ALYTH PARISH CHURCH

MAGAZINE

SPRING/SUMMER 2026

Dear Friends

It was a real pleasure acting as your Locum over the Christmas period. As well as some very well attended services with some very special singing and a lovely atmosphere I also received invitations to some lovely Christmas events in the town which were most enjoyable.

Working here in Alyth has been very special for me. We have an exceptionally lovely church with such a friendly atmosphere and which is so well attended. Even on days when we have had real winter weather this year the numbers coming to our services have still been very good.

As well as our Church services and activities, getting to know this community has also been very special. Friendliness, care and thoughtfulness are very much at the heart of life here. For a minister working in a world very different from the one he started off in all those years ago, to see these special qualities where you are working is something very dear indeed.

I look forward to sharing in the Easter services with you.

God bless you all and your loved ones,

Brian

A QUICK MINUTE FROM THE SESSION

A YEAR WITH BRIAN – CELEBRATING OUR LOCUM MINISTER

It's hard to believe that we've already enjoyed over a year with Brian as our locum minister. In that time, he's become not only a steady and reassuring presence leading us in worship each Sunday, but also a much-loved part of the everyday life of our church family.

Over these months, we've discovered a lot about Brian — and he's discovered plenty about us too! Somewhere between services, pastoral visits, funerals, coffee mornings, and the occasional bit of gentle church chaos, we've all settled into a rhythm that feels both familiar and full of warmth.

One of the things that has stood out most is Brian's pastoral care. His regular visits, especially to Burnside Court, have brought comfort, companionship, and conversation to many. Whether he's offering prayer, listening with patience, or simply sharing a moment of humour, Brian's presence has been such a blessing to those he visits.

We also want to commend the care and dignity with which Brian has supported families through funerals over the past year. His compassion, calmness, and thoughtful words have meant more than he probably realises, and we are grateful for the way he walks alongside people during some of life's hardest moments.

Of course, no reflection on a year with Brian would be complete without mentioning one of his best-known qualities his love of all things Cake!

Coffee mornings have quickly become a favourite stop on his schedule — and we're sure the bakers have upped their game since discovering his enthusiasm!

We must also mention Christine, who has taken to church life in Alyth with such warmth and friendliness. Whether she's chatting after a service, joining in at events, or offering a supportive presence alongside Brian, she has become very much part of our Congregation. We're delighted to have her with us, and her kindness has not gone unnoticed.

As we look back on this first year, we do so with huge gratitude — for Brian's dedication, his care, his good humour, his sermons, his companionship. Here's to the past year of shared ministry, and to many more moments of fellowship, laughter, worship, and of course, coffee mornings & cake!

Steven Tait
Session Clerk

FOSTERING

Alistair and I have a Social Worker (SW). She's employed by Perth and Kinross Council (P&KC) and her job is to support foster carers. She asked us recently if we knew of anyone who'd be interested in fostering because there's a foster carers shortage. The council website has information about what fostering is and how to start to make enquiries about becoming a foster carer. I thought I'd describe some of our experience of fostering in the church newsletter. Maybe someone else in the congregation would be interested in doing this work.

There's an African proverb "it takes a village to raise a child". Bringing up our three children, Alistair and I were so grateful to the people who embraced that proverb, people who helped us, encouraged us, worked with our children in Cubs and Scouts, Brownies, Sunday School, sport groups. We had family and friends who supported us. The church community was central to our children's childhood. Sometimes it's not possible for children to be cared for by their birth parents and P&KC fostering team first look to see if children can be cared for by someone in the children's extended family or friendship circle. This is called "Kinship Fostering". An example of this could be aunties or uncles who take on the task of raising their nieces or nephews. The SW department supports these carers and sometimes will look for respite care to give the carers a break.

Currently, Respite/Short Break Care is the type of fostering that Alistair and I are doing. What this means is that our SW will ask us if we can take a child or two children for up to two weeks. We're given the dates we'll be needed and information about the child/children that will help us make the child/children feel safe, welcomed and positive about their experience away from their main carers. Usually the carer will bring the child/children to us for a visit before they come to us for the break.

We've been privileged to meet some amazing people in the six months we've been foster carers: children and their families, other foster carers and the fostering social work team.

There are other different types of fostering: Interim Fostering with placements of up to about four months and long term fostering. It's a slow process to get approval to be a foster carer and the final decision to approve is made by an independent panel. There's training during the approval process and we're expected to be able to demonstrate ongoing training. Other foster carers have been generous to us with advice and support.

If fostering is something you'd be interested in or you know of someone else who'd be interested in this, then we'd be happy to chat further or the P&KC Fostering team would be delighted to hear from you directly. *Submitted by Sarah Cowper*

MY MOUNTAIN ADVENTURES – MOUNT TOUBKAL, MOROCCO

Standing at 4,167 metres (13,671 feet), Mount Toubkal is the highest mountain in North Africa. Situated in the Atlas Mountains in Morocco, it is also the highest peak in the Arab World. In 2022, I picked this as my next challenge and booked flights to Marrakesh, via London, and arranged to join a guided group to attempt to reach the summit.

On arrival in Marrakesh, I was a little overwhelmed. The main square in the city was a bit of an eye opener for a wee lad from Alyth. As evening approached, I met with my fellow climbers and we were soon on our way towards the mountains and the small village of Imlil, which would be our base for the night. Imlil was much more my kind of place with its small array of mountaineering shops and cafes. We were treated to a traditional Moroccan meal at our hotel (known as a Riad) and had a briefing on what to expect over the next day or so. It had been a long day of travelling and soon, I was off to bed, slightly apprehensive about what I would experience on the mountain.

After a light breakfast and a cup of peppermint tea, we were on our way. We could see the snow topped mountains from the door of the Riad and collected crampons from one of the shops in Imlil. We wandered through the town and into the mountains, got to know each other and soon we were gaining some height and the African sun was getting hot. Wild goats kept an eye on us as we trekked and we passed through some traditional Berber villages there. The Berber people were a real delight. They live a basic life but were kind and generous and we were only too happy to hand over a few Dirhams for a glass of freshly squeezed orange juice or a bottle of cold water. They had some ingenious contraptions set up to keep bottles of water cold in the hot sun.

We had lunch at a Berber settlement and by late afternoon, we were approaching Toubkal Refuge. This is a very basic lodge situated at 3,207 metres (10,521 feet) and was busy. We again were treated to a Moroccan meal, prepared by our guides and snacks were available to purchase. Electricity is only available there for a few hours a day and the showers were 'interesting'! Nothing more than a trickle of cold water really! The sleeping arrangements would make some people uncomfortable. The dormitories were mixed sex and consisted of bunk beds with four to a bed. Yes, FOUR to a BED!!

At a height above 3,000 metres, altitude sickness can be an issue and at the refuge, I did have a sore head but it could be managed with plenty of fluids and basic medication. The next day, we had to summit and return all the way back to Imlil so a very early start was needed. No one slept much due to the combination of sleeping arrangements, altitude and the excitement and some nervousness about the next day's climb. We were up and off heading for the summit at 3 am. Ground conditions meant we would require crampons from the refuge, all the way to the summit and back again.

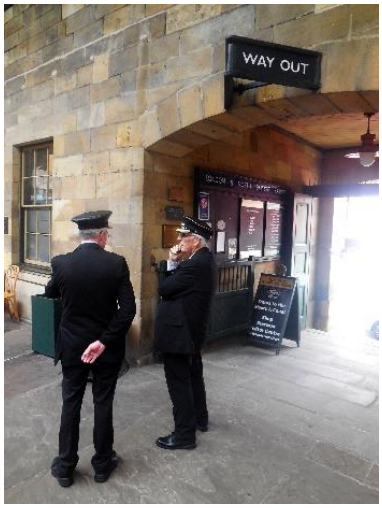
It was truly beautiful making our way up the mountain with the stars shining and a stream of headtorches lighting our way. It was tough going but the views over the mountains as the sun rose made it all worthwhile. The altitude was really taking its toll though and we all had to grit our teeth and keep putting one foot in front of another. By early afternoon, we reached the summit. It was a great feeling and I'm not going to lie, nearly brought me to tears. Although snow covered, it was warm on the summit and we could see for miles in every direction. We had time to sit and take in the views and what he had achieved but still had a long trek ahead of us. Back at the refuge, we had a beautiful Moroccan salad and copious amounts of peppermint tea. Then the slow trudge back to Imlil started. We were all knackered and although heading downhill, this was arduous and took us a good few hours. It was a great relief to reach the Riad and get a rest and we had a small celebration. As a Muslim country, alcohol is banned in Morocco but the peppermint tea was in ample supply and certainly hit the spot! Again, our chef rustled up a beautiful meal which fuelled me for the long trip home the next day.

Alyth to the top of the Arab world and back again in 4 days! I was feeling quite proud of myself!

Submitted by David Robertson

THE NORTH YORKSHIRE MOORS RAILWAY

On my mother's side of the family, both my grandad and my great grandad had worked as train drivers so I grew up very knowledgeable about steam trains and spent hours with my toy railway. I still enjoy a steam railway trip and my favourite is the North Yorkshire Moors Railway.



Christine and I discovered it when on holiday in North Yorkshire. We were staying in the village of Goathland which was featured in the 1990s TV series called Heartbeat. It was called Aidensfield in those stories about a local policeman.

There in the village is a lovely old station, restored by the North Yorkshire Moors railway, and like some of the others has a lovely little tea room where you can enjoy some lovely friendly hospitality.

They have made a wonderful job of restoring both train engines and carriages and continue to do so every year.

The lovely restored trains travel from Pickering to Whitby on the North Yorkshire coast, stopping off at the lovely refurbished stations at Levisham, Newtondale, Goathland, and Grosmont.

If you are down in that part of the country it is well worth a visit. One of my special days out is to travel the whole line then go into Whitby for one of their delicious fish suppers! A special holiday treat.

Submitted by Rev Brian Ramsay

THOUGHTS FOR THE DAY

It's good to hear the phone ring
And know a friend is on the line
A catch up then is brewing
To find all is fine
Lots of topics are covered
A laugh or two is shared
Nothing beats a little chat
To show you both care

When someone is worried
Don't pass them on your way
A shoulder's required
To brighten their day
That moment of solace
Is all that it may need
To listen and comfort
And that's a good deed.

There's nothing as bonnie
As flowers in bloom
Their wonderful colours
Bring beauty to gloom
When sun shines on them
Or raindrops enfold
It's clear to be seen
They are a joy to behold.

Live for today
Find joy in your life
Laugh when you can
To combat any strife
Talk to others
And show that you care
Enjoy time outdoors
And the lovely fresh air.

Alyth is a great place
With beauty it abounds
Its folk so rich in talent
They really would astound
Standing strong and proudly
Whatever they may face
There's nowhere quite like it
That's oor ain Alyth place.

A dog is such a treasure
To walk by your side
Always true and faithful
Sometimes a lovely guide
A pal to be relied on
To love you come what may
Both caring for each other
Each and every day.

Though time flies past so fast
Memories are made to last
Make each day a pleasure
With happy moments to treasure

SUNDAY TEAS

On the first Sunday of each month from March until December and every week during July /August, refreshments are served in the lower hall after morning worship. It is manned by volunteers and there is a donation dish for charities. In 2025 we supported 4 charities, each receiving over £100. It is an opportunity to meet up and have a chat often with folk we don't see on a regular basis ..... a church social occasion that is well attended. We hope you will come and join us for a cuppy.

ALYTH'S 19TH CENTURY ACTIVISTS

As secretary of one of the oldest organisations in Alyth, the Alyth Literary Society, I have had the privilege to meet and talk to many interesting people who have accepted the invitation to address members and visitors. I have also received enquiries regarding past members and two of these proved to be most interesting.

A lady in Yorkshire who had seen a picture in the Literary Society publication "Alyth, A Licht Abune" thought that one of the men in a photograph could be her great-grandfather. The gentleman in question was Robert Dempster, "The Quarryman Propagandist" as he was described in a newspaper article in "The Evening Times". Dempster was born in Dairsie in Fife around 1849 the son of a ploughman and was himself of that same profession for a good part of his working life. In 1881 he was the Head Farm Servant at Tullyfergus and married Jane Ann Hardie in 1883 by which time he was living in Morn Street, Alyth. Five of their family were born here between 1884 and 1893.

In 1884 Dempster wrote a booklet "The Natural Horseman - The Horse and Ploughman" in which, apart from the main topics of horses and ploughing, he expounded his views on the conditions which farm workers endured in the days at the end of the 19th century. He also published several leaflets on various contentious subjects which were distributed throughout Angus and Perthshire mainly by himself and indeed he often walked into Dundee to distribute the leaflets on a Saturday night winding up with an open air address at the Greenmarket before returning again on foot. His views were undoubtedly socialist and he was probably a founder member of the Alyth Ploughmen's Club and Socialist Union. An Alyth branch of the Ploughmen's International Society was formed in 1885 and Dempster was appointed Treasurer and in November 1890 the Alyth Branch of the Federal Labour Union held its first meeting and he was the interim president. He was a member of the local Liberal Society and the Alyth Literary Society but resigned from the latter after only a short time as he "disagreed with their politics". Obviously in those far off times the Alyth Literary Society was more than just a literary society.

Dempster's views may have caused him to change his occupation as he was later employed as a quarryman at Auchterhouse and then about 1896 the family moved to Dunino in Fife and then to Clackmannanshire where he continued his involvement in politics until 1905 when he was killed in a quarry accident.

Robert Dempster was without a doubt a man with a great social conscience and although with probably little formal education wrote and proposed changes in society some of which nowadays we take for granted. The footnote to this is that, unfortunately, we

were unable to prove conclusively that the gentleman in the photograph was the great-grandfather of the lady from Yorkshire.

Another enquiry, from even further afield, concerned an Alyth poet. A young Italian girl, Veronica, was studying English literature at the University of Bologna and had chosen to write her thesis on James Young Geddes who lived in Alyth in the late 19th and early 20th century. Why an Italian student should choose to write about a relatively unknown Scottish poet is a long story but suffice to say she was guided in that direction by her tutor. Having discovered that I was the Secretary of the Literary Society and knowing that Geddes had been a member she came to Alyth to have a look at our minute books and to her delight found at the back of one book were handwritten poems by the man himself. So who was James Young Geddes?

He was born in Dundee in 1850 the son of a tailor, a profession he was to adopt himself, and by the time he was 18 years old was running the family business. He married Jessie Henry in 1874 and they moved to Alyth in 1881 or 1882 but before this he had already established himself in literary and debating circles in the town of his birth. In his youth he joined the Tay Square United Presbyterian Church Literary Society described as one of the best in Dundee, this at a time when such organisations were very popular. He rose to become president of the Society but came into conflict with the minister of the Church over his, the minister's, prosecution of the Rev. George Gilfillan for heresy. He moved to the Lindsay Street Congregational Church and again joined the literary society there. During this period of his life Geddes came into contact with many literary figures of Dundee and this inspired him to his "New Jerusalem" a poem which has been described as "typical of that phase of mind through which many thoughtful young men pass".

When he came to Alyth, he became involved in local politics and was a founder member of the Radical Association which later merged with the Liberal Association. He served on the Police Commission and was a long standing member of the Town Council. He was greatly disturbed by the sanitary conditions in Alyth and began a correspondence in the "Dundee Advertiser" which ultimately led to the founding of the Working Men's Municipal Party. He was one of the founder members of the Alyth Literary Society and was elected President at the first meeting on 31st August, 1882.

It is, however, in his poetry that the politics of the man are seen. He had a disregard for convention and pomposity and in many poems he criticises through humour and sarcasm the parochial actions of politicians. In "the Spectre Clock of Alyth" he ridicules the local council for their efforts to restart the town clock which has stopped due to years of bird droppings fowling up the works. The repairs could only be carried out if the sale of the guano is enough to pay for the repairs.

On a more serious note his poem "The Glory has Departed" shows his sadness at the lost radicalism of Dundee and his contempt for those citizens and politicians whose only concern is where they will be in the procession to celebrate Dundee becoming a city. James Young Geddes died on 30th October, 1913. He had attended the meeting of 21st October but on his way home that evening he had taken ill and failed to recover. A report in the Dundee Advertiser reported on the funeral. "The shops were closed and blinds drawn as the long funeral cortege slowly wended its way to the cemetery, and here, in the mellow light of an autumn day, following a wild morning of rain, the last remains of Baillie Geddes was(sic) laid at rest".

Whereas with Dempster the query raised was unsuccessful, Veronica obtained her Degree and was commended for her thesis on Geddes.

As mentioned Robert Dempster was billed as "The Quarryman Propagandist" and James Geddes was once described as a "Poet and Public Man". These descriptions probably show the different approaches taken by these contemporaries in their efforts to promote radical ideas in the changing political world of the late 19th century. Dempster can be imagined as the firebrand whereas Geddes had more subtle methods. Nevertheless, both had the well-being of their fellow man at heart and although neither was Alyth born and bred, the town can be justly proud of these adopted sons.

Submitted by Bill Davidson

A D V E N T

Tapestry in background crocheted by Rev Brian's Grand-daughter Freya for his special Birthday. It depicts the Life of Christ.

Our exceptional gifts

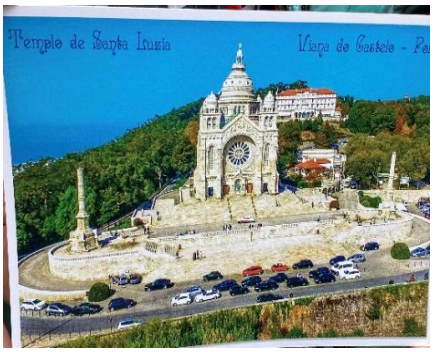
Delivering the toys in Edinburgh with Hannah Beaton-Hawryluk at the Ukranian Office.

POUSADAS AND PORT

The word "pousada" means a place of rest or an inn. Pousadas were established by the Portuguese government by taking over beautiful, old and magnificent castles, monasteries and nunneries and converting them into upmarket hotels, similar to Paradors in Spain. The Pestana group has acquired the management and upgraded them into luxury hotels without losing the historical magic.

My visit took me to three Pousadas. The first was in the small town of Vila Vicosa, east of Lisbon, which was the residence of the Dukes of Braganca, the royal family of Portugal. They built the Ducal palace which is a huge construction, not dissimilar in style and size to Versailles with hundreds of elaborately fitted rooms reflecting their excessive wealth. Adjacent to the palace is the lovely Pousada, a former nunnery. The most notable duke was Joao who drove the Spanish out of Portugal in 1640 after only 60 years of subjugation and became King Joao. It is him on the horse in the square (see photo). Today's Duke of Braganca is the 24th and is heir to the non-existent throne. He now lives in Twickenham.

The second Pousada, a magnificently converted old granite hospital, was north in Viseu, which is an old Roman town with a wonderful cathedral and castle. The main feature in Portuguese places of worship, apart from the ostentatious gold alters, are the floor to roof wall coverings of thousands of 10 cm square ceramic tiles depicting biblical and historical events in graphic detail. See photo.



The third and most spectacular Pousada was further north at Viana Di Castelo by the mouth of the river Lima. The Pousada is perched on the top of Monte Santa Luzia at an elevation of 1815 feet. It overlooks the town and the Atlantic and is adjacent to a glorious Basilica. See photo. In the nearby Estrella mountains (bus to the peak at 6539 feet) is the source of Rio Mondego, the longest in Portugal. The Tagus and Douro do not count as they have their source in Spain. The other significant river is the Mondego which forms the northern border with Spain. The whole border between

Portugal and Spain is the oldest unchanged border in the world having been established in the 13th century.

No visit to Portugal is complete without a wine tasting at a port wine house in Gaia, across the Duoro from Porto. All the major port brands are now owned by multinational drinks conglomerates bar one Ferreira. The popularity and rise in consumption of port was due mainly to two factors, the British traders (mainly Scots) and Napoleon. The wars between Britain and France all but stopped the importation of brandy and port (and Scotch whisky) hurriedly filled the gap. Perth and Alyth have a connection with the port trade through Sandeman, a Perthshire family, and one married an Alyth lady as recently pointed out in "The Voice". Port was sometimes prescribed for health maladies including gout. When Pitt the Younger developed gout aged 14 his doctor prescribed one bottle of port a day (a habit he may never have changed). The Ferreira brand was established by a formidable lady, Dona Antonia Adelaide Ferreira in the 19th century. One port to be recommended is Ferreira's white port, Ferreira Reserve Branco (not Blanco). Branco is Portuguese for white, and the port a must.

Pousadas and port are a perfect match.
Submitted by Bruce Ballantine

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A grandfather was walking through his garden when he heard his granddaughter repeating the alphabet in a tone of voice that sounded like prayer. He asked her what she was doing. The little girl explained: "I'm praying, but can't think of exactly the right words, so I'm just saying the letters, and God will put them together for me because He knows what I'm thinking."

Written by children:

- St Paul cavorted to Christianity, he preached holy acrimony, which is another name for marriage.
- One of the oppossums was St Matthew who was also a taximan.
- The people who followed the lord were called the 12 decibels.
- The Epistels were the wives of the Apostles.
- Jesus was born because Mary had an immaculate contraption.
- David, a Hebrew King, fought the Finkelsteins.
- Moses led the Jews to the Red Sea where they made unleavened bread, which is bread without any ingredients.
- In the first book of the Bible, Guinness, God got tired of creating the world so he took the sabbath off.

RABBIE TODAY

If Rabbie Burns cam' back this way
And saw the world as it is today
He'd likely have a lot to say
I hiv' nae doot
But I'm sure that he wid want to stay
And try it oot
What wid maist impress this humble loon
Born and brocht up near an Ayrshire toon
He'd be prood Neil Armstrong reached the moon
And stayed a while
And I'm sure the Berlin Wa' comin' doon
Wid gaur him smile

Friends o' the Earth I think wid score
They'd beat a pathway to his door
Even the puir wee moose, whase hame he tore
Wis safe, for he
Wi' gentle calm and nae furore
Just set it free
A car, instead o' horse and cairt
Wid tempt the loon, noo that's a cert
And him, never bein' faint o' hert
He'd have a go
But wid he manage tae convert or wid he no'?

The toons wid get the lad, I fear
Wi' traffic jams, and changin' gear
And if a traffic warden should appear
Wi' pen and pad
He'd think the fine was awfu' dear
And be hoppin' mad
MacDonald's, Wimpey, Burger King
Wid fairly mak' his taste buds zing
He'd want tae sample everything
On offer there
In his day haggis was the thing
His bill o' fare

At microwaves and oven chips
And plastic joints for knees and hips
Flyin' tae France on weekend trips
He'd gasp in awe
But the lassies wi' their glossy lips
He'd think them braw
But tae Women's Lib he'd be averse
'Tho we've here a lad, who'd ne'er coerce
He may think tae try wi' word and verse
Or love's sweet sang
Modern miss's fancies tae disperse
But he'd be wrang

Television films by satellite
Wid gi'e puir Rab some sleepless nights
And the giant plane poised for flight
Like a bird o' prey
Could fly him tae the highest heights
And back in a day.
He'd come doon tae Earth though wi' a bump
When he grasped the economic slump
Half the MPs in the hoose are chumps
No' every man
But maybe he could come up trumps
Wi' a better plan

He'd be saddended by the world affairs
Countries fightin' grimly for their shares
'Hale nations thinkin' naebody cares
Aboot their plight
He'd pray, I'm sure for quick repairs
And an end in sight
I widna' even hazard a guess
What in the world wid maist impress
But I'd like tae think oot o' a' the mess
Some good shone through
And Rabbie Burns wid say "God Bless"
I've enjoyed the view.

Submitted by Elma Mitchell

ACROSS CANADA IN 18 MONTHS

Alexander McKenzie was born in Stornoway in 1764. He went to America in 1774 and was employed in the fur trade in 1779. In 1788, he charted Canada's longest river, now bearing his name. In 1793, McKenzie became the first European north of Mexico to reach the Pacific Ocean by an overland route. McKenzie was knighted in 1802. He is buried in Avoch on the Black Isle, north of Inverness.

In 2003, a bit over 200 years later, McKenzie's feats inspired a married couple, Abi and Duncan Thomson (family of Morag and Tam Thomson), to give up their jobs and decide to follow the "McKenzie trail" in a canoe – having had no previous canoeing experience.

Starting in Montreal, their journey took the intrepid adventurers up and across the heartland of the vast country of Canada. Backs aching, muscles burning, they paddled initially upstream against the currents. Going from one river system to another usually required carrying the canoe – and luggage to last them 2 years – distances of up to 20 km (12 miles).

Starting in April, they canoed and portaged (carried) until it became too cold to go further, and they spent 8 months in La Ronge, Saskatchewan, finding temporary work and "enjoying" temperatures of -48°C. Such temperatures however brought unique experiences such as ice fishing, dog sled tripes and cross-country ski-ing with the Canadian Mounties.

Setting out again after winter, their journey took them to Peace River in northwest Alberta, then down the infamous Fraser River, one of Canada's most dangerous, many parts much too hazardous to canoe and requiring long sections of portaging.

Not everything on the journey had gone exactly to plan. Capsizing in the middle of nowhere caused them to lose some important equipment. At the top of the Fraser River, in the town of Prince George, they decided to leave their canoe under a bridge, unattended, only to find on returning that it had been stolen. They had to re-equip themselves completely. And they had to deal with a number of uninvited visitors at their campsites. "We had quite a few encounters with bears – they're incredibly inquisitive and always hungry. There was one occasion where a bear wouldn't leave us alone and we had to pack up and paddle 5 km down river to get away from it." Tired and relieved, they arrived in Vancouver, 18 months after setting out from Montreal. "We carried our canoe into downtown Vancouver and hit the fast-food restaurants to celebrate."

20 years on, Abi and Duncan are parents to 5 children. All are being raised to enjoy the big outdoors, and understand and appreciate different peoples, cultures and languages.
Submitted by Morag Thomson

A LETTER FROM GOD

Good morning,

As you got up I watched and hoped you would talk to me. Just a few words, such as thanking me for something good in your life yesterday or last week would do.

But I noticed you were busy selecting the right clothes for work. I waited again to hear from you. When you ran around the house collecting papers, I knew there would be a few minutes to stop and say hello, but you never slowed down.

I wanted to tell you that I could help you accomplish more than you ever dreamed possible if you would just spend some of each day with me. At one point, you waited fifteen minutes in a chair with nothing to do. I waited to hear from you.

Then I saw you spring to your feet; I thought you wanted to talk to me, but you ran to the phone and called a friend. I watched as off to work you went and waited patiently all day long to hear from you. With all your activities you were too busy to talk with me.

I noticed at lunch you looked around; maybe you just felt embarrassed to talk to me. You glanced three tables over and noticed some of your friends talking to me before they ate, but you wouldn't.

There was still more time left, and I hoped that we would talk. You went home and had many things to do. After they were done, you turned on the TV; just about anything goes there and you spend many hours watching. I waited as you continued watching TV and ate your meal but again you wouldn't talk to me.

At bedtime you were totally tired. After you said good night to your family you plopped into bed and fell asleep . I had so much wanted to be part of your day. We could have had so much fun and accomplished so much together.

I love you so much that I wait every day for a thought, prayer or thanks. Well, maybe tomorrow! I'll be waiting.

Your Friend,
God

Submitted by Liz Norrie

H A R V E S T

All is safely gathered in for Trussell Trust and checked over by our youngest congregation member, Charlie.

OUR VISIT TO JAPAN

Many of you will know that Margaret and I visited Japan last autumn. It was Margaret's 70th birthday and so a special adventure was in order. Neither of us had visited before, but armed with tourist guides, maps and advice from our son, we were excited to learn first hand about the culture, the history, and the life there. We were keen to meet people, experience their ways, to sample the food, and the traditions, to visit gardens, markets, shrines and castles. Well, we certainly tried our best in the relatively short time we had.

I have so many stories to share, some of amazing discovery, and some silliness, but one of my favourite days was spent in Tokyo with our guide Nobuko. She was a lovely lady who chatted about the city, its parks, shrines, markets and tourist attractions, but also spoke of her family, and most importantly listened too. She was interested in our lives and in Scotland.

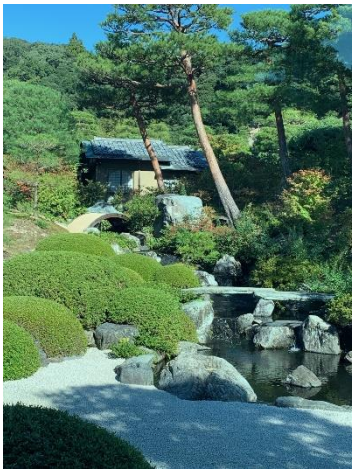
Nobuko took us to the park that surrounds the Meiji Jingu Shrines. We entered the park under a huge Tori gate. She stopped and explained that you should hesitate and bow as you enter the sacred site. She then said it was polite to walk on the left of the path, and indeed many people were following this respectfully, however we noticed that many were not, and it was obvious they were the tourists! It seems that although the locals were careful to follow protocol, they were not upset by those who didn't know better. Nobuko explained that most Japanese adhered to two religions and felt no contradiction. Many holy sites have shrines dedicated to Shinto and to Buddhism alongside each other. She told us that Shinto focused on the present and the influence of spirits in all things around us, the trees, the wind, and the living presence of ancestors, and Buddhist shrines compliment this with a focus on self-awareness, and provide an outlet for the belief in an afterlife. Before approaching the shrines they wash; we were directed to a small fountain and were shown how to use a small ladle to rinse both hands and face, and then the ladle itself. At the shrine they bow twice, clap hands twice to call attention to themselves before praying, then toss a coin(silver please, no bronze,) into a collection box, and a final bow before leaving. I couldn't help but draw similarities with the Christian notion that God's spirit is all around us, then the use of cleansing water in baptism, the way we address God when we start to pray, and lastly the expectation to part with a bit of cash! I was reminded of the children's hymn "Stand up, clap hands, shout thank you God". The Japanese turn to the Buddhist shrine when they recall the dead. We noticed that many statuettes were adorned with red bibs and hats, and asked Nobuko for an explanation. We discovered that after an infant mortality, parents would

bring their baby's bib to the shrine so that their child's scent will be recognised in the next life, and so will be cared for.

We climbed (we actually took the lift) 451 metres to the top of Tokyo Skytree, the tallest building overlooking the city. In the distance we could see the outline of Mount Fuji, the unmistakable sentinel image of Japan, standing at 3776 metres tall, and over 100 kilometres away. Nobuko laughed with us as I joked about my fear of heights.

We had been warned that the Japanese do not like monetary tips, so we had prepared by taking Scottish souvenirs as small gifts instead. As we approached our hotel at the end of the day we stopped and handed over our gift explaining how much we had enjoyed her company. It was noticeable that she was moved. Later, as we recovered from the long day in our hotel room, the phone rang. We were surprised when a voice told us there was a package for us at reception. Nobuko had seemingly returned to the centre of Tokyo bought us a small gift, plus some chocolate together with a card, and brought it back to the hotel for us. Another example of the high level of respect shown in ordinary life.

The last of our days was spent at Nagasaki, the site of the detonation of the second and last atomic bomb of World War 2. I felt an obscure but personal connection as my father served in the Royal Navy around the far east in 1945, as a Sick Berth Rating aboard a hospital ship, HMHS Jerusalem. I have a picture of him as a 19 year old at the helm of a landing craft, which was being used as an ambulance, he is bear-chested, under the sun with a sailors hat at a jaunty angle. I have no idea what horrors he may have seen, or could have experienced. Like so many he never spoke of it.



We visited ground zero, the point above which the bomb exploded, the peace park dotted with national memorials, and we visited the museum. What I saw was the utter indiscriminate destruction of war enacted on defenceless civilians; women children, young and old. The power of such a bomb to obliterate schools, twist electrical pylons, to melt glass bottles was truly shocking. Our guide for the morning was a very spry octogenarian who, amazingly was a witness on that day and brought her personal memories, but eighty years on there are now very few survivors. A lasting memory I have is of her recollection of the Emperor who said that there should be no further retaliation, no revenge, no further hostility. And so it was.

As our ship sailed from the harbour we were serenaded from the jetty by a youth brass band, with a selection of tunes including YMCA. Finally they held up a banner urging us to return and visit again. They ran along the pier waving and shouting until we were out of sight, Arigato! (it means thank you and goodbye) *Submitted by Derek Colley*

THE COUNTDOWN IS ON…….THE 24TH ALYTH KIRK SHOP!

It's getting near that time of year again !! Time to look out all your unwanted bits and bobs and set them aside for our annual recycling event in Alyth.

This year the shop will run from **Monday 6th July To Saturday 11th July**.

As usual, our hours will be
10 am – 4 pm & 6 pm – 8 pm Monday to Friday
9.30 am – 12.30 pm on Saturday

Donations can be left at Airlie Street Hall on
Friday 3rd July 6 pm – 8 pm or Saturday 4th July 9 am to 11 am.
Donations are also most welcome during shop hours throughout the week.

For those who haven't yet experienced the Kirk Shop,
(yes maybe there are a few!!!!) we accept kitchenalia, china, glassware, textiles, books, jigsaws, sporting goods, toys and much more.

A daily raffle gives an opportunity to be a lucky winner!

Come along for a browse, banter and a cuppy accompanied by some delicious home baking. Everyone is very welcome. One visit is usually not enough – as new items are coming in each day, it's definitely worth returning. There will be something you simply can't live without – even if it's simply a blether to keep the moral going for the many volunteers who work their socks off all week!