ALYTH PARISH CHURCH



MAGAZINE

SPRING/SUMMER 2025



Dear Friends

I am happy to be helping out along here in Alyth during your vacancy. I have received a very friendly welcome at what is a very friendly Church. I look forward to getting to know more of you and helping in any way I am able to.

When Jesus came to Jerusalem in the days before the first Easter, He came with a message of peace, riding on a donkey to fulfil the prophet Zechariah's prophecy about a King who would bring peace to the world. We were told that the King of Peace had been defeated. His loved ones, friends and followers, were heart broken. Then, on the first Easter day, the light of joy and peace lit up their hearts. Goodness prevailed and to many in our world, the King of Peace is still our ruler.

He still comes to us as he did that day, with a message showing us a better way of living. He offers us a way of life that is needed so much in our world today – a world in need of love, peace and care for all.

May God bless you and all those you love this Easter.

Brian



ON BEING INTERIM MODERATOR

Hello everyone. You may know that the Presbytery of Perth asked me to be Interim Moderator for the congregation during the current vacancy. After some thought I agreed to say yes and was appointed last December. When I was serving full time as a minister I was interim moderator several times and always found it quite interesting to see how different congregations could be. Some vacancies were quite long and it looks like this one could be fairly lengthy until the Presbytery grants the congregation permission to call a new minister.

Being Interim Moderator involves being with the congregation during the vacancy and offering guidance on the process (though many of you are already as familiar as I am about Church of Scotland practices and procedures I'm sure). Because the congregation does not yet have approval to form a nomination committee (whose role is to nominate a suitable candidate when the time comes) my main role is to 'moderate' the Kirk session in their leadership role. This includes making sure all the necessary business is attended to including organising pulpit supply or locum ministry to lead Sunday worship services and funerals as well as other pastoral care.

We are blessed to now have Brian as our locum minister and I'm sure you'll want to support him in his ministry with us here. There are many advantages of having a regular face 'in the pulpit' not least the opportunity to get to know Brian well. Please also remember the Kirk session in your prayers as they help to keep things going. I'm especially grateful to all of you who serve in so many different ways, thank you for doing so (I'm not going to list names for fearing of missing someone out - you know who you are!).

All of us can play our part in making church as great as it can be simply by being a part of the body, being present whenever we can (and when we can't be physically present we can be spiritually present through prayer). It's so important to keep on keeping on during times of vacancy and to pray for God's guidance throughout this vacancy and in everything.

As we seek to honour God in all we do, the Bible reminds us that God will in turn honour us (1 Samuel 2:30). So let's keep journeying on and worshipping together in God's amazing grace and peace. Rev Alistair Cowper



Alistair and wife Sarah

A QUICK MINUTE FROM THE SESSION

I never find a shortage of material when writing articles for the Church newsletter as there is always something going on. I usually like to balance the information against some relevant quotation, and for this article I must refer to two such quotes. Firstly, "wave goodbye, say hello" and secondly "seek and you shall find, ask and you will receive. "Referring to our first quote, back in November, we waved a very happy goodbye to Mike, as our minister, who for over twelve years served this Parish with dedication and devotion, above and beyond all expectations. Mike's legacy will live on for many years and I have no doubt that we will all have some special memories to reflect on, during his time with us in Alyth. Retirement is something that Mike is slowly getting used to and it's great to catch up with him, and keep abreast of all the new activities and family life that he is now enjoying.

As much as it was not unexpected that Mike would retire at some point, it did leave me wondering what the future would hold for us and whilst being in a state of vacancy is not something that we have not encountered before, it was with a sense of the unknown that we entered into this status, especially given the current grave situation the Church Of Scotland finds itself at present.

We have been very lucky to say hello, to Alistair Cowper, as our Interim Moderator. Alistair, has taken on this role, and is providing us with direction and support at this time of vacancy. Another hello and warm welcome, has to be extended to Rev. Brian Ramsay who has agreed to become our Locum Minister. Brian, who was minister at Guthrie for many years, has offered his services and we were only too happy to accept this, it gives us great continuity for Sunday services of worship, he is also able to offer time in pastoral support where required, which is something that can drift, when in this period of vacancy.

As we entered into the period of the unknown, there were certainties that would occur, we would be appointing an Interim Moderator, this was a given. We did not have to seek too far from home to find one. Alistair is no stranger to us, as he and Sarah were already members of the congregation having moved to Alyth following his recent retirement from the Ministry. His guidance so far has been very much appreciated and he has been very diligent in his support for us as a congregation in this role. When we asked for volunteers for pulpit supply and if anyone was interested in the Locum role, our prayers were answered when Brian initially volunteered for pulpit supply, and then latterly offering his services as our locum minister.

Going forward, the period of vacancy is likely to be a long drawn out affair, and we need to prepare ourselves for the future, which will look and feel very different going forward. The Church of Scotland is going through a period of restructuring which will be painful, and we are locally yet to really see the effects of the radical action plan that was agreed a few years ago by the General Assembly. Congregations will be under continual review, with linkages and unions taking place, a lot of Churches will close and there will be displacement for many. I think that just as we entered this period of vacancy with a lot of unknowns, we have to go forward in faith together as a congregation and both seek and ask for help and guidance in prayer and action, it's certainly not let us down to date.

Steven Tait Session Clerk

HAPPY CLAPPERS

A Hymn bewailing the demise of traditional church music.

Dear Lord and Father of mankind, Forgive our foolish ways; For most of us when asked our mind Admit we still most pleasure find In hymns of ancient days, In hymns of ancient days.

The simple lyrics for a start, Of many a modern song Are much too trite to touch the heart; Enshrine no poetry, no art; And go on much too long, And go on much too long.

> O, for a rest from jollity And syncopated praise; What happened to tranquillity? The silence of eternity Is hard to hear these days, Is hard to hear these days.

Send thy deep hush subduing all Those happy claps that drown The tender whisper of thy call; Triumphalism is not all For sometimes we feel down, For sometimes we feel down.

Drop thy still dews of quietness Till all our strummings cease, Take from our souls the strains and stress, Of always having to be blessed, Give us a bit of peace, Give us a bit of peace.

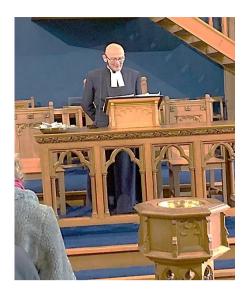
Breathe through the beats of brave guitar, Thy coolness and thy balm, Let drum be dumb, bring back the lyre, Enough of earthquake, wind and fire, Let's hear it for some calm, Let's hear it for some calm.

Submitted by Janey MacFarlane





THE CLOSE OF ANOTHER CHURCH CHAPTER - 17 November 2024













A STORY FROM BRIAN

Many years ago I decided to write a history of two of my Churches, Guthrie and Rescobie. Miss Jackson, my church treasurer, had already written one on Aberlemno Church.

As part of my research I looked on an early map of the area and noticed that on the part of Guthrie where our Manse is, there was a symbol which was described as "The ruins of an old church."



I then did some research and discovered that one of the earliest Christian communities was in the very spot where we were living. It had been a community of Culdees who were there before the beginning of the 11th Century. They were a monastic order of a Celtic background and tradition which had begun in Ireland where they were very strong but then spread across Scotland too. Their name derives from the name Keledei which was the Celtic word meaning "friends of God." The Culdees remained an independent group until the Reformation in 1560. Although they were a monastic group they did allow marriage of members and they were also well known for their high quality of singing.

While I was doing this work I mentioned it to a member of our Kirk who had lived in the village all his life. When told him about the ruins, he smiled and said he knew all about them. The little field had been where the ministers had kept their ponies in the days before they began to drive cars. When the Second World War began Jim was a pupil at the village school but much to his delight he was given a week off in order to convert the pony field into one for growing food. When he was digging it up he came across stones which had clearly been part of a building. As nothing else had been built since the Culdees were there they clearly were part of their little place of worship and prayer.

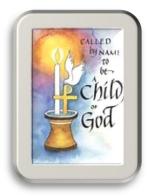
To sit in a Manse study praying and preparing services on the very sight of a Christian Church created more than 1,000 years before in very special indeed.

Rev Brian Ramsay

GOD'S GIFT OF TIME

Take time to think, it is the source of power Take time to play, it is the secret of perpetual youth Take time to read, it is the fountain of wisdom Take time to pray, it is the greatest power on earth.

Take time to love, it is God's given privilege Take time to laugh, it is music of the soul Take time to give, it is too short a day to be selfish Take time to work, it is the price of success.



I NAME THIS CHILD

Upon this day your downy head Is sprinkled, while your name is said, And standing with you at the font We pray it is a name you'd want.

For on a name we pondered long, We didn't want to get it wrong Nothing too obscure or clever For you'd be stuck with it forever.

Something very trendy? No, For fashions come, and fashions go. A family name might well be good But that can start a family feud!

If only you could wait 'til grown And be allowed to choose your own, But, little one, you had no say In the name you have today.

So we wish you joy and health, Happiness, contentment, wealth And hope that you will like your name If not, you'll know who to blame!

> Attributed to Alison Mary Fitt and Submitted by Liz Norrie

Live for today Find joy in your life Laugh in the moment To combat any strife Talk to another And show that you care Enjoy being outdoors And the bracing fresh air.

DRINKSTE ENE MET?

This is the 10th of Cologne's eleven basic laws. Translated: Are you having a drink with us? And means something like: You are welcome, whether friend or stranger. That's what we feel whenever we're in Scotland. Also on the Sunday of our visit to Alyth Parish Church.

We are Roman and Nasibah from Cologne and we have been friends with Margaret and Derek for 15 years now. And also with your wonderful country. It all started by chance: Nasibah happened to meet Ansa at university, whose parents happened to know Margaret and Derek through a school partnership, who then happened to hear in a phone call with Ansa that Nasibah really wanted to go to Scotland. And who then (and this is no coincidence) invited Nasibah to their home together with Ansa - without knowing me. Drinkste ene met?



That was the first time we realised that the 10th Cologne

Basic Law is held very highly in Scotland. After that, we experienced many more such special moments in Scotland: Curlers inviting us for a meal after a tournament. A policeman giving us a lift in the pouring rain. A hostess on whose couch we watched the ESC together. Lots of accommodation where warm scones, tea and a great chat awaited us.



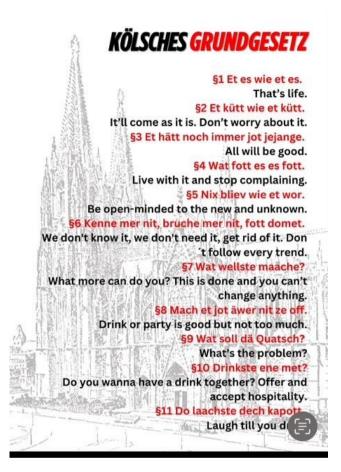
And on 9 February 2025, we also had this feeling. We were allowed into the service and we saw the 'All Welcome' sign outside the gate. Pretty close to: Drinkste ene met? Don't you think? (5) And the many friendly faces confirmed this - we felt right at home, even though we didn't know anyone apart from Margaret and Derek. And even though, to be honest, we are not very familiar with Christian church services. Two things particularly

impressed us. Firstly, that the members were part of the service. Margaret recited something that day, but we were told that this is how it is usually done. This breaks the distance and creates a special sense of community.

And that's where the second special point for us comes in: You could see everyone! Until then, we only knew church halls where people sat in rows behind each other. With you, people are facing each other, looking into each other's eyes, you notice reactions, you don't just hear the singing together, you see it too. We found that very unifying. Just like listening to the cheerful and friendly conversations after the service. Even though you are few and far between, you have etched yourselves into our memories.

Thank you very much for allowing us to be your guests. And we wish all our parishioners good health and many happy moments with their loved ones. And we say: 'Drinkste ene met?' If any of you are ever in Cologne and would like to go for a drink, please let us know via Margaret and Derek. We'd be delighted! And there's an annual curling tournament in Cologne in September. Maybe we'll see you there too. And otherwise definitely again in your wonderful church in the future.

All the best, Roman and Nasibah (friends of Derek and Margaret Colley)



HAPPINESS WITH STRANGERS

Sometimes, happiness is found in unexpected places, in the smiles of strangers who cross our paths, in the kindness of strangers who lend a hand, and in the stories of strangers who share their hearts.

Yesterday, it was like a ray of sunshine, that broke through the clouds of loneliness, that warmed up the coldness of indifference, and brightened up the darkness of despair.

Today, happiness is like a drop of water, that quenches the thirst of curiosity, that nourishes the growth of friendship, and refreshes the soul of humanity.

Tomorrow, happiness will be found in unexpected places, alongside strangers, who will become more than strangers, strangers who will become our associates, and strangers who become our happiness.

Attributed to John Ngor D Garang

THE WEST HIGHLAND WAY - SEPTEMBER 2021

2020 was a strange and upsetting time for many of us with Covid striking early in the year. We were unable to see family and friends, businesses were struggling and life as we knew it would never be the same again. A friend of mine suffered more than most though, losing his wife to Covid or at least complications brought on by it.

We all rallied round him as best we could but it was not easy due to the restrictions put in place to keep us all safe. We couldn't give him a cuddle or attend the funeral. We had Zoom get togethers to try and keep his spirits up and I'm sure this helped to a degree.

During these online meet ups, the idea of doing something in his wife's memory was discussed and I suggested perhaps doing the West Highland Way. This seemed to go down well and within days, we have a team of 8 preparing to take on the challenge. It was hard to plan for something like that as we didn't really know when the restrictions would ease, never mind lift completely.



A provisional date for May 2021 was set and we set about training as best we could. Luckily, living in Perthshire, we had a vast expanse of countryside to explore (within the rules of the time) and plenty of room to socially distance. The West Highland Way stretches for 96 miles from Milngavie to Fort William and takes in some of Scotland's most beautiful places. Most people complete the route in 7 days, we however would attempt it in 5 days.

As the weeks and months passed, the training intensified, accommodation and baggage transfer services were booked and we were all looking forward to the experience. After Christmas 2020 though, it became clear that the Covid restrictions were going to put a stop to our original plans or at least alter them to the point where we would not get the full experience we wanted. The trip was rescheduled for September 2021. Although disappointing, it was the correct decision to postpone, plus it gave us some extra time to get the training miles in.

The days and weeks passed in a flash and it was not long until our team of 8 were heading for Milngavie, travelling in luxury in the AYP minibus. By 8 am we were on our way, our target was Balmaha, some 20 miles away. The going was easy to start and the weather was very kind to us. The sun was shining and everyone was in high spirits. A couple of whiskies were taken on board to give us a wee boost when needed and it was mid-afternoon by the time we reached the foot of Conic Hill, the main obstacle of the day.

We were up Conic Hill in no time but the cloud had descended so there were no views of Loch Lomond, which was a slight disappointment. From there it was all downhill, with some steep sections. With the thought of a cold pint and a bar meal driving us on, it was not long before we reached the days target, the very bonnie village of Balmaha. Day 1 was done and thoughts turned to day 2 which turned out to be a very draining day for us all.

We were up and away early on day 2 as we had 21 miles to cover. The first port of call was a beautiful statue of Tom Weir, situated at the north end of Balmaha. I'm sure most of you will remember him and his signature bobble hat from his TV show 'Weirs Way'. From there we made our way up the east side of Ben Lomond, stopping on a picturesque beach for a late breakfast. The going on this section was tough. Underfoot conditions were difficult, there were a lot of ups and down, both in terms of the path and our morale and this made for probably the



hardest day of the trip. Some light relief was gained and a short break taken at Inversnaid, before carrying on towards our final destination of Inverarnan. I'm sure the views of the loch are beautiful but this was a day for getting the head down and grinding through to the end!

The sight of Beinglas Farm Campsite was very much welcomed. Although not staying there, it was a sign that the day was almost over. After 11 hours of walking, we arrived at The Drovers Inn, where we were staying for the night. Reportedly one of the most haunted inn's in Scotland, no ghosts were going to deter us from a nice cold pint, steak pie and chips and a very welcomed rest!

Day 3 began bright and early again and we were on our way with Bridge of Orchy our destination.



We started off in some woodland, making our way up through Glen Falloch. The route swings under the A82 and winds it's way through grazing lands before descending to Crianlarich. It was a beautiful, hot day and after a quick pit stop for supplies at the wee shop in Crianlarich, we were soon making our way under the railway line and over the A82 again heading for Tyndrum. This section was particularly interesting as it passes the 13th Century St Fillan's Priory and the even older 8th century graveyard. We then reached Auchtertyre Farm which has a wee farm shop. Calippo ice lollies and fluids were taken on board and off we went again, passing through Tyndrum and continuing up through stunning countryside towards Bridge of Orchy.

Stunning views of the Munros and perhaps a couple of alcoholic beverages made this section very enjoyable and we soon arrived at Bridge of Orchy for more refreshments and to await a taxi to return us to Tyndrum where we were staying for the night. Plans were put in place with the taxi driver to return us to Bridge of Orchy in the morning, then it was time for food and off to bed. The next day would take us through some of the most beautiful scenery in Scotland and we would need all of our energy!

The 4th day would take us from Bridge of Orchy to Kinlochleven. We headed off over the bridge and on towards Inveroran. This was pretty easy going but all of our legs were starting to feel a bit tender having walked over 60 miles in the past 3 days. After passing Inveroran, we tramped our way along an old military road which was cobbled and I felt particularly uncomfortable on this section. The path winds its way gently up towards Rannoch Moor and (on a good day) the views in both directions would be amazing. This was the one day where we didn't get the weather although at this point it was still dry. Soon we had some views of the Glencoe Hills but possibly Scotland's most iconic mountain, Buachaille Etive Mor, was shrouded in grey cloud.



On down from Rannoch Moor to the newly renovated Kingshouse Hotel, the rain came down and for the first time, the waterproofs were on. The rain became persistent and it was a relief to reach the hotel. That being said, the wallets took as much of a battering there as the waterproofs did when we received the final bill for teas and coffees! After a brief respite from the rain, we headed along Glencoe and were soon faced with the next challenge - 'The Devil's Staircase'! Not as scary as it sounds and we zig-zagged our way (some slower than others) up to the summit at 550m. The rain had stopped by this time and we were back to shorts and t-shirts. We had views of the Mamores to the north and the Glencoe Munros to the south and a moment of celebration and reflection was had at this high vantage point. From there, we had a gruelling 3 hour descent to Kinlochleven, which was made even harder by the fact we could see it for most of the afternoon but never seemed to get any closer. The whole team arrived there feeling pretty drained and sore. Again refreshments and food were had and a wee celebration took place, knowing we only had one day to go.

Day 5 started in very disappointing fashion. One of the team had suffered terrible blistering and deterioration of his feet and was in no fit state to continue. The team rallied round him best we could but it was an upsetting time for us all. We were all friends before but had bonded into something more than that over the past 4 days. For us to have to leave 1 team member behind was devastating and a few tears were shed. The show had to go on though and we had to remember why we were doing this. Off we went on the final leg towards Fort William. The path winds up through trees before opening onto a wider track giving great views back down over Loch Leven and Kinlochleven. The path continues to climb gradually and passes some old ruins on the way. These were particularly welcome given our tired legs and minds. The path continues, crossing burns and through gates all the while undulating and giving no indication of our final destination. Finally Ben Nevis comes into view. Several kilometres pass before we reach a forestry track which winds its way down giving great views of 'The Ben'. The path seems endless but eventually reaches a road close to Glen Nevis Visitor Centre. It's paved road from here and 3kms later, we reach a roundabout on the outskirts of Fort William, which used to signal the end of the route. This is no longer the case so we had a little longer to wait until we could really relax and celebrate. In no time we were marching up Fort William High Street, in the rain again, towards the end point. Upon reaching the end, we were all elated but emotional. We had just covered 96 miles (and the rest!!) in 5 days. Our injured team member, fresh from a visit to A&E, was there to greet us and that lifted us even further.



A celebratory nip was taken and soon we were off to the hotel for a well-deserved shower and then some food and drinks.

In the weeks and months leading up to this trip, we had been raising money for the Intensive Care Unit at Ninewells Hospital, Dundee, where my friends' wife and many others had received first class care from all of the staff in the most trying of circumstances. We did this walk in her memory and had hoped to raise £1,000. By the time we were finished, our total was £15,500. An unbelievable total, and beyond our wildest dream.



David Robertson





THE CAULD

Toothache is the hell o' a' diseases Well we a' ken that's true But runner up must be the cauld An' I'm fair choked up fu'.

I've had this ane for weeks noo It simply winna' shift Wait 'til I find my hankie Och I'll mak' dae wi' a sniff.

Noo I'm no' ane for moanin' At every ache and pain But I thocht you micht be interested In the trouble I've been ha'en.

I've coughed and sneezed and spluttered And nearly choked tae death Wi' my nose sae blocked and bunged up I can hardly get a breath.

> My e'en are red and streamin' And my nose is near red raw It's shinin' like a beacon 'Cos it's nearly wiped awa'.

I've had Aspro Clear and Disprin Benalyn and Medinight Had Vick stuffed up my nostrils And I'm nae nearer bein' right.

So tonight I'm tryin' Night Nurse Which induces peaceful sleep But I'll ha'e to be excused now 'Cos here comes another dreep.

By Elma Mitchell



AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY

One day, on a holiday in Easter Ross, my wife Pat and I decided to take the quiet road to Glen Affric on the south side of the River Beauly through Strathglass. A few miles up the road we came to Eskadale and a lovely white church by the roadside. This building which seems quite

out of place in a rural setting is St. Mary's Roman Catholic church and was built in 1827, only 34 years after the passing of the Catholic Relief Act which allowed Roman Catholics freedom of worship. The people of this area were strong in the Roman Catholic faith and even at the end of the 19th century the congregation numbered 800. The church was built by the 12th Lord Lovat and to the West of the church is the very simple private burial ground of the Lovat Fraser Family including



the grave of the legendary World War II hero, "Shimi" 24th clan chief of the Lovat Frasers. Brigadier Simon Christopher Joseph Fraser, the 17th Lord Lovat was one of the founders of the Commandos and, accompanied by his piper, led the Special Service Brigade that landed on Sword Beach on June 6 1944 - D Day. They then went on to capture Pegasus Bridge. Beside his grave are those of his two sons who died in 1994 a year before him within 10 days of each other. One was the Master of Lovat, and to pay his debts, the nearby Beaufort Castle and estate had to be sold thus ending 500 years of the connection of the site to the Lovat Frasers. The castle was bought by Ann Gloag of Stagecoach fame but is again on the market.

But there is one mysterious stone in the graveyard which bears a foreign name and with an



epitaph written in Latin. This is the grave of John Sobieski Stuart and his brother Charles Edward Stuart who claimed to be descendants of Bonnie Prince Charlie. In fact their real surname was Allen and they were born in Wales in the latter part of the 18th century. They claimed that in 1811 they discovered that they were descended from the Stuart kings and in the 1871 census they gave their birthplace as Versailles. Apparently the two brothers bore a striking resemblance to the later Stuart kings and when in Edinburgh, in 1837, they were known as 'the Princes'. They had the Stuart love of finery and ceremony, they learned to speak Gaelic, specialised in clan history and costume, and published books on the chivalry of Highland lairds. It is not surprising,

therefore, that they were feted by men of rank in Scotland.

When they came North in 1838, their benefactor, the 13th Lord Lovat, had a house built for them on Eilean Aigas, a 60-acre wooded island in the River Beauly. Imagine the effect in isolated Strathglass of these colourful characters as, banner flying, they were rowed up the river to Eskadale. At the church door the local gentry would kiss their hands, the ladies would curtsey, and all would back away from them. For a little while John and Charles Sobieski were indeed kings of all they surveyed, be it only the island kingdom of Eilean Aigas. For us it was a surprise to find such a fine building in such a remote spot but for many it was a place, almost of sanctuary. It was graced by the ostentatious Sobieskis and their entourage, it comforted the underprivileged 'boarded-out' children of the Thirties who were sent from Glasgow to be housed and to help out in the crofts of Strathglass; and it was a reminder of home to the navvies who came from Ireland to build the Hydro-Electric dams after the Second World War.

The church was closed when we visited but following extensive restoration it is again in use for the local congregation and may be visited by arrangement which we hope to do at some point in the future.

Submitted by Bill Davidson

Don't be scared to walk along The winding path of life Experiences will show you Both happiness and strife But always as you travel Great people will be there To support and guide you Showing that they care. A dog is such a treasure Always walking by your side Always true and faithful Sometimes your guide A friend to be relied on

BOARD COFFEE MORNING

The Fundraising Committee would like to thank all those who came along to our Coffee Morning on 22nd March. A big thank also to all who donated to the various stalls.



We appreciate your continuing support. The magnificent sum of £787 was raised.

Audrey, Ruth and Elasaidh





Morag, John and Joan helped decorate the Church for Christmas Our Nativity Scene



Brass Band Concert



KIRK SHOP

The Kirk Shop takes place from Monday 30th June to Saturday 5th July.

We will be at the Airlie Street Hall to accept items for sale on **Friday 27th June from 6 pm** - 8 pm and Saturday 28th June from 9 am - 11 am.

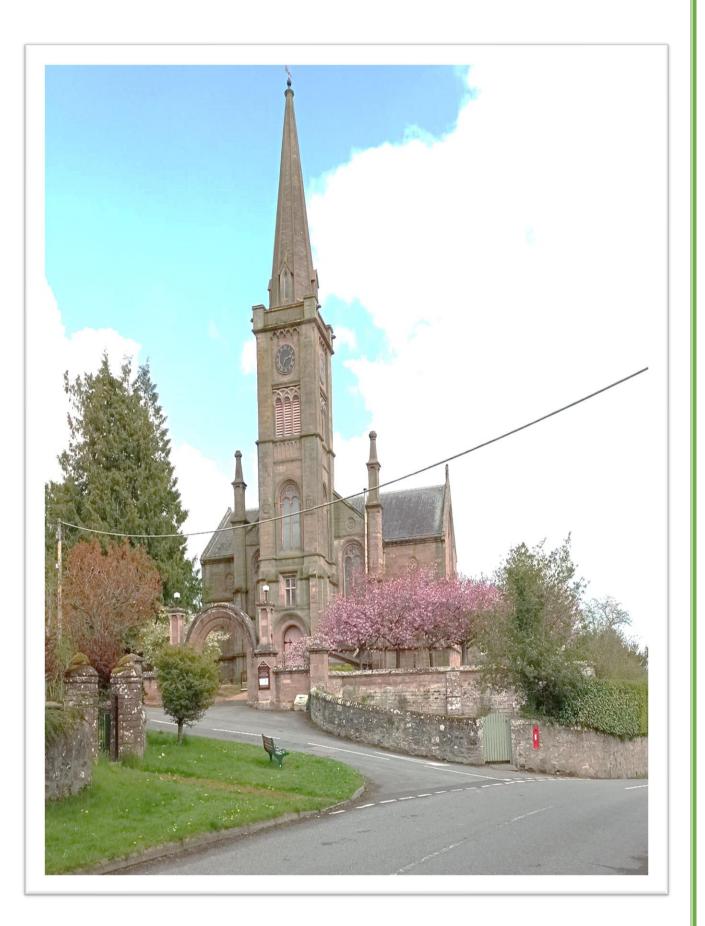
We are unable to accept items outwith these times but donations will be gratefully received during shop hours throughout the week.

We look forward to seeing you there.

PRESENTATION TO BRUCE MAXWELL



Thank you Bruce for looking after and winding our Kirk clock for over 30 years.



www.alythparishchurch.org.uk Alyth parish Church of Scotland Scottish Charity No SC 000540