

EDITION 1



AUTUMN 2025

BLACK ISLE EAST PARISH NEWS



Scottish Charity Number: SC004472

WELCOME!

Welcome to the first edition of "Parish News" (one edition a year) for Black Isle East Church of Scotland: this engages with a range of topics connected to the church and parish - sometimes looking inwards and sometimes out beyond our boundaries and is the companion volume to the "Church Digest" (two editions a year).

Following the transition to the new union (in 2024) we have been realigning our communications:

- the "Church Digest" aims to keep us aware of all that's happening in the church and mission-related activities in the Beaully Firth area and organised by the new regional Presbytery of Clèir Eilean ì - the church of Scotland in the Highlands and Hebrides;
- the "Website" for Black Isle East Church of Scotland has also been revamped in 2024 - <https://www.blackisleeastchurch.com/> - and offers information on "Worship" at our Sunday morning services; you can explore the range of "Activities" that take place in the parish under the headings: 'Explore', 'Deepen' and 'Create';
- recently, given the interest of our members, we have created a 'Creative Church' web-page to show ways to get involved in creative groups that interact with church life; other web-pages offer practical information: like 'About Us' (on the church community) and 'Resources'; contact information is found on the 'Visit Us' page.

We hope that you will enjoy this edition about life in the parish of Black Isle East and its connections to Christian engagement further afield!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

- 2 MINISTER'S ARTICLE
- 4 CHURCH NEWS
- 5 MEMORIES OF THE DEPARTED
- 7 BOOK REVIEW
- 9 NEWS FROM MALAWI
- 12 NEWS FROM GUATEMALA
- 14 CRAFTS GROUP
- 15 PARISH LIFE
- 17 BENEVOLENT BLESSINGS
- 20 NEWS FROM INDIA
- 22 PATHWAYS TRAINING



MINISTER'S ARTICLE

Rev Dr. Warren R Beattie



The added-value of Christian Faith

"It's fashionable to think of Christian faith as old-fashioned, outmoded, insignificant and problematic ..." This is how a partner church, The Protestant Reformed Church of Switzerland, introduced a recent morning service. Responding to these negative stereotypes, the minister Frederick Siegenthaler, wanted to look at the positives, so he asked this question: "What's the added-value of Christian faith?"

He is very mindful of the negative perceptions of Christianity in Europe:

"When the media talk about church it's either to look at abuses – connected to power, sexuality, or spirituality - or to present graph after graph of the inexorable decline of members, of church attendance and of finances. On the other hand, if a church has the temerity to thrive – it's discounted as being suspect ..."

(Lest we think these comments unkind, note that the group of sociologists who wrote *The Routledge Handbook of Megachurches* (2024) admitted that they themselves had been far too quick to be critical and negative of the phenomenon of very large modern churches when they started studying them in the late 1990s. They confessed that it has taken a couple of decades to produce more balanced accounts ...)

"What's the added-value of Christian faith?" To answer his own question, Siegenthaler recorded the responses of a group of late teens in a Confirmation course - showing how it had been profitable for them - helping them to look inwards into their hearts but also out towards God and the world around.



JamieBrown2011, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons



"Frederick Siegenthaler." Screenshot from Vimeo
[JamieBrown2011, CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>, via Wikimedia Commons1087735336/117a4c354b](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

Siegenthaler explains their reactions to the Confirmation programme: “The transforming factor is not discussions about God ... Rather, what they’ve experienced is an encounter of the ‘third type’: one beyond themselves, and beyond others - they’ve encountered God. In so doing, they’ve found that they can live in a dynamic relationship filled with discoveries about God.”

The teenagers shared how they felt free to ask questions about faith and search for 'light' - each one in their own way. The ambiance of shared meals and discussions created a community setting where each one could contribute and bonds were forged between them. They learned more about faith, developed understanding and experience the presence of God – one testified to a transformation as if “an inner blockage had been opened”; another of perceiving God in a more intimate way, like a friend, close by and the new-found confidence that this had brought into her life.

In our times, *relatively* little is shared in the media of the positive impact of Christian faith – whether through Sundays in church, special services or bible studies and encounter groups – and how these experiences of faith help people find meaning and purpose in their lives. Siegenthaler addresses the media stereotypes that subtly marginalise Christian faith in liberal European societies: he does so, not with rhetoric, but with evidence and the testimony of the next generation. We’re grateful to him and the team at RTS for sharing these stories to a wider audience.

*Morning service at the Church of St. Blaise /
RTS Presenter - Laurence Villos (July 2025)*

<https://www.celebrer.ch/culte/2025-07-06/quelle-plus-value-la-foi-chretienne-offre-t-elle-notre-societe>



"Church of St. Blaise" - Hadi, CC BY-SA 4.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

CHURCH NEWS

Rev Dr. Warren R Beattie

Black Isle East Church Groups & Activities - Autumn 2025

All are welcome to join any of the below groups and activities.

SUNDAYS

10:30 a.m. Sunday Service

Rosemarkie Church Building

- Worship and Bible Teaching

TUESDAYS

2-4 p.m. Create - Crafts Group

Seaforth Hall, Fortrose

- Craft activities

WEDNESDAYS

3:30 – 5 p.m. Explore – Discussion Group

St. Regulus, Cromarty

- Fruitfulness on the Front Line (LICC)

THURSDAYS

3 – 4 p.m. Deepen – Bible Study Group

Ethel's House, Fortrose

- Bible Study on the book of Isaiah

4:15 – 5:15 p.m. Create - MAJN

Rosemarkie Church Building

- Music for Advent and Christmas

7:00 – 7:30 p.m. Deepen – Prayer Meeting

Zoom (details from Minister)

- Prayer for Church, Community and the World

Occasional and Special Activities

- See our website – <https://blackisleeastchurch.com/our-activities>



Image from Black Isle East Church website

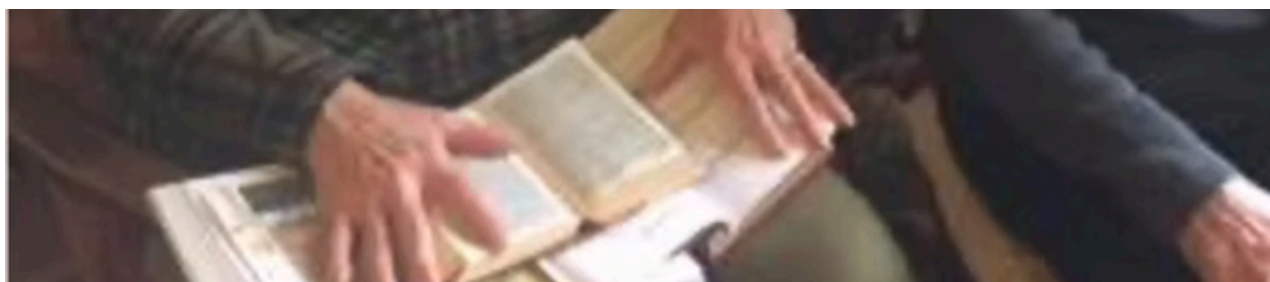


Image from Black Isle East Church website

MEMORIES OF THE DEPARTED

Rev. William Mather

Just Blowing in the Wind

A lasting impression for many of us was seeing Anthony and Jane driving down the middle of Fortrose High Street in their electric buggies, yellow high-viz jackets blowing in the wind. The fact that others might want to use the road didn't seem terribly important to them!

Both he and Jane loved going to church. He really responded to the love and care that he received from church. Even though he never spoke much about his personal beliefs he appreciated being part of the local Christian community.

When the late Mary MacDonell started a weekly 'Home Group' for prayer and Bible study Anthony and Jane were among those who enjoyed the deep faith-connections with others around the Black Isle.

'Determination' was Anthony's second name. When he met Jane on a sailing holiday in Cornwall he determined not to lose her. He proposed within a couple of weeks – and she accepted! Their resulting marriage brought many years' happiness, including the joy of having Nick and Sarah as children and being a lovely family. His determination took him through a career as a Land Agent and eventually heading up the National Trust in the Highlands.

During retirement Anthony loved to write. He kept on finding novels in his head. There was 'Six Kippers' followed by 'Carnelian' and 'The Golden Legacy?' and then finally 'Letter to my Grandchildren'.



William Mather. Book Cover



Photo. Playing musical instrument.

In this latter volume, Anthony writes of sailing in Cornwall and about the Royal Fowey Yacht Club (RFYC) and the Fowey Gallants Sailing Club (FGSC): “The first gave me all the facilities I could want and the latter many really good friends.” He speaks with affection of the different kinds of boats and especially of “Cygnet” a clinker built 12 foot dingy designed for sailing at sea. By the end of the first season she needed repairs and by the next season Anthony wanted something bigger and faster – which he duly got!

He also wrote: “My real strength is the family. A wonderful son, an amazing daughter and of course their families and our five delightful and favourite little people.” His love of Jane was clear during their life together and after she was not present, physically, he still thought of her constantly and shared his joy and his sense of loss with those who knew him well.



Jane Bryant, portrait
William Mather, pastels on paper

*“My real strength
is the family.”*

The very writing of the book “Letter to my Grandchildren” – was a sign of Anthony’s desire to share his own experiences with the family – and it’s a wonderful record of both his life and his desire to share the continuity of family life with those who come after.

Anthony was much respected and loved; a very special and genuine character. His determination, despite the handicap of polio at the age of four and more recently the death of Jane, will continue to be an inspiration to many of us, and part of his legacy.



Anthony Bryant, portrait
William Mather, pastels on paper

BOOK REVIEW

Robert S Moore

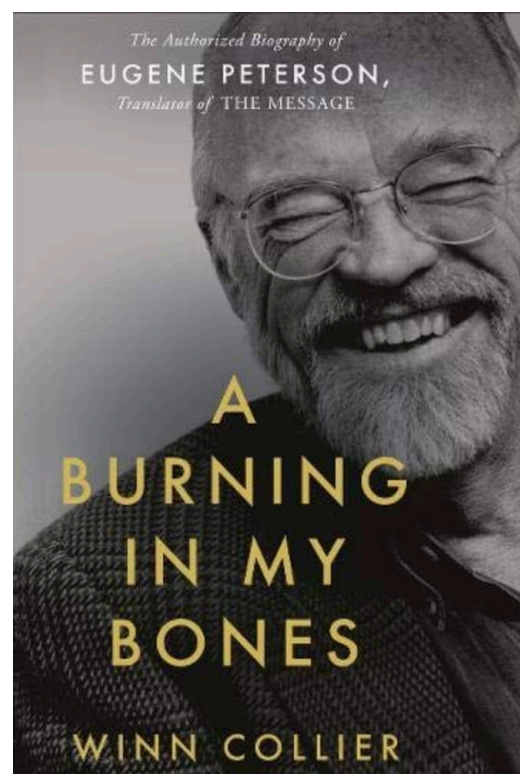
Review of “A Burning in my Bones” the biography of Eugene H Peterson

Eugene H. Peterson, the author of *"The Message"* translation of the Bible and numerous other spiritual works, influenced countless individuals through his writing and ministry. In *"A Burning in My Bones,"* biographer Winn Collier offers an intimate and enlightening portrait of this very spiritual man, bringing to life Peterson's journey of faith, creativity, and pastoral care.

The narrative unfolds in a way that holds the attention of readers, beginning with Peterson's early years in a small town in Montana where his father was a butcher and his mother a Pentecostal preacher. During his formative years he developed a profound connection to the Montana landscape which continued throughout his lifetime. Readers follow Peterson's development from a young boy wrestling with faith into a man committed to the vocation of shepherding and teaching.

The biography is structured not just chronologically but thematically, allowing readers to engage with the core aspects of Peterson's life. His journey through education, ministry, and writing is interspersed with rich anecdotes, quotes from Peterson's numerous works, and reflections from those who were influenced by him. His interaction with Bono, the U2 singer, I found particularly interesting. This layered approach highlights the interconnectedness of his experiences, illustrating how each phase of his life fed into the next.

Peterson's commitment to the cultivation of a deep spiritual life is another crucial focus of the biography – delving into Peterson's pastoral work, showing how he emphasized the importance of walking alongside members of his congregation, bearing witness to their joys and struggles. Peterson's insistence on the need for authenticity and vulnerability in the Christian Walk comes through in every chapter, making it clear that he believed in the faith that was woven into the very fabric of life.



<https://www.eden.co.uk/christian-books/christian-biographies/general-biography/a-burning-in-my-bones/>

One of the standout sections of *"A Burning in My Bones"* deals with the creation and aftermath of *"The Message"* translation of the bible. Collier paints a picture of the challenges Peterson faced in attempting to translate the Bible's text into a contemporary idiom while remaining faithful to its original meanings. The context in which he translated, his desire to make Scripture accessible and relatable, reflects his pastoral heart.

Peterson's reverence for language and the power of words, which is evident in his life's work, is clearly brought out. The biography further reveals how Peterson struggled with fame and the commercialization of his work; readers gain insight into his humility. His biographer shares how Peterson consistently sought to remain rooted in his values, resisting the temptations that come with popularity.

"A Burning in My Bones" is not merely a biography - it is a thoughtful exploration of what it means to live a life of faith with purpose and authenticity. In summary, this book is a treasure, offering rich insights into the life of a remarkable man whose work continues to inspire and challenge us to deepen our relationship with God and our understanding of Scripture.



Book Review: Winn Collier, A Burning in My Bones : The Authorized Biography of Eugene Peterson, Translator of The Message, Authentic Media, 2022.

NEWS FROM MALAWI

Robert S Moore

Interview with Dr. Ken Ross

Dr. Ross, you have spent a lot of time in Africa, can you tell us what prompted you to go to Africa in the first place and what aspects of life in Africa you find most appealing?

The idea of being involved in church and mission in another part of the world caught my imagination during student days. After some years of parish ministry and doctoral studies, it seemed like a “now or never” moment. A theological educator was needed in Malawi, the Church of Scotland was looking for one, and this consolidated into a call for our family. It was a big adventure – we loved many aspects of life in Malawi but particularly the quality of friendship that it offered.

On the face of it there can be few similarities between Unst, Argyll and Malawi. I wonder if you have found the congregations in these localities markedly dissimilar? Or are there common attributes in all three?

I must admit that moving from the Shetland Isles to tropical Africa meant a bit of a change in terms of weather. But learning the ways of a rural community was actually good preparation for Malawi which still moves to the rhythms of rural and agricultural life. There is a sense of space and “big sky” in Malawi, and I notice Scots returning from Africa are often drawn to the Highlands and Islands – I guess I am no exception.



Research Colloquium – staff and students



Treeplanting on Campus & Ecotheology

During your presentation you spoke of Ecotheology I find this an interesting concept, could you tell us more about it?

Christians have always confessed their belief in God as Creator. But somehow this was often left as a preliminary matter as we focussed almost exclusively on our human destiny. The climate catastrophe of our time has been a wake-up call. It is urgent to rethink the meaning of our faith so that we can cherish the whole creation, as God does, and play our part in sustaining the natural environment.

“Women have always been the mainstay of Christian life and witness in Malawi”

You also stated your student body was almost evenly split between the sexes. Do you feel that a feminine outlook enhances a Christian perspective? In what ways do you see Christian women make a particular and distinctive contribution to the church and society in Malawi?

Truth be told, women have always been the mainstay of Christian life and witness in Malawi. In particular, Women's Guilds have been a force to be reckoned with at local level. For a long time, however, women were excluded from leadership positions, but this is now changing and a priority for Zomba Theological University is to equip women, as well as men, for leadership roles.



Online Master's – Research Track Students

I was interested to hear of your plans to grant scholarship to students studying for a Master's degree. Can you tell us what criteria you will use during the selection process? Could you summarise what's in view and how the Presbytery of Clèir Eilean Ì can help?

As a University, we use academic criteria when it comes to selection of students while also assessing the potential of each applicant to contribute to church and society in the future. Often a big obstacle for promising students are the financial demands of taking a Master's course. This is where Clèir Eilean Ì aims to make a difference by awarding a scholarship to one Master's student each year (approx. cost £1,500).



Online Master's - Student

Clèir Eilean Ì aims to make a difference by awarding a scholarship to one Master's student each year.

“African Christians sing their faith”

You mentioned the importance of music in the Malawian church, can you say a little more on that? With encouragement from Warren our minister, we are adding World Church hymns to our repertoire of praise - so I wonder if you have any indigenous hymnwriters and if their music would translate to the Scottish situation?

First and foremost, African Christians sing their faith. If you want to hear the heartbeat of African Christianity, you need to tune into its music. Almost as soon as Malawians came to faith in Christ, they started composing hymns, sometimes adapting their war songs to become Christian hymns. Some of their beautiful melodies have been brought to Scotland and included in collections of world church music.

From your research for the Edinburgh Companions project, what trends do you see that have fostered the rise in Christianity in the global south? How might we respond in the global north to engage with decline and encourage positive change?

In the global south I would suggest that there has been a significant recovery of the spiritual quality of the faith. Perhaps in the global north we became absorbed with cerebral and institutional aspects, drifting away from the spiritual life that is the heart of the matter. I wonder if a renewal of spirituality and discipleship might be the force that will reverse church decline in the global north?

Finally, I wonder what we here in Scotland can learn from the implementation of a green Campus at Zomba?

Planting a tree. Banning thin plastics. Installing solar power. Each of these by itself is a small step and apparently negligible. Yet might it be the many small actions of a global green alliance that will combine to meet the climate crisis that has placed the earth itself in jeopardy. The passion of our students to play their part in caring for creation can inspire action in Scotland too.

“The passion of our students to play their part in caring for creation can inspire action in Scotland too.”



https://www.free-pik.com/premium-vector/malawi-map-africa-zoom-version-icons-showing-malawi-location-flags_38763228.htm



Dr Ken Ross

NEWS FROM GUATEMALA

Robert S Moore

The Messeders in Guatemala

Some months ago, we had the pleasure of having the Messeder family worship with us, as Rosie was helping with communications for the new union. The family now has four members Phil, Rosie, Phoebe and Madelyn. They flew out to Xela (Quetzaltenango) in Guatemala in September last year where they joined the InnerCHANGE team who are established there.

You can learn more about InnerCHANGE
– its vision and ethos –
by visiting their web site: www.innerchange.org

Xela (Quetzaltenango) where the Messeders live is Guatemala's second city and a hidden gem surrounded by a variety of landscapes, most notably several volcanoes! It is a colourful city rich with Mayan history and culture. The city is located about 200 kilometres west of Guatemala City at an altitude of 2330 metres. Guatemala is known as the land of Eternal Spring. The climate is pleasant with a year-round temperature fluctuating between 5°C and 20°C. Rosie and Phil and the two girls have settled in well, they continue learning Spanish, becoming familiar with the local culture and building relationships.

Rosie is getting to grips with the local market and attends weekly cooking classes with other team members to learn the subtleties of the local dishes and has hosted a Scottish evening which included an attempt at Scottish dancing. They also hosted the Teen Girls Group Christmas Gathering. A regular activity is having breakfast with a local Football team after training two or three times a week. The InnerCHANGE team have found that by sharing food with the young people and their families whom they work with, enabled them to show their love, build friendships, laugh together and have deep conversations around the table - this is not something new, Christians have been eating together for two thousand years!



Family photo from Phil and Rosie Messeder



Photo from Unsplash



Team photo from Phil and Rosie Messeder

Phil has become involved with the local football team Cambio Interno (InnerCHANGE). This year with support from friends they've managed to get new football boots and help with a strip. Pheobe plays her part and shouts "Vamos Cambio Interno" at appropriate times. The football ministry was established about fifteen years ago with the aim of showing the boys (many of whom at that time were shoeshine boys in the city square) that they really are not different from the boys on the opposing teams.

One of the reasons the Messeders were drawn to Guatemala was the opportunity to teach carpentry to teenage boys. Many of those lads come from very challenging social contexts, some struggle to complete key stages of school education, and due to a lack of connections, have not had the opportunity to learn this or other skills - so Phil has made this a "project" or more accurately a "Social Enterprise" activity.

They are also developing a "project" to give access to showers – particularly to teenage groups. Rosie wrote: "To be very honest, we didn't expect that showers would be a big part of our ministry, but we soon realised that most of the families we work with do not have shower or bath facilities in their home." The football team have the use of the Messeders' shower after training and several teenage girls come round periodically for a shower, a chat and to study with Rosie – offering an opportunity to develop relationships further.

The Messeders have enjoyed ongoing contact with Black Isle East, especially as we have been developing the website together at this time of transition; they have been very encouraged by the engagement with the community in the first few months of their stay in Guatemala.



CambioInterno Football team. Photo from Phil and Rosie Messeder



Carpentry. Photo from Phil and Rosie Messeder

EMBROIDERY BY THE CRAFTS GROUP

Sylvia Brooks

Rosemarkie Church 200th Anniversary

At the end of 2024, we were delighted to receive an embroidery from the Crafts Group that is now hanging in the church. This is an account of that project and its context.

The Crafts Group decided to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the Rosemarkie Church Building by engaging in an embroidery and sewing project. It was decided to put the church in the foreground and to surround it with embroidered flora reflecting the flowers and shrubs that grow wild in the local district.

The design and concepts for the church and surrounds came from the Chair of the Crafts Group, Sylvia Brooks, who has prior experience in such activities with information about the local flora from Douglas Willis a retired elder with a deep knowledge of the Black Isle's nature and geography; a team of people from the church Crafts Group were involved in the sewing and embroidery -

Linda Simpson, Violet Stewart, Ethel Urquhart, Helen Donald, Aileen Fraser, Aileen Norval, Margaret Macsween, Hillary Murray, Anne Fiddes and Sylvia Brooks.

The Crafts Group have produced a striking image that reflects the church's setting in the local environment. At present, it is hanging in the sanctuary towards the front of the church on the right-hand side and can be seen by those attending services or visiting the church.



Picture of Embroidery from Black Isle East website

PARISH LIFE

Sandy Jack

Mrs Angell - Bequest

The mandated modernisation of Rosemarkie Church will cost approximately £600,000. Some £250,000 is available to our credit, in what is called a Consolidated Fabric Fund, but where was the rest to come from? The Lord's future intentions for the Church were magnificently demonstrated with the provision in December 2023 of £358,000 from the Estate of the late (so appropriately named) Joan Angell! 'Jehovah-Jireh' (Genesis 22) indeed! Sandy Jack gives us some background to the lady who has been used by God to make the modernisation possible.

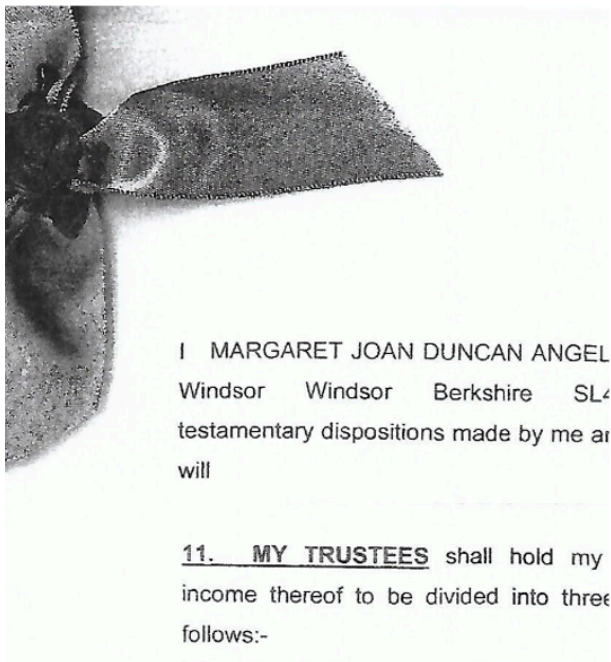
Margaret Joan Duncan Angell was born in 1937, the youngest of three children of Mr and Mrs Penney, "Springfield", Cathedral Square, Fortrose. Joan's mother (née MacLeman), was born in Cromarty and the three children's names were Jean, Hugh and Joan.

As a child, Joan was musical and went to piano lessons with one of the local piano teachers of the time, Annie Reid, who lived at "Rosedene", Park Street, Avoch. She must have been an excellent pupil as a few years later she was giving piano lessons herself at her home in the Cathedral Square!

In due course, Joan obtained employment working at the Town Clerk's Office in Fortrose High Street. During this time, she was able to extend her musical skills, playing the organ in Rosemarkie church for a few years - the musical baton of "organist at Rosemarkie church" was picked up by Mhairi McKenzie (from the Marina Guest House) who followed Joan in this role.

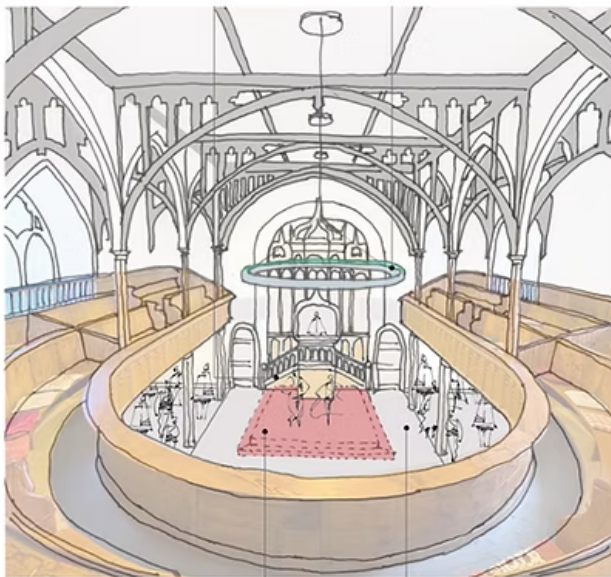


Rosemarkie Church, Photo by Warren Beattie



At that point in her life, Joan decided to join the police force and she travelled south to London where her brother was working. It was through her work in the police that she met her future husband David Angell, who was employed in the same profession, and they were married in 1964. She went on to have a fulfilling life and she and her husband were able to create a solid legacy.

Her interest in the Black Isle continued throughout her life, and she had a house built in Wester Links, Fortrose – one of the first houses to be constructed there. At her death, in Windsor on the 1st June 2022, she left the residue of her estate, divided into three equal portions, to two charities in England (connected with animal welfare) and to Rosemarkie church - “for the benefit of that Church only”.



HRI Munro Architecture - sketch of projected sanctuary space

This has been a great blessing for the local Church of Scotland as, following the recent union, it will meet in the Rosemarkie church building and, as instructed by the Presbytery and the General Trustees, is engaging in a programme of renovation to make the church building "a well-equipped space in the right place" - fit for congregational life and worship in the 21st century!

BENEVOLENT BLESSINGS

Jack Kernahan

“... for the benefit of modest persons in indigent circumstances”

All three former congregations have brought to the union of Black Isle East “benevolent funds” which have fascinating histories.

THE SEAFORTH MORTIFICATION

Just over 350 years ago, in 1673, Barbara, Countess Dowager of Seaforth, died aged 65 and was buried in Aberdeen. Born Barbara Forbes, daughter of Arthur, 9th Baron Forbes and his wife Jean Elphinstone, at age 19 she married George Mackenzie, 2nd Earl of Seaforth. They had four sons and two daughters. It was not until 1680, some seven years after her death that her Mortification was established.

In Scots Law a mortification is the ‘bequeathing of lands, property or money in perpetuity to a corporation or public body for specific religious, charitable or social purposes.’ She bequeathed for the benefit of ‘poor and indigent persons within the burgh and town of the Channonrie of Ross four pecks of land between Channonrie and Rosmarkie (sic).’ (A ‘peck’ of land was a relatively small area or parcel of land, with no specific size or dimension.)

Since 1680 the bequest has been altered and modernised. It was originally to be dispensed by the incumbent ministers of the parishes of Rosemarkie and Avoch, now the minister and session clerk of Black Isle East. The capital asset has now become a holding in the Income Fund of The Church of Scotland Investors Trust which produces annual dividends for distribution to deserving cases, as far as possible in accordance with the Countess’ wishes, resident within the parishes of Avoch, Fortrose and Rosemarkie.



Only one small piece of Seaforth Castle remains. The castle stood on the site now occupied by the Co-op in Fortrose, but the stone is attached to The Old Stables on Station Road.

Although the castle was built around 1500, the letters B C S are believed to stand for its seventeenth century resident, Barbara, Countess of Seaforth.

FORSYTH FUND FOR THE POOR OF CROMARTY

250 years ago, on 28 July 1775, John Forsyth was born in Cromarty, the youngest of six children born to William Forsyth and his wife Elizabeth Grant, daughter of the minister at Nigg. William's father James had moved in 1717 from Elgin to Cromarty where he established a small merchanting business. William was born in 1719 and was sent to London where he trained as an accountant. On the death of his father James in 1739, William, at the age of 20, returned to Cromarty where he became a much respected businessman for sixty years until his death in 1800.

In addition to his flourishing merchanting business, he leased the quarry at Newton, was tenant farmer at Townlands and North of Scotland agent for the British Linen Company. He was also heavily involved in the development of flax spinning and linen manufacture in Cromarty. Despite all this business success, William Forsyth left no business interest to the next generation and ensured that his sons pursued their own independent careers.

Born in Cromarty in 1775, John Forsyth died, age 47, in Fort William. Not Fort William in Scotland, but Fort William in Bengal, India! He and his brother James, ten years his senior, made their careers with the 'United Company of Merchants of England trading to the East Indies in the Bengal Establishment', known as the 'Honourable the East India Company' with which he was a senior merchant. He did not forget his birthplace as every year he remitted funds to his sister Isabella, four years his senior, to be distributed as she thought fit 'among families in and about the town of Cromarty who from misfortunes had fallen into indigent circumstances'.

Forsyth House in Cromarty was built for William Forsyth in 1772, so John Forsyth, born in 1775, would have spent his childhood here.



Following his death, his executors continued to remit funds to his sister for fifteen years until her death in 1838. Thereafter the executors of both John and Isabella agreed to establish a benevolent trust whereby, in conjunction with the then minister of Cromarty, Rev Alexander Stewart, the capital sum of £1,000 (worth around £150,000 today) would be invested and the annual income arising 'shall in all time coming be divided among modest persons in indigent circumstances in and about the town of Cromarty, more especially such as have seen better days, such division to be made half-yearly and the minimum to be paid at each half year to any one person not to be under one pound sterling.'

The selection of beneficiaries was given to Rev. Stewart (or successor) and the Kirk Session. The executors trusting that given 'their judgement and discretion as well as their local knowledge they must be conversant with the circumstances of parties entitled to the benefit of this donation'.

The founding deed required that a record be prepared and retained containing details of the Deed establishing the fund and all minutes and particulars of all transactions. These records were accordingly maintained, in two leather bound volumes, the first covering 1838 to 1903 and the second from 1904 until the final entries in 1980. The £1,000 was invested in Commercial Bank of Scotland Stock. The first half year of 1839 produced income of £24.7s 7d, including a small credit arising on the initial stock transaction. This was divided among twelve beneficiaries, the highest payment being £6 and the lowest £1.1s 1d. The second half year produced the £16.19s 4d, divided among the same twelve beneficiaries, five of whom received the mandated minimum £1.

During subsequent years other bequests for the Poor of Cromarty were received and distributed through the fund, but at the time of Union in 2024 the 'Forsyth Fund for the Poor of Cromarty' holds investments in M&G Charifund Units worth around £6,000 and which produces annual income of around £300. It will continue as was desired by the late John Forsyth under the direction of the Minister and Kirk Session of Black Isle East.

MIDDLETON SALVESEN BEQUEST

Cromarty also brings to the union another fund for the alleviation of need in Cromarty and surrounding area called the Middleton Salvesen Bequest, possibly bequeathed by the late Brigadier Alexander Middleton who was killed in a car accident near Beaulieu 1963 and whose wife was Winifred Salvesen.

[David Alston's excellent "*History of Cromarty*" (2006) is acknowledged for much of the information on the late William Forsyth.]



Cromarty Town Landscape. Photo from BIE.

NEWS FROM INDIA

Ken Hossack

Phoenix India Update - July 2025

The Comprehensive Rural Tribal Development Programme (CRTDP) has been fighting for the rights of Nagpur's landless people for over forty years. The cause was, and remains to be, one of the principle aims upon which Rev. Karim David founded the organisation in 1980. Although much has been achieved during the intervening four decades, there remains a great need to address a prevailing unfairness as the fundamental entitlement of certain social groups continues to be disregarded by government departments, whether due to institutional priorities or apathy to embrace the challenge of necessary change. So many meetings have been arranged over the years to educate, advise, support and motivate landless people regarding their rights.

CRTDP recently held a meeting in Nagazari village. More than 100 people representing twenty villages attended, and those present were advised regarding their rights and the correct application process. The Indian bureaucratic system is notoriously complicated, and applications often become trapped in an administrative cul-de-sac. One prevailing message was to highlight that when a group of villagers create a combined voice and consolidate their efforts, then this can greatly strengthen their progression towards obtaining legal ownership of their land.



Landless People's meeting held in Nagazari village. Photo by Ken Hossack

The Khaparkheda Mahila Cell (women's support group) continues to provide support to so many women and their children, a project which Phoenix India has been funding since its inception in 2008. This project is located within the compound of the Rural Police Headquarters, approximately 25 km north of Nagpur. The police are very supportive of the initiative and assist CRTDP with exerting pressure on uncooperative family members. During the past year, more than 100 cases were successfully resolved, with many families experiencing a reconciliation as a direct result of the Mahila Cell's intervention.

Phoenix India has continued to support CRTDP in organising quarterly health camps in various villages including Nagazari, Sheshnagar, Airangaon, Nipanikhapa, Srangaon, Kanholibara and Navegaon. The camps provide free medical consultation and prescribed medication at minimal cost.



Women playing a predominant role in the quarterly health camp at Navegaon village

Around sixty people were treated at Navegaon village for various ailments including muscular pain, arthritis, stomach pain and fever. The most common complaint was conjunctivitis for which many required urgent treatment. The health camp provided medication to treat this, easing the discomfort and reducing the spread of infection.

Yashoda, the girls and I are returning to Nagpur in October for a three week stay. It will be great to see family and friends again and receive a firsthand update on all the projects. It will also be a good opportunity to discuss a proposed visit to the UK for CRTDP Programme Director, Vimal Jadhav, whom we hope to bring over in February / March next year (2026). Vimal last came to the UK in 2004 and is very excited at the prospect of a return visit - during which we would endeavour to arrange another 'Indian Night' - similar to the very successful event held in November 2023.

PATHWAYS TRAINING

Rev Dr. Warren R Beattie

‘Pathways’ Training Courses – HTC / UHI (Autumn 2025)

This Autumn, the Presbytery of Clèir Eilean ì - the church of Scotland in the Highlands and Hebrides are running two ‘Pathways’ training courses for church elders and other experienced members who would like to develop ministry and pastoral skills through the Highland Theological College (University of the Highlands and Islands).

The ‘Leading Worship’ course, led by Rev. Dr. Warren R. Beattie offers a 10-week training (from Wed 17th September 25) for those who would like to gain more experience in ‘Leading Worship’ in local congregations. The course covers key topics, includes activities, an assignment with a short presentation, and will enable students to arrange three ‘church practicals’ to gain ‘hands-on’ experience. Those who complete the necessary requirements will be accredited to ‘Lead Worship’ in the Presbytery in a range of situations.

A parallel 10-week course around the skills for ‘Conducting a Funeral’ will be led by Pastor Mike Rattenberry (weekly from Wed 24th September 25). This will offer similar kinds of training, interaction and accreditation. In the spring of 2026, the Rev. Hector Morrison (Principal of HTC) will lead the third parallel ‘Pathways’ course entitled, ‘Preaching the Word of God’ to equip for that aspect of ministry development.

For more information contact:

kathryn.stewart@uhi.ac.uk or w.beattie@churchofscotland.org.uk

NB formal applications will need approval from minister or supporting church leadership.



Leading Worship
Commencing 17th September
This course helps you plan, prepare and deliver worship services. It gives Biblical and historic background and addresses issues and challenges faced by local congregations today.

Conducting a Funeral
Commencing 23rd September
Training to equip you to plan and conduct a funeral service, support the bereaved family, write a eulogy, and liaise with the funeral directors.

Applications are welcomed with approval from your minister or supporting church leadership

Contact kathryn.stewart@uhi.ac.uk



BLACK ISLE EAST PARISH NEWS

**Join us on Sunday Mornings at 10:30 a.m.
and throughout the week**

For more information visit:

Website: blackisleeastchurch.com

Facebook: Black Isle East Church

Email: blackisleeastchurch@gmail.com

Location: High Street, Rosemarkie, IV10 8UF

Minister: Rev Dr Warren R Beattie