



Cathedral News

December 2025 - January 2026

Who's Who at the Cathedral

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From the Provost

Dear friends,

I am writing this rather late, just after Pat Butler's funeral on 27 November. Pat was a much loved member of our congregation, a quiet and humble lady who came to St Ninian's with the late Celia Matthews in the 1960s and was a good friend to Celia, to Bishop Michael Hare Duke and his family, and to many of us here. There were many people at the funeral and Pat had left various wishes which we were happy to carry out in the context of the Scottish Episcopalian funeral rite. One of her requests was to have read the poem 'There' by Kenneth Steven. It was a powerful moment in the service as we commended Pat to the Lord she followed so faithfully.



Poems are powerful things. The late poet laureate Sir John Betjeman had the rare gift of being both popular and profound and, as we begin our Advent journey towards Christmas, his poem on the season often comes to my mind. Here are the last three verses:

Contents

Who's who	2	Annual General Meeting	24
From the Provost	3	Magazine subscriptions	26
Readings and collects	6	Miracle of the flaming coat	26
Forthcoming events/services	8	God's mysterious ways	27
Cathedral Christmas closure	8	Congratulations!	27
Christmas at the cathedral	9	Choir news	28
Remembering the departed	10	Decorating the cathedral	28
From the registers	10	Winter warm space	29
Gladys Ogilvie Shepherd	10	From the Farquhar diaries	30
Pat Butler	11	Caption competition winner	30
What's been going on?	13	Eddie the Eagle	31
Conference in Malaysia	19	Times of services	31
Notification to congregation	24	Clergy contact details	32

And is it true? And is it true,
This most tremendous tale of all,
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,
A Baby in an ox's stall ?
The Maker of the stars and sea
Become a Child on earth for me ?

And is it true? For if it is,
No loving fingers tying strings
Around those tissued fripperies,
The sweet and silly Christmas things,
Bath salts and inexpensive scent
And hideous tie so kindly meant,

No love that in a family dwells,
No carolling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine.

'And is it true?' Betjeman was torn by doubt throughout his life but held onto his faith and his commitment to the Church of England until his death. Christmas has become even more secularised since his day but this poem challenges us to hold on to the mad-seeming truth of our faith, 'The Maker of the stars and sea / Become a Child on earth for me'; and 'That God was man in Palestine ; And lives today in Bread and Wine'. Jesus and the Eucharist, Christ and the Mass, Christmas literally means Christ's Mass.

At St Ninian's Cathedral we want to share this good news with everyone. God loves us so much he came to live with us as one of us. Not only that, he became one of the most vulnerable in our society, a child in the womb and a new-born baby.

We will share this in our carol services, in Christingle on Christmas Eve for children and in our Christmas Masses. This is a busy time for churches, clergy and choirs and we are grateful to our own cathedral choir who will be contributing so

much this Christmas. As a cathedral, music is essential to our life and our music is centred on this same mystery of our faith: Christ who became a child on earth for me and lives today in bread and wine. Even if our cathedral can get a bit chilly in winter we still come because there we know we meet Jesus in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

Part of our witness is the Nativity in the 'stable' on North Methven Street. Andy Beatson has done great work to restore the stable to better than its original condition - many thanks to him and to Bill who transported it here, and also to Fr Philip who used his skills as an electrician to install a safe outside plug socket. While inside our cathedral we worship and pray and serve people, for example at our Monday Warm Space, it is also important to bring our faith out onto the streets especially at this time when it is the 'reason for the season'.

I see many families stop and look at our Nativity and it was a great pleasure to bless it at the start of the Perth Lantern Parade. This was cancelled because of bad weather last year but this year the children made their lanterns in the cathedral and we processed through the rain to carols in St John's Kirk. Thanks to Jamie Gardner for organising it. It was nice to meet Xander McDade, the Other Provost of Perth. As we are a cathedral, we should be active in the life of our Fair City.

Christmas is a time when many come to church to sing the old carols and hear the old stories. Come and celebrate Christmas with us and bring your friends!

With love to you and your families and friends this Christmas and every blessing for the New Year,



The Very Rev'd Dr Stephen Holmes



Cover Photo

The cover shows a painting of the Virgin and Child, known as the Virgin of Humility, which was painted by Fra Angelico in the 1430s.

Readings and Collects for December and January

Second Sunday in Advent - 7 December

Collect: Stir up our hearts, Lord, to prepare the way of your only-begotten Son: that, in his coming, we might serve you with our hearts made pure; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

The Second Collect in Advent: Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness and to put on the armour of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility: that on the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Readings: Isaiah 11.1-10, Psalm 72.1-7, 18-19, Romans 15.4-13, Matthew 3.1-12

Third Sunday in Advent - 14 December

Collect: Stir up our prayers, Lord, and hear us: that they who are sorrowful and suffering may rejoice at the Advent of your only-begotten Son; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Readings: Isaiah 35.1-10, Psalm 146.4-9, James 5.7-10, Matthew 11.2-11

Fourth Sunday in Advent - 21 December

Collect: Stir up your power, Lord, and come: and strengthen us by the might of your love; that, although we are hindered by our sins, your abundant grace and mercy may quickly come and save us; for you live and reign with the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Readings: Isaiah 7.10-16, Psalm 80.1-7, 16-18, Romans 1.1-7, Matthew 1.18-25

Christmas Eve - Wednesday 24 December - Midnight Mass

Collect: O God, you have made this most holy night grow radiant with the brilliance of the true Light: grant that, as we have known the mystery of that Light on earth, so we may delight in him in heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Readings: Isaiah 9.2-7, Psalm 96, Titus 2.11-14, Luke 2.1-14(15-20)

Christmas Day - Thursday 25 December

Dawn Mass

Collect: O God our Father, the light of whose Word has come among us in the Holy Child of Bethlehem: grant that the radiance of that true light, which enlightens our minds by faith, may shine brightly through our words and deeds; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Readings: Isaiah 62.6-12, Psalm 97, Titus 3.4-7, Luke 2.(1-7)8-20

Day Mass

Collect: O God, who wonderfully created and yet more wonderfully restored the dignity of our human nature: grant that we may share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Readings: Isaiah 52.7-10, Psalm 98, Hebrews 1.1-4(5-12), John 1.1-14

First Sunday of Christmas - 28 December

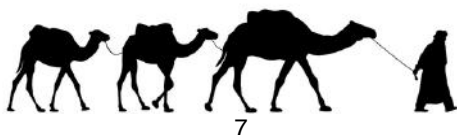
Collect: O God, you make us glad with the yearly remembrance of the birth of your Son, Jesus Christ: grant that, as we joyfully receive him as our Saviour, so we may with confidence behold him as he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Readings: Isaiah 63.7-9, Psalm 148, Hebrews 2.10-18, Matthew 2.13-23

The Epiphany of the Lord - 4 January 2026 (transferred from 6 January)

Collect: O God, who, by the guidance of a star, revealed your only-begotten Son to the nations: Grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at the last be led to see your glory face to face; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Readings: Isaiah 60.1-6, Psalm 72.1-7,10-14, Ephesians 3.1-12, Matthew 2.1-12



The Baptism of the Lord - 11 January

Collect: Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant that we, being born again, and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. Amen.

Readings: Isaiah 42.1-9, Psalm 29, Acts 10.34-43, Matthew 3.13-17

Second Sunday after The Epiphany - 18 January

Collect: Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Readings: Isaiah 49.1-7, Psalm 40.1-12, 1 Corinthians 1.1-9, John 1.29-42

The Conversion of St Paul the Apostle - 25 January

Collect: Almighty God, who caused the light of the gospel to shine throughout the world through the preaching of your servant Saint Paul: grant that we who celebrate his wonderful conversion may follow him in bearing witness to your truth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Readings: Acts 26.9-23, Psalm 67, Galatians 1.11-24, Matthew 10.16-22

Forthcoming Events and Services

Sunday 13 December at 4.00pm: carol concert by the Royal School of Music Scottish Voices

Wednesday 17 December at 1.30pm: St Ninian's Primary School Nativity Service

Thursday 18 December: Perth High School Christmas Concert.

Please note that **the cathedral will be closed from 26 December until 3 January** but will be open for the 11.00am Sung Eucharist on Sunday 28 December (no 9.30 service), the Warm Space on Monday 29th, and a Eucharist on Wednesday 31 December at 11.00am to ask God's blessing on us in 2026.



CHRISTMAS

at PERTH CATHEDRAL

Sunday 30 November, the First Sunday of Advent

4pm - CANDLELIT ADVENT CAROLS

choral music, hymns and readings for Advent, to prepare for Christmas

Sunday 21 December

4pm - CANDLELIT COMMUNITY CAROLS

favourite carols with readings by leaders of community groups

Christmas Eve - Wednesday 24 December

4pm - CHRISTINGLE

candlelight, carols, oranges, and the Christmas story for children & families



11.30pm - MIDNIGHT MASS

a Christmas celebration of Holy Communion with choir & carols

Christmas Day – Thursday 25 December

9.30am - DAWN MASS

a short, quiet Christmas Holy Communion in traditional language

11am - CHRISTMAS SUNG EUCHARIST

a joyful family celebration of Holy Communion with carols

St Ninian's Cathedral, North Methven Street, Perth : www.perthcathedral.co.uk

Sunday Club at the Cathedral

Sunday 7 December: children help with refreshments after the service

Sunday 14 December: rehearsal for the Advent play

Sunday 21 December: Advent play during the 11.00am service

Remembering Departed Loved Ones

The cathedral's Lady Chapel is a place of powerful spirituality where Jesus is present in the Sacrament, where we gather to pray, and where prayers are answered. In it a candle burns day and night to remind us of the loving presence of Jesus. It costs about £20 to keep the flame burning for a month and your donation can be given to the treasurer or Provost or made by bank transfer (subject - Lamp). You are invited to sponsor the flame for a month in memory of your loved ones. You can add their name to the sheet in the Cloister or contact Provost Stephen on provost.perth@gmail.com or Chris our treasurer on treasurer@perthcathedral.co.uk .

In December the flame will burn in memory of **Anne Crowe** and in January in memory of **Pauline Petterson**.

From the Registers

Deaths

Memorial Service for Douglas Keelan (1943-2025) - 7 November

Gladys Bowman Ogilvy Shepherd MBE died on 12 October aged 102 and her funeral was held at Brewsterwells Crematorium on 13 November

Funeral of Patricia Butler (1937-2025) on 27 November at St Ninian's Cathedral

Gladys Ogilvie Shepherd MBE was a dear friend of Provost Hunter and a generous benefactor of this cathedral. Her final gift to us, made two or three



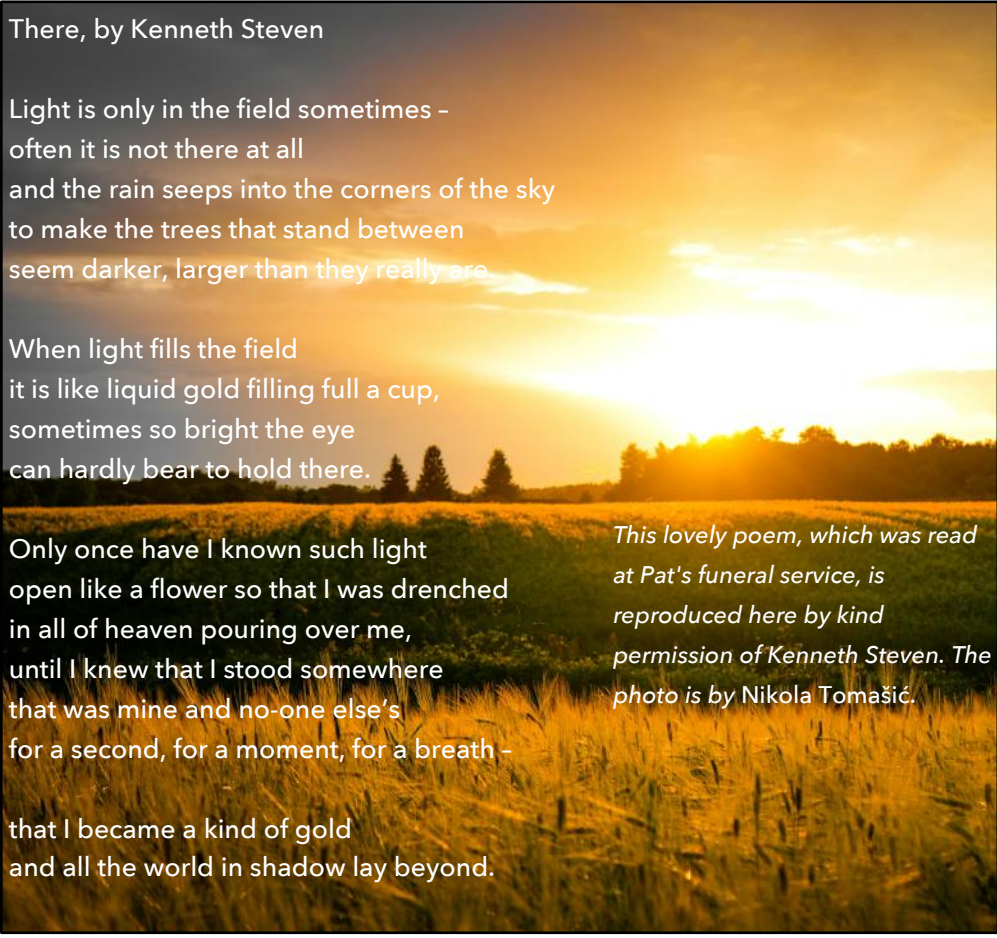
years ago, enabled us to purchase the three illuminated display cabinets which are positioned in the south aisle. She and Hunter shared a deep love of dogs, and her support of the Royal Dick Veterinary College in Edinburgh was recognised by the award of an MBE in 2015. We send our condolences to Hunter on his loss. Gladys's photo (*left*) was taken at her 102nd birthday party.

Pat Butler was better known to most of us and was a faithful and loyal member of the cathedral over many years. Though quiet and self-effacing she had an inner strength which got her through several long periods of ill-health in her younger day. She took

on various roles in cathedral life, from reading and interceding, to manning the Fair Trade stall and supporting artistic events. She was a good friend of the late Canon Celia and of Bishop Michael Hare Duke and his family and it was lovely to see all four of Bishop Michael's children - who had travelled from as far afield as London and Nottingham - at her well-attended funeral service.

Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.





There, by Kenneth Steven

Light is only in the field sometimes -
often it is not there at all
and the rain seeps into the corners of the sky
to make the trees that stand between
seem darker, larger than they really are.

When light fills the field
it is like liquid gold filling full a cup,
sometimes so bright the eye
can hardly bear to hold there.

Only once have I known such light
open like a flower so that I was drenched
in all of heaven pouring over me,
until I knew that I stood somewhere
that was mine and no-one else's
for a second, for a moment, for a breath -

that I became a kind of gold
and all the world in shadow lay beyond.

*This lovely poem, which was read
at Pat's funeral service, is
reproduced here by kind
permission of Kenneth Steven. The
photo is by Nikola Tomašić.*

Thank you!

As we draw near the end of another year, the editor would like to thank everyone who has supported *Cathedral News* over the past twelvemonth. In particular, the provost and his team who have provided a monthly column, as well as lists of readings and collects (usually on time and without being reminded!), everyone who has contributed an article, whether of their own free will or in response to an annoying request to write a review or something on a specific topic, to our photographers - our paparazzi! - Christopher D and Lis B who so willingly send in their pictorial record of what's been going on - thank you all and thank you for reading it. Keep the articles and photos coming!

What's Been Going On?

The Organ

Our poor old organ has been showing signs of age. It was out of action in the autumn while asbestos was being removed from its inner workings (*the photo shows the cheery men from Harrisons at work in the Cloisters*) and is once again in need of a not inexpensive repair. At least we have the recently gifted small organ to fall back on - thank you Robert Gower!



The Unstable Stable

Following on from the council's stated unwillingness to help us erect, dismantle and store our lowly cattleshed - having done so in recent times - we must thank Jamie G for storing it in his garage over the past year and Andy Beatson (*pictured below, hard at work on a roof truss*) for casting his architect's eye over the mass of wood - some of it broken, some of it rotten, and all of it hazardous with its profusion of protruding nails - and then carrying out the necessary repairs in a



very professional way. Our thanks too to Bill Beattie (*pictured overleaf*) for providing his trailer and helping us transport the various panels from Burrelton to the cathedral. And a final word of thanks to the team who, under Andy's close supervision, managed to put it all together in time for the lantern parade.



Robert Lyon Memorial Service

The Robert Lyon memorial service - commemorating the Scottish Episcopal priest who was hanged in 1746 for his support of the Jacobite army - took place in the cathedral on Saturday 1 November. The service was a joint event between the cathedral and the 1745 Association.



Feast of St Margaret of Scotland

St Margaret of Scotland's feast day was marked on 16 November when Canon Christine Fraser preached in the cathedral. Canon Christine is, of course, well known to many of us, having gone in later life from a long-standing member of the congregation into the priesthood. She is rector of St Peter's, Kirkcaldy and it was good to welcome her back to the cathedral. The photos below show the



reverse of a chasuble with an embroidered image of St Margaret, and the Rev'd Christine and Provost Stephen.



'God as Nothing'

Despite the title of this talk by Gilbert Márkus (*pictured on opposite page*) - which could almost have been conceived as a way of discouraging Christians from attending - there was a good turnout in the Chapter House on Sunday 16 November. It was a challenging but most interesting talk and it is to be hoped that the readers of *Cathedral News* will forgive the editor - lest his 'understanding' of it should misrepresent what Gilbert said - for reproducing part of a review of the speaker's book, *God as Nothing*, taken from the *Church Times*.



'Perhaps the most enduring argument for the existence of God has been the requirement for all that is made to have a Maker. But then that bright child in a Year 4 assembly will sooner or later ask the visiting Vicar "Who made God?" Responding with "Ah, but not being made is what makes God God" probably won't cut it, but it does resonate with a recent focus on God as "no thing" ...

'Gilbert Márkus, formerly a Dominican Friar, but now an ecclesiastical historian, here reflects further on the logical imperative that "if God created everything that exists God cannot be one of the things that exists."

'Many theists will have said with some exasperation that the God whom the new atheists don't believe in we don't believe in either. Márkus argues that what theists and atheists actually disagree about is "whether it is meaningful to ask why the world exists, rather than nothing existing at all. They disagree about the meaningfulness of looking at the world, at everything that is, and seeing it as a mystery."

'His key point is that if God is believed to be an existing being, to worship such an existing being is idolatry – and it is idolatry rather than atheism that the Bible tends to condemn as the opposite of faith. This is the theological thread that he traces through religious texts from pre-biblical Akkadian myths, via the biblical canon, and on through the classics of Christian theology, eventually encompassing the poetry of R. S. Thomas and Paul Celan...



'Precisely because we cannot logically, or theologically, refer to God as a being who exists in any sense akin to what it means to say that you, I, this, or that exists, we can be open to the mystery to which faith entices us – and accede to the American country singer Iris DeMent's injunction to "Let the Mystery Be".'

Other thought-provoking statements from the speaker, picked up by the editor, include the suggestion that it is better to think of God not as a noun but as a verb, God is being - 'I am what I am'. God is outside time and space and is not bound by it, therefore God cannot change as change requires time. God is unknowable and he referred to an Indian meditation technique whereby all thoughts of God are countered with 'not that'.

He said we should be very careful with our images of God, eg God as a father, God as a rock etc, as these are the images which will trap us. God is an utter mystery, nothing, yet closer to us than we are ourselves. The atheist in many ways is the ally of the Christian in that he doesn't believe in the images that many of us have of God, and in this he is right.

The talk was recorded and can be heard via the cathedral's Facebook page.

Lantern Parade

The annual lantern parade took place in poor weather on Sunday 23 November. It was preceded by a lantern-making workshop in the cathedral where dozens of colourful lanterns were made. A sizeable crowd gathered on North Methven Street and after a prayer from Provost Stephen, and a countdown to the switching on of lights around the nativity scene (very ably done by Bess and her friend Poppy), they walked towards St John's Kirk, preceded by the Perth and

District Pipe Band. The weather necessitated a move inside the Kirk where our own Jamie led the congregation in carol singing. The following photos show some of the lanterns being made, the Provost at our nativity scene, the pipe band en route to St John's, Jamie leading the carol singing, and the two provosts of Perth - Provost Stephen of the cathedral and Provost Xander McDade of Perth & Kinross Council - pictured in the John Knox chapel at the Kirk.





Conference in Malaysia

World Council of Churches and Churches for World Mission Conference - Malaysia, August 2025

The summer was a rather exciting time with a lot of activity and new experiences.

The last in a series of the summer events - for me - took place at the end of August, when I attended the joint world conference of the Council for World Mission (CWM) and the World Council of Churches. With the theme 'Youth and Evangelism Empowering the next generation of Church Leaders', the conference that took place at the Malaysian Bible Seminary in Rawang, Kuala Lumpur. This was a first for me, solo travelling, as I had been invited to represent the Scottish Episcopal Church.

The journey for this started back in November 2024, when I was at an ecumenical gender-based violence vigil event in Perth and Miriam Weibye, our church relations officer from the General Synod Office, was in attendance. I asked whether she had received any interest in the World Council of Churches Stewards Programme taking place in South Africa in June 2025, and by the end of the event, I had agreed to sign up to apply and submit three essays on church life and young people in Scotland.



As part of the application the Primus, Bishop Mark, also had to write a reference, in which he referred to the fact that the SEC had been a member of the World Council of Churches since it began in 1948, but up to now had never been able to send representatives to any event.

Time passed, and it wasn't until Ash Wednesday that I heard that due to the high numbers applying I was unsuccessful in my application for the Stewards Programme. That was that, I thought, until out of the blue in May I had an email from the UK office of the Council of World Mission inviting me to this conference in Malaysia that was fully funded! A very rare thing in the church.

Once Yeek (the annual SEC youth camp) and the two weeks of the Edinburgh Fringe run was over, I started getting ready for the conference, and this involved a few serious chats with close friends. One such took place on a wet night in the car park via Zoom with Ley-Anne who has had a couple of experiences of international events and of being the voice of our church. We discussed several things around expectations, and how would I feel dealing with people of different viewpoints, the big topic being around same sex relationships and the church. This is also where the conversation turned to the slightly more serious point that I was going to a place where human rights are very different from home, and the fact that in the worst-case scenario I could find myself in a lot of bother just for being myself, let alone being on my own.

I flew from Edinburgh and was met at the airport in Malaysia as planned, and was taken to a hotel for the Sunday night, as they wanted us all to have at least one good night's sleep.

We started that Sunday evening with a formal dinner where we met other delegates. Very quickly I found a friend from Indonesia, as both of us had been wearing our Taizé crosses and we both had an interest in Taizé worship.

The following day we were taken to the Bible Seminary (*pictured on previous page*) where we would be staying while at the conference. It was a great facility and we all made it our home while we were there. Meals were all rice-based dishes, but what was nice was that we were all encouraged to sit wherever we could to fill a table, as no one could eat until the table was full. This meant that each meal you were eating with a different mix.

All the workshops were led by young people, either through the Transformative Ecumenical Partnership, or by those who were in the Training for Mission Programme, the CWM programme for training for ministry, which is a bit like our mixed mode/ contextual training at the Scottish Episcopal Institute but with the students moving country not just placement every 3-6 months.

For me, all the workshops had moments of inspiration and encouragement, and, regarding one of the activities, I came away inspired and wanting to look at running the same activity with the Vestry as it was an interesting and helpful way to identify key strengths and skills. I was fortunate enough to be able to use a small part of a conference workshop with PACT at the October Mission Action



Plan away day that we held at the Bield, and it was good to hear these discussions between PACT members in the similar questioning and open way that it was at the conference.

The lasting impact for me from all the discussions during the workshops and conference itself is that there were other young people my age and younger who at that point had similar challenges and frustrations as me, and it was good being able to share some things that I have found to help with the moments of frustration and challenge. Such frustrations have not gone away but now I can mostly see a way forward which I could not have done a couple of years ago. Being able to share that with other young adults was really nice and assuring for all.



A particular highlight was the WCC delegation getting together on the Monday night, to be told that we had to plan morning prayer for one of the upcoming days. This is where my Yeek leader experience really came into its own, as everyone agreed it should be creative and involve movement but how to deliver that was not something members of the delegation had experience of. In the end we settled on a prayer walk around the grounds with three stations to visit and finished with a full group dramatic telling of the story of the good Samaritan.

We finished the conference with a BBQ which was an interesting experience with its long, round altar fire and, to my slight horror, raw chicken to cook. Thankfully no-one to my knowledge got food poisoning just before long flights home. The quote of the night, for me, was 'You barbeque well for a Brit' - considering this came from an Australian I took it as a high compliment!

I arrived home, tired, jetlagged but also spiritually encouraged and with a wider group of international friends. Since the conference we have all committed to keeping conversations and links going and have met twice on Zoom so far this year, sharing and learning more about each other's contexts and mission.

Jamie Gardner

Advent Carol Service

Perth Cathedral, St Ninian's

North Methven Street, Perth PH1 5PP

4.00pm

Saturday 13 December 2025

All welcome

Music includes:

Palestrina – Matin Responsory

Palestrina – Alma Redemptoris Mater

Vaughan Williams - This is the truth sent from above

Roberts - Angelus ad Virginem

Poston – Jesus Christ the Apple Tree

MacMillan – O Radiant Dawn

and congregational carols.

Director:

Frikki Walker

(Director of Music, St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Glasgow)

Organist:

Dr. John Gormley

(Royal Conservatoire of Scotland)

RSCM Scottish Voices, part of the worldwide Royal School of Church Music, is an adult choir which draws together some of our most accomplished and experienced church musicians to sing services six times a year in a variety of Cathedrals, abbeys and churches around Scotland.

To find out more about us, or maybe wishing to join us, please go to <https://www.rscm.org.uk/learn-with-us/rscm-choirs/sv/> where you can find an application form.

To find out what the RSCM can do for you and music in your church, please visit www.rscm.org.uk.

Notification to the Congregation

As part of our ongoing efforts to reduce the cathedral's dependence on fossil fuels and reduce our carbon emissions the Vestry is planning to trial the use of destratification fans in the Chapter House and Lady Chapel. These fans work by recirculating the warm air that rises from our existing radiators and gently blowing it down to person level, significantly improving thermal comfort and as a result reducing the required heating period by up to 35%.

Solar PV panels (to generate electricity) are under discussion and would also reduce our carbon footprint. These would be situated on the south roof overlooking the carpark.

You may have noticed that the joiner has been working on essential draught proofing of our outer doors and they still feel a bit stiff. This will get easier the more they're used, but in the meantime please would you kindly ensure that the doors are always closed properly behind you?

Thank you!

The Cathedral Vestry

Annual General Meeting

The cathedral AGM will take place in the Chapter House on Sunday 18 January, immediately after the 11.00am service. Please do bring along a sandwich for lunch if you wish. Tea and coffee will be provided.

There are several vacancies on the vestry so if you think you could contribute to the running of the cathedral in this way please do give it serious consideration. Further details about nominations - and nomination forms - will be announced nearer the time. It should be noted, though, that candidates must be communicant members and nominations must be proposed and seconded by members similarly qualified. Candidates should also have indicated their willingness to stand.

Meanwhile, reports for the AGM should be sent into the office by mid-January, ideally in digital format, for circulation before the meeting.



2025

**ANNUAL CAROL
SERVICE**

**Perth Action of
Churches Together**

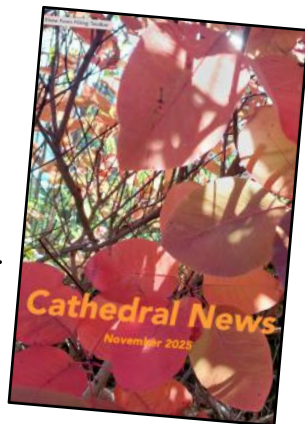
**Friday 19th December, 7pm
St. Matthew's Church,
Tay Street, Perth**

ALL WELCOME

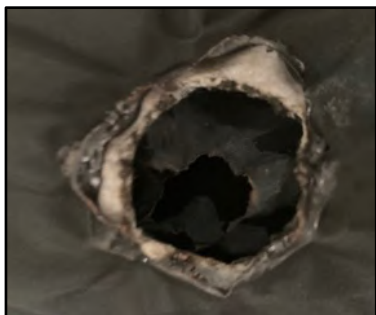
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Local, National and International Charities*

Magazine Subscriptions

Once again the time has come when you have to ask yourselves if it's really worth paying £1.50 for all the nonsense that comes with each paper issue of *Cathedral News*. The magazine is of course free if you are happy to receive it by email. If, however, you would like a paper copy then the suggested price - only if you feel you can afford it - is £1.50 , or £15.00 for the ten issues each year. You can opt either to collect the paper issue from the cathedral each month or have it posted to you, for which there is a suggested charge of £8.70 to cover the postage. The good news is that the envelope is free...



The Miracle of the Flaming Coat



Lighting the flame on a votive candle to remember special people is a lovely idea. However there can be too much flame as I found to my cost when the sleeve of my coat caught fire. It's quite alarming to look down at your arm to see flame licking over it. What to do? A kindly passing Samaritan stopped and we just watched. What to do? There were no convenient towels to throw over and no water readily available.

Blowing on it just fanned the flames, then miraculously the flames died. All was well, my arm was not burned. Looking round the congregation I couldn't help noticing that many were wearing coats of flammable-looking material.

Can anything be learned from this little incident? Maybe? Don't crowd around the votive stand but wait in a queue and maybe the third row of candles, at the back should be removed?

Heather Brand

Many thanks to Heather for this salutary tale. While it is lovely to see candles in the cathedral - and especially so at our candlelit services - perhaps we do need something to hand - a water spray? - in case of accidents such as this.

God Moves in Mysterious Ways

A lovely little story comes from Jacqui Ahern, our cleaner, who literally found herself browsing through the large loose-leaf volume by the war memorial which contains a day by day listing of baptisms, marriages and deaths over the years. The volume was open, as it always is, at the current date, and there, under the baptisms, was Jacqui's name. That day was the anniversary of her baptism, and she had never been totally sure if she had ever been baptised, or where. So, if the phrase 'God moves in mysterious ways' has you imagining God doing 'Dad dancing' then this might be a better way of understanding that phrase!

Congratulations!

Many congratulations to our very own Jackie MacRae (*pictured right*) who was recently given a Community Champion award. Well done, Jackie - very well deserved! The award scheme is run by Perth & Kinross Council and recognizes individuals or tenant groups who go 'above and beyond' for their neighbourhoods. As reported in last month's issue, Father Ross received a similar award for his work in the Stanley community.



Perth Festival of the Arts 2026

On Thursday 21 May at 7.30pm, the Ponterddulais Male Voice Choir from Wales will be singing at St Ninian's Cathedral. This is the opening concert of the 2026 Perth Festival of the Arts and we are pleased that the great success of the opera at St Ninian's this year persuaded the festival organisers to choose us as the venue for their opening concert next year.

Choir News

Christmas is an extraordinarily busy time for the choir so please do come along and support them as they sing us through Advent and into Christmastide. They began in spectacular fashion at 'Seeking Refuge', the candlelit service of music and readings for Advent which was held on the first Sunday of Advent.

One absence from their busy schedule this year is the carol singing in the St John's Shopping Mall. It was always a good opportunity to showcase the musical talent that we have at the cathedral and helped boost the numbers attending the Christingle service in particular, and Midnight Mass. We hope they will be back again next year!

If anyone is interested in a bit of DIY carol singing then the Perth Christian Aid Group will be singing carols at Dobbie's Garden Centre on Crieff Road, on Saturday 13 December at the following times: 11.00 to 11.45, and 12.00 to 12.45. Further details are available from Peggy Lamond.

Christmas Decorations

Here's a great opportunity to get into the Christmas spirit by coming along to the cathedral on Friday 12 December, from 9.00am, and helping to decorate our lovely building for Christmas. We shall have the usual two trees to decorate and the window and pillar decorations to get in place. There will be tea and coffee available and probably cake, biscuits and Christmas music. It's always a cheery morning! One little change this year, is that the nativity scene will be placed on the north aisle, rather than beneath the pulpit, so that visiting schools won't need to move it to make space for their orchestras and bands etc.

Provost's Contact Details

The best way to contact me is by email at provost.perth@gmail.com. My phone number is 07584 091870 and my days off are Monday and Friday afternoon.



THE ADVENT POLICE

I'm afraid I'll have to issue a summons. I definitely heard someone humming 'Joy to the World' in the sacristy.



Was that a 'Fa la la la la' I heard coming from your office?



I'm so ashamed.

I'm sure those weren't Christmas decorations hanging from the Advent wreath.



Busted.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



Perth Group

WRITE FOR RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

WRITE A CARD CHANGE A LIFE!

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 10, 2025

ASHRAF HAMZAH

St John's Threshold,
Princes St. PH2 8LJ

10.00 – 12.00 noon

All welcome!

Enjoy tea / coffee home baking

Ashraf Hamzah,

AI Movement
Building Manager

how & why
Write for Rights
Campaign
makes a difference

Free: donations to Amnesty International welcome

More info: brownmackay@gmail.com

Warm Space

The winter warm space in the Chapter House is up and running again, providing hot drinks and breakfast - and perhaps more importantly, companionship - on Monday mornings between 9.00 and 11.30.

It is funded by Perth & Kinross Council and is open to anyone who would like to come along. And if you felt like giving a hand with making bacon rolls, or frying eggs, the team would welcome you aboard. Just have a word with Pat Beatson or Wendy Duncan.

And as mentioned elsewhere it will be running on 29th December.

From the Farquhar Diaries

Our very reverend friend had recently suffered the loss of his younger brother, James, also a clergyman who had also served as a chaplain at St Ninian's. He describes him as follows:

7 December 1925. James did well in life but his abilities ought to have carried him further than they actually did. Till he got his Hon. B.D. from Cambridge, and his Canonry [at *Inverness Cathedral*] about a year before he died he never in the eyes of the world rose above the ranks of the ordinary parish Clergy. For some years too he attended the Rep. Ch. Council and made a pretty frequent & most creditable appearance on the platform, but somehow something always emerged to arrest and stop his progress. I think his health must have continually been against him; the cares of his large family hindered him. He also belonged to a school of thought, which had no affinities to the dominant 'Anglo-Catholicism', so that his writings were not welcomed and for many years I think he was discouraged by his want of visible success. He was a man, however, of the most transparent honesty, unpretending goodness and had a vigour of thought which would always think for itself. He was not 'Catholic'; he was not 'Evangelical'; he was not 'Broad'; he was not 'Modernist'. I do not know how to describe him. Perhaps I might say he was a Low Churchman, without much unction, whose faith was fundamentally orthodox. R.I.P.

This is an extract from The Diaries of the Very Rev'd G T S Farquhar, edited and published by the late Margaret Lye, a member of our congregation.

The Caption Competition



A worthy winner of the caption competition is Pamela Robertson whose suggested text to the photo of Provost Stephen struggling in the play tunnel at toddler church is, 'That beretta just won't fit.' Well done, Pamela, and the prize - a photo of a brand new BMW - is on its way to you!



Eddie the Eagle says...

As assistant editor I was amused to receive yet another email from Google suggesting we were not based in the UK. Last time they thought we ran this esteemed magazine from France, and this time they think from South Carolina in the USA. This, of course, is in the Bible Belt. Has Google perhaps read this magazine cover to cover and decided that we are terribly fundamentalist? I don't think Provost Stephen has any plans for snake handling - a Bible Belt practice - but should snakes ever come in to St Ninian's a number of people will very quickly be out. The first, dare I suggest, being Father Ross whose aversion to our slithery friends has previously been noted!



Times of Services etc

A warm welcome to everyone who comes to our services!

Sunday	Sung Eucharist 11.00am Sunday Club 12.15-ish, after the end of 11.00 service in term time, for primary age children
Tuesday	Morning Prayer 9.30, Evening Prayer 5.30 Rosary Group 1.00
Wednesday	Morning Prayer 9.30, Eucharist 11.00, Evening Prayer 5.30
Thursday	Morning Prayer 9.30, Evening Prayer 5.30 Toddler Church 10.30-12.00 in term time (for ages 0-5)
Friday	Morning Prayer 9.30

And finally...

Please pass any contributions for the magazine to the editor, Jeremy Duncan, or email them to cathedralmagazine@gmail.com . The closing date for inclusion in the February magazine is **18 January**. Thank you!

**St Ninian's Cathedral
of the Scottish Episcopal Church in the
Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane.**

We are one of the family of Anglican churches throughout the world.

The cathedral is served by a clergy and lay team:

Bishop

The Right Rev'd Ian Paton
Diocesan Office, 28a Balhousie Street, Perth, PH1 5HJ
Tel: 01738 443173

Provost

The Very Rev'd Dr Stephen Holmes
provost.perth@gmail.com

Assisting Clergy

The Rev'd Philip Francis
The Rev'd Ross Stirling-Young
The Rev'd Peter J Higson, Vocational Deacon
Currently on sabbatical

Lay Reader

Lis Burke

Contextual Formation Pathway Student

Dr Maihri Greenwood

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