

# The Country Link



Kelso  
Country  
Churches

~~~~~**September/October 2023**

Dear Friends,

In the Borders I have had to learn patience. Why? Because I always find myself behind tractors on small country roads. However, it always gives me time to look at the fields and marvel at God's wonderful creation. This summer the combines have already been busy, snatching the opportunity of the occasional dry day in our wash-out summer to bring in the crops, and once again we feel blessed by a good harvest. We will be able to celebrate God's bounty in our Harvest services.

As I write this, I gaze out of my study window and see birds enjoy their share of the harvest left in the fields across from my manse. That reminds me of Israel where even today a portion of the harvest is always left in the field for any passers-by. It is a practice going back to biblical times when some of the harvest was to be left for the widows, orphans and strangers, so that they too could share in the harvest and not starve. In the Old Testament we read of Ruth who came from Moab with her mother-in-law Naomi and was able to glean in Boaz's fields enough to survive.

It is an important principle, for we are called to remember those whose harvests have failed – because of floods or drought or even the wild fires that have raged over many parts of our planet this summer. Earlier this year there was rationing of some vegetables in some of the supermarkets. It is a wake up call to thank God for the fruits of the earth but also to care for our planet and realise our responsibility to be stewards of creation.

*Look after the earth gently, Look after the earth gently,*

*For if the earth is spoiled, it cannot be repaired.*

*Look after the earth gently*

*(Yoruba poem from Nigeria)*

Peace and Blessings,

Colin

# *Parish News and Updates*



Kelso Country Churches Manse (and minister) were deemed surplus to requirements by Jedburgh

Presbytery in their Presbytery plan which was devised a few years ago, which unites our parishes with Kelso North and Ednam. The manse has been advertised for sale and a flurry of interested people visited it at the end of August, beginning of September. The closing date for offers was mid-day on 5<sup>th</sup> September. The asking price was offers over £370,000.

On receiving the bids, the lawyer sent the most relevant ones to the session clerk (myself) who contacted all session members with all the details who, in turn, replied with their preference bid, so now we await with fingers crossed that it all goes through.

At this time, it is with grateful thanks that the session and the congregation wish to thank the property convener for his ever-faithful work over many years in looking after the manse (as well as all the kirks in the past), especially the heavy task of cutting the grass and disposing of it. Bert also took on the task of showing all interested viewers around. That in itself, took a lot of time. Bert was the ideal man for the job as he knew so much about the workings of the manse.

One of the prospective buyers indicated to a friend of mine, how knowledgeable he was about the manse, and he was also a very nice man! Well done, Bert.

*James Smith*

*Preaching Plan for September/October*

**Weekly services start at 10.30am unless otherwise stated.**

**September**

|                  |            |                   |
|------------------|------------|-------------------|
| 3 <sup>rd</sup>  | Makerstoun | Fran Selkirk      |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> | Stichill   | Elizabeth Findlay |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> | Makerstoun | Sophia Duncan     |
| 24 <sup>th</sup> | Stichill   | Jim Smith         |

**October**

|                  |                                         |                  |                      |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1st              | Makerstoun                              | <b>Communion</b> | Rev John Shields     |
| 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Stichill                                |                  | Fran Selkirk         |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> | Makerstoun                              | <b>Baptism</b>   | Justin Manley Cooper |
| 22 <sup>nd</sup> | Stichill                                |                  | Elizabeth Findlay    |
| 29 <sup>th</sup> | Ednam at 9.30am and Kelso North at 11am |                  |                      |

**There will be no services in Kelso Country Churches on 29<sup>th</sup>**



**September 10<sup>th</sup>** Kelso Churches Together



**Songs of Praise**

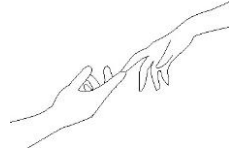


in The Square, Kelso at 2pm  
accompanied by the Jedforest Band

All Welcome

Will be held in Kelso Old Parish if wet.

# Across the Parishes



The sub-group appointed to pave the way for the Union of Kelso North and Ednam and Kelso Country Churches met on 4<sup>th</sup> September in Stichill Church Hall.

Here are a few of the relevant topics which were discussed:

The new Presbytery met on Saturday, 2<sup>nd</sup> September at Haddington and the old Jedburgh Presbytery plan got the go-ahead.

Rev. Anna Rodwell spoke with Abigail Morrison from the Presbytery Planning Group and ascertained some important facts regarding the Union. Most important was the fact that the two churches due to be closed – Ednam and Makerstoun – do not need to close when the Union happens. At the moment, the only stipulation is that all churches deemed for closure in the new Presbytery, need to be closed by 2027. So, it will still be possible for very occasional services to take place in these two churches after the Union occurs, and until 2027.

A new name for the united churches needs to have a geographical input in the name, and congregations are asked to put forward any suggestions. A few names were discussed but the one most favoured is **KELSO NORTH** and **COUNTRY CHURCHES**, but it is still open for discussion.

Times of services:

It was thought that Stichill would slot into the 9.30am service and Kelso North service would continue at 11am. The fifth Sundays in a month would continue with all the congregation meeting for a joint service in Kelso North.

It was also thought a good idea if the worship team could take occasional Sunday services and that would give the minister more time during the week to do other things that she has not time for at the moment.

**STICHILL PARISH CHURCH**

**SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 17<sup>TH</sup>**

**at 4p.m.**

# **Mosaic**

**With Gillian Payne & Sophia Duncan  
(flutes)**

**Piano  
Anne Kerr**

**A CONCERT OF LIGHT MUSIC  
REFRESHMENTS**

**ENTRY BY DONATION for**

**Chest Heart &  
Stroke Scotland**

## *Twenty Years a Church Hall*

It was on Sunday, 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2003 that Stichill Church Hall was officially opened and what a blessing it has been over these twenty years.

Our Minister at the time, Rev. Valerie Watson announced at the morning service at Smailholm that the new Hall would be opened at 4.30pm followed by an evening service and everyone was invited to attend. Jim Smith's photos are testimony of the special occasion it was in the life of Stichill Kirk.

But there were many twists and turns in the road leading to that momentous day.

When the manse was sold in 1975, a condition of sale was to retain the old stable buildings with access into them as the need for a hall beside the church was identified. All church meetings and Sunday School were held in the Cairns Memorial Hall which was not ideal. The Kirk Session discussed the conversion of the outbuildings over the years, but the recurring problem was drainage.

Changes started happening in 2001 when it was decided to sell the Cairns Memorial Hall and the Session, with our new minister at the helm, appointed architects Smith Gore in Edinburgh to draw up plans for a church hall, kitchen and toilet and disabled parking space where the piggery once was.



Before and After

The outside of the building was to be retained in it's original style as much as possible with storm doors over the glass doors of the main entrance.

The work of converting the buildings continued apace over the next 18 months or so and despite the lack of facilities, we started serving refreshments at the back of the church following the service, the Sunday School met in the vestry, and the Session and Guild meetings were held in the new manse in the village which was bought in 2001. We had coffee mornings there and garden clean ups followed by sausage sizzles.

There was a new air of a fresh start where anything seemed possible and our church family grew and thrived.



A quick call by the property convener to a local farmer arranged delivery of a load of quarry gravel to level the entrance area, and the hall was ready to meet its public.

The congregation at Makerstoun Kirk had a very welcome surprise on 6<sup>th</sup> August when three charity cyclists and their back up vehicle driver, Maureen, arrived in time for our service. They had found our service on the Country Churches website, which suited their timetable when they would be passing through Makerstoun.

Their presence and participation in the service enhanced worship for everyone present and over tea that followed, we soon established that Maureen and her husband, David had been teachers at Kelso High School in the eighties so there was much to talk about.

I was delighted to receive the following email and photo from Maureen after the event;



*It was the final day of our 5 day cycle across the south of Scotland from Portpatrick to Berwick on Tweed when we came on Makerstoun church with open doors and a warm welcome. We had checked the web site while planning the tour and discovered that the service time of 10.30am fitted perfectly with our itinerary.*

*What we experienced was a great service of worship, led by Jim Smith, with great hymns and prayers and a thought -*

*provoking message around the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand.*

*The tea and cake afterwards was much appreciated as were the lively and engaging conversations.*

*Fortified in every way by our time at Makerstoun, we made it to Berwick with 15 minutes to spare.*

*The cyclists were raising money for EMMS (Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society) and their work among some of the poorest communities in Malawi.*



## ***Kelso Food Bank***

There is an on-going shortage of food items in stock and any donations of tinned, packet or dried foods are most welcome.

There are receptacles in Sainsburys and the two Co-op stores where dried, packet and tinned foods can be deposited.

At present, there is particular need for the following items:

*BOXES OF CEREAL      JAM      TINNED MEAT*  
*TINNED VEG.      TINNED FRUIT      TINNED PUDDINGS*  
*TINNED SOUP      TINNED TOMATOES*

Please pop in an extra item in your basket when shopping if you can.  
Thank you.

## *Let us Pray*

*Lord of the harvest,*

*We praise you for the gifts of the harvest.*

*You are the creator of the world.*

*We praise you for our food and fresh water  
to quench our thirst.*

*We praise you for the harvest of industry;  
for iron and steel, cars and clothes,  
and for the skill to fashion the materials you created.*

*Loving God,*

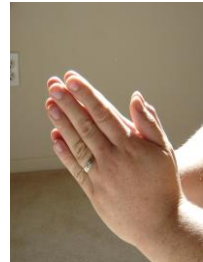
*in our plenty, we do not appreciate all that we have.*

*Help us not to forget those whose harvest is meagre.*

*Celebrating our harvest, help us not to forget those who  
bring it to our tables.*

*Genuine in our thanks, help us to be generous in our giving.*

*Amen.*





Once again our harvest retiring offerings will be donated to Self Help Africa (charity no 298830) which runs around 40 projects for farmers across Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Togo, Uganda and Zambia.

I recently received a letter from the charity which says:

“I hope that you and the congregation are keeping well and looking forward to your Harvest celebrations this Autumn; an opportunity to thank God for the abundance of food many of us enjoy, whilst also raising awareness of the hunger that exists for others. By celebrating harvest, we foster a deeper understanding and empathy for those who depend directly on agriculture for their survival. It serves as a reminder that a stable food supply is not something to be taken for granted. In Africa, 1 in 5 people are currently experiencing hunger. Most of these people live in rural communities, on land that has the potential to produce much more. There is no single cause of the current rising levels of food insecurity and global hunger, but rather a combination of factors including economic shocks, extreme weather and conflict. It makes our work more important than ever. Agriculture is 11 times more effective at reducing poverty than any other approach which is why we support smallholder farmers through the provision of effective agricultural training, quality seeds and livestock, and business development programmes. We enable and empower smallholder farmers - so that they have the tools, the training, and the necessary support to anticipate a future free from hunger and poverty. We are so grateful for your support, it truly makes a difference.”

We will be taking up retiring offerings for Self Help Africa at both Makerstoun and Stichill churches around the time of Harvest Thanksgiving. Donations can also be passed directly to our treasurer, Liz Orr. This year we will also have Gift Aid envelopes available, so do make use of those if you are an eligible taxpayer and you wish to increase the value of your donation by 25%.

## Useful Contacts

**Website:** [www.kelsocountrychurches.org.uk](http://www.kelsocountrychurches.org.uk)

**Church of Scotland Charity No. SC000958**

## Songs of Praise

Our Sunday afternoon '**Songs of Praise**' held in Stichill Church on 23<sup>rd</sup> July was very successful. As well as our 'ain folk', many people from neighbouring churches joined us, creating that enhanced feeling of joy and togetherness that worshipping together brings. This was followed by a delicious afternoon tea in the hall prepared by ladies from Makerstoun and Stichill and there was just enough room for everyone to have a place at the table.

Although this was not intended as a fund-raising event, there was an opportunity to give a donation to the Kelso Food Bank and a total of £ 97.43 was raised.

## THE PERFECT CHURCH

If you should find the perfect church  
without a fault or smear,  
for goodness sake don't join the church,  
you'll spoil the atmosphere.

If you should find the perfect church  
where all anxieties cease,  
then pass it by, lest joining it  
you should spoil the masterpiece.

If you should find the perfect church  
then don't you ever dare  
to tread upon such holy ground –  
you'd be a misfit there.

But since no perfect church exists,  
made up of perfect men,  
let's cease our looking for that church  
and love the church we're in.

Of course it's not the perfect church,  
that's simple to discern,  
but you and I and all of us  
could cause the tide to turn.

What fools we are to flee the past  
in that unfruitful search,  
to find, at last, where problems loom,  
God proudly builds his church.

*Author unknown*