

ISSUE 62 - SUMMER 2022  
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The Orwell and Portmoak Quarterly Parish Magazine

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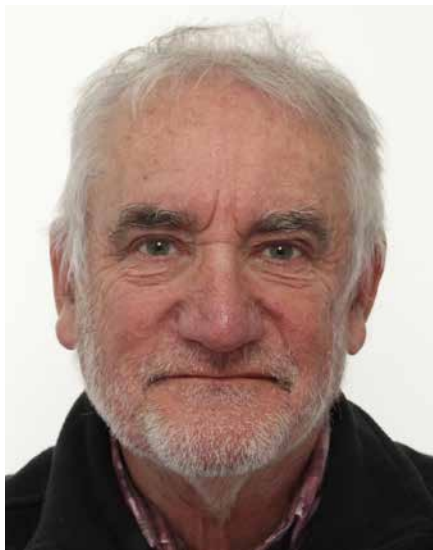
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## Friends,

**I'm very glad to be here among you as locum minister for Orwell and Portmoak; for the Church of Scotland has a long and distinguished history here.** I feel honoured to follow in the footsteps of my friend, the Very Rev. Angus Morrison, who has since retired to live in our capital city.

For the last thirty-eight years, I've been parish minister on the Drumchapel housing estate in Glasgow, for an international church in the Dutch port of Rotterdam and latterly in Dundee's Steeple Church in the city-centre plaza. I retired and with Lesley-Ann live in a cottage looking on the West Lomond.

Though I came to love cities, I'm not a stranger to the country or small towns, having grown up in Langholm in the Scottish Borders. My father (*also a minister of the Kirk*) had been brought up on a farm in Cumbria. I recall his stirks and sheep grazing on the glebe land, taking them to the local auction in Longtown and getting the hay in the autumn. Hard work!

The churches at Orwell and Portmoak have a strong relationship with the farming community – but, wherever we live, we're connected to rest of the world. Covid, climate change and war in Ukraine are felt as much here as anywhere. All of these affect us socially and economically –

and the ugly violence in Ukraine is something that we must all be willing to pay for.

We've suddenly become less certain about how the world works. These lines from William Blake's poem '*On Another's Sorrow*' connect with our current turmoil. The key theme is God's love but the poet wonders if God listens to the smallest of creatures. He concludes that God always sits near to those who suffer, even as they give and receive love from each other.

God stir the soil,  
Run the ploughshare deep,  
Cut the furrows round and round,  
Overturn the hard, dry ground,  
Spare no strength nor toil,  
Even though I weep.  
In the loose, fresh mangled earth  
Sow new seed.  
Free of withered vine and weed  
Bring fair flowers to birth.

Can I see another's woe,  
And not be in sorrow too?  
Can I see another's grief,  
And not seek for kind relief?  
Think not thou canst sigh a sigh  
And thy maker is not by;  
Think not thou canst weep a tear  
And thy maker is not near.  
O! he gives to us his joy  
That our grief he may destroy;  
Till our grief is fled and gone  
He doth sit by us and moan.



The key theme in the poem is God's love. The poet wonders if God listens to the smallest of creatures and concludes that He is always sitting next to those that suffer. He is near to all who give and receive love. In every human situation, no matter how ugly, He is more present than we imagine.

Yours faithfully,  
**Rev. Robert Calvert**

*P.S. I have many friends from working in Kiev and Odessa over the last decade. You can read my short article on it elsewhere in these pages.*

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# Interim Moderator's Update

Dear Friends,

You will be able to read elsewhere in this magazine a letter from the Rev Robert Calvert who has been serving since January as Locum in the vacancy at Orwell & Portmoak, undertaking the day-to-day tasks of ministry in church and parish and making my task as Interim Moderator much more manageable. But let me take this opportunity to update you on some news of the wider church.

As I indicated in the last magazine, vacancy procedures across the whole of Scotland have been paused pending the preparation and agreement by each Presbytery of a Mission Plan which takes into account the levels of ministry that will be available in the coming years and the harsh reality that church buildings cannot merely be maintained for a relatively small number of people to gather once a week and for the occasional wedding or funeral.

Locally, the proposal is to create a network of parishes taking in Arngask (*that is Glenfarg*), Cleish, Fossoway (*that includes Crook of Devon and Powmill*), Kinross, and Orwell & Portmoak (*that of course includes Milnathort, Kinnesswood and Scotlandwell*). The allocation of stipendiary ministry for that area is two full-time-equivalent posts, although we would expect some

non-stipendiary ministry (*Worship Leaders, Readers, Ordained Local Ministers etc*) to be available, and the pooling of resources envisaged should also make it possible to employ other full- or part-time workers to support such work as may be deemed desirable – from administration and the management of property and finance to ministry support.

It is proposed that the church buildings at Orwell, Fossoway and Kinross would be the main centres for worship and mission and that the church buildings at Portmoak, Cleish and Arngask be sold or otherwise repurposed, but the detail of how and when these changes would be implemented will be for the local network (*rather than the Presbytery*) to decide.

Although the Draft Mission Plan proposes a direction of travel, it is currently still very much under consultation. Meetings were held with the Kirk Session of each church in April and a report will be made to the June meeting of Presbytery before a final plan is brought to Presbytery for agreement in September. Meantime, there are very healthy conversations taking place between representatives of Cleish, Fossoway, Kinross and Orwell & Portmoak congregations about how we might most effectively, creatively and faithfully implement the changes that are proposed to parish ministry and the use of church buildings, and we will keep you posted on the

development of these discussions.

Whatever the outcome, each one of us has a crucial part to play in the Body of Christ and when even one piece of the jigsaw is missing there is an impact on the whole. So let me encourage you to play your part and get involved. This is not a season for resignation but for pushing new frontiers.

Every blessing,

Alan  
Rev. A.D. REID  
Interim Moderator  
[areid@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:areid@churchofscotland.org.uk)  
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# Reflecting on Ukraine 2022



**On three occasions in the last ten years, I've visited the impressive cities of Kiev and Odessa.** Ukraine is a Christian Orthodox country. Two thirds of Ukraine's population live in urban areas. Two Ukrainian seminaries (who train Christian students) invited me to prepare students to become pastors.

I teach about urban ministry and how to identify the different people-groups in the city, how to build relationships/network them, and how to plant/grow churches. Up to 2012, I had worked in post-communist Hungary and Romania but not Ukraine, where it was hard to find a guide.

Kiev is a sprawling city of about 3 million people and contains the Dnipro river and much woodland. To get to Odessa, I took the overnight sleeper train to this strategic port on

the Black Sea. The industrial areas of Ukraine are to the east and south where the current Russian incursion is at its greatest.

Some key realities about Ukraine:

- Ukraine, 'the bread-basket of the Soviet Union', is one of the largest grain exporters in the world and the current crisis threatens Africa
- Ukrainian people have a long association with and love for Russia because many have lived there and have family and business interests there
- Ukraine is still recovering from systemic corruption in society and politics which is mostly a 'carry-over' from Communist times

*With an Iranian doctor in Odessa*



- Ukraine is a relatively new country (became independent in 1991) and younger generations are assuming responsibility for its affairs
- Ukraine is strategic for students from Asia, Africa and the Middle East – and most immigrants are from China, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan
- Ukrainian refugees in the current conflict equal the population of Scotland, in a land that is the second largest in Europe (*after Russia*).

Finally, let me introduce friends (*using first names*) with whom I'm in touch.

**Kirril**, is a young pastor with wife and child, who offered himself as a chaplain to the Ukrainian army. The theological seminary was one of the first buildings to be hit when the Russians approached the northwest of Kiev. He stayed behind to look after the campus while their cooks baked bread to give to hungry people in the area. Currently Kirril is doing his best to support and connect people around the capital city of Kiev.

**Andrei** is a young pastor who is serving people in the subways and shelters of Kharkiv, which has faced constant bombing.

**Alexander** was one of my first students and he leads a Christian students' movement around the city of Odessa in the south. He obtained invitations for me to meet students in the Law Faculty and University. The churches, which would normally be a big resource in time of crisis, have all been affected by people needing to flee the country. Alex is doing his best to network the churches in the Odessa area.

**John**, who is from Chicago and married Stella from east Ukraine, suddenly had to leave the area where they worked in education. They found a home in Kiev where John is employed as a professor.

**Pam**, who is originally from Boston, married a Ukrainian and started up a 'parish nursing' project to support alcoholics and displaced people from the Dombas.

**Charlie** who has his own business in Dundee, goes out to the east of Ukraine for months at a time. Supported by United Nations bodyguards, his technical and medical skills help to fix people's living

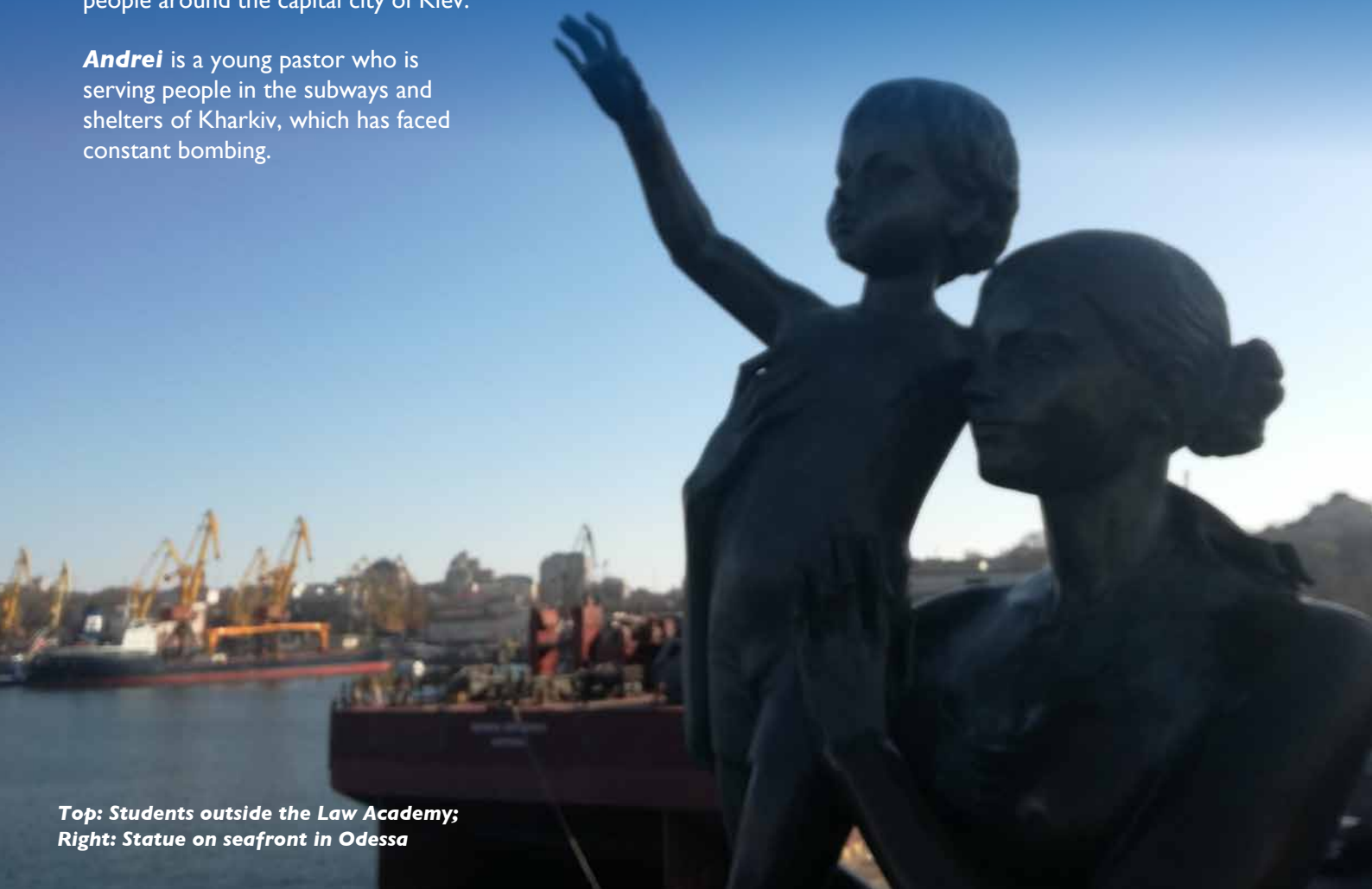


quarters in the broken Dombas region. For eight years, Ukraine had already been hit hard by the intrusion of Russian-backed separatists.

**Ivan**, rector of the seminary, has been interviewed on BBC's main news bulletins. Four years ago, he told me that the seminary would change to Ukrainian in lectures and publications (*it's normal to use Russian*). For Ukraine's big issue is about identity and being recognised as an autonomous nation.

Thank you for reading this article. These comments and views are my own.

**REV. ROBERT CALVERT**





# THE GUILD

*Whose we are and whom we serve*

**The Church of Scotland Women's Guild was formed in 1887, when the Reverend Archibald Charteris convinced The General Assembly of a need for an organisation which would offer women an active and positive role within the work of the Church.** Very quickly the movement spread across the whole Church of Scotland with a peak membership of 132,000- in virtually every congregation in the country and beyond - in Europe, Africa, India and Middle East.

In its infancy, the Guild raised funds to build a girls' school in Kalimpong, India- setting the trend for Projects which support work at the edges of human experience, and which continue to the present day. Over the years, the Guild evolved to meet the issues of the day.

The motto of The Guild is '*Whose we are and whom we serve*'.

A major change took place in 1997, when The Guild's Constitution was amended and the name changed to '*The Guild*' - allowing men to join.

It is a movement which encourages both men and women to commit

their lives to Jesus Christ and enables them to express their faith in worship, prayer and action and is a place of welcome and fellowship.

The Guild's Partnership Projects address issues often not being addressed elsewhere, and over the years have raised significant amounts of money for the Projects.

The Guild operates at National, Regional and Local levels, and has adapted to meet the changing needs of The Church of Scotland and like every other group and club has a Committee to run and organise the programme each session, with Speakers talking about the Projects being supported and many other topics of local or National interest.

Orwell Guild was formed early in the twentieth century and became Orwell and Portmoak Guild on the linkage of the two churches and a few years ago we were also joined by some members of the former Arngask Guild, which had closed.

Over the years, we have had many interesting speakers, fun nights and visits to other Guilds and in return hosted other Guilds ourselves. Fundraising from afternoon teas and



offerings for national projects at home and abroad were major activities and we were continually amazed at the total amounts raised.

Unfortunately, we became an increasingly elderly group, unable to attract young members and despite continuing pleas for new office-bearers, no one came forward. The COVID years did not help the situation and we reluctantly took the decision in March to wind up. We all agreed that the fellowship we had enjoyed would be greatly missed and so most of us intend to continue meeting informally after the summer break.

Kinross Guild continues and anyone wishing to join with them will be welcomed.

**FIONA DEARING**

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\* CLOSED CHRISTMAS DAY \*



# 櫻の季節がやってきました

## Lorna's Update

### Greetings from Japan where the cherry blossoms are gradually making their way north up the country.

In Japan, there is much appreciation for the changing of the seasons, and in March the weather forecast regularly includes predictions as to when the blossoms will be in full bloom in different parts of the country. The dates range from mid-March in the south to early-May in the far north.

Before the pandemic, the arrival of the cherry blossoms ushered in a time of cherry blossom parties. People would take a big plastic sheet, and lots of food and drinks, and enjoy a party with their family, friends or colleagues sitting under the blossoms. However, due to COVID, parties have been banned for the past three years. People have been allowed to walk past the trees and take photos, but not sit down and linger.

At the same time as being a source of joy and celebration, however, in Japan the cherry blossoms are also said to bring a sense of sadness because the flowers last only a few days before their petals rain down on the ground beneath the trees. Their short duration is seen as a reminder that life is fragile and short.

The cherry blossom season is a reminder for me too since this was the season when my husband David's cancer relapsed, 5 years ago now. I remember seeing the beautiful blossoms from the car as I drove to the hospital each day. The last time David was able to go outside was to briefly view the cherry blossom trees in the hospital grounds. So, seeing the beautiful blossoms come out each year is a bittersweet experience.

I recently read Kay Warren's book 'Choose Joy; Because Happiness Isn't Enough' with a friend. Kay has been through a variety of very difficult experiences in her life, including the death of her son. In the book, she talks about how our lives, perhaps even each day, contain both good things which give us joy, and also difficulties and challenges which bring us sorrow. She calls these the "track of joy" and the "track of sorrow" and notes that "one of the toughest challenges in life is to learn how to live on both of these tracks at the same time." It is indeed challenging, one that for some of you might be very real at the moment.

Near the end of the Bible, we can read the following verse about the new heaven and the new earth:

*"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."*

(Revelation 21:4)

As Christians, we have the hope that one day the track of sorrow will disappear and only the track of joy will remain. My heart's desire is that many more people, both in Scotland and in Japan, will come to know this same amazing hope.

**LORNA FERGUSON**



# Portmoak Festival      may ~ june 2022

## Community Connections:

# Portmoak Festival 2022

**The last Portmoak Festival took place in 2019.** Looking back at the highlights, we celebrated Intergenerational Working, and this was definitely reflected in the programme. We had the usual favourites like Afternoon Teas, Pudding Club and Jazz Night all taking place in the hall. The children of Portmoak Primary school launched their intergenerational film. There were different sports and the grand opening of Benarty View. It all took place over a week at the end of June and beginning of July.

Some of the stalwarts thought we should be finding ways to get together once again this summer with different groups organising their own events, highlighting what goes on in the area, with a view to being low budget, relatively covid safe and not quite so intense as in previous years. This year, events will be spread out across several weeks in May and June, giving everyone a chance to take part and enjoy what is on offer. We will not have a big raffle or fundraising events. It will just provide an opportunity for friends and neighbours to get together and feel like things are getting back to normal.

Scotlandwell in Bloom will have their plant sale at the Well Country Inn from 10.30am to 2.00pm on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May. In addition to regular quiz nights and bar meals, our ever-supportive local pubs will be hosting the Festival Quiz in the Well and a Folk Night in the Balgedie Toll.

For residents of Scotlandwell and Kilmagadwood, The Platinum Jubilee will be celebrated with an afternoon tea party in the Well Green on Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> of June. There are also

teas at the hall over the weekend from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> June and a chance to see the artwork of the children of Portmoak Primary and the Under 5 group. Scotland is celebrating the Year of Stories and the children will be giving their own interpretation of stories, both local and from further afield. The hall is back in business and so there will be a chance for folk to find out what is going on. To keep you on your toes, Pam is hosting a Queen fitstep dance night, and Ladies Badminton invite you to come and try the game the following day. The Under 5's are celebrating the long weekend with a Portmoak Under-Fives Royal Jubilee Fancy Dress Disco, which will be held on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June from 09.45am – 11.30am. The Bishopshire Friendship Circle ladies invite you to a Games night or to one of their other Thursday night meetings.

The Woodland Group has developed a learning area in the Portmoak Orchard, and they hope to provide an outdoor venue for summer afternoons with music. There will be a folk session with Tunes in the Trees, with Dave Bachelor and Players performing some jazz, a couple of weeks later. The Orchard is also the venue for an educational guided walk. These events still have to be confirmed and may be in the hall if the weather is poor.

We hope to invite people to sign up for a Portmoak Park Run League, based on results from the regular event at the Larder every Saturday at 9.30am through May and June. More details to be announced.

Last year, Portmoak Primary School had 8 new raised beds and a

polytunnel built, where the children are working regularly with members of Kinnesswood in Bloom. There will be an opportunity for the public to see what is growing there on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June at their Environment Day. The children will also be showing off their contribution to the Queen's Canopy. They have a compost tumbler which hopefully will have produced some lovely compost by then and maybe there will be a few vegetables and flowers to take away. Find out more in the June newsletter

All the villages and hamlets of Portmoak will be looking their best at the end of May and beginning of June. It will be worth your while to pay a visit and admire the floral displays. Kinnesswood will have a trail for you to follow, and six very special figures dressed as characters from different times in local history. The crafty ladies have been busy!

The last event is the Michael Bruce Service of commemoration at 6.30pm on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2022. It will be conducted by locum minister Dr Robert Calvert with an address by the Very Rev Dr Angus Morrison. Dr David Munro, Chairman of the Michael Bruce Trust, will read some lines by 'The Gentle Poet of Loch Leven' and will lay a wreath on the Poet's grave at the end of the service.

There will be no leaflets and so keep an eye on the Portmoak Festival Facebook page or local notices to see what's on. If anyone has an idea to add to the programme or wants to know more about what is going on, please let us know.

You can contact Norma after 7<sup>th</sup> May on 01592 841160.



prtmkfestival@gmail.com

facebook:~ portmoak festival



## PORTMOAK FESTIVAL    may ~ june 2022

Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday		Sunday	
2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
		Quiz in Well				7.30pm Bishopshire Friendship Circle. Games Night. Hall				9.30 Park Run challenge, Larder 10.30am - 2.00pm Plant and Bake Sale, Well Inn, SIB		Larder	
9		10		11		12		13		14		15	
		Quiz in Well				7.30pm Bishopshire Friendship Circle. Games Night. Hall				9.30 Park Run challenge, Larder		9.30 Park Run challenge, Larder	
16		17		18		19		20		21		22	
		Festival Quiz in Well		Folknight in Toll		26				9.30 Park Run challenge, Larder		2pm "Kirkyards Tales" D Munro - Churchyard	
23		24		25		26		27		28		29	
		Festival Quiz in Well								9.30 Park Run challenge, Larder		Tunes in the Trees folk tbc	
30		31		1		2		3		4		5	
						2 - 4pm Teas in Hall		9.45-11.30 Under 5s Royal Jubilee fancy dress disco. Hall		9.30 Park Run challenge. Larder		2 - 4pm Teas in Hall	
6		7		8		9		10		11		12	
		Quiz in Well		7 - 8pm Firststeps - "Queen Night". Hall		10am Ladies Badminton. Try out session. Hall		Environment Day School KIB		9.30 Park Run challenge. Larder		Jazz on a Summer's Day tbc	
13		14		15		16		17		18		19	
						7.30pm Bishopshire Friendship Circle. Hall						Sunday 3rd July Michael Bruce Service 6.30pm Church	
Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday		Saturday		Sunday	

# June

# May

# Celebrating Individual Achievements

**KYTHE celebrated the achievements of its young people by holding its inaugural Youth Scotland Awards Celebration in March.**

Youth Awards are individual learning awards that provide a framework to support quality work with young people aged 10+. They can be tailored to support any activity and offer formal recognition and accreditation for young people's achievements.

Following a plan-do-review process and recording their activities and learning over the last 18 months, 14 young people achieved these awards, 5 at Hi5 level and the other 9 at Dynamic Youth level. However, due to the various restrictions of COVID, this was our first opportunity to celebrate their achievements.

John Duffy, from Youth Scotland, joined Gillian Lindsay (*who leads the Youth Awards Support Group each week*) for the evening, noting that these awards are tailored to the individual and were as diverse as art and crafts, music, guitar repair, outdoor activities, photography, graphic design and volunteering to support other young people at KYTHE.

The young people were delighted to receive their awards and have their hard work recognised -

*"It means a lot to me with all the work that I've put in."*

*"It's made me more confident in myself and what I do."*

Their parents were equally pleased.

*"I can't say enough just how much KYTHE inspires him, it's great for the kids and they absolutely love it."*

*"The activities at KYTHE tapped into her strengths, with the right pace and encouragement. It's great for her to have an achievement outwith school. She has grown in confidence and is much more independent, and we are very, very proud of her."*

This is sure to be the first of many Youth Awards Celebrations, as many of these young people are on target to complete their Youth Achievement Gold award (*equivalent of SQA Higher level*) and even Platinum (*Advanced Higher level*)!!!



And we expect more to join them, as this is an alternative means for young people to achieve a recognised award, that is not academic.

For more information on Youth Scotland Awards at KYTHE, or if you want to support more young people increase their confidence, abilities and therefore wellbeing contact [gillian@kythe.org.uk](mailto:gillian@kythe.org.uk)





# All are Welcome!

**Have you been inside Orwell Church since the completion of the alterations and extension of the building? If not, why not?**

*10.30am, alternating monthly with Portmoak Church.)*

A very warm welcome is extended by the Kirk Session and Congregation of Orwell and Portmoak to anyone and everyone – with or without any existing connection with the Church – to attend one or more of the services held in Orwell Church on a Sunday morning at 11.30am *(other than on the first Sunday of each month when a service is held at*

If you would prefer to have the opportunity of visiting Orwell Church at some other time and seeing at first hand the full extent of the improvements, then you may telephone me **(07867 797429)** to arrange a mutually convenient date and time for your visit.

I hope to see you soon!

**RUARY MACLEOD**  
**Convener - Church**  
**Improvements Working Group**

We were delighted to welcome Eileen Rock to the KYTHE Team as Head of Development. Her role involves raising funds to finance future new initiatives and projects. Over the coming months, she will be building a calendar of events and challenges which we hope you and your family and friends may wish to support. So, if the idea of a 5km run, a 13,000ft sky dive or perhaps hosting a gentler cake sale sounds an appealing way to raise funds for KYTHE, then we'd love you to get involved! The team, will, of course, be on hand to offer advice and provide fundraising support. However, if you wish to support with direct financial input, this is always required. The greater the input the greater the impact on our young people in transforming their lives.

If you'd like to discuss how you can support KYTHE and help make a difference, please email: **[fundraising@kythe.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@kythe.org.uk)**

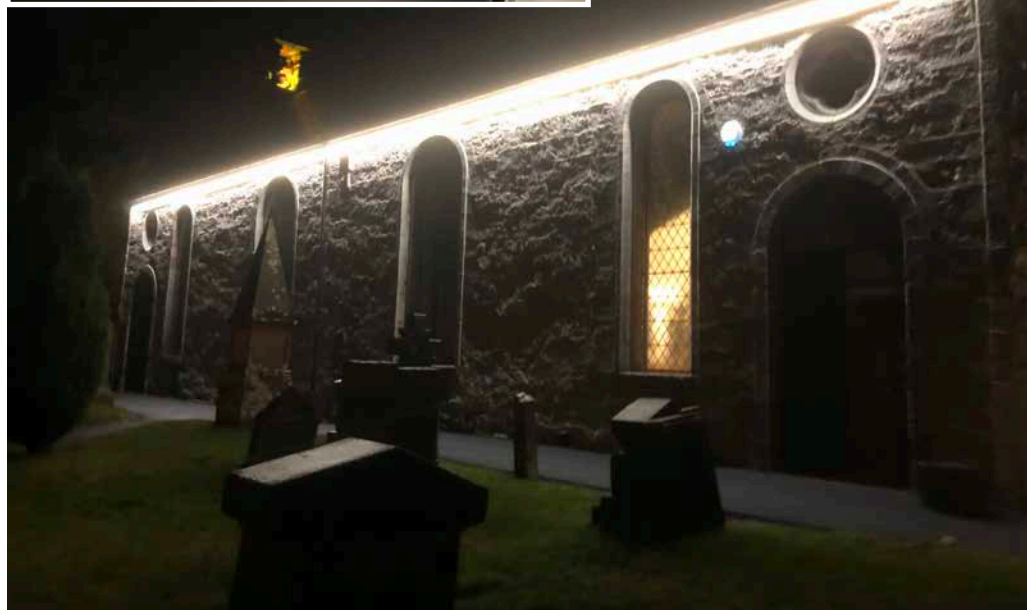
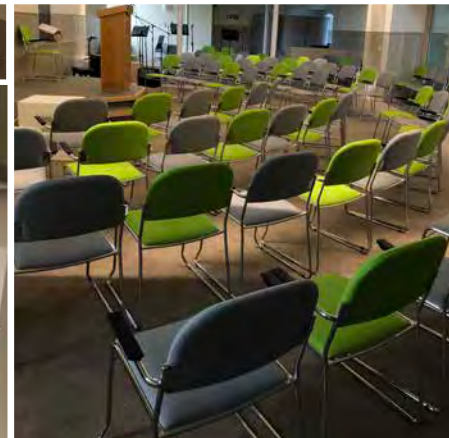
Our website is currently under redevelopment but can still be accessed for details of KYTHE at **[www.kythe.org.uk](http://www.kythe.org.uk)**

We hope that the redesigned website should be relaunched in June/July but watch social media for full details.

## The KYTHE Team

*Kinross-shire Youth Enterprise SCIO  
– known as 'KYTHE'  
Scottish Charity No. SC045043*

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# Strength after Stroke

**It is amazing how dependent we get upon an individual with whom you have lived for 30 years plus, but you never really realise how much you depend on their day-to-day activities until that person is not by your side.** We, (Rebecca, Fiona and I), found ourselves in this predicament at the start of lambing this year when Kathleen was rushed to hospital after suffering a severe stroke. No warnings, boom, it was just there. The ambulance came and she was in the hospital in around an hour of the phone call. The consultants, doctors, therapists and especially the nurses have given Kathleen (and still are giving) first-rate attention to her rehabilitation. The cards, letters, phone calls and social media messages that have been received have been overwhelming and we are grateful to all.

But, with a valuable member of the team down, we managed to get lambing done. Rebecca, Fiona, Kathleen's sisters Elizabeth and Anne, other family members from time to time, friends from the village and rugby friends were an enormous help in the lambing shed; Kathleen's sister Agnes, from East Lothian, friends within the community and mum (Dorothy) supplying soups, home made meals and cakes, filled a void that I presupposed did not exist because Kathleen normally had it all organised. She did the bookkeeping, kept sheep records, mowed the lawn and tended the vegetable beds, greenhouse, the hens, etc. in order that I could get on with the day-to-day graft of the farm. You never fully appreciate how much behind the scenes work is completed by somebody you unknowingly take for granted. I am extremely lucky to have two young ladies who are prepared to roll up their sleeves and get stuck in, whether it is lambing ewes or doing the accounts: they really make us proud.



It would be easy to get deflated with life when something like this happens to a person you treasure. Friends from afar and local, plus the farming community we have within Kinross-shire have been immense in their support to us, whether it is an offer of help on the farm, a phone call to ask how Kathleen is doing or to enquire how the girls and I are coping. I hope that sometime in the future I can repay a debt of gratitude to all of the above people.

**MARK THOMSON**

Through modern technology (Google) I was trying to find an appropriate prayer or biblical verse and found this:-



**Prayer for Strength after a Stroke**

*Have mercy, O loving God  
Upon all who have suffered a stroke  
Remove the sudden fear that befalls them  
Endow them with courage in the struggle  
To recover what has been lost  
Grant them strength and hope  
To envision new days ahead  
And a spirit of faith  
To take the risk of living fully  
Once again.  
**AMEN***

**Vienna Cobb Anderson**



# Been Missing Messy Church?

So have we all – but don't worry -we'll be back very soon!

We are delighted to say that, after a long and slow wait as a result of the pandemic, we plan to resume Messy Church again very soon here at Orwell and Portmoak.

We have so missed getting together for all-age fun with our families and can't wait to see everyone. Familiar faces and new will be made so welcome and we hope you can come along and join us. We especially look forward to showing you our newly refurbished building!

For those who are not familiar with Messy Church, it is an all-age expression of church that is for families and others and is found all across the world. It's a church for people at all stages of their faith journey and of all ages and is viewed as a congregation of people in its own right. We come together just to be, as well as to make, to eat and to celebrate God!



Messy Church is based on creativity, hospitality and celebration and aims to introduce Jesus and create opportunities to encounter him. A typical afternoon at Messy Church involves a welcome followed by a long active and creative time where we explore the bible theme of the session through a range of activities. We then have a short celebration time which involves stories, prayers, songs and games and we finish by enjoying a sit-down meal together. Messy Church is great fun and each element is for people of all ages, adults and children alike. Yes, adults, you're encouraged to join in all of the play and messy activities too!

holidays and the dates for this are provided below. All being well, we do also hope to be able to hold an informal Messy Church gathering before the summer, on June 11<sup>th</sup>, for our existing members and anyone who wants to pop along and find out more. We will keep our mailing list updated on this and updates will also be provided on the Orwell and Portmoak Church Facebook page.

We look forward to welcoming you!

Messy Church dates for your diary (all at Orwell Church, Milnathort)

- Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August
- Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> September
- Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> October
- Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> November

**CARA CHALMERS**



We meet on Saturday afternoons between 4pm and 6pm on the last Saturday of the month. Our plan is to resume in earnest after the summer

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## 1729 and all that --- the moving of Orwell Church Division – Secession – Unification – and the legacy of Thomas Mair

**High on the south wall of Orwell Church on Ba’Hill, Milnathort, there can be seen a stone plaque bearing the date ‘1729’.**

Following the 1715 Jacobite Rebellion, General Wade’s Great North Road, which was part of his network of military roads constructed throughout Scotland, was coming to Kinross-shire and the weavers in Orwell (*near the Standing Stones*) felt they would miss the trade when the road came. So, the village and church moved from Orwell, by Loch Leven to Ba’ Hill in Minathort; a big project, as anyone who moves ‘house’ knows, never mind rebuilding their church and houses. Wade’s road was to pass Kinross-shire in 1726 and plans were made, which all took time, and the church was rebuilt on the Ba’ Hill above Milnathort in 1729. Gravestones mark folk buried there from early in the century.

Thomas Mair was ordained minister at Orwell on 27<sup>th</sup> September 1725, having been educated at Edinburgh University, and it was his first charge at the age of 24. The move of the church to Milnathort was discussed at Session and plans gradually made. Mair helped at Portmoak Church sometimes, at Communion, with the neighbouring minister Ebenezer Erskine, some twenty years his senior but a friend. Erskine was a minister who went round his flock and understood their trials and strengths and was very popular in his Parish.

The church was moved under Mair’s watch, and there is mention of a tent being repaired, and so, perhaps, while rebuilding the church, a tent was used in inclement weather when an outside service was impossible.

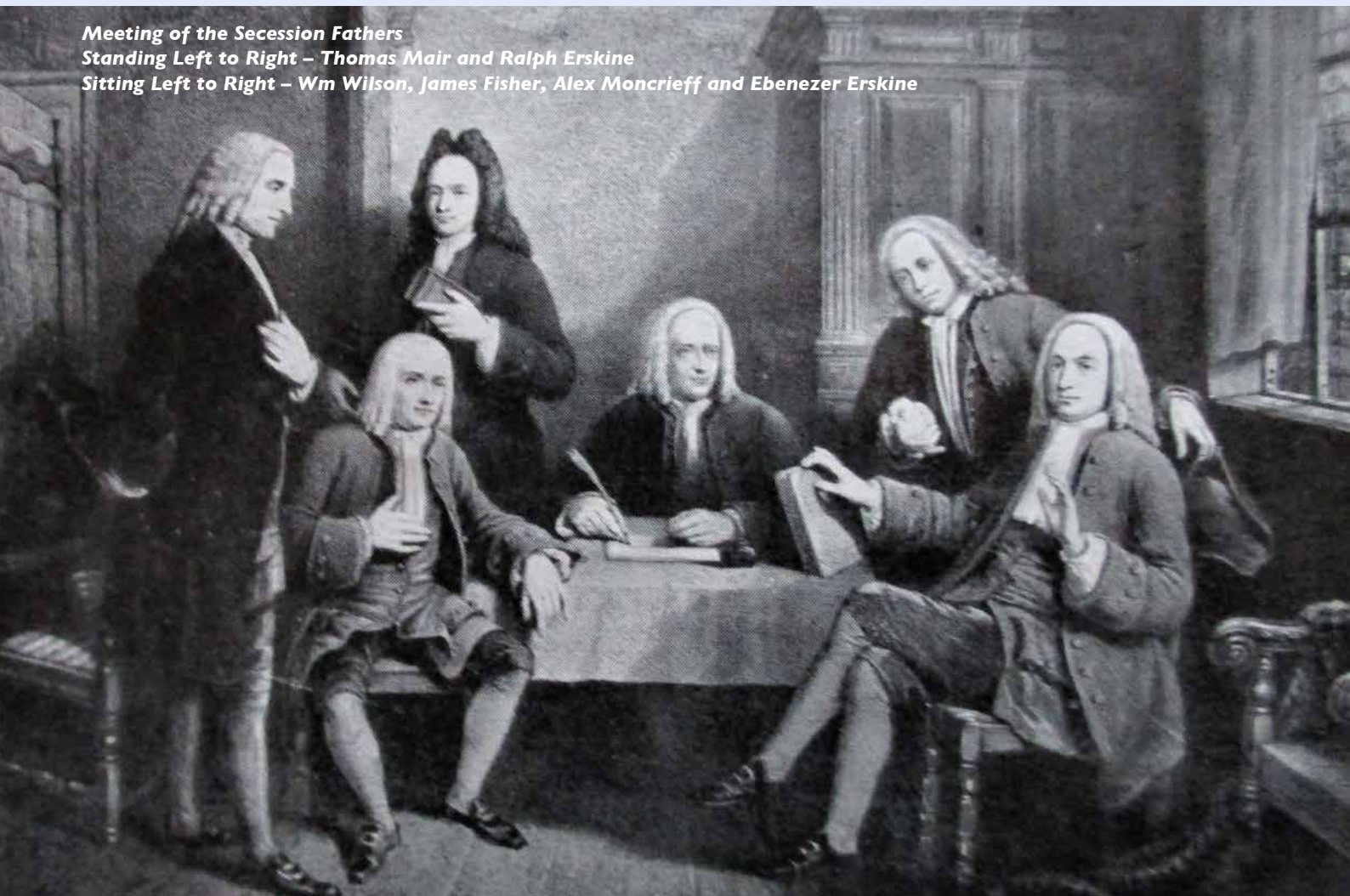
Orwell was in the Presbytery of Dunfermline, while Portmoak was in St Andrew’s Presbytery. Ebenezer Erskine, in 1722, had been

rebuked by the General Assembly for defending doctrines contained in the book *“The Marrow of Modern Divinity”*. After twenty-eight years at Portmoak, he moved to the West Church in Stirling. From there, he preached to the Perth Synod, causing a fresh accusation being levelled against him at General Assembly, and, after obtaining a hearing, he and William Wilson (*Perth*) Alexander Moncrieff (*Abernethy*) and James Fisher (*Kinclaven*) were suspended from ministry by the Commission of Assembly in November 1733.

In 1729, Rev Francis Craig had received a *“most harmonious call”* to the parish of Kinross but in 1733 Rev Robert Stark was admitted minister of Kinross and his settlement was the *“occasion of division and strife”*, as he was the author of an essay which created controversy.

The Rev Francis Craig was *“a man of great ability and eminent piety”*, but

*Meeting of the Secession Fathers*  
Standing Left to Right – Thomas Mair and Ralph Erskine  
Sitting Left to Right – Wm Wilson, James Fisher, Alex Moncrieff and Ebenezer Erskine





a majority of members of the Synod had been in favour of Rev Robert Stark and ordered the Presbytery to induct him to the charge of Kinross. The majority of Presbytery refused to act. The case was taken to the General Assembly. This resulted in “*suspension*” of four members of the Assembly, who continued to refuse to ordain a minister against the wishes of a majority of the congregation. These four - the above-mentioned Erskine, Wilson, Moncrieff and Fisher were declared rather draconically to be “*no Ministers of the Church of Scotland*” and lost their charges.

On Tuesday, 4<sup>th</sup> December 1733 at Bridge of Gairney, Ebenezer Erskine met with his brother Rev Ralph, and with the other three suspended ministers, and, after prayers and conference on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup>, at 2 o'clock on Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> December, they constituted themselves as an Associate Presbytery, with Ralph and Thomas Mair as witnesses. They appointed the next meeting of their Presbytery to be in Dunfermline on the first Wednesday in February. This was the start of the Secession Church.

In 1737, Rev Mair applied to be the Minister of the Church of Scotland in Rotterdam but it was reported falsely to the British Envoy at the Hague that he had “*objected to patrimonial and was an antinomian*”. Erskine wrote in support of Mair, but he was not appointed.

Mair left the Church of Scotland and days later joined the Associate Presbytery of the Secession. The Associate Presbytery sat at Orwell

in September 1738 with Rev Ralph Erskine of Dunfermline as moderator. It was Rev Mair who read the Secession’s Declaration to the Assembly of the Church of Scotland on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1739. He and the other Secession Ministers were all formally deposed from office by the General Assembly. This deposition was intended to prevent them using the Church buildings.

Back in Milnathort, however, Mair continued to use Orwell Church. The Dunfermline Presbytery had their attention drawn to this use and were ordered in 1740/41 to evict him and to “*crave civil power if necessary*”.

Mair lost his stipend and had to rely on collections amongst his parishioners. He built a new church on a hill beside the Wade road to Perth, on the other side of Milnathort, and it was called “*the Muckle Church*” as, in addition to 1200 inside the church, the back doors could be opened to allow the congregation over-spill to sit on the banking and hear the services; which were so popular that in excess of 5,000 people came to hear him preach. The congregation came from Milnathort, Kinross, Balgedie and beyond. The population of Orwell parish at that time was 1831 souls.

The Rev John Spence was ordained Minister at Orwell in 1737. (*A smaller church was built on the site of the Muckle Church in 1821, which was used as a store by W. Robertson from the mid-twentieth century.*)

In 1747, the Burgher’s Oath caused another split in the new church.

The Oath required the holders of public office to approve the religion “*presently professed in this kingdom*”, a forerunner of later arguments over separation of church and state. Erskine joined the Burgher section, and his friend Mair joined the Antiburghers. Mair believed in the idea of the “*common benefits*” of Christ’s salvation including “*every cup of cold water enjoyed by the unsaved*”.

He continued in his ministry, and it is reported that most of his parishioners continued with him. In 1766-67 a petition was presented for his restoration to membership of the Church, but it was refused. He died of paralysis on 17<sup>th</sup> February 1768 in Milnathort. There is a fitting epitaph on his gravestone at Orwell, which is worthy of reading, as you pass by.

In 1847, the United Presbyterian Church and most of the Free Church of Scotland united, and in 1929 they finally reunited with the Church of Scotland. The Antiburghers became the Original Secession Church in 1882, which split, one party joining the Free Church of Scotland, and the other finally reunited with the Church of Scotland in 1956.

It is a very Scots characteristic to show “*a distinctive independence of conviction and unwillingness to compromise over sincerely held beliefs*”. Perhaps, we could stop and remember Mair’s belief in the “*common benefits*” of Christ’s salvation, and have compassion, understanding of the other’s point of view, and, best of all, love our neighbours.

**DOROTHY THOMSON**





# Big Changes at Mombwe

## New Vestry, new Clinic, new Minister - what's next?

**In the last published issue of Stramash in September 2021, it was reported that the Session of Mombwe Congregation, in Northern Malawi, twinned since January 2016 with Orwell and Portmoak (O&P), had decided to build a new vestry (a small church) at Muyegha, a district located midway between existing vestries at Kacheche and Njakwa.**

That vestry has now been fully constructed by local builders and carpenters and furnished with new benches and other church furniture. It is already in regular use and proving popular with the people of the district, who no longer must walk a considerable distance in order to participate in church services and other forms of local fellowship. The builders involved in the work on the vestry, subsequently donated, free of charge, their labour in erecting the brickwork of a new Under-Five clinic, situated on ground adjacent to the vestry. That clinic has also now been fully completed with roof, windows and doors and fitted out with some basic furnishings. It should prove to be of major benefit to the mothers of young children in the community.

Following upon the completion of these developments, which began during the ministry of Rev Bonet

Kamwela, the minister at Mombwe since the commencement of the Twinning Partnership (*who, along with his wife Roselyne and an elder, Dean Phiri had visited O&P in May/June 2018*) Rev Kamwela has been transferred to the congregation of Vibangalala, situated to the south of Mombwe. This is a larger congregation than Mombwe, with nine existing vestries.

A new minister, Rev Tuntufye Gondwe, who is a friend of Rev Kamwela, has been appointed to the charge of Mombwe. Rev Gondwe is married to Tryness and has three children. He has been delighted to continue his new congregation's twinning partnership with O&P.

Rev Gondwe has already drawn attention to the very poor condition of another much older clinic, situated at Kapilimuhoto, the roof of which had blown off in a storm, and which was in other respects incomplete and unsafe, and accordingly was unfit for use as a clinic.

All three of these buildings could not have been satisfactorily completed, as they have now been, without financial assistance from Friends of Mombwe Congregation (*residents of O&P parish*).

If you would like to be such a Friend and to provide some financial help (*however little*) to Mombwe



*Rev Tuntufye Gondwe and Mrs Tryness Gondwe and their three children*

to meet any pressing need of the people there (*such as, for the purchase of foodstuffs in times of flood or drought*) or to assist with some future project of importance to them, then please contact the Congregational Treasurer, Linda Stewart, (07925 321932) who will be able to offer you advice as to the most appropriate means of donating, including possible giving by way of Gift Aid donation, if you are a UK taxpayer.

**RUARY MACLEOD**  
Twinning Co-ordinator

*Rev Tuntufye Gondwe with 2 young builders of Under Five Clinic*



*Muyegha Vestry - new church furniture and benches in place*





# Prayer Corner

A prayer for peace at this time of conflict in Ukraine:

*Almighty God, our loving and merciful Father, each day at present brings news of the continuing conflict in Ukraine, of the many deaths and the destruction of homes, public property and of livelihoods. We pray for all those families and individuals where lives have been lost, bodies injured or minds for ever damaged by the brutality of warfare and the trauma of grief, fear and anxiety.*

*We pray that all those who seek refuge from the conflict may find a welcoming place of safety. We pray that very soon warfare may come an end, that hatred, cruelty and aggression may be no more, and that in their place will come a just and lasting peace, and a determination to build a better, happier and more stable future for that country and its people.*

*Through Jesus Christ, our Lord, AMEN.*

A prayer for young people:

*Lord God, at this time of year, many of our young people are engaged in study and revision, in preparation for examinations at school, college or university. This can be a stressful time in their lives and may cause anxiety and depression. We ask you to bless them at this difficult period in their lives. Help them to gain in confidence, wisdom and concentration, through knowing that you are with them, sharing your love and peace. May their lives be directed in the paths which you have planned for them.*

*For Jesus' sake, we pray, AMEN.*

A prayer for young people to use:

*Heavenly Father, many older people do not seem to understand how worrying a time this is for me and other young people. I feel anxious and fearful just thinking about examinations, but you understand everything which happens in life, because, through your Son, Jesus Christ you shared the experience of growing up.*

*Most of my life is still before me and I know how important this stage is in determining which way to go. Help me, Father God, to know that you are with me, giving me courage and keeping my mind calm and peaceful.*

*In Jesus' name, I pray, AMEN.*



**Kapilimuhoto Clinic awaiting new roof**



**Kapilimuhoto Clinic re-roofed**



**Muyegha - Vestry - finishing cement drainage**



**Muyegha - Under Five Clinic**



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