

balerno



Blether

FREE

the magazine and newsletter of Balerno Parish Church; for the Church and for the Community

Happy Easter!

Issue no 50

April 2026

Malleny Rhododendron

8 March 2026



Interim Ministry News - April 2026

A brief update from Roy Henderson, Interim Minister.

Weekly Worship

Sunday services will continue to be held at 09.30 a.m. in Balerno and 11.15 a.m. at Currie.

Joint services are on the third Sunday of the month at 10.00 a.m. and on special occasions (e.g. Easter Sunday) also at 10.00 a.m.

This will continue until the end of June and will be reviewed.

Strategy/Steering Group

The Strategy/Steering Group will soon get to work to develop, support and progress the union of Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church.

Members of the Group are, Diane Browne, Grant Gordon, Kathryn Harper, Neil Johnstone, Iain Matheson, Ann Merrilees, Jean McGuire & Martin Petty.

Among other things the Group will consider:

- The Basis of Union document in turn to be agreed by the Kirk Sessions, so that the congregations can vote on the Union.
- Support the joint workings of existing church committees and groups. e.g. The joint worship group. The Moving Forward Group. The Pastoral Care personnel from each Church. Mission, Outreach and Fellowship representatives. Fabric and finance groups are being encouraged to get together too.
- Employment contracts
- Church magazines
- Church websites

Leading Worship – a Lay Vocation?

The linked churches benefit from people who read the Bible lessons and lead prayers at Sunday services. Others take part in Messy Church, Christmas family services and other worship related activities. In future it may be that trained lay people will bear more responsibility in leading worship services. Are you interested in joining them?

Now would be a good time to encourage and build up people in their skills and confidence in this. Roy Henderson, Interim Minister is keen to provide training for

people with such an interest.

If you are feeling drawn to this, please contact me at; 3 Johnsburn Road, Balerno, EH14 7DN

Tel: 0131 449 3830

Mob: 07961 736061

E-mail: RHenderson@churchofscotland.org.uk

What Some People do for Easter

Throughout the world there are diverse traditions for the celebration of Easter which often blend religious significance with cultural rituals, marking the holiday as a time of rebirth, community, and joy. In one country you could be celebrating by flying a kite while in another you could simply be reading a murder mystery!

Easter Monday in **Poland** is known as "Wet Monday." It involves playful, nationwide water fights where young people soak friends and strangers with buckets, water guns, and balloons. The tradition symbolises the end of winter and the beginning of spring renewal, cleansing, and courtship, it is a public holiday and a lively, mandatory tradition. It can be prudent to dress appropriately and avoid carrying valuables or sensitive electronics.

In Bessières, **France**, a giant omelette is made using over 15,000 eggs on Easter Monday. This tradition is understood to originate from the occasion when Napoleon stayed in the area and was so impressed by an innkeeper's omelette that he ordered the town to gather all available eggs to feed his troops the following day. It takes about 42 minutes to cook the omelette over a wood fire on a 4 metre wide pan!



In **Sweden and Finland** boys and girls dress as Easter witches. They go door to door, giving out cards and receiving treats on Maundy Thursday or Easter Saturday.

In **Greece**, eggs are hardboiled and dyed red on Holy Thursday and then, in a competition reminiscent of conkers, the eggs are tapped together; if the eggshell cracks, then the player is 'out.' After this knockout competition, the egg with the hardest shell is the winner.

In **Spain** and much of **Latin America** there are lengthy colourful street processions throughout Holy Week. As well as holding processions, in Mexico there is an added feature on Easter Saturday of burning paper-maché figures which represent Judas – and sometimes dressed with the appearance of unpopular politicians!



On **Bermuda** there is a tradition of flying homemade, hexagon-shaped kites to symbolize Christ's ascension on Good Friday. People fly hexagonal kites, which have been claimed to hold world records for altitude and duration of flight.

In the **Philippines** the Salubong ceremony is held early on Easter Monday and re-enacts the meeting of Jesus and Mary on Easter morning. This tradition has its origins in the Spanish colonial times. Two separate processions – one for Jesus and

one for Mary – meet in front of a church and a child removes a black veil from Mary's face to symbolise the end of mourning.

The Easter Bilby in **Australia** is a native marsupial, and replaces the Easter Bunny to raise awareness for endangered species.

In **Norway** there is an unusual tradition which dates back to the 1920's of reading, listening to or watching crime thrillers and mysteries during the Easter break. There is no connection to the Easter story, the tradition having been started by a newspaper's publicity stunt.



The new Steering Group (formerly Strategy/Process Group) is now hard at work and will have been assessing its remit as that was agreed at the Joint Kirk Sessions meeting on 25th February. They may even have got down the list of topics to the Website and Magazines items. The group may be wondering how to approach the matter and they may even have asked what is the purpose of church websites and magazines?

They may of course even have wondered whether websites and magazines are not in fact aspects of the bigger issue of communications in general for the new united Church. And we would not disagree with that. However, assuming they don't take up that challenge, what of church magazines?

What is a Church Magazine?

All websites and all newsletter type magazines are there to inform and to engage their target audiences. They serve as central, reliable hubs to broadcast updates, to build trust, and to align different cultures. There is and will be a continuing need for all of that for the target audience within the two churches. Ask Mr Google and he will say that 'generally, [a church magazine] should aim for a balance between serious content and lighthearted, community-focused material. While it should avoid misinformation, heresy, or disruptive gossip, incorporating humor, cartoons, and light local news can make it more engaging and accessible to the wider community.'

Currie's Kirk News and the Balerno Blether approach their tasks in rather different ways, and their readership will have their own views about what they like and what they don't like. Whether the Strategy Group recommend a completely new vehicle for the future or whether they suggest a new shared copy model in which both publications are retained with a common core of material remains to be seen. Either might be a solution to what the Strategy Group's remit clearly identifies as an upcoming issue for the new united congregation which is, of course, the principal target audience for a church magazine.

But, of course it's not the only target audience. There is another important, and developing, target audience outside of the church walls, and that is the community at large, and especially, in our case, the communities of Balerno and Currie. Are they an audience with whom the Church should engage? Yes, certainly and probably to a far greater extent than heretofore.

Local congregations are expected to articulate mission in their planning, and much active mission is going to entail local activity. Thus the local community becomes a key audience, and potential partner, both for the design and for the delivery of mission.

However, that then begs the question; who are the local audience, because the new congregation of Currie and Balerno has two communities. The new church magazine will have to speak to both communities. Logically that takes you to a single magazine; but, and there is always a but, both congregations have emphasised the importance of their unique histories and community roles. Furthermore, current plans anticipate the continued use of church buildings in both locations to ensure continuity of service.

Community use of church buildings is not only vital to church finances, but those buildings are critical to the communities for

what they are; community assets. Communities do regard the local church as 'our church.' This sense of ownership is especially strong in rural areas, where churches act as central hubs, offering support from "cradle to grave" and hosting community events.

We read that sociologists and theologians often describe this phenomenon as "vicarious" Christianity—people who do not attend church but want it to be there as a stable presence in their community, for, say, a funeral or a wedding.

Churches are also community partners and a 2021 study by the National Churches Trust calculated the annual social and economic value of church buildings to the UK was worth roughly £55 billion. This figure was updated from an initial 2020 estimate of £12.4 billion to reflect new HM Treasury Green Book guidelines on valuing wellbeing.

Which ever of those figures applies they show that the impact of churches and their buildings is immense. and churches recognise that by going above and beyond in their mission to their own communities.

How best then to access community audiences, and how best to make sure each community feels part of a new church project?

Considering what might work best the Steering Group might look at whether the primary aim in its magazine offering is to create a single voice for the union, or a joined-up voice for the union tailored for each community. The messages can be common but delivery can also be tailored. The Steering Group may consider that there is at present an effective voice for the church in both Currie and Balerno, and they may elect not to rush things but to take a longer view on how and the extent to which we should approach combining magazines as has been suggested. They may consider tailored publications is in the best interests of the union by safeguarding the connection between church and their community. That might give you perhaps,

Kirk News

the voice in Currie of Currie and Balerno Church

and

Balerno Blether

the voice in Balerno of Currie and Balerno Church

Whatever model is adopted however, the important thing is that a church magazine has to recognise its audience, and whatever else, that audience must now include its communities; loud and clear.

A brief history of the Easter Egg

Easter egg traditions originated from ancient spring fertility celebrations, later adopted by early Christians to symbolize the resurrection, with the egg representing Jesus' tomb. Historically, eggs were forbidden during Lent, prompting people to decorate them to mark the end of fasting. Chocolate eggs appeared later in the 19th-century Victorian era.

Early Christians in Mesopotamia dyed eggs red to represent the blood of Christ. The Church, in the 17th century, solidified the egg as a symbol of the resurrection, with the hard shell representing the tomb.

Because eggs were forbidden during Lent, those laid during this time were often boiled, decorated, and given as gifts to children or church officials on Easter Sunday. In 1290 Edward I commissioned 450 decorated eggs for Easter. Then along came Faberge 700 years later.

A word on the Basis of Union

The Basis of Union is what it says on the tin. It is the basis on which a union of two or more congregations will proceed. It is a mandatory document which formalises the legal, financial and missional agreement between uniting churches. The areas covered by the document are the key areas where decisions have to be made and agreed before a union can take place. When the congregations come to vote on the union they will be voting on the union as described in an agreed Basis of Union. Without agreement the Union cannot go forward; and conversely with it the congregations cannot easily go back.

So what's in the Basis of Union? While the *pro forma* in which the Basis of Union comes to be considered looks more like an ultimatum, it may be best to view it more as the opportunity to shape the future rather than a strait-jacket of legal obligation. The Basis of Union requires agreement on the new name for the united congregations, on the Kirk Session, and on the ministry, with voting required in both congregations. It agrees the transference of funds and assets to the united charge. Although that means in effect that everything goes, it may be as well to understand what that means so to speak on the ground. There is an automaticity about transfer of assets when the Union takes place and it is as well to have some more detailed appreciation of what that means so that questions can be answered in up-coming debates. In general if it's screwed down then it transfers; but there may be assets which are stored in the Parish Church belonging to other bodies which won't be expected to. Can be a good idea to check on what there is lying around. There is the old chestnut about the status of the Gibson Craig Halls, and it's not necessarily clear what might have to be done, if anything, to regularise arrangements for that for a union.

The Basis of Union will also involve a statement on places of worship. In general since both Currie and Balerno are listed as Grade A by Presbytery option C in the form is likely to apply. That is to say

Both churches at present used and occupied by the

congregations shall be the places of worship of the united charge. Services shall be conducted in [Currie Kirk](#) and in [Balerno Parish Church](#) each Sunday at times to be decided by the Minister and Kirk Session

Precise times of worship would not ordinarily require to be specified.

It ought not to be necessary to determine the desirable size of the new Kirk Session in the Basis of Union. Ditto for the application of the Unitary Constitution since both Currie and Balerno are constituted on that basis.

On Article 7 - Minister - sub paragraph (a) would apply since both charges are vacant at present. Equally with paragraph 8 - Manse - presbytery have already arranged that the Balerno manse would be used for the new charge. And paragraph 9 is of little direct relevance to a decision whether to sign the Basis of Union; it refers to Stipend which is par excellence a Presbytery and General Assembly matter.

There ought then to be no great difficulty in the congregation being recommended to sign the Basis of Union; the challenges in signing are more to do with the underlying issues of what the world will actually look like in a union.

Like many things the moment of signing may call to mind details which may not be absolutely relevant but which can seem critical. So, more haste less speed and think before you leap.

While refusal to agree a Basis of Union in the case of Currie and Balerno is unlikely, it is as well to be aware of what happens in the event of refusal. First of all the Presbytery would come to call to investigate concerns and address issues. That might lead to reconsideration and adjustment of the Presbytery Plan or simply reconsideration by the congregations. If that doesn't work however then there is the possibility of enforced structural change despite local opposition.

Is it time to look back, in order to look forward?

Is it time to revive the Water of Leith community. It now seems like years ago although it's just over ten years since the community councils in Balerno, Currie and Juniper Green discussed how best to look at the future together. Long before the Presbytery Plan.

Balerno had started its Farmers Market back in 2005 under the auspices of the 19thC sounding *Balerno Conservation and Development Forum*. Founded in 2002 it morphed into the Balerno Village Trust in about 2009.

Discussions between the three Councils started in the wake of the success of both Sustain Balerno (Tattie Day, Apple Day etc), the Balerno Music Festival (from 2008), and the Balerno Christmas Tree Festival (2010 onwards). They were directed towards the possibility of establishing an overarching umbrella organisation, something like a community trust for the Upper Water of Leith area.

Events in early 2015 took the drive out of the discussions and in any event the idea may have been ahead of its time, but in the meantime the opening of Harlaw Hydro in September 2015 reinforced the idea of what a community can do when it organises.

The idea of doing more together and establishing new structures for the purpose was born also out of the pressure on

each of the communities arising from the housing planning process which produced a seemingly endless supply of planning applications for large scale housing developments in the valley.

Those applications had arisen partly from the target driven pressure from Government for new housing. Community energy was being diverted towards combatting applications which could have swamped the area. The formation of a Planning group in the valley - the South West Communities Forum - drawn from the three Community Councils produced a more coherent response. The pressure dropped soon after the 2016 Local Development Plan was eventually agreed. Some of the key actors in that process are no longer available. But the idea of communities combining to share experience and to plan together is still there.

The process towards Union is complex and the success of the new congregation will require something of the same inputs which produced the community development in Balerno in the 2000's. It will entail a new vision for the church in the Upper Water of Leith Valley. The idea of the Pilgrimage Route along the Water of Leith recognises the potential of leveraging Scotland's scenic appeal by developing pilgrim routes and offering hospitality to tourists and walkers, recognizing rural areas as places of spiritual reflection. In its own way it can be part, but only part, of that new vision.

My Vision of Church

Given that we are in the process of considering the way forward for the congregations in Currie and Balerno, it seems appropriate to include the thoughts of someone who has given consideration to a less conventional style of church. Rev Ruth Harvey is the leader of the Iona Community and the following is an extract from an essay entitled, 'Inside Out.'

Over the last two years a group of five of us have been meeting once a month, to eat together, to study the Bible and to pray. We choose themes for study that reflect our concerns and interests. Our prayers come out of these discussions and are made in the form of silence, songs, painting together, lighting candles. In the sharing of our concerns, we listen hard to one another.

Over the years together we have developed a degree of trust and honesty which enhances this sharing. My vision of church is that groups of people can meet with joy and anticipation, share their concerns honestly with each other, share food, and offer these concerns, hopes and fears in the presence of each other to God. My vision of ministry is that we in the churches will recognise those who have the gift of enabling this process to happen and will encourage small, seemingly insignificant 'gatherings' like this to grow.

My vision of church is that individuals can be freed to spend time alone with God and not feel they have to verify that freedom on a Sunday morning. My vision of ministry is that a climate of self-expression will be enabled to grow within the context of a rooted, communal ministry.

My vision of church is that we will recognise Christ in the most unlikely places and there be able to say, 'Ah, church!' My vision of ministry is that it will be a vehicle through which the Bible and other wise texts can come alive, drawing on the insights and experience of those with little or no formal training who nevertheless walk in Christ's path.

This extract is reprinted from 'This is the Day,' a book of readings and meditations published by the Iona Community. The full essay, 'Inside Out,' was included in the Wild Goose Publication, 'In Good Company: women in the ministry,' edited by Lesley Orr Macdonald.

do you have a minute, Lord?

Lord, are you listening? Did you hear me, or are you just ignoring me and the thousands of others who have been praying for peace in the Middle East for years?

Events like these make many people think that it may be better not to have really strong convictions as far as religion is concerned, because strong convictions seem to lead to extremism and hurt. Throughout the world there are political leaders who, because of their certainty that they know what is right, insist on provoking confrontation with others and, in doing so, cause increased suffering and destruction. There are people in all parts of the world who know you by different names who feel betrayed by such leadership – but although the peacemakers may be blessed to inherit the earth, they still seem to get sidelined and have to suffer the world of the warmongers who choose to ignore the people of other faiths who would happily join in with Christian prayers for peace – because suffering is suffering in any language.

Allah, our lord, unite the nations around the principles of justice, peace, love and faith. Put peace and love in our hearts for the diversity that makes our world so beautiful. Oh Lord, most Strong, give us the strength to protect and care for our neighbours, remove prejudice from our hearts, and enable us to love our brothers and sisters of all faiths and none. Lord, give the world leaders vision and wisdom, as they take decisions affecting peace in our world. Allah, our Sustainer, please give us the patience to continue to learn from one another and work towards a world which is more peaceful and kind. Make our hearts generous so that we may treat others as we wish to be treated ourselves.

Adonai, we pray for peace, for wholeness, healing and safety when violence touches us all. We pray for peace, for justice and compassion and acceptance in the face of hatred. May the world be bathed in the light of peace, where conflicts cease and understanding prevails. Let kindness be the guiding principle for all people, nurturing empathy and compassion in every heart.

Contributed

The prayers above were edited from: 'Prayer for the Nation,' published by the Mosques and Imams National Advisory Board and a prayer published on reformjudaism.org.

Stated Annual Meeting and Treasurer's Valedictory

Balerno Parish Church's Stated Annual Meeting, or SAM, for 2025 was held on Sunday 22nd March immediately following 9.30am morning service.

SAM is a mandatory meeting for congregations of the Church of Scotland and is usually held by June 30th. The business transacted includes receiving the Annual Report and Accounts for the previous calendar year. The Report includes individual sections on the various committees and activities on the church's life and work, and can be found on the Church website. David's explanation of the accounts was as usual comprehensive while succinct, picking out and addressing all the main points.

Joint Session Clerk Kay Coull gave the vote of thanks on behalf of the meeting, to David both for delivering the annual report 2025 and also for his long period of service as Treasurer. Her address was met with warm applause,

David retired as Treasurer at the end of the 2025 financial year, at 31st December, handing over the Treasurership to Jim Todd. In his closing remarks he said it had been a privilege and pleasure to serve the church in Balerno as Treasurer in two separate periods totalling some eleven years. During that period, he made many friends, and received welcome guidance on Church of Scotland accounting. For both of which he said, he profoundly grateful – 'long may those friendships continue!', And then he concluded, 'That's it folks!' before leaving with an envelope, a large bouquet for Joan, and the warm thanks of the congregation.



Meanwhile, elsewhere in Balerno?

News in brief from Balerno Community Council

The Community Council's March meeting was held on Thursday 5 March and the agenda included discussion.

Matters raised by members of the public included problems with vermin and issues concerning possible danger from trees.

There was considerable discussion about the state of roads and pathways across the area, and Cllr Jenkinson explained a funding allocation for 2026/27 of £26M for capital spending, and outlined a longer term strategy for road maintenance.

Following the March meeting the Council circulated guidance on actions to take to reduce risk of vermin infestation.

The Council also discussed recent planning applications including in relation to small developments outside of the village envelope.

The Balerno Local Place Plan continues at the evidence gathering stage with questionnaire returns being analysed, and on the morning of 7th March an open meeting at the Community Centre where those attending could put questions and have the process explained along with preliminary findings. The event was attended by a small audience and the speakers included Graham Marchbank of Planning Aid Scotland. A further public meeting will be organised for a date yet to be determined before a start is made on actually writing a draft plan. That draft plan will once approved by the Community Council be put before a further public meeting. The plan if approved would then be submitted to Edinburgh Council.

In a presentation given at that public meeting it was reported that by 7 March there had been 67 online responses to the questionnaire and approximately 11 paper responses. Key themes emerging from the questionnaires include active travel, school safety, green belt protection, and a village-centric design.

At the Council's March meeting the Council agreed to write to Gordon MacDonald MSP thanking him for his service as our constituency MSP since his election in 2011 and wishing him well for whatever he may choose to do following his retirement from the Parliament. The Council expressed thanks for all that Gordon had done for the community and for individual constituents, saying he had been a good friend to Balerno's residents and to our community as a whole. The Parliament goes into recess on Thursday 26 March, prior to being dissolved on 9 April to allow for campaigning to begin for the election which will be held on Thursday 7th May.

The Council's April meeting has been postponed from Thursday 2nd April (Maundy Thursday) to Thursday 9th April, at 7.00pm at Balerno Community Centre.



Balerno Parish Church raises the Cross for Easter

The Cross was put up on Monday 23rd March by John Burnside (yellow hat), Neil Johnstone (red hat) with grateful thanks to Brian Fleming (Upper Dean Park Farm) for his assistance with the Fork Lift!

Guild AGM and Social evening - Wednesday 18 March



In the Navy
with the
Kirk Singers

The Guild's AGM on 18th March was full of fun and laughter; they were joined by the Currie Kirk Singers who used props such as bubble machines, yoyos, and flat caps - and US Navy caps - to enhance their performance, bringing much joy to the AGM!

The Guild session is now finished until the first Wednesday evening in October. However, they will be having their annual fund-raising event on **Wednesday the 24th of June at 7pm in the St Joseph's Centre at Balerno Parish Church**, in aid of their National Guild Project, over some sweet treats and a glass of Pim's.

For further information about the Guild, please don't hesitate to contact Kay Coull at coullkay@hotmail.com.

Coffee with a Cop - 25 March

There hasn't been a 'Coffee with a Cop' for a few years in Balerno, and These sessions provide an informal opportunity for residents to meet and discuss safety concerns, or simply have a friendly chat with Police officers.

The South West Edinburgh policing team has 9 officers, based at Oxbgangs, and organised in three shifts of three; Andrea called in on the 25th for a chat and met a good number of Mill customers. Chat ranged across police matters with traffic, speeding, parking and electric bikes figuring high, but also touched on general getting to know you topics as well.

Balerno Police Station was formally closed as an active police station in March 2024. before being sold to Balerno Village Trust. It was one of 70 police stations in Scotland closed over the last five years. The original Balerno Police Station was actually situated in Main Street, and the last police station, now to be a Community Hub, was opened in the 1960's.



**Come and visit The Mill Café at
the St Joseph's Centre.
Open Tuesday to Friday,
9.00am to 2.00pm.**

**(and the 2nd Saturday of the month
when the Farmers' Market is on)**

The Mill Café

There is something for everyone at the Mill Café. A warm welcome awaits families, walkers, locals – in other words, the whole community. It is bright and spacious, and the food is fantastic. You will find good quality coffee, freshly baked scones, delicious cakes and much more besides. Try it once and we guarantee you'll be back.



Every day we have two varieties of soup, lovingly made by our Mill volunteers and staff. Try our baked potatoes, bacon rolls, roll and sausage or toasted sandwiches and paninis, with a variety of tasty fillings to choose from.

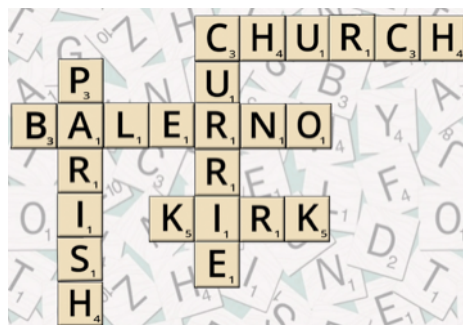
We use Fairtrade products wherever possible.

The Mill Café, St Joseph's Centre, 2 Main Street, Balerno EH14 9EH

another

B

It was reported in last month's edition that there were diverging opinions at a meeting of the two Kirk Sessions as to the next



steps in bringing Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church into a union. Given the even division of opinion, it is perhaps worth exploring the immediate issue.

On the one hand we have a body of opinion which is focussed on

the priority of the integration of the two congregations to worship as one in the expectation that this consolidation will automatically produce a more close-knit congregation with renewed strength and sense of purpose.

On the other hand, there is a concern that the proposed 'rotation' for holding Sunday morning services in only one of our two churches on alternate Sundays is likely to have the effect of undermining the sense of continuity in worship in both parishes and that it would lead to an overall decline in the number of worshippers. Our congregations serve two distinct communities and the Presbytery plan made it clear that it expected both places of worship to remain open for worship in their respective communities.

Both views contain valid points. If there is to be a successful union of the two congregations, then there needs to be more opportunity for the members of both congregations to get to know each other and to build closer relationships. However, as one of the reasons for the impending union has been an overall national decline in church membership, it

would seem counter-productive to be taking steps which have the potential to contribute further to that decline.

So where do we go from here? Perhaps it might help to take the advice of an old snooker player. Success doesn't just come from potting the balls, it comes from leaving the cue ball in the right place after you've potted the ball. You need to ask yourself where you want the cue ball to be after the pot to set up your next shot? So that would beg the question – what do we think should be our next shot and what, therefore, is the best thing to do now to set that up?

It has been said before, that the message of the church hasn't changed, but the world has and so the method of communication perhaps has to adapt to this new environment.

In the secular world, buzzwords like 'resilient' and 'agile' are used to complement successful organisations which manage to adapt to changing trading environments or political trends. There is a view that we live now in a 'Post Christendom Society,' where the teachings of the Christian Faith can no longer be assumed to underpin the values and beliefs of our world. In the face of such change, the church is presented with a serious challenge to its 'agility' and 'resilience.'



LIQUID CHURCH?

But what might be the characteristics of an agile and resilient church? What would it look like? Pete Ward, Professor of Practical Theology at Durham University and a former Christian youth worker, has written of the idea of *Liquid Church* which, 'Is continually on the move, flowing in response to the Spirit and the gospel of Jesus, the imagination and creativity of its leaders, and the choices and experiences of its worshippers.' For him, a church which is based on structures, institutions and meetings is *Solid Church* and he presents a challenge with the suggestion that a valid sense of 'Church' can come from an unscheduled sharing of spiritual activity between people motivated by the Christian message. He suggests that, 'church might be something that we make with each other by communicating Christ, so that it is not an institution as such.' The idea of a 'solid' church has two facets. On the one hand it implies an image of something which is quite reliable, immovable and permanent, but on the other there is a hint of something which is old fashioned and unattractive.

Whatever Pete Ward might regard as the way forward for 'church' it is difficult to argue with his implication that the church has lost its appeal. He does not claim that the Christian message is less relevant, but rather that its shop window / public interface could change without compromising the message. While it might be uncomfortable, it has to be accepted that this is not just a message for the church at large, but one which is equally relevant for churches at grass roots as it is for the institution. It is a message which challenges all parishes to rethink how they do things to provide a Christian hub for their communities.

That is the background against which congregations are making decisions in and about their future and perhaps we have to ask ourselves whether we are likely to be stronger – more agile – more resilient - as one congregation or as two? The conventional - but not exclusive - pattern for a union has been for the formation of one congregation but union has

THE

ISSUE

often been followed by the loss of some of the members of the amalgamated congregations. The challenge is illustrated below:



When congregations / churches are required to sacrifice some of their previous identity which has evolved over the years in order to accommodate compromise and change, the loss of some members may be common but that can only be overcome by the creation of a new identity for the church in the community. Despite these problems, there are occasions when it is hard to argue against the need for unions – where, perhaps, a church building has fallen into disrepair and the cost of repair is prohibitive or where the low membership of the congregation makes it no longer viable on its own, but it is harder to see a good justification for reducing the presence of the church while the buildings and congregations remain viable.

Perhaps that leads this discussion to the proverbial elephant in the room: our congregations are currently viable – but for how much longer? The demographic profile of our congregations has been steadily ageing for the last 10

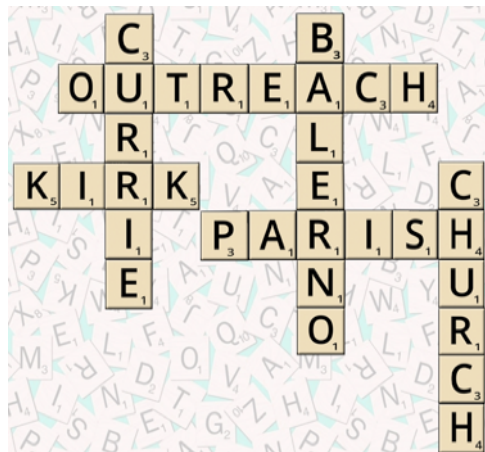


years and possibly longer. The size of the congregations is in decline and so, therefore, is the income from givings. Our financial position is sustained by the income generated from community use of our facilities, but succession planning to find people willing to take over from those who currently undertake roles in the management of the church campus is going to be very challenging. Sadly, that is not a predicament which is unique to the church in our community, but if we become too intimidated by that problem then there is a danger that we will allow ourselves to go into a stage of managed contraction and decline.

So, let's get back to that metaphor about the cue-ball and the next shot. It is not unreasonable to consider that the process of the union of Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church may be enhanced by bringing the congregations together for worship, but that is perhaps a rather short-term approach which ignores the long-term issues. How would that help to address the issue of declining membership? Perhaps that apparent consolidation is an example of 'solid' church and lacks the 'agility' and 'resilience' which is required for the twenty-first century.

There is much written about 'mission' in the thick files of

documents which have been circulated in connection with the future of the church, but, in some ways, there is a lack of practical guidance as to what this might mean for individual congregations. If the range of the projects supported by the Go-For-It Fund is taken as an example, then the idea of Mission can cover a wide variety of initiatives including the appointment of an outreach worker, the support of a drop-in centre for addicts and the setting up of an internet café.



Mission of any sort starts with outreach and it is difficult to see how the new union of the congregations of Currie Kirk and Balerno Parish Church will not have a better chance of success and better unity of purpose in outreach to the people of the two communities if it continues to provide regular worship presence in both churches.

It would not be revolutionary to retain our two centres of worship for a Sunday morning. It happens elsewhere. If we were to expand our ministry team, as has been suggested, then that initiative would allow worship in both churches to return to the original times and it would offer more options for the development of variety in our worship.

It could be claimed that these issues are all something for the future and that we need to wait and see what sort of minister we get when the process of the union has been completed and that it will be for them to make such decisions. On the other hand, there is an argument that says that it is for the united congregations to establish some idea of how they would like to move forward and then to look to call a minister whose vision for the future is a good fit with the congregations' aspirations. Perhaps our response to these arguments rather depends on what we think is the future of ministry in our communities. Is ministry something which we expect to leave to other people or is it something in which we feel we should be active participants?

Health Warning: The maintenance of the continuity of Sunday worship in both churches is not a guarantee of anything for the future. Success will depend of what we make of the opportunity but we have to be aware that we have a choice. JB



Notes from Roy

Hello and greetings from the manse of 'Balerno linked with Currie Church of Scotland'. The two churches in the linked charge are to form a union, making 'one' out of 'two'. How this will look is still to be worked out. The Kirk Sessions of Balerno and Currie have set up a 'Strategy Group'. The first thing the group has done is to rechristen itself more modestly as the 'Steering Group'. Steering things forward is a delicate task. Please remember them and the task we share with them in your prayers. Where do we turn for comfort in these unsettling times in church and wider world? What has Easter to offer, in all of its shadow and light?

From Palm Sunday, through Holy Week, we watch disciples desert and deny Jesus, crowds welcome and vilify him. We witness 'Powers that Be', as they plot, sentence and execute him. We see tender love and cruel hate revealed. Humanity at its best and worst are unveiled. More than watch on, we participate in the story. The Easter story is the opposite of a comfort blanket. It is a wake-up call.

In 'Murder at the Cathedral', T.S. Eliot wrote:

We do not wish anything to happen.
Seven years we have lived quietly,
Succeeded in avoiding notice,
Living and partly living.
There have been oppression and
luxury,

There has been
poverty and licence,
There has been
minor injustice.

Yet we have gone on living,
Living and partly living.

In the words of John V Taylor, 'Quietly avoiding notice, and quietly avoiding having to take notice, is a recipe making an irresponsible community in which nobody matters because nobody cares.'

The combination of the Easter story combined with current events and the work to be done in our churches is a wakeup call. This is a deeper kind of comfort. Not a deadening of pain but a deepening of commitment, a strengthening of resolve. God calling a responsible community, marked by dying and rising, into life. Church.

*O living God,
we who are partly living,
scarcely hoping,
and fitfully caring,
pray to you now to make us fully
alive.
Give us the vitality, awareness and
commitment
that we see in Jesus Christ,
through the power of his death and
resurrection.
we ask this in his name. Amen*

(John V Taylor – A Matter of Life and Death)



SPRING DEEP CLEAN

Most people wouldn't be aware of the income that is generated by the letting of our church facilities. Pam McKeon does a Herculean job letting out the various facilities on our church campus. To attract these lets, our facilities have to be maintained to a high standard. On an annual basis the kitchen attached to The Ogston Hall is deep cleaned by a squad of volunteers. This is not quite as onerous as the Herculean task of cleaning out the Augean stables, it is nevertheless a major exercise. All of the crockery and cutlery is carried downstairs to be cleaned in the industrial dishwasher in the St Joseph's kitchen. While one part of the squad manages the dishwasher, another team acts as porters, while the third team cleans the cupboards and work surfaces. All in all a great team effort. This entire exercise was also carried out in record time, and the willing workers were The Blacks, The Johnstones, The Woodburns, Joyce Lamert, Isobel Laing, Ian Todd and The Ogilvie.

If you wish to be part of the team next year please let Pam know.

[Ed's Note; Well done to all involved!]

Malcolm Ogilvie, known locally of course as The Ogilvie, has never yet required to resort to that well established recruitment mechanism known as the Press for this jolly annual happening, and he'd be even happier if he could keep that record up for 2027.

So let's keep Malcolm happy!

Thesaurus

FRESH (adj)

New, Renewed, Additional, Replacement, Other, different (slang) - cool, stylish, new, or impressive

START (n)

Beginning, Birth, Foundation, Commencement, or, together, (and in plain language),

a collection of household goods to benefit people setting up home for the first time.

EARLY NOTICE

is hereby given

(giving warning, or information sooner than you might have expected, thereby allowing you time to prepare, mitigate risks, and take action.)

OF AN IMPORTANT EVENT

(being a significant occurrence causing major change, shaping a narrative, and having lasting impact on individuals, societies, and history, acting as a turning point, a milestone and a catalyst for development).

For more on this exciting event, should you require it, see the Balerno Blether or BPC Facebook!

The Balerno Parish Church Spring Collection

in aid of

Fresh Start

will be held on

Friday 24th and Sat 25th April 2026

between the hours of

10.00am and 12 Noon

and within the building commonly known as

THE OLD HALL

More information from Susan or Malcolm Ogilvie

Susanogilvie61@hotmail.com
malcolm.ogilvie@hotmail.co.uk

Charity donates funds to Balerno Parish Church

Young at

Young at **Young at Heart**, a Scottish charity which catered for older people in the Balerno area is dissolving and the Charity's Committee has decided to split and donate its funds to other local charities in the Currie and Balerno area.

Young at Heart was established in 2002 for "the advancement of health", "the relief of those in need by reason of age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage", and its beneficiaries were specifically described as 'older people'

Amongst the six charities to benefit is Balerno Parish Church and the church is immensely grateful to the Committee for the generous donation of £5721 which will be used to benefit older people.

In winding up the Charity **Young at Heart** also donated funds to The Octagon Club, The Meeting Place, Pentlands Community Space, Pentlands Men's Shed, and Palm Dementia Cafe.

The Church has not yet decided on how precisely the monies from **Young at Heart** will be applied, but how exactly care for the elderly is to be enhanced in our local area is bound to be a matter for debate especially as with the earlier loss of the Monday Club, provision for care of the elderly is now further depleted.

The charity had been active since 2002 and its dissolution further reduces the provision for older people in our area. The object of the charity as recorded by OSCR was stated as follows; 'established for charitable purposes only and specifically to relieve the needs and isolation of the elderly members of the community, and to advance their education by the provision of recreational, educational and social opportunities.'

There is a continuing need for such charitable activities.

Edinburgh Medical School 300th Anniversary



When you're next in Princes Street take a look around the square at the National Gallery and you will see at least one familiar face looking down at you from the surrounding display, of '300 Faces of Edinburgh Medical School'. The face hasn't changed over the thirty years since picture was taken.

The 300 Faces exhibition aims to spotlight remarkable people who have shaped Edinburgh's rich medical history, and has been put on as part of this year's Edinburgh Science Festival, between Friday 20 March and Sunday 26 April at Edinburgh Mound Precinct, before moving to Portobello Promenade from Wednesday 29 April to Sunday 14 June.

Established in 1726, Edinburgh Medical School is one of the oldest medical schools in the world, and, leading revolutionary advancements in medicine over three centuries, its students, doctors, researchers and alumni continue to respond to critical health challenges and influence medical science across the world.

Historic alumni with whom John shares space at the exhibition include Joseph Lister, the founder of antiseptic medicine, and Elsie Inglis, the founder of the Scottish Women's Suffrage Federation and Scottish Women's Hospitals. John himself held the James Mackenzie Chair of General Practice at the University of Edinburgh and is generally recognised as one of the founding fathers of general practice as an academic discipline.

When asked by the Bletter what it meant to him to see himself gazing out on Princes Street as one of the select 300 John Howie responded, 'Although just over half my medical career was spent in the Edinburgh Medical School,, this Exhibition reminds me that that period covers only one fifteenth of the life of this illustrious international establishment. It is humbling to be included amongst so many others who have made such significant and often unsung contributions to the well-being of the increasingly complex Society we now live in and contribute to.'

Calendar announcements & chit chat

Unless otherwise notified Sunday worship is at 9.30am every Sunday at Balerno Parish Church

April 2026 Services

Date	Time	Place	Service
Holy Week			
29th March to 5th April			
29th March	9.30 am	Balerno Parish Church	Palm Sunday
	11.15am	Currie Kirk	
2nd April	7.00 pm	Currie Kirk	Maundy Thursday
3rd April	7.00 pm	Balerno Parish Church	Good Friday
Easter Sunday			
5th April	10.00am	Balerno Parish Church	Joint Service; Cantata & Communion
12th April	9.30am	Balerno Parish Church	
	11.15am	Currie Kirk	
19th April	9.30am	Balerno Parish Church	
	11.15am	Currie Kirk	
26th April	9.30am	Balerno Parish Church	
	11.15am	Currie Kirk	
3rd May	9.30am	Balerno Parish Church	
	11.15am	Currie Kirk	

April 2026 Events

- 3 April - 11.00am** - Good Friday Walk of Witness - Balerno to Currie
- 4 April - 10.00am to 12 noon** - Easter Saturday pop-up Coffee and Craft morning Gibson Craig Hall - teas coffees., juice & treats! All welcome!
- 6 April - 10.00am** - Help required with gardening in the Church campus on the 1st Tuesday of the month! Please bring gloves and gardening tools!. For more information contact; George Harrison - margaretgeorge28@gmail.com
- 7 April: - 10:00am** - **Currie Guild** at Gibson Craig Halls Occupational therapy Speaker: Pauline Halliday
- 11 April - 7.00pm** - Ravelrig RDA - Casino & Silent Auction evening at Currie Rugby Club 1Tickets £20 Must be bought in advance. Email fundraising@ravelrig-rda.org.uk
- 13 April - 7.00pm** - **Joint Kirk Session Meeting** at the Gibson Craig Halls.
- 21 April - 2:00pm** - **Currie Guild Annual General Meeting** at Gibson Craig Halls with Tea/Coffee and Scones
- 24/25 April** - **10.00 to 12.00 each day** - at Old Hall, Balerno

The Fresh Start Spring Collection

Forget Paris, Milan and London Fashion WeeksT!

There's only one REAL Spring Collection and it's on 24 and 25 April!

see page 8 !!!!

- 26 April - 12:00-noon to 3.00pm** - Ravelrig RDA indoor car boot sale £15 a pitch to book email fundraising@ravelrig-rda.org. All proceeds go to Ravelrig Riding for the Disabled
- 28 April - 3.00pm to 4,30pm** - **Palm Cafe** - at St Joseph's

The (former) Treasurer's Thumb t'other one

'Ah very good Thumb, glad you're awake; jolly good! Now then, your offer to retire and go and bask on some storm tossed shore, Well, we got £37 in the Red Bucket, and everyone commends your self-less commitment to harmony and all that jazz. So I was thinking maybe we could move on now, like immediately, if not sooner and get something more worthwhile in your spot in the jolly old Blether now, what, what?'

'Yes sir, very good sir. Pardon me, sir, but I should tell you I've had a message. Very secret, sir. From The Other One.'

'Secret? Most intriguing! Ha ha! What do you mean, 'from the other one?'

'Well it's from the end of the other arm, sir. You have two you know. We meet occasionally for a chat especially when grasping the same mug of tea. But then we never know how long before we're going to be pulled apart to resume our separate solitary existences at the end of Arm and Other Arm.'

'How long's this been going on then? you mean you actually talk to each other?'

Well yes, we do actually. He was most upset when I had my near death experience - remember that one sir? back in 23 I think it was - he suggested I should sue you but I didn't see the point of that did I? Anyway he obviously knows all about this column in the Blether and reckons he might be able to do a better job. Not si sure I agreed immediately and we had a bit of a scuffle - thumb wrestling I think it's called - over that, but I said I was looking for a break and he said so were the readers, and yes that would certainly be good for everybody so we had a another few rounds and then he said he'd write something for Blether.'

'Well I really don't know what to say, Thumb.....!'

'That's all right sir, no need to say anything, because it's academic now, isn't it?'

'Pardon me?'

'Granyted. But you see sir, I agreed £50, not £37. I mean a chap's got his pride sir, hasn't he. I said £50, and you've only managed £37. But as well, in addition and all that, I mean, our readers have shown great judgment, have they not? They obviously want me to stay. How could I possibly leave now?'

(spluttering and harrumphing sounds from himself)

Woof

Hello again my friends – after boring weather now come the problems. 'She indoors' is quite ill and spends much of the day in bed – don't know the details, but the fact is, this is severely hampering my 'free time' when my presence around the village is of most value (to me!) And what do I get instead – a neighbour who has volunteered (but I wish she hadn't) to take me for walks.

This lady is a maniac – we walk for miles around two lakes and she doesn't allow me any 'off-lead' time. So, bang go all my sniffs and my opportunity to search out any attractive feminine doggies who happen to be passing by. The butcher must think I've moved home, so little does he see of me.

Looks like Plan B is called for, although Plan A was a disaster and I'm far from confident about its replacement. Friends, I need your help - many of you must own dogs – I can't say 'help' to them – what price my ego if I do that?

My pal Billy runs free and always comes back when called. I suppose I could think of some devious method of severing myself from the lead – that would leave the neighbour in a quandary! Probably the best way would be for my mistress (her indoors) to recover from her illness, then everything would be back to normal.

Ah, woe is me – hope to see you all next month

woof! woof!



Thesaurus

FRESH (adj)

New, Renewed, Additional, Replacement, Other, different (slang) - cool, stylish, new, or impressive

START (n)

Beginning, Birth, Foundation, Commencement, or, together, (and in plain language),

a collection of household goods to benefit people setting up home for the first time.

EARLY NOTICE

is hereby given

(giving warning, or information sooner than you might have expected, thereby allowing you time to prepare, mitigate risks, and take action,)

OF AN IMPORTANT EVENT

(being a significant occurrence causing major change, shaping a narrative, and having lasting impact on individuals, societies, and history, acting as a turning point, a milestone and a catalyst for development).

For more on this exciting event, should you require it, see the Balerno Blether or BPC FaceBook!

The Balerno Parish Church Spring Collection

in aid of

Fresh Start

will be held on

Friday 24th and Sat 25th April 2026

between the hours of

10.00am and 12 Noon

and within the building commonly known as

THE OLD HALL

More information from Susan or Malcolm Ogilvie

Susanogilvie61@hotmail.com

malcolm.ogilvie@hotmail.co.uk

Palm Cafe

Last Tuesday of each month at St Joseph's; 3.00 to 4.30pm.

'A space for people with dementia and their carers'

Friday 29th May 2026

**TICKETS
COMING
SOON!**

£10



A joint production by the linked charges



for a
Devilish Quiz !



10 OF 12

2026 Fairtrade Event

In a week of international gloom, Saturday March 7's Fairtrade (FT) Morning in our Church Halls was a joy. Our prizewinning young artists from the Balerno Schools FT Art Competition, and their proud grown-ups, clearly loved Depute Lord Provost Lezley Marion Cameron's presentation of their awards, reminding us too why FT still matters; and the display of their work was inspiring. They'll remember their Morning for years.

FT stallholders were very happy with their Morning's custom, in turn supporting producers around the world not with charity, but via guaranteed, fair prices, plus a community premium applied to social and educational (etc) projects prioritised by the communities themselves. FT details were readily available on the Information stall; Pentlands Eco Group Seed-swappers reminded us to go on caring for our planet; a glorious 'Mill' cake was competed for and won; and Edinburgh Bicycle Cooperative's FT Banana Smoothies riotously pedalled and swigged.



In the Ogston Hall, kind Dean Park School staff and helpers led a buzzing children's activities table. And famous Guild refreshments, backed by such generously donated homebaking, and lovely helpers as ever, did so much, all at once: welcomed, fed and rested everyone, while fund-raising hugely for the day's causes. Sunday March 8's 'follow-on' sale of remaining baking and bananas, plus other generous donations from

friends and families, some not able to attend, were truly big-hearted too.

Costs dealt with, healthy donations are now on their way to Transform Trade, and to Scottish Fair Trade's Youth Collective, working hard to bring FT awareness into mainstream schooling throughout the land.

We're so grateful to everyone who made this possible. Where do we start? As in many previous years, Scotmid helped sponsor prizes, Bike Bananas, and some of the refreshments. Local press and online publicity, national FT agencies, patient helping families and neighbours of the FT Group all did so much. BPC Staff, setters-up and takers-down, stallholders, helpers, visitors, First Aider and customers were amazing. Whether young, old, bouncy or struggling to keep the bounce up: you were so much appreciated. Thank you all again!

Lesley Henderson



THANK YOU AGAIN!

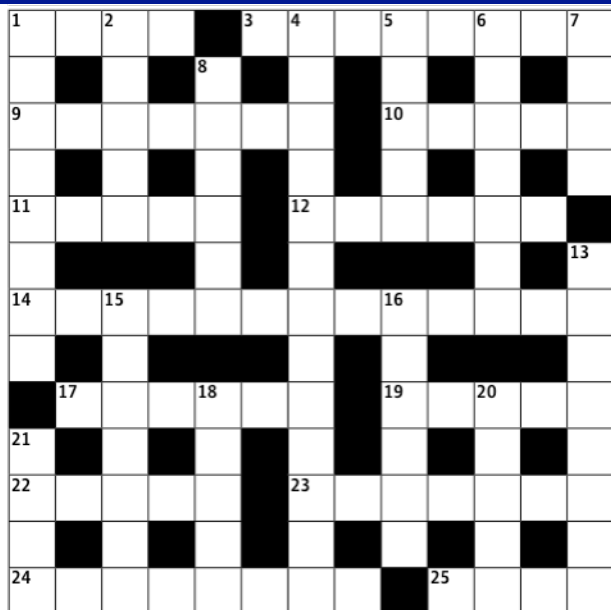
Picture of the month
April 2026



Guess who came to Balerno !

first correct answer to the Office gets a free cup of Mill Cafe coffee

Crossword Corner - April puzzle



Across

- 1 Move from side to side (4)
- 3 Scatter in all directions (8)
- 9 Without delay – short time (7)
- 10 Hobbling more (5)
- 11 Choose (5)
- 12 Parent (anag) (6)
- 14 Equestrian competition (5-3,5)
- 17 Hanging spike of frozen water (6)
- 19 Alcoholic drink (5)
- 22 Supple (5)
- 23 Herb related to marjoram (7)
- 24 Mineral after which a range of Italian Alps is named (8)
- 25 Surface hollow (4)

Down

- 1 Dagger with tapered blade (8)
- 2 Passageway (5)
- 4 Sharing similar problems (2,3,4,4)
- 5 Aviator (5)
- 6 Run wild (7)
- 7 Official name of the Irish Republic, 1937-49 (4)
- 8 Child's toy (6)
- 13 Begin a journey (5,3)
- 15 Concert performed by a solo musician (7)
- 16 Surpass (6)
- 18 Best – ointment (5)
- 20 First English captain to sail round the world (5)
- 21 Tramp along (4)

Who likes Chocolate?



The world's largest chocolate Easter Egg, according to Guinness World Records was created in Italy in 2011. It was 34 feet tall and weighed 7200kg - that's 15873lb and 4.53oz. The average weight of a Scottish adult male is 13.4st. We'll let you do the maths.

The largest Chocolate Easter Egg made in the UK was 7ft tall and weighed 300kg or 47st 3lb 6.4oz. It was made in 2025 by a team from Cocoba based in Kent. History does not record how many people were involved in eating the egg, assuming that it was.

Moving into a more manageable area the Creme Egg was launched in 1963 by Fry's - remember them, 'Five Boys' and chocolate cream bars. It became the Cadbury's creme egg in 1971, and nowadays they are produced at the company's Bournville factory, at a rate of 1.5 million a day. The sales season is between New Year's Day and Easter, and in 2011 total sales in the UK were about 200 million and a brand value of £55 million.

Crossword corner March answers



COPY DATES

for May Blether

Final date for receipt of copy for May Blether is Friday 17th April. Please ensure that copy is in the hands of Editors by 17 April. Publication of the May issue will be on Friday 1st May. It may not be possible to include copy submitted after 17 April in the May issue.

Please submit e-copy to the Editor in time to be considered for publication.

Useful Numbers

Interim Minister Rev Roy Henderson
0131 449 3830

rhenderson@churchofscotland.org.uk

Church administrator (Church office)

Pam McKeon 0131 449 7245

bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk

Session Clerks

Kay Coull 0131 449 6151

07415506947

Elaine McCulloch 0131 449 5876

balerno.sessionclerks@gmail.com

Treasurer

Jim Todd 0131 449 6422

bpc-treasurer@balernochurch.org.uk

Roll Keeper

Pam McKeon 0131 449 2541

bpc-admin@balernochurch.org.uk

Fabric Committee

Dilys Conway 0131 449 7245

dilysconway@blueyonder.co.uk

Pastoral Care Co-ordinator

Kay Coull 0131 449 6151

coullkay@hotmail.com

Mill Cafe

Lynsey Inglis 0131 449 7245

themillatstjosephs@gmail.com

Balerno Blether

Lesley Burt 0131 449 4314

lesley.burt70@gmail.com 12 of 12