open ground, requiring a variety of approaches. Car patrols can be heard a long way off and foot patrols are limited in range and speed. I see bikes fitting nicely into the space between. They can go where cars can't and can be an effective response to local incidents. (As well as being a bit sneaky for catching the thieves I talked about earlier!)



We first used them in July and August, and the public reaction to them was overwhelmingly positive. We hope to make good use of them over the coming months.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have an issue, either via our national '101' number (it's still '999' in an emergency) or by e-mail for non-crime related enquiries at [AiryhallBroomhillGarthdeeCPT@scotland.pnn.police.uk](mailto:AiryhallBroomhillGarthdeeCPT@scotland.pnn.police.uk).

Ian McKinnon, Inspector

## The Guild

*In the slightly adapted words of the Vera Lynn song –  
"We'll meet again, don't exactly know where, but we do know when"  
— first night 22 September, 7.30pm.*



We'll need to be flexible and to that end we will have a "mobile NAAFI canteen" i.e. can you bring your own mug? Someone on the Committee will phone you prior to the meeting to "brief" you on the details, such as where we are to be.

"Be Bold, Be Strong" is the Guild Strategy for the next three years with the first session being "Go in Peace". How very apt!

Fundraising for our six new projects and the development will be trickier. Not impossible if we work together and are adaptable. We would like to invite others to join us. Come and join those who may be senior in years but very young in spirit and attitude!

## ARCHIE IN AFRICA (continued from page 6)

Dressed in my theatre gown, shoes and head gear I watched as the surgeons and anaesthetist checked him over and looked for the best place to insert a needle to administer the necessary drugs. The spot agreed, they proceeded to prepare for the operation, wrapping Godwin in cotton wool to maintain body temperature in an already extremely warm theatre and covered his body only leaving to view the tiny area of his tummy where they would operate.



As the operation took place I watched in awe the skilful abilities of the surgeons, anaesthetist and theatre staff. The problem found, a twisted intestine was repaired and the operation completed. It was incredible to see first-hand what the team did to save Godwin's life. Godwin was then moved to the recovery room where, under the watchful eye of a caring nurse, he was given the help needed to come out of his induced sleep. It was incredible to watch his arms give a twitch and his legs kick as he came round quite oblivious to what had taken place.

After the operation I was chatting to one of the team and mentioned it would be good if we could follow Godwin's early life as he had been our first patient. Sadly he did not have an address, probably the family living in one of the many shanty towns around Kampala.

The second operation of the morning was on a girl of thirteen who had a large ovarian cancer which was successfully removed saving her life. Not bad for a morning's work by the surgeons - two lives saved, an unlikely outcome without the operating facility provided by the youngsters of Aberdeen and the north east through the ARCHIE Foundation. The project to provide the medical equipment and ward cost in the region of £50,000 with any shortfall in the fundraising being underwritten by a local business man.



This is what we achieved on the ward

Whilst in Kampala we visited Mulago hospital and saw where new born babies are looked after. Every year a staggering 30,000 babies are born in this hospital. We spoke to a young mum who had recently given birth to quadruplets, two conjoined and who already had another three children at home. How do they cope!! In this overcrowded ward there are rows of baskets each containing a baby and those who are not so well are in incubators sometimes three unrelated babies in the same incubator. When they run out of baskets the babies are wrapped in blankets and set down on tables, window sills or wherever there is a flat surface. Coming out of the ward perched on a chair there is a cardboard box marked Death Files! The mortality rate of young babies is 40%.

Since our visit the good work in Naguru hospital continues with at the end of May over sixty operations performed in The ARCHIE Foundation Theatre on children ranging from days old to teenagers - many of them life saving.

I left the hospitals in Kampala appreciative of the facilities we have in the UK and the north east in particular and rewarded for what had been achieved through the generosity of the people of the north east, by The ARCHIE Foundation.

*Thank you all.*

*Joe Mackie, Chairman, The ARCHIE Foundation*

**TO BE CONTINUED in November InSpire**



## **AN AFTERNOON OUT WITH FRIENDS**

**Come and enjoy a round trip by easy access bus to**

**BRECHIN CASTLE GARDEN CENTRE**

**MONDAY 21 SEPTEMBER**

**Tickets £14 including**

**AFTERNOON TEA with SCONES & TRAY BAKES**

**Bus arrives at 12.40pm and will depart at 1.00pm**

**returning approx. 4.30pm**

**Tickets available now from the CHURCH OFFICE or  
the HALL on Sundays**

### **In Session.....by Amanuensis**



The main discussion at the last Session meeting on 30th June revolved around the Update Report received from the Development Committee. At that time it was reported that the Tenders for the works to be covered by the Grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund had been received and the cost of these works were at a higher than anticipated level as a result of additional works found to be required to repair and maintain the structure of the building, particularly to the steeple and roof. A potential significant shortfall in funds currently raised and ensuring that there would be sufficient funds available before starting the work were the concerns that were discussed. The outcome of these lengthy discussions was that the vast majority wished the work to commence as soon as possible, supported the Development Committee in their work to achieve this and tasked them to look at ways in which the cost could be covered so that work could commence in the autumn. Accordingly Session approved suggestions that an immediate appeal be made to the Congregation for help, with a 'Gift Sunday' being held, and that an approach be made to the Church of Scotland to clarify if additional financial assistance could be obtained from them.

In other areas, Session noted that there had been a fall off in attendance at Evening Services and decided that these would now take place only on the 2nd and last Sundays between September and May, with one being a traditional style service and the other in the Cafe Church format. In relation to Sunday morning worship, it is hoped to include a more 'contemporary' style of worship once per month. The Creative Worship material continues to be popular and thanks were extended to those involved, particularly those responsible for creating the arts and craft material. The next session of material will run from September through to Christmas.

To end on a happy note, Session was delighted to hear that our Assistant, Phil Gunn, was successful at the National Assessment Conference and was accepted as a candidate for Church of Scotland ministry. Perhaps selfishly, Session was also pleased to note he would be with us for a while yet, before embarking on his training!

# NOTES & NEWS

## **Mannofield Book Club Wednesday 7 October “The Places in Between”**

*by Rory Stewart*



The *Places in Between* is Rory Stewart's moving account of his walk across Afghanistan in January 2002. Caught between hostile nations, warring factions and competing ideologies, Afghanistan was in turmoil following the US invasion. Travelling entirely on foot and following the inaccessible mountainous route once taken by the Mogul Emperor, Babur the Great, Stewart was nearly defeated by the extreme, hostile conditions. Only with the help of an unexpected companion and the generosity of the people he met on the way, did he survive to report back with unique insight on a region closed to the world by twenty-four years of war.

*For more information contact  
Niki Anderson (☎ 01224 743484)*

## **44th Boys Brigade**



With the summer holidays past, all our Boys Brigade sections are preparing to restart with a recruitment campaign for Anchor Boys and Junior section across several local schools. We would welcome any new boys interested in joining. Anchor Boys starts on 3 September. Anyone interested or for more information please contact [info@40four.co.uk](mailto:info@40four.co.uk) or see our website at [www.40four.co.uk](http://www.40four.co.uk)

## **GUIDE DOGS WEEK**

**3– 11 October**

### **GUIDE DOG COFFEE MORNING and CHRISTMAS CARD SALE Saturday 10 Oct: 10am-12 noon**

As the final decision about availability of halls will not be made until end of August, further information about this event will be included in Sunday intimations.



## **MANNOFIELD CHURCH THEATRE OUTING**

A block booking has been made for the matinee performance on

**Saturday 16 January 2016, 2.30pm**

Tickets are for mid stalls at the reduced price of £26.50

Tickets available from the church office or call Sheila Towns (☎ 01224 589812)

**DON'T DELAY  
VERY limited numbers available**

## CHURCH CONTACTS

Minister	Rev Keith Blackwood	<a href="mailto:minister@mannofieldchurch.org.uk">minister@mannofieldchurch.org.uk</a>	315748
Parish Assistant	Phil Gunn	<a href="mailto:philipgunn106@btinternet.com">philipgunn106@btinternet.com</a>	07763 135618
Secretary	Jean Sharman	<a href="mailto:office@mannofieldchurch.org.uk">office@mannofieldchurch.org.uk</a>	310087
Church Officer	Nick Youngson	<a href="mailto:nick.youngson@o2.co.uk">nick.youngson@o2.co.uk</a>	322239
Session Clerk	Bob Anderson	<a href="mailto:Nnikibob@aol.com">Nnikibob@aol.com</a>	743484

## CONGREGATIONAL REGISTER

### Deaths:

Mrs. Margarita Elise Donald – 30 April

Mr. Graham Hamilton – 7 June

Mrs. Jean Tough – 23 June

Mrs. Cath Knox – 28 June

Mr. William Harper – 5 July

Mrs Elizabeth Cooper Nutt – 12 July

Mrs Nenee Falconer – 12 August

### Change of Address:

Mr. and Mrs Frank Christie

Mrs. Ann Cruden

Mrs. Dorothy Downie

Miss Hazel Anderson

Mr. Duncan Thomson

Mr. Ryan Webster

### Baptism:

Murray William James Farquhar

23 August

### Accession:

Miss Lorna Howie

The deadline for the November issue of *InSpire* is

**22 OCTOBER**

Material for *InSpire* should be deposited in the Church Office or emailed to:  
**roddy@mccollassociates.com**  
**office@mannofieldchurch.org.uk**

### *InSpire* dates 2015/2016

**Possibly subject to change due to the development work**

<b>2015</b>	<b>Material Deadline</b>
<b>November</b>	22 October

<b>Christmas Community Edition</b>	12 November for 9 December issue
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<b>2016</b>	
<b>February</b>	21 January Keith's personal message in leaflet form

<b>Easter Community Edition (March/April)</b>	11 February for 6 March issue (as Good Friday 25 March)
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## Mannofield Church Lunch Club

As construction on the Development project is expected to begin on 1 October there will be **NO LUNCH CLUB** until further notice



Thanks to all our loyal supporters. We look forward to welcoming you back to our refurbished halls and new kitchen!

*Mhairi Clark and her willing volunteers*

### The late Willie Harper

Jane and I wish to thank all who made Dad's time in Mannofield so happy and also thank all for their kind expressions of sympathy since Willie's death last month.

*Alan Harper*



## Part 1 of Edited version of *Anne Thompson's Wednesday Morning Service on 15 July*

As many of you will know, for a number of years now we have been going to Romania to help teach English to groups of teenagers with the Christian Charity *Veritas*. It has been working in the town of Sighisoara for about 20 years now and runs old folks clubs, teenage after-school clubs, kindergartens and a domestic violence refuge among many other things. About 200 people receive a hot meal every day. Usually we come straight back home after our strenuous week but this time we decided to visit a region of Romania entirely unknown to us. That is the area in the extreme North of Romania, very close to the border with the Ukraine. One part of that region is called Bukovina, the other Maramures.

This is an area which for centuries has changed hands among warring powers - it has been invaded by Tartars, Turks, Hungarians, Germans and more peoples over the centuries and bears the marks of all these different cultures. There's a story in the area about an old man who was asked where he had been in his life: *"I've been in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union and Ukraine. And I never left this village!"*

Our first stop was in Vama, a little town famed for its monasteries. These greet you at every step, mostly built over 500 years ago by King Stephen the Great among others. He lived in the 15th century and built a church or monastery after each of his battles against the Turks, Tartars, Hungarians or Poles. He reigned for 47 years, fought about the same number of battles and so there are a lot of churches and monasteries in the area! Voronet is known as the Sistine Chapel of Romania. The exterior is stunning! The exterior paint is made from crushed lapis lazuli and has remained untouched since 1488! It is run by Orthodox nuns. Unfortunately they didn't care for Alan's very discreet knee length shorts and immediately enveloped his legs in a kind of pinny which he had to wear until we left! We were not permitted to take any photos of the



inside but every inch of the walls and ceilings was covered by the most beautiful frescoes depicting mostly biblical scenes, images of heaven and hell and portraits of saints and prophets. Note that the soldiers beating Jesus are dressed as Turks – a political 'spin' of the day.

The life of Bukovina in times of old seems to have been dominated by a profound sense of the religious. Why did they feel the need to build so many wonderful churches, so beautifully adorned? We need to remember that these people could not read the word of God. This was how they could express their love, be reminded of Bible teaching and feel that God was helping them in their lives and defending them against their enemies. Many of them were closed during Communist times and indeed Voronet only reopened in 1991 after the execution of the Communist dictator, Ceausescu.



**To be continued in November InSpire**