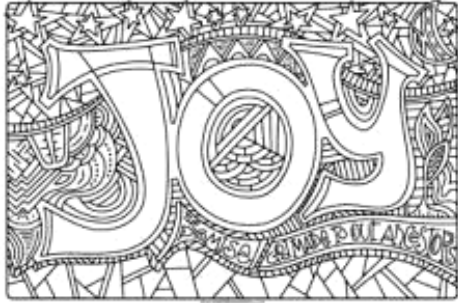




Alloa Baptist Church

Winter Newsletter
December 2019

Featuring 150th
Anniversary of the
Scottish Baptist Union



“The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.” Luke 2:10 (NIVUK) - Joy to the world

‘Surprised by joy’ is how C. S. Lewis described his conversion from atheism to faith in Jesus Christ. He had never expected that there was any connection between God and joy.

If anything, he had thought it would be the opposite: ‘For all I knew, the total rejection of what I called Joy might be one of the demands.’

Convinced that it was true, Lewis ‘admitted that God was God’. At that moment, he was ‘the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England’. To his great surprise he found that following Jesus was the very opposite to what he expected. He experienced great joy through his new-found faith. He discovered that ‘the heart of reality’ is to be found in a Person. He was surprised by joy.

There might be temporary bursts of happiness, controlled by surrounding circumstances: Presents- food- even for some, pleasure in the General Election!

You won’t find joy gift-wrapped and under the Christmas tree, but it is a gift indeed. Without the birth of Christ that we celebrate at Christmas, there would be no authentic joy. Joy can only come from the One who guarantees salvation because, with that, there is eternal peace of mind. This is what Christ promised in John 15: 9-11

“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!” Joy is not just for Christmas.

May you continuously be surprised by joy in the coming year:

Pastor



**The Leprosy
Mission**
Scotland

THE LEPROSY MISSION

This year we sent to the Leprosy Mission a total of £260. The church very generously gave an amount of £100 (included in the £260) So earlier in the year when I sent the church's £100 plus £100 from the people who support the Leprosy Mission, this money was doubled to £400 by a generous donor. The £60 has just been sent to them.

A BIG THANK YOU to all who support this cause, it is very much appreciated. If you would like to become a supporter of this cause, I can give you a blue tub in which to save your donations.

Some people use these and others, like me, still have the red boxes shaped like the letter 'L', some people use their own boxes, and one person saves it up in a Chewing gum packet. I won't name her (but it's Margaret Armitage) she is doubly blessed, because not only does she get to enjoy the chewing gum, but I get to send her donation to the Leprosy Mission.

Thank you. The Lord bless all of you. **Thomas McInally**

BLYTHSWOOD CARE



There was a record breaking response to the Blythswood Shoe Box appeal this year. A total of 158 boxes were collected and £215.00 forwarded for transport.

Many thanks to all who filled boxes and also to those who contributed many items and money which enabled Margaret Armitage to fill over a hundred of the boxes. This was a tremendous effort by Margaret who just keeps going all the year round covering and filling boxes.

Blythswood are very grateful for each box, as they see how much they are appreciated by the children and adults who have so little, and the joy they bring as they are given with love in the name of The Lord Jesus.

Morag Reekie

Once again, the Fellowship is grateful to all those who use their time and talents to contribute to the upkeep of the building and the various church activities. Thank you! May you experience the hope, peace, joy and love of God in 2020, which Advent reminds us of.

Bill McGrouther

BMS CHURCH PARTNERS



Chris and Debbie Drew completed their time with BMS in September and have now settled in Leeds.

They write "Thank you for journeying with us during these years with BMS. It truly has been a privilege and we have felt wonderfully encouraged and supported. Thank you for giving, for praying and remembering us. Though there have been uncertainties, disappointments and challenges we are so grateful that God gave us the opportunity to serve Him in this way."

Please remember Chris and Debbie and the children as they settle into life at home.

Jude Craig was married in June to her Tunisian husband, Aymen. She continues to work with a colleague in her project that focuses on single mothers and developing micro-enterprise initiatives for them. Having given food hygiene training earlier this year, Jude finds it such a privilege to try to encourage these women as there is such a stigma in Tunisia towards single mothers.

Please pray for the women, that they would grasp this opportunity of developing their micro-enterprises in their hearts and minds. Pray too for Jude and Aymen as they begin their life together as a couple.

Philip and Rosemary Halliday have just welcomed a BMS Action team to Gif-sur-Yvette to help them with the church planting ministry and to join in with some other projects in nearby churches. During their six month stay in France they will also go with them to North Brittany to help out.

We look forward to a visit from Philip and Rosemary in June of next year. We are asked to pray for the Action Team as they settle in to life and ministry in France and the special events planned in the run-up to Christmas.

Joy Ransome has been chosen as our third Church Partner in place of the Drews, Joy is a primary teacher whose home is in Dumfries. She served in Nepal with BMS for seven years in the nineties, returning home expecting to return soon but it was nineteen years before she went back as a volunteer having realised there was still a need for someone of her age and skills in Nepal.

Joy is now working under EQUIP, which stands for Education Quality Improvement Programme and is part of the International school in Kathmandu. She is based at Besisahar to encourage and support teachers to put what they learn in training into practice in their classes and to provide any extra help they need.

We are asked to give thanks for her visa being granted, her M.Ed. being awarded and the team of people who have helped her to get settled. Pray for good relationships with the school staff and their small team and the many visitors they will host.

Morag Reekie

**BAPTIST ASSEMBLY - MOTHERWELL CONCERT HALL
Friday 1 and Saturday 2 November
2019**



This is the 150th Anniversary of the Scottish Baptist Union and the theme for the year is "Give me also streams of water".

The first session was at 2pm, in the Theatre Auditorium, and was led by Elaine Duncan from the Scottish Bible Society who entitled her talk, "Was there something in the water?". Elaine used several Biblical events involving water and especially the water of life as Jesus offered it to all who were thirsty. (John 7:37) When we acknowledge our thirst, God's spirit/ living water will revive our souls and we should let it flow through us to others.

There then followed a Communion Service led by Rev Jack Quinn who called us to worship around 'The table of leastness'.

After a coffee break, many from the national team reported on the work being done in Scotland. Ben Drabble from Communications for BMS told of the life of John Mackay who left Scotland to be a missionary in India. He was described by the BMS at the time as being 'diligent, prudent and wise'. Those who knew him said they had never met 'a man more emptied of himself'. He was the first BMS martyr when he was shot at the age of 32. Ben suggested that Scotland still sends its best through the BMS to the world, giving the examples of those abroad now, and the work is not finished. Ben's closing words were, "Let not the need at home drown out the need abroad."

The next speaker was Mark Craig, again from BMS Communications, who showed a video in which two men and a woman told of their appreciation of the help and support that BMS was for them in Afghanistan. Their faces were blocked out for security reasons. A video of all the waving delegates present was then taken to send to Afghanistan!

Francis Bloomfield, Convener of the Baptist Union of Scotland, opened the first AGM of the Baptist Union of Scotland Ltd and led us through the approval of the last minutes of the Baptist Union of Scotland, which were on pages 15-18 of our handbook! In the new set-up she was now in a non-executive position as Trustee but was re-appointed as a non-executive director of the new limited company. The Financial Director, who is being considered for the treasurer of the new BU Co. Ltd, explained that this new Company had no assets because it had not done anything so that was the end of the report!

Rev Alan Donaldson, who has been General Director for the last nine years, has 'resigned' from the position. He and his wife feel they need a time of change and Christ-like reflection which will release their creativity. Rev Martin Hodson wrote a

poem expressing appreciation for all Alan had done for the BU in Scotland. This was reinforced by video clips from eight church fellowships who expressed appreciation for his help in their situation. Rev Jim Purves then prayed for the unknown future of Alan and Ruth Donaldson.

.Rev Martin Hodson, the new General Director, said he was excited and petrified with his new appointment. He will work for transformations to lead to discipleship. Innovations are needed, not always the inherited model if progress is to occur. Is your church like an elephant - slow, with a good memory, being conserved, or like a swallow - nimble and tucked in unexpected places?

There then followed half an hour of discussion 'on the sofa' with English, Irish, Welsh and BMS representatives sharing their views on Western and Eastern Christianity and realising that Christianity must exist through cultural boundaries, sharing the Gospel within cultures.

Friday evening celebrated the 150th Anniversary with a big Birthday Party! Around ten large circular tables sat 320 Baptists for melon starter, Balmoral chicken, cheesecake or gateaux followed by tea and coffee. It was something special!

Saturday's programme began at 11am with "Celtic Worship" leading worship in three traditional hymns in a Scottish folk style. Then newly settled ministers and workers were called onto the stage, followed by those involved in settlement changes and finally retired ministers, all with their partners, so the stage was full.

Rev Martin Clark, from the Hillview Community Church in Aberdeen, read from Hebrews 10:19-25 and led our thoughts by asking, 'What happens in a church in a year?' v 11-22: let us draw near to God, v23: hold fast your confession of hope, v24: consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, v25: encourage each other in your life together.

During Saturday afternoon, there were many options: Bite-sized Lectures hosted by the Scottish Baptist College, Chat Show with input from Scottish Baptist Lay Preachers Association, musical items and much more, Afternoon Tea hosted by the Scottish Baptist Women's Fellowship, The Fisherman's Tale Theatre Performance, Youth Stream for 14-21 year olds as well as Amazon animals and face painting for children.

The All-age closing service included all-age worship and talk, the recognition of newly accredited Ministers and their families, a new church joining our Union and the commissioning of the new General Director by Rev Don Currie.

A very busy, interesting and varied programme which celebrated 150 years of Baptist witness in Scotland.

Elizabeth McGrouther

HONOUR YOUR LEADERS IN THE LORD'S WORK

1 Thessalonians 5:12 NLT

If you want to encourage your Pastor

1. **Cut the criticism** - Most workers are evaluated each year based on their job performance; pastors are evaluated every week. Remember, if a particular sermon doesn't scratch where you itch, chances are someone else needs to hear it.
2. **Remember the leaders who taught you the word - Hebrews 13:7** - and pray for their spiritual growth. Goethe said, "If you treat a person as he is, he'll stay that way. But if you treat him as he ought to be, he'll become what he ought to be and could be."
3. **Write a note** - Especially when something your leader says or does ministers to you. Verbal encouragement is good, but a note can be read several times over
4. **Put your talents to work** - For example, if you're mechanically inclined, service the pastor's car. If you're technologically savvy, help them improve their computer skills. Instead of saying, 'You need to do this,' say 'I'd like to help by doing.' Ask where your skills are most needed and become an active participant.
5. **Squash gossip** - James said, 'If you ... don't control your tongue..... Your religion is worthless.' James 1: 26. Counter negative talk with positive comments, and correct misinformation with truth. If all else fails, walk away!
6. **Be openly responsive** - Nothing encourages leaders like seeing people respond to their preaching and teaching.
7. **Lose the measuring stick** - Instead of expecting them to be a mirror image of their predecessor, thank God for your pastor's individual style to minister to those in need.

UCB Word for Today, written by Bob and Debby Gass

Submitted by **Betty Jorgensen**

THE 150 BU ANNIVERSARY PRAYER BATON

The Anniversary Prayer Baton has been travelling the length and breadth of our nation. Its purpose is to act as a visual reminder of our Union together and the call to pray for all the churches of our nation.

Carved from 150-year old Scottish beech and yew wood, the Baton was created by Rolf Buwert and harvested from trees in the Drumlanrig Estate in Dumfries and Galloway. The baton is hollow and contains a record of its creation and a record of the places it has travelled to. At the end of the year photographs of the Baton's journey will be placed inside as a record of the year.



On every occasion that the Baton is present in a local church or area event, the congregation is invited to pray for our nation and the scroll from the baton is signed by representatives. Already the Baton has been present at Dumbarton, Ellon, Larkhall and the joint prayer gatherings in Perth, Fife and the Borders and also Orkney and Shetland. Not to mention the 150th Celebration of the Scottish Baptist Union in Stirling on Sunday 23rd June, and the SBWF in St. Andrews on 25th August.



On Wednesday 2nd October, around 75 current and former Staff and Trustees of the Baptist Union of Scotland gathered together along with denomination guests and some MSPs to mark the 150th Anniversary of the Baptist Union of Scotland in the Scottish Parliament. The event was sponsored by Jeremy Balfour an MSP and a well-known face to many within our family of churches. Bill Slack spoke about his time as General Director, highlighting the era of Challenge to Change and also thanking staff, across the years, for their commitment to and work for our union of churches. Alan Donaldson introduced the 150th Anniversary Prayer Baton and the travels it has undertaken in this special year for us. Martin Hodson also spoke about the future direction of our union, the desire for transformation and innovation at the same time as holding fast to our convictions and identity. Jeremy Balfour signed the commemorative document as an MSP.

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP: ST ANDREWS FRIDAY 23 - SUNDAY 25 AUGUST

Seven ladies from Alloa joined with another seventy seven from around Scotland for the annual weekend conference in the St Andrews University Residences. The Committee apologised that the programme was not as we had anticipated as the speaker for the weekend had to cancel at short notice due to ill health but they had met together and with God's guidance managed to get a speaker for the Friday and another for the Saturday. God is good!

On Friday evening, after dinner, Elaine Duncan from the Scottish Bible Society led us in a session entitled "I want to see Jesus" based on Philippians 2: 1-18. We were challenged to memorise the hymn from verses 5-11 using sign language. As this took a lot of practise, we more or less learned the verses which tell of the significance of God taking on the form of man to redeem human nature.

Saturday's programme began with Maureen Russell from BMS. There was a quiz to test our knowledge on the history of the Baptist Missionary Society which began in 1792. This revealed that Kathleen Natella was very knowledgeable about BMS as she was the winner. (This is a reflection of the Alloa WF ladies and the interest they take in the BMS work.) Maureen then updated us on the work of the Scottish Missionaries: Philip and Rosemary Halliday, Christine Kling, Phil and Louise Proctor and Joy Ransome. To keep us all informed these Missionaries are encouraged to send an email of 1,000 words each month to keep the interest up to date.

From 11:45 till 12:45, Catherine Wyles, from the Salvation Army, used the title for the original speaker - "Expect the unexpected". Catherine applied this very personally to her life experiences and her walk with God. Although she came from a godly family and she herself had a Christian faith, her four sons did not all share her beliefs. She had to accept that God was in control and still share in the life of her boys. She goes to music gigs and is introduced by her son to his friends at the concert as 'the Major'.

She has proved that God never forsakes us and does miracles, even when your husband leaves you and your family will not invite you into their house, God has promised: I will never forsake you because you are mine.



After lunch, there was the opportunity to participate in a workshop for an hour on meditative prayer, a Bible study on Deborah or using crafts to bless others. The rest of the afternoon was free to explore St Andrews or relax in the residences and its grounds in the company of many other friends.

The sun shone and the ice cream is world famous!

After dinner, we were treated to a history of the Women's Auxiliary and Women's Fellowship through the years depicted in drama and song by the WF Committee.

The Sunday programme included prayer groups, worship in song and communion. Andrea Voysey spoke on love: Jesus loved his disciples even although he knew their characters very well; he loved his family and from the cross arranged for his mother to be cared for. How we are loved determines how we can love others.

At the closing session in the afternoon, there was time for reflection and worship and the epilogue was given by Kathleen Natella. The baton to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Baptist Union was displayed and signed on behalf of the Women's Fellowship.

The sun shone on the journey home adding to the blessings of the weekend.

Elizabeth McGrouther



At the Baptist Assembly in November, the SBWF provided the option of Afternoon Teas for those attending on the Saturday. It was greatly appreciated. Thanks to all who participated.

MARY'S MEALS AND BACK PACKS

I would take the opportunity to thank Thomas McNally and his sister Margaret Ellen and others in the church for their continuous donations of clothing, stationery and toiletries for the bags that I make up and send on to Mary's Meals.

Once again a very big thank you to all. Yours in the Lord, **Margaret Armitage**

ALLOA BAPTIST WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

During the Summer break, it is good to get together for fellowship and an Afternoon Tea. On 10th June there was one such occasion with something to commemorate. Morag Reekie has been President for over 20 years in Alloa but has decided to take more of a back seat. She was presented with flowers and a gift in appreciation.



Some of those at the afternoon tea

Beginning our Christmas break sees us just over halfway through our annual programme.

We have had, until now, a varied and interesting few months sharing with 'old' friends and have welcomed some 'new' friends to our meeting and have both enjoyed, encouraged and been challenged by those who have come to share. Folks like our dear friend Valerie Furmage shared with us her return to the church she and John built up there in Brazil having been invited to celebrate an important anniversary. Along with both daughters they received a tremendous welcome and outpouring of love which was a huge encouragement to Valerie and her daughters as they rekindled friendships and fellowship. Miss Mary Barclay also came and opened up scripture to us bringing – as always – encouragement to keep going and growing in the Lord. She herself is a living witness to the truth of that. 'New' friends Ivana Bajic and Jayne Lamond told of their own journeys. Ivana was led by the Lord from Estonia to working with Friend's International in Stirling among the students at the University. Jayne from Denny has been to Kenya to set up a way to help and support a great work there and is planning to return in January. Arising from being a 'Friend of Strathcarron Hospice' she has initiated 'Snowdrop Cafés' in Denny and Alloa to offer friendship and support to patients, carers and the lonely.

On Monday 9th December, we finished by enjoying a beautiful Christmas lunch in the Cambus Inn – a good way to end the session and highly recommended!

We recommence the session on January 13th, when we will hear from Kami our COLT worker; David and Ann McFarlane as our BMS speakers; Revs Norman Rollo and Graham Brown and Mrs Margaret Gilvear. We will have our Open night on March 23rd and have as our guest speaker Major Catherine Wiles of the Salvation Army. A few of us have heard Catherine before and we look forward to welcoming her along with the ladies from the various other Women's fellowships/Guilds in the County. (Men are also allowed!)

We take this opportunity to wish you a peaceful (if at all possible) and meaningful Christmas.

Kathleen Natella

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AT STIRLING : 23 JUNE 2019



Hundreds of people from the Central Scotland churches enjoyed the 150th Anniversary celebration at the Albert Halls in Stirling. Thanks to: the Stewarding Team from St Ninian's Community Church; our M.C. Brian Gooding from Callander; Brian Talbot from Broughty Ferry for his historical insights; to Julie Ann Love from Stirling Baptist Church for sharing her testimony; the BUS Mission and Ministry Advisor Jim Purves for preaching the encouraging word about our living Christian faith at work in Scotland using the theme for the year, "Give me also springs of water" Judges 1:15. Alasdair Black from SBC for sharing his insights stemming from the work of Dr. David Bebbington; to the worship team and the 'lights and sound'

people from Falkirk Baptist; and the closing remarks from Alistair Cuthbert.

It was an honour to work with such a dynamic group of servant-hearted people.

David Fraser, Alva Baptist Church

Alloa Baptist were well represented at this special event.

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY!



On a Sunday, the crush-hall children have a choice of activities before the teaching session. They get on well together. The Lego tower shows how they are growing! The older children now work through in the back hall, leaving the babies, toddlers and younger children and their parents with more room for their activities.

On the 26th June, Martin Hodson, now the new BU General Director, visited Alloa to have a discussion with the fellowship about our vision for the church. We plan to follow this up in 2020.

