

stedfast

THE MAGAZINE OF THE UNITED FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

JUNE/JULY 26

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From the Editor's Desk

You might notice some new design ideas in this issue of Stedfast. We had some feedback that the magazine could be difficult to read for people with dyslexia. Clearly that's not ideal. So, I spoke to the designer, and the designer spoke to the printer and we've made some changes. We're always glad of feedback and would be particularly happy for some on these changes.

As a wordsmith, I'm resistant to the idea that a picture is worth a thousand words. I like to think that words well used are powerful and evocative,

as well as challenging and informative. It's what we're aiming for in Stedfast. However, there is no doubt that images can be very effective at giving a snapshot of place and mood. And you'll see that in this issue of Stedfast. More by accident than design, it's full of pictures.

It's good to have some words too, though, and particularly to hear about happenings in Ardeer, Corstorphine, Darnley and Sauchie. And there are thoughtful and thought-provoking articles on home communion, as well as Martin Keane's reflections on his year as Moderator and Jane McArthur's thoughts on her year to come.

Earlier this year I was hit by the realisation that I will have been connected to the United Free Church for fifty years this summer. It scarcely seems possible that it's that long since I drove with my parents, sister and disgruntled cat into Lossiemouth for the first time, but that is the case. I hope you will enjoy the story in words and pictures of how that move came to be – and forgive any indulgence.

Jane E Sandell



Partnership in the Gospel

It's not every day you find a crowd of children cheering outside a Church, nor will you often find the chairs and tables turned over in the sanctuary and feathers and coins scattered over the floor. But then this was no ordinary day. We were going on an Easter Journey in Sauchie and Fishcross UF.

Over the last three years it has been our privilege to partner with staff from Scripture Union Scotland in order to facilitate an interactive experience at Christmas for P6 classes from our two local Primary Schools and again at Easter for the P7 classes from both schools.

Two hours go past very quickly in a packed, fast-moving programme that makes use of every sense. For example in the most recent Easter Journey the pupils were tasting food from the Passover meal; listening to the struggles of Jesus and his disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane; being physically caught up in a crowd; reading about the release of Barabbas; observing the crucifixion through a clip from *The Miracle Maker*; making an Easter card with pastels; seeing the empty tomb for themselves; and nailing their written responses and reflections to a wooden cross.

There were quieter moments too when we got into groups and the children had the opportunity to ask questions and to consider not only what happened that first Easter, but also why Jesus had to die and why he had to come back to life.

Having been on this Journey together, the young people were very engaged and there were many thoughtful responses.

Feedback from school staff members at both Christmas and Easter Journeys has been extremely positive, not only because the programme links clearly to the school curriculum but also because of the way every pupil becomes actively involved throughout it. An added feature this year has been the notes given to teachers in advance so that they know what to expect and so that they might prepare pupils with additional support needs.

We are grateful for another opportunity to share the Gospel with our community and for a further way of serving our local schools. An additional bonus for our Church members is the joy of working together as a team! We wouldn't be able to do this without the resources and expertise of Gordon Roy and Caroline Boyers from SU, and we would highly recommend this kind of partnership to other Churches too.

Alison McWhirter

Home Communion: A Few Thoughts

January. April. June. October. Most likely on one Sunday in each of these months the majority of our congregations gather to celebrate Communion in-person during worship. It's the best and most complete way of sharing together around the Lord's Table.

However, not everyone who longs to receive Communion can be present in Church. Some may be housebound, others in sheltered housing or residential care, a few in hospital. One of the privileges I've experienced in ministry over the years is the opportunity to celebrate Communion with folks in these circumstances where they are, often in their own homes. This has happened most recently at Wilson Memorial UF in Portobello. It's much more informal, certainly very personal and can often prove to be deeply meaningful spiritually for everyone.

Informal. Each congregation does Communion its own way, but still with the elements of bread and wine being central. It's within the usual context of worship and praise, where God's Word is always preached. Home Communion is different. You simply can't formalise an act of worship when it's held in someone's living space. It's naturally more relaxed, we sit close together, we chat beforehand and share the elements alongside the same mutual understanding of what they signify and mean for our faith in Christ.

Personal. Communion in a gathered Church congregation is a unique, collective experience bringing rich blessings to all who believe. But there's something which touches your heart and draws you very close to God personally in the sharing of Communion at home. A small group of three or four people is intimate, there's physical proximity and a shared experience that brings the things of God into the domestic context where you live day-to-day. It makes Communion very up



close and personal. That's always made a spiritual impression on me and I hope also upon those present.

Meaningful. The underpinning truths of what Communion signifies always remain the same. It's still the amazing reality of Jesus' sacrifice for us as God's son. Home Communion includes a reading of those familiar words starting at 1 Corinthians 11:23 and, of course, praying together. We share a few thoughts on the theological significance of Jesus' broken body and shed blood. It is manifestly apparent that this is spiritually meaningful and faith-strengthening for all involved - including the minister. Not just because it's been requested, but in the sense that it brings the eternal significance of Communion back home.

You may have folks in your congregation who can't make it along to weekly Church services for the reasons outlined above. I would therefore encourage you not just to consider offering home Communion to these good folks out of practical necessity. Think of it in terms of being inclusive and reflect on just how much it will nourish those receiving the same blessings, but at home.

Equally, you may be one of those people in a UF congregation longing to receive Communion where you are. Perhaps years have gone by since you last participated in the Lord's Supper during worship. Please don't be afraid to ask whether Communion at home might be possible for you. It's a priceless gift, which every believer should be able to receive.

Alexander Ritchie



Home Communion

Home communion hasn't disappeared in Presbyterian Churches, but in many cases it has been under-used or inconsistently practised.

1. Historically, it was part of the tradition

From early Christianity onward, taking communion to those who couldn't attend worship (the sick, elderly, or shut-in) was normal. Deacons would carry the elements from the gathered service to people's homes. Even within the Reformed tradition, figures like John Calvin supported Communion for the sick as spiritual encouragement. So, the idea of home Communion is not foreign; it's rooted in both early Church and Reformed practice.

2. Why it sometimes declined

There are a few reasons it has seemed neglected. Firstly, the **low frequency** of Communion overall in Presbyterian Churches. Historically they have celebrated communion infrequently (often quarterly or half-yearly). If Communion itself is rare, home Communion naturally becomes even rarer. Secondly, the strong emphasis on **gathered worship**. Presbyterian theology stresses that Communion belongs to the corporate gathering of the Church, not just individuals. That can make separate home celebrations feel less ideal, so they're not prioritised.

Thirdly, **practical neglect**. Ministers and Kirk

Sessions openly admit a problem. Housebound members often don't receive Communion regularly. Some feel reluctant to bother ministers. As a result, they can be excluded in practice. That's a pretty strong acknowledgment that neglect does happen.

3. Signs of renewal

It's not all decline; there are efforts to recover it. Many Churches now practice home Communion, Elders arranging a home visit with the minister during the communion seasons. So, in some places, it's actually being revived, not abandoned.

4. So, has it been neglected?

A fair, nuanced answer would be:

Yes, often in practice many Churches have not consistently provided communion to the housebound.

No, not in principle. The theology and official guidance still support it.

Home Communion isn't a forgotten doctrine in Presbyterianism - but it has often been pastorally overlooked, especially where Communion itself is infrequent or strongly tied to gathered worship.

Andrew McMillan

Interview with Jane McArthur

Andrew Scott caught up with Jane McArthur ahead of her becoming Moderator of the General Assembly.



First of all, congratulations on your appointment. You have attended many General Assemblies. However, leading the Assembly as Moderator is something else. What are your thoughts as this year's Assembly approaches?

Thank you, Andrew. It is difficult to express my thoughts about this year's Assembly coherently because there are so many! I am looking forward to it, but that's not unusual – I enjoy the Assembly and always look forward to it. I'm excited, but also a little apprehensive. You might think, having been every year for the last dozen or so years that I would know just what to expect, and I suppose in a way I do, but in another way I don't. No two Assemblies are exactly the same, every year is a bit different. There are always new commissioners as well as familiar faces that are missing, the issues being discussed vary from year to year, and of course there is always a new moderator.

Some Stedfast readers will know you well, but others not at all. So, Jane, tell us something of your background, and where you grew up.

I grew up in a manse, first in Dundee, then Ayrshire and then Renfrewshire. My late father was a United Free Church minister until 1968 when he moved to the Church of Scotland. When I was born, he was the minister in Caird Avenue United Free Church in Dundee. Although only a small child when we left, I missed Dundee and used to ask if we could go back. Never did I imagine that when I did go back over 50 years later it would be as minister of the same congregation.

You have played an integral role in the ALPs course, which has been one of the

denomination's significant initiatives in recent years. Stedfast readers will be interested in an update on the course.

It is a great pleasure to be involved in the ALPs course. I am responsible for the Christian Doctrine section of the course, sometimes teaching and sometimes arranging for someone else to teach. The Apostles' Creed is an excellent teaching tool and over the two years we work through the statements in it, looking at what we can know from the Bible about God as creator, the humanity and divinity of Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, and so on.

We are delighted that there are five Approved Local Preachers from the first cohort preaching in their own and other congregations. The current course is approaching the end of its first year of two, comprising three full-on residentials and a few zooms. The group, which is made up of men and women from all three Presbyteries, who were mostly unknown to each other before starting, work and discuss well together. Although after May, they will not meet again until October, they will be busy writing essays and in Church placements. Please continue to pray for them.

You will shortly finish your pastoral ministry in Dundee. What are your reflections as this period of service comes to an end?

As I write this, I have two Sundays left until I retire, but by the time this is in the hands of the readers, these two Sundays will have been and gone. It has been a privilege to journey with my congregation over these ten years and I will miss them. We have shared happy times together as well as sad times,



Angus Coast



From the left we have;
Ming, Ziv, Melody, Kashif, Elijah, Norma, Candy & Jeff.

laughter as well as tears - to say nothing of the strangeness and disconnectedness of the Covid days. It has been a joy to explore the scriptures together, both in sermons and in Bible studies, and I hope I have helped them grow not just in understanding but in faith.

I am profoundly grateful to God for these years, and to the congregation of Caird Avenue for welcoming me to their Church family and for being willing to share me with other congregations as Interim Moderator and the wider denomination through committees and working groups.

As your regular ministry comes to an end what are your plans for the years ahead?

With being Moderator from a month after retiring, I will have Church visits and possibly other Moderatorial responsibilities during my first year as an OAP so I don't have any specific plans for then. After that... well, there will still be UF committees, working groups and ALPs, and there will always be a need for Interim Moderators.

When I leave the manse I am going to live on the Angus coast, surrounded by fields, so there are lots of lovely quiet places to walk the dog. I look forward to doing that without thinking of all the other things waiting for attention. I also look forward to sitting down during the day with a cup of coffee and reading for pleasure, something I only ever do on holiday.

Having some free time, I hope to catch up with friends in different parts of the country, especially those I've not been able to see for a while, and to spend time with my eight great-nieces and nephews.

New members at Corstorphine

We welcomed seven new members at Corstorphine in January. Five of them originate from Hong Kong and two from Pakistan. Our Church is becoming more multicultural with the large majority of those coming on a Sunday being Hong Kongers. The Scottish members are glad to have them join the family. There is a new worship song out by Bethel Music called The Church that captures what we are trying in Corstorphine:

**For the different ways we see You,
for all the ways You move**

**All the colours and expressions,
oh, the beauty of Your Church**

**What a masterful reflection when
we are unified**

**Truly celebrate each other and let go
of our pride**

That You would have a spotless bride.

Duncan Whitty

Ardeer Adventures

On what turned out to be a bright Saturday morning in February, members of Presbytery arrived at Ardeer Church for a Prayer Walk. Rev David Miller gave helpful guidance and focus on the aims of the morning. Around twenty of us set off in five small groups, each with a mix from Presbytery and the Church.



Ardeer Beach



Ardeer UF Church

The general route was a circuit which included the local school, community centre, factory and shop up to and including our unofficial border of the railway crossing. Groups had different starting points and stopped periodically as the area was covered in prayer. We met back at the Church for a bit of brunch and chat. It was an uplifting morning and we at Ardeer felt privileged that Presbytery had organised such an event for our area and supported it so fully.

In addition to praying specifically for Ardeer residents and direction for our Church and services, prayers were said for a new to us upcoming event. Following the successful Christmas Puppet Show at Cumnock the same group of puppeteers were invited to perform in Ardeer. On Saturday 28th March the Messenger Christian Puppet Ministry (MCPM) put on a short funky show about Palm Sunday and Easter.

The MCPM arrived with a trailer full of equipment but were so slick they had their staging and sound set up within an hour. The puppeteers were thanked and informed pre-show that if even one child was in the audience this would be an outcome. Can you feel our delight when the Church

filled up and there were nearer to twenty children! This did not include our regular Sunday School child who was afraid of puppets and did not come! Try Praying adult and children's booklets were distributed and we pray seeds were sown.

Please join us in continuing to pray for Ardeer and help us to be patient in our wait for a minister/pastor/leader. We are indebted to Rev Archie Ford for his stalwart support and to each member from Presbytery who joined us in prayer. You can't tell me prayers aren't essential.

Catriona Brown



Ardeer Neighbourhood Centre



Ardeer Beach



Ardeer Community Cafe



Ardeer Puppets



Ardeer Puppets



2027 Calendar Competition

I must admit I was a bit sceptical when Helena first suggested a Photo Competition from which we could produce, and sell, a calendar. I just couldn't visualise how the idea would catch on. Maybe because I'm not great at taking photographs I just doubted there would be much interest but I'm more than happy to admit I was totally wrong. It has been such a successful and fun way to support partner projects and to offer people a means of witness and outreach. Since we started it, we have supported projects in China, Botswana and, this year, the Hepburns as they prepare to leave for Namibia.

The 2026 Photo Competition again produced a clutch of amazing photographs, and this is when we regret that there are only twelve months in the year. It is such a shame that photographs of the quality we received cannot all be included so I want to say thank you to everyone who submitted a photograph or photographs but never made it to the calendar. Please do not be discouraged. I know Bill, our judge, had a really difficult job picking the calendar pictures as the quality of all submissions

was so high. As I've said before, we have some very gifted photographers in the denomination.

To the two winners and those who made it into the calendar – congratulations! The vibrancy of the images and colours are just amazing and have come together to produce another wonderful calendar. I'm really looking forward to giving it out as a gift to family, friends and partners in China and I hope you will want to do the same.

The calendar will be available for sale from 3rd June at Ladies' Day. They will also be available at the General Assembly, The Gathering in August or to order from the Church Office. Please consider buying some to give as personal gifts or for your congregation to use as a means of outreach to the surrounding community.

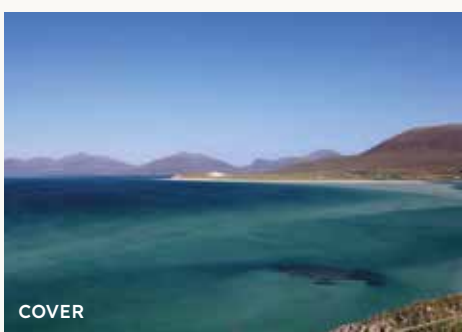
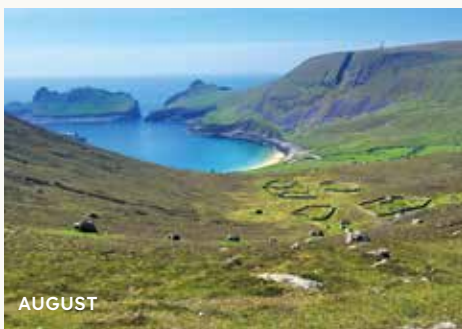
The recipient of the funds raised from the 2026 Photo Competition and calendar sales will be the Bible translation work supported by Flying Mission Zambia. Matthias Bauert, who heads up Flying Mission Zambia, speaks of their desire for people to have access to God's word in their own

language. Being able to read the Scriptures in a language that reflects your own culture and history makes them that much more accessible. That is why Flying Mission Zambia supports translators as they go to remote areas of the country where they can spend time with local people, immersed in the local culture, all of which leads to God's

transforming word becoming available to more and more people, a desire we all share.

Enjoy the calendar, thank you for supporting it and to God be the glory.

Patricia A Johnston





Arriving at the Logos Hope docked in Montego Bay, Jamaica
August 2025



Arriving into St George's, Grenada November 2025



Ceilidh on board in St John's



Gaming Outreach St John's, Antigua and Barbuda November 2025

Logos Hope

Rebecca Tait from our Darnley congregation has been sailing some of the seven seas on Logos Hope. Here she shares some snapshot of her time on board.

For the past eight months I've been serving onboard the Logos Hope, the world's largest floating bookfair which exists to share knowledge, help and hope with the people of the world. I was called to the ship to be a teacher in Logos Hope School, teaching the children who live on the ship with their parents who are serving onboard. While I still do that (teaching four wonderful young children), since December I have also been the Headteacher, a role I never could have predicted that God had for me when I first began this journey.

Since joining the ship eight months ago I have had the privilege of visiting a variety of different ports, cities and countries in the Caribbean, Bermuda and now Europe; I have lived with about 300 people from more than 65 different countries;

taught alongside wonderful teachers from all over the world; sailed across an ocean; and got to know people from local Churches, schools and organisations in the countries I've visited, some of whom I am still in touch with today. It has been both an honour and a challenge to work and serve in this way, but God has been so faithful.

I am also SO excited that the Logos Hope is coming to Scotland this summer! The plan is to be in **Edinburgh from 9 July – 21 July** and then in **Aberdeen from 21 July – 5 August**. I have been so grateful for all of the support and prayers each of you has given me during my time on the ship and now you have the opportunity to come aboard and visit the Logos Hope for yourselves!

Rebecca Tait



Logos Hope from above in Road Town, British Virgin Islands
October 2025



Learning about keeping our teeth clean St John's



Port in Basseterre, St Kitts and Nevis November 2025



New Year celebrations in Scarborough



Working with the University Bible Group as part of the Challenge
Team in Malta April 2026



Visiting a Scottish Church in Hamilton, Bermuda February 2026



Auchterarder

Moderator's Musings

There is something about Presbyterianism that is not always obvious to people. Presbyterianism at its heart is a form of Church government where the leadership is not in the hands of the congregation nor a particular individual (because Christ is the King and head of the Church), but in the Eldership. Oversight of the Church is by a series of bodies, or courts, with the General Assembly being the supreme court of the Church.

What is surprising is that when a General Assembly closes it dissolves having agreed when the next one will meet. Unlike the Kirk Session and Presbytery, it has no continued existence. To be the Moderator of the General Assembly means you chair that particular meeting. Afterwards you are in the strange position of representing a body that no longer exists!

As a Church we have always entrusted the Moderator to fulfil an ambassadorial role to represent the Church and to speak on behalf of the

General Assembly. This year has been no exception to this but has also seen some changes.

It has been a privilege to lead worship and meet congregations in each of the three Presbyteries. This has been a year of transition as the previous scheme was becoming too onerous, not for the Moderator, but for their own congregations.

This year this has meant two visits in each of the Presbyteries. The congregations visited were my own St Ninians, Tayport, Dalreoch, Auchterarder, Ardeer and Lossiemouth. I had previously visited



each Church for different reasons but in three of them it was the first time I had conducted worship.

In each congregation faithful fellowships were working hard to maintain a witness to their communities and proving once more that hospitality is a speciality among our people, though we resisted giving scores for the best baking.

We were delighted to visit the meeting of the Glasgow Women's Presbyterial being held in Knightswood, not least because that is where almost forty years ago Margaret and I were married. It is always good for the ego to be told we have not changed a bit, though does that mean we have always looked this old!

The leaders and Church representatives of many of the Churches in Scotland come together in an online forum and it has been good to do so, to discuss and share issues of mutual concern and where possible come together to make representation on matters of importance to enable the voice of the Church in Scotland to be heard. As with our own General Assembly, we are reminded we are part of a larger body of Christ as we invite others to join us and we in turn join with them.

Beyond Christian circles it seems that civic society has less interest in engaging with the Church than

it had been in the past. This may be a sign of increasing secularisation, but it may also be that increasing insularity and cancel culture means we are, as a society, less willing to involve or listen to those who would challenge views. Our Biblical mandate is to be salt and light but how is that to be expressed? It is too easy to be negative but salt stops things going bad and the light illumines the darkness. What are we as a part of the body of Christ doing to fulfil that responsibility?

As I write this the next General Assembly is just over a month away and by the time this is published the final visit as Moderator to Lossiemouth will have taken place and we will have spent time in our old home. It will remind us that clocks can be turned back but time cannot. It is always good to acknowledge the past but to look forward knowing that it is God who is faithful and does all things well. We pray for Jane as she takes on the responsibility as Moderator of the General Assembly and knows the privilege and blessing that it is.

Martin Keane



No such thing as Coincidence

Fifty years ago, Rev John B Sandell was inducted to the charge of Lossiemouth United Free Church. Nothing remarkable in that, you might think. But the journey that led him there took a meandering way. From Hampshire to Moray was a big enough undertaking in the mid-seventies but John's route went via Australia, a detour that proved hugely significant.

John was born in Gosport in 1931, the third child and only son of an English father and Scottish mother. His mother died when he was five and it was his much older sister Connie who brought him up. The Second World War brought changes to his life: Connie joined the WRENS and John was evacuated away from the dangers of the Naval Dockyard in Portsmouth. Leaving school as the war ended, he became an apprentice in the Dockyard and served his time there as an electrician before National Service called. Signing on for four years, rather than the obligatory two, he joined the RAF and spent most of his time in still-occupied West Germany. John never spoke much about his early life, but he remembered fondly his time in Germany and the people he met there.

National Service had given him experience working on planes as well as ships and he moved

on from the Dockyard to work at Fleetlands in the late 1950s. It was there he heard that the Australian government was looking for skilled workers including aircraft electricians. One of his friends sent off for the details but his new wife felt that Australia was too far. So, Robbie passed on the information to John who applied and in 1965 was offered a job in Melbourne.

Naturally he flew to Melbourne. In later life whenever anyone mentioned having been on holiday somewhere – anywhere – John would remark that he'd been there. And he had: to the airport at least! These were the days of many refuelling stops when flying to Australia was a massive undertaking, a journey of three or four days with overnight stops. Arriving finally in Melbourne, he rented a flat in Elwood, not far from St Kilda, and started his new life.



Lossiemouth from manse back garden



John's cousin Isa with Noel, Lew and Barry



At the cricket with Lew & Isa



Met in Southampton by John's sisters, Norah & Connie, & husbands, Frank & Sam, & his niece Gillian

But being on the other side of the world didn't mean that he could escape family responsibilities! Before he left Hampshire, his elder sister had told him all she knew about their Scottish mother's family. Connie knew that their mother's sister had emigrated from Galashiels in the late 1920s; indeed, after her mother's death, Connie had kept in touch with Aunt Aggie and Uncle Bill until the war when it became difficult. She knew the family had been living in Geelong, Victoria's second city and a major textiles centre, and that they had attended a Presbyterian Church there.

And so, one Sunday morning, John took the train to Geelong and found the Church Connie had mentioned – boarded up and clearly no longer in use. However, a local directed him to another Church in the neighbourhood, suggesting that he might find the people he was looking for there. Having come this far, it would have been foolish not to go another mile – so fortunately he did.

As he neared the Church, the congregation began to emerge. Noticing John hanging about, a gentleman approached him and asked if he could

help. John replied that he was looking for his aunt and uncle, Aggie and Bill Armstrong. With a curious expression on his face (I'm told), the man explained that they no longer attended this Church but that, as it happened, their daughter was married to his son, and they were both still members! They were away that weekend but the man, who became known to John as Uncle Ted, invited him home for lunch.

That was the first of many meetings with his extended Australian family. His cousin Isa, her husband and two sons made him welcome, and he was a frequent visitor to their Geelong home. Isa's parents, Aggie and Bill, by then pastoring a small Church, were also delighted to meet him and for the first time in many years he had a connection with his mother's family. But it was Uncle Ted with whom he developed the strongest bond. And it was Uncle Ted who introduced him to Christianity as a faith, rather than a religion. Over the next few months, John and Uncle Ted discussed the Christian faith and, for the first time in his life, John seriously considered what it was all about. And



Aunt Aggie & Uncle Bill



John & Rosemary in retirement



Big sister & baby Ann

finally, he decided that the claims and promises of the Bible were true, causing him to turn his life over to God. Encouraged by Uncle Ted, he looked for a Church in Melbourne, and his choice fell upon St Kilda Presbyterian Church near his Elwood flat.

And it was there, in March 1966, that he met a young Scottish woman. Rosemary Steele from Musselburgh had become bored with her life, full though it was, and this led her to apply for an assisted passage to Australia. She was successful and made the decision to emigrate, agreeing to remain in Australia for at least two years. Dramatic as it sounds, her family and friends expected never to see her again. Rosemary went by sea, sharing a cabin with five other (unknown) women aboard the SS Australis. One of those women, Angela, became a lifelong friend. They sailed east via Egypt, Aden and Fremantle. Because of the weather, Australis was unable to dock at Station Pier in Melbourne, going on instead to Sydney. From there the unfortunate travellers went back to Melbourne by train. Rosemary was met by her aunt and uncle with whom she lived for a few weeks before renting a flat with Angela in the suburb of St Kilda, joining the Presbyterian Church there.

As John told the story, he knew right away that he wanted to marry Rosemary. Certainly, he wasted no time. They were engaged by June and married on Christmas Eve in the Church at St Kilda. The bridesmaid was Angela, Rosemary's cabin mate, and John's best man was Barry, his cousin's son. John and Rosemary set up home in Elwood, spending their free time travelling around Australia and with their families. John was considering becoming a minister and they thought very seriously about staying in Australia. However, they finally decided they would return to the UK so that, as John said, Rosemary's parents could meet the strange Englishman she'd married. John was

offered a job in Edinburgh, and they booked a cabin on SS Orcades, leaving in October 1967. Rosemary had to be granted special permission to leave before her two years were up! They sailed east, via New Zealand, Samoa, the Panama Canal and Madeira, so that Rosemary could circumnavigate the globe, arriving in a very snowy Southampton just before Christmas. John's sisters met them there and they stayed a few days before going to Musselburgh for Christmas with Rosemary's parents.

Five months later, their first daughter was born. The family settled in Edinburgh and, alongside working full-time, John started studying for enough Highers to gain him admittance to the Scottish Congregational College. Growing up a nominal Anglican, John had no ties to any Church in Scotland and so he and Rosemary settled in the Congregational Church in which denomination Rosemary had grown up. Highers (and a second daughter!) gained, he finally started studying for the ministry. There were a number of students of the United Free Church in his classes and one of them, Tom Patterson, became a good friend. Whilst John and the family moved southwest to Dumfries and the Congregational Church there, Tom and his wife and children went northeast to Balintore United Free Church, but the families stayed in touch.

Three years later John was looking for a new challenge and Tom, as Interim Moderator, was helping the congregation at Lossiemouth UF look for a new minister. Perhaps the two searches could come together. John travelled north to meet the people and preach in the Church, an unlikely candidate. Or perhaps not. Lossiemouth was still very much a fishing-town then, a tight, but not insular, community thanks in part to the RAF station on its doorstep. Perhaps a time-served electrician in the Portsmouth Dockyard with four



John on holiday with friends 1948



Farewell dinner Lew, Aunt Annie, Uncle Ted, Isa, Rosemary, Noel, John, Barry, Aunt Aggie, Barry's fiancée Barbara, Uncle Bill

years' experience in the RAF was not such an unlikely choice – even if he did have a weird Hampshire accent!

John and Rosemary were, of course, my parents and it is I who was born in May 1968, having first sailed halfway round the world! My younger sister and I grew up on this story and many others of our parents' time in Australia. Flimsy blue airmail letters were a feature of our lives as our parents kept in touch with extended family on both sides. To his dying day, John would never accept the idea of coincidence, citing this story as his reason. He believed unwaveringly that God had a plan for his life and had begun unfolding it long before John knew him.

Jane E Sandell



Baby Jane

Darnley bake off

On Easter Sunday we brought back an old favourite: the Darnley Bake Off. Everyone was invited to bake a cake with a biblical theme, in the design or the flavour. This was a great opportunity for the whole congregation to get involved in what traditionally is a children's event. We had lots of entries and an independent judge, Karen Voy, enjoyed tasting them all. Christopher Young for the adults and Erin Steele for the under-16s were our winners. The congregation then enjoyed eating all the cakes after the service and put in donations for the Easter Scheme where £225 was raised.

Elizabeth McNaughton



Darnley Bake Off



From Stedfast 50 Years Ago

- On Sunday 15th June 1976, Rev Graeme B Bruce was introduced and preached into his new charge by Rev John McArthur (Neilston), formerly of Caird Avenue UF church, Dundee, and closely associated with our churches in the Montrose area.
- St Valentine's Day is supposed to be special. Mind you I don't know if anyone was proposed to at Croftfoot on February 14! Everyone enjoyed themselves. What was it? The Youth Council St Valentine's Shindig of course. Ross Mitchell organised the games and around 60 young people joined in. Were you there?
- The congregation of Leith: Ebenezer must vacate its building by May 1st, this by decree of the City of Edinburgh District Council acting through its Estates Surveyors' Department.
- "Andrew Begg puts me in mind of John Wesley. Similar in appearance, though Andrew is taller; similar in animated preaching for both have had their hearts strangely warmed with the experience of a personal saviour; similar in freedom from manuscript, in eloquence, in gestures too. When Andrew preaches I see and hear John Wesley."

Rev Elizabeth Barr
at North Woodside's Centenary Dinner

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