

# Burnside Blairbeth Church



*"...finding hope in dark times."*

## Contact

No 167

January 2024

Dear friends,

Late last year an academic report found that the number of people taking a strong interest in the news has declined by around a quarter in the past six years. The same study found that 41% of people sometimes or always actively avoid the news in the UK. This trend is unsurprisingly called “news avoidance.”



There are a variety of explanations given for this phenomenon, including that the news is too gloomy. I'm certain that those who avoid the news for this reason will not have increased their news consumption over the months since that report, given current world events.

If this describes you, you may not be enjoying our current series looking at the book of Jeremiah – given that he has often been referred to as the weeping prophet! Most of his calling was to tell the people of Judah about the forthcoming judgement, in the form of exile to Babylon. As he did so he was rejected, imprisoned, and often found himself questioning what God was doing and why. It's therefore no surprise that reading through this book, which is a mixture of his life story, his sermons, his conversations with God and more, can sometimes feel like hard going.

So why would we look at such a difficult and dispiriting part of the Bible? The first answer is in the last part of the question -because it's in the Bible. If we believe that Scripture is God's word and is therefore useful in all times in all circumstances, that is the most basic reason for studying any part of the Bible. We haven't studied Jeremiah together before, so that means it's “higher up the list” as something we should be studying.

A second reason is that the more I've thought about this prophet, the more I've seen how useful his story is for people who find themselves in situations they dislike intensely. These may vary from a job that is horrible to health issues which feel debilitating to family crises that feel unremitting. Jeremiah experienced some of these and much worse. He was seen as a traitor and although there were instances where he proclaimed hope, he didn't live long enough to see those hopes fulfilled. Through all this he remained faithful. I suspect not many of us would wish for Jeremiah's calling, but he ought to be an encouragement to us to remain faithful and to remember that we don't always know how God is using us.

The book of Jeremiah also reminds us, that living in bleak times with all sorts of awful geopolitical issues, isn't new. He experienced several despotic regimes where there was unspeakable cruelty. I suspect he could watch our news bulletins and tell us that he had seen worse! Amid this he reminded the people that God was in control, but also that they bore their fair share of responsibility for the situation in which they found themselves.

This is why we need to listen to the call for repentance which is front and centre of Jeremiah's prophecy. Time after time he challenges us to examine where our ultimate loyalties lie. Are we obedient to God or is our religion simply "something we do"? When Jeremiah started his ministry Josiah was king, the book of the law had just been rediscovered and people seemed to be returning to God. It quickly became apparent that this return was more surface than substance. Religious practice is relatively easy – obedience to God certainly isn't. Repentance must be a full return to God, particularly in those areas which we find most uncomfortable.

The final reason that the book of Jeremiah is especially relevant in dark times is that it points out reasons for hope. It doesn't say that all will be

well instantly, or even quickly, but it does remind us that God has good things in store beyond what we can see now. Jeremiah spoke of the New Covenant – the promise that was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. God is still working His purposes out – ultimately to that point when all things will be made new and there will be new heavens and a new earth.

The most famous verse in Jeremiah is Jeremiah 29:11

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

We often quote this verse out of context as a kind of “feel-good” message to reassure ourselves. It’s certainly valid to use it as a reminder of God’s desire to bless His people, but to see this promise in the seemingly gloomy context of Jeremiah actually brightens the hope that it contains.

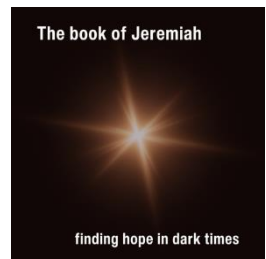
As we study this book together, may God help us to act on both its warnings and promises, brought to us through the weeping prophet Jeremiah.

Your friend and minister,

William

## **Jeremiah – finding hope in dark times**

The sermon series between January and Easter is covering the whole book of Jeremiah. Each week we will be looking at one big “chunk” of the book, and to help us do that, you might like to read ahead [or recap afterwards] using either the whole chunk, or the verses which will be read in Church each Sunday morning.



<b>Date</b>	<b>Section covered</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Sunday morning reading</b>
<b>14<sup>th</sup> January</b>	Jeremiah 1	Called to what?!	chapter 1: 4-19
<b>21<sup>st</sup> January</b>	Jeremiah 2-6	Judged & sentenced	chapters 2: 2-7; 3: 6-13; 6:6-11
<b>28<sup>th</sup> January</b>	Jeremiah 7-10	Multiple delusions	chapters 7:9-14; 8: 8-12; 9: 7-11; 10; 6-10
<b>4<sup>th</sup> February</b>	Jeremiah 11-20	Prophecies & protests	chapters 11: 6-8; 12: 1-6; 18: 1-5; 20: 1-4; 20: 15-18
<b>11<sup>th</sup> February</b>	Jeremiah 21-23	Disastrous leadership	chapters 22: 1-7; 23: 9-14
<b>18<sup>th</sup> February</b>	Jeremiah 24-29	Disaster realised	chapters 24: 8-10 and 29: 4-11
<b>25<sup>th</sup> February</b>	Jeremiah 30-33	Promises	chapters 30: 1-9 and 33: 19-26
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> March</b>	Jeremiah 34-39	Tidy & untidy endings	chapters 34: 2-5; 37: 16-21; 39: 1-7
<b>10<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Jeremiah 40-45	Strange obedience	chapters 40: 1-7, 11-12; 42: 9-16 and 45: 1-5
<b>17<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Jeremiah 46-51	Lord over all the nations	chapter 50:1-13
<b>24<sup>th</sup> March</b>	Jeremiah 52	Weeping for the people	chapters 52: 1-11 and 27b - 34

## **Treasurer's Report**

December saw the completion of our financial year and the preparation of our Annual Accounts is well under way. Milne Craig will again carry out the Independent Examination of these and in the next Contact I will update you with the final year end position.

Key information to note at this stage –

- Our Gift Day total, including Gift Aid, was £24,907. This has been a real answer to prayer as we look to meet all of our financial commitments as a congregation.
- We were also able to meet all of our financial commitments to our Missionary Partners by the end of December.
- The Christmas offering total for Tearfund was £2,323 and this has been sent to them.

I wish you all a good New Year and thank you for your continued financial support to our congregation.

Andrew Telfer

## Burnside Blairbeth Guild

### “New Wine, New Wineskins”

Happy New Year to all our members and friends.

We are looking forward to our next session of the Guild and we have organised a varied and interesting programme. Our last term ended on a high note when Anne Scott delighted us with a beautiful floral interpretation of the Christmas story ably assisted by her daughter Paula who read from the bible and recounted some amusing anecdotes.



- ❖ Our Christmas lunch at the Burnside Hotel was a great success and our thanks to Ann Cowan who played the keyboard to accompany the Christmas songs and carols.
  
- ❖ The Christmas Fayre raised the grand total of **£2,099-51**. Well done to everyone who helped and especially to those who attended. News of dispersal of the funds will be communicated at a later date.
  
- ❖ At our opening meeting on 8th January 2024 we were treated to a fascinating talk by Melissa Simpson, head gardener at Dumfries House which was saved in 2007 by the intervention of the Prince of Wales now King Charles III.

We look forward to:

- ❖ January 22nd “Here’s tae us” Luckenbooth
- ❖ February 5th. “Porridge” Barlinnie Prison Chaplain. Rev Jill Clancy
- ❖ February 19th. “Keep Young and Beautiful” Kay McDade.

Jean Goldie

## **Missionary Partners**

### **Messages of thanks from our missionary partners**

We have received messages of thanks from our missionary partners following the dispersion of offerings in 2023.

#### **James Fraser, Release International**

(Lead Engagement Manager, with responsibility for Scotland)

Thank you so much for your recent annual gift towards my personal support. As ever, I am so thankful to be one of Burnside Blairbeth's mission partners and very much appreciate your keen interest in our ministry, your regular prayers and your committed financial support.

I am looking forward to another year of helping local churches in Scotland to engage with our work and stand with our persecuted brothers and sisters; and to visiting you again later in the year. I pray you know the Lord's blessing and fruitfulness in your own local ministry.

#### **Craig and Amanda Cunningham, Bolivia**

We are writing to acknowledge the generous gift from Burnside Blairbeth for our missionary support. We remain greatly humbled by your continued prayerful interest in us as a church. Thank you so much!

#### **Bernard Bakunda, Uganda:**

This is to acknowledge with deep appreciation receipt of the funds you graciously sent to me for family and for Rhema School. Please, kindly convey my deep appreciation to the rest of the family and team at Burnside Blairbeth.

I had a blessed Christmas and New year in our home village in Kabale with Timothy and his bride Deborah followed by attending an East African Revival conference in Mbarara where I am gave Devotional Teachings on Hebrews. Many thanks for your prayers. May this year 2024, bring you peace and good health.



**Carolyn Tomasović, Croatia:**

I am hugely grateful and humbled by the church fellowship's support of me and my family. In times when so many are struggling, this financial gift is utterly incredible. Thank you all so much. And thank you for the prayer support which keeps me connected to all at Burnside Blairbeth and is a constant reminder not to be fearful or anxious because the Lord is with me. Thank you too for your teaching which I listen to each Sunday, and which provides an anchor on to which I hold.

**Morven Collington, New Destiny Brazil:**

I was so overcome when I received your missionary support for me last week. Once again, I can't even begin to express how grateful I am for this gift and for such incredible generosity. In 2023 your support helped me to make two trips to Brazil, one with the family, and since receiving this gift, I am now able to start programming for the next one at the end of the year and possibly another trip out before that.

As another academic year at ND begins, we are excited to re-start our programmes and new adventures for 2024. I hope to see you all soon and may God surprise you this year with many unexpected blessings.

**Satish Chettri India:**

We thank God always for your gift from the missionary partner fund. It is such a blessing and an encouragement to us. We also thank you for your unceasing prayers and encouragement in our ministry. Assuring prayers and wishing God's blessing upon you all.

"The best investment in life is to invest on missions"-Reapers.

**Jerry and Stacy, Love for the Least:**

We really appreciate your gift – thank you, as ever, for loving the least in His Name with us. Together we are loving orphans, refugees, and trafficked women; and making disciples among 35 Unreached People Groups. Over the last two years our team has planted more than 1,200 churches and discipleship groups in the Middle East and on the Swahili

Coast of East Africa. Thanks so much for having us in August. Prayers and love from us.

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**Update from Craig and Amanda Cunningham, Bolivia**

Craig and Amanda have been in Santa Cruz for over 5 years where Craig is Pastor of Trinity International Church and Amanda works as Stride Coordinator with Latin Link.



For various reasons the time has come for them to move on, and by the summer they expect to be in Western Ontario, Canada.

Craig is exploring opportunities to become pastor of a church in Canada. Amanda will move to work with Latin America Mission Canada (LAM Canada) in 'Member Care' which she can do from Canada. Member care has been defined as 'the ongoing preparation, equipping and empowering of mission personnel for effective and sustainable life, ministry and work', recognising that the physical, spiritual and mental care of the workers is essential. Amanda is passionate about this, having experienced severe burnout a few years ago.

In other news, Craig writes that his parents were able to visit in October which meant various jobs in the house were completed as well as spending family time together.

The Latin Link team conference took place in Samaipata in November. Craig and Amanda benefited from great teaching on Jonah and time to catch up with friends and colleagues, many of whom gathered from far-flung places.

The Latin Link team in Bolivia has recently had 2 new short termers arrive. Daniel from Belfast plans to complete his short-term training then move to longer term status while Tobi from Cambridge is on a gap year before starting university. He will be working in sports ministry with young offenders. As Stride Coordinator, Amanda is responsible for introducing them to life and ministry in Bolivia.

Craig was greatly encouraged in November as one of the young folk from the preaching cell group which Craig leads preached for the first time.

Christmas in Bolivia coincided with the 3 week school summer holiday. As Sam's first term back at school was quite challenging Craig and Amanda hope that this break will have been helpful. They ask us to pray that Sam will be ready to go back for his next term and hope that the move to Canada in the summer will be of benefit to Sam in his schooling and socialising.

Craig and Amanda are hosting the MICN Recharge Americas conference in Santa Cruz in March <https://micn.org/icrecharge/>.

Craig ends by giving thanks for the prayerful and financial support they receive.

Marjory MacLean

## Kitega Community Centre, Uganda - Update



Here is a wee update from Kitega Community Centre in Uganda. The school system in Uganda has their big holiday between December and February, so currently the centre is shut and both staff and children are having a well earned rest, but here are some highlights from 2023.

### Support for Children with Disabilities:

Thanks to your support, over 40 children with disabilities have received special support resulting in increased independence and improved social skills. Three of these children have even started running their own small businesses, showcasing their potential and applicability of the lessons learned at the Centre. They are also preparing to graduate at least three more children to follow the same path in 2024.

### Education for Vulnerable Children:

Your support has made it possible for more than 300 vulnerable children to access education. Through scholastic materials and Project Porridge incentives, these children not only have access to education but also

experience the joy of learning and achieve academic success. Project Porridge has improved overall health and concentration of the pupils as they attend school.

### Katungulu Community Hospital:

The construction of the community hospital has generated excitement and anticipation within the community. This special healthcare facility, made possible by your support, will soon open its doors, providing essential healthcare services to community members. The establishment of this hospital will significantly improve overall health outcomes and well-being.

### New Members:

Congratulations to Daudi and his wife on the birth of their twin boys, Pharez and Dariel in September. We pray that these boys grow up and become Shalom (Peace) Makers for the people of Kitega – just like their Dad and Grandfather.

### 2024

This will be a big year for the Kitega Community Centre as the centre celebrates its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

If you would like more information you can have a look at the website:  
<http://kitegacc.org/>

Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/kitegacc> or speak to Amy or David Samson

Amy Samson

## Messy Church - Nativity Journey December 2023

On the first Saturday of Advent the church gardens were sparkling with Christmas lights...and over 100 people in small groups were travelling around our Nativity Journey hearing the story of the first Christmas. If you weren't there come with me as I take you on that journey in your imagination...

After a warm cup of apple punch you exit the church sanctuary through the big doors onto the steps. A trail of lights leads you round the side of the building to a twinkling gazebo where Mary is cradling her new baby. She tells you about her little boy, and how in the midst of all the messiness of becoming a parent she knows God is with her, and God is good. She asks you to go and find her husband Joseph, because he has more of the story to tell you.



Continuing to follow the lights you come round Church Avenue towards the main entrance to the church you can hear someone hammering, as you come up the steps you see Joseph at his work bench. He welcomes you in and tells you that God spoke to him and told him all about Jesus, their baby, before he was born. He hopes Jesus will grow up to be like his real Dad.

You can hear a fire crackling and the trail of lights brings you to some shepherds huddled round their campfire in the snow.



They are funny. They have an amazing story to tell of angels, and singing, and running to find a baby. They say they have become good news tellers. It is difficult to leave the warm fire, but you follow the lights up some steps to the decking where there are two very wise looking people. They were nearly tricked by Herod, but they listened to God instead and were able to worship the baby Jesus.

You are now back inside and it is time for a fantastic Christmas dinner. In the midst of all the noise and chatter you wonder who this baby was and what he means to you.

Jen Robertson

## Small Groups

When you think of all those people around the church, do you wonder who you would like to know better? We would all like to know God better, to know his plans are for us and for those close to us but often it's difficult to be sure.

Help can come from talking with God (prayer), your Bible, or talking with others. One of the ways we can combine these is through small groups. Not only might it help you, but you are likely to help others. Often areas of concern arise in discussions that might not have been appreciated previously probably because of the informality of the setting.

The small groups provide options to suit most. The group meeting in the church permits people to gather on neutral ground, but other groups meet in people's homes which some prefer. There is the opportunity to meet for group meetings on Zoom, and, if it suits group members, there may be reason to vary between meeting on Zoom and in person. (Should anyone wish instruction on how to join a meeting on Zoom it can easily be arranged.) Some small groups share a meal or have a cuppa together at meetings.

William prepares material for discussion at groups (followed most of the time) but occasionally there is reason for the use of other material, for instance, the Healing Hearts courses ran for a few weeks tackling specific issues.

You will be surprised how joining a small group can help. Thank you for thinking about joining in.



## Small Group Timetable

Format	Day and time	Host	Frequency
Alternating in person and zoom	Monday @ 7.30	John Hunter	Fortnightly
On zoom	Tuesday @ 7.30	John Hunter	Fortnightly
In person – MacLean’s house.	Monday @ 7.30 (currently full)	John and Marjory MacLean	Fortnightly
Online	Monday @ 7.30	Ross and Leigh Galloway	Fortnightly
For Young people	Sunday evening	Andy McArthur and Andy Campbell	Monthly
In person, in the gathering area at church	Tuesday @ 7.30	Chris and Lesley Mackintosh	Fortnightly

If you would like to know more, are thinking about coming along to a small group or would like to be involved in a small group on a different day, please get in touch with anyone in the list above or email the office-[theoffice@burnsideblairbeth.church](mailto:theoffice@burnsideblairbeth.church)

## **“Past Times”**

### **Dementia Friendly Community at Stonelaw Church**



“Past Times”, our Dementia Friendly Café, opened in November 2021. The group meets on the second Wednesday each month from 2.30-4pm. Growing from three couples at our first meeting, we soon had to move from our community café area to our refurbished church sanctuary.

We recognise that many people living with dementia are isolated and lonely and need a safe, friendly environment to socialise. Their carers often feel isolated too and so the model we operate is that a person living with dementia should be accompanied by their carer.

Our main “Past Times” session meets on the second Wednesday of each month, lasts 90 minutes and starts with tea / coffee and cake. Then follows a selection of music, singalongs, games, quizzes, movement to music, etc. We have 15 volunteers, all with PVG approval and Safeguarding training. Our local Alzheimer Scotland’s Dementia Advisor attends to provide advice and guidance. Two Community Psychiatric Nurses from the Older Adults’ Mental Health Team at Rutherglen Health Centre come along to provide support.

In December 2022 we started an extra session. Our Drop-in Café meets on the fourth Wednesday each month and gives our visitors more time to chat and form relationships with others in the same situation.

We received funding in January 2022 from the Scottish Government’s Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund. This two-year grant has allowed us to pay for professional entertainers and to purchase

dementia friendly activities, etc. We have applied for further funding but will not know the outcome until February. This time we aim to reach a much larger percentage of our community **and** expand our services further. We currently serve 22 people living with dementia and their carers. Our plan is to serve another group of the same size. In addition, we have capacity in our building to open up to three afternoons a week, offering music, art and walking groups, for example. The Community Mental Health Team assure us they have many more patients to refer to us; we had to close our waiting list some time ago. So, we are seeking funding for a part-time employee to lead our volunteers and manage our services.

We see the transformation that takes place in all of our visitors, both people living with dementia and their carers. They leave the building in a totally different frame of mind from when they arrive. Being able to make a difference in more people's lives is what drives us forward. We know we can alleviate the despair and social isolation that so many people experience - our volunteers also find this work very rewarding!

We were blessed with funding from Rutherglen Community Council which paid for our Christmas Party at which this video was made. Watch now to get a flavour of what Past Times is all about.

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmk0pmVoUBk>). If you would like to know more, please get in touch with me:

Janis Neil

Email [jneil1@virginmedia.com](mailto:jneil1@virginmedia.com)

Mob: 07808 926067

## Read all about it!

At the start of 2024 from 14<sup>th</sup> January, the sermon series covers the book of Jeremiah. By the time you read this, there will have been information about how we are going to split up the book and read it in the services. At the same time, there will be a suggested personal reading plan to cover the whole of the book, and the sermon material will also be used in some of the small groups.

To help you in this, we have put together a number of resources, firstly, available from our “10ofthose” bookshop front page <https://uk.10ofthose.com/partners/burnside-blairbeth-church>.



“**Jeremiah & Lamentations – the death of a dream, and what came after**” by Michael Wilcock, part of the Focus on the Bible series of commentaries.

“**ESV Scripture Journal**” which is the full text in the ESV plus an empty page opposite for notes. You may like it to take notes during sermons and by yourself and additionally this format may work well if you are part of a small group.

There’s a book called “**How to read and understand the Biblical Prophets**” by Peter Gentry – I haven’t read it but might be a good book to read at the same time as we look at Jeremiah.

Dale Ralph Davis has a book called “**True Word for tough times**” which is basically a tidied-up transcript of five addresses he gave in Ireland in 2013. I have looked at the sample online and it is very easy to read. You can download a sample from the 10ofthose website and decide if you are going to buy the book or not.

Moving away from 10ofthose, the Bible project has a 7-minute summary of Jeremiah which you can find on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSK36cHbrk0>

You may be interested in “**Run with the Horses**” – by Eugene Peterson, which William rates highly (and I like Eugene Peterson’s style) It is available on Eden bookshop, as a paperback and there is a copy in the church library.

If you are looking for a more detailed and longer study of the book, “**The Message of Jeremiah**” –part of the “**Bible Speaks Today**” series by Christopher Wright looks good value. It wasn’t on 10ofthose last time I looked but some copies are available from other bookshops.

Chris Mackintosh

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## Safeguarding – Ensuring A Safe Church For All

The love of Christ compels us to care and protect those who are vulnerable in the Church and society.

Harm or abuse of children or adults at risk can happen anywhere - even in church communities.

At Burnside Blairbeth Church we take the safety of all in our care very seriously, particularly of children and vulnerable adults. We aim to promote a safe environment and culture in our church and recognise that it's the responsibility and duty of everyone within the fellowship of the church to minimise the risk of harm occurring, be it physical, sexual or emotional.

We have robust recruitment procedures to ensure that all staff or volunteers working with under 18s and adults who may be at risk have an up-to-date PVG certificate in line with the Church of Scotland Safeguarding Policy.

[https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/3216/safeguarding\\_policy\\_statement.pdf](https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0012/3216/safeguarding_policy_statement.pdf)

If harm or abuse does occur we aim to **recognise and report** this promptly. We are committed to working with Police and Social Work services when required.

We recognise our responsibility to care pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse as well as for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons.

We have a responsibility to follow Church of Scotland guidelines when responding to those that may pose a risk to others.

For further details of the Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service please click on this link: [SAFEGUARDING](#)

**If you suspect or witness harm or it is reported to you, you must immediately report it to your Safeguarding Coordinator or other member of the Safeguarding Panel or your line manager using the 4 'Rs' of safeguarding: Recognition, Reporting, Recording and Referral.**

Contact details are on the notice boards in the gathering area and church halls and we will soon have a Safeguarding section on the church website.

Marjory MacLean, Safeguarding Coordinator

[Safeguarding@burnsideblairbeth.church](mailto:Safeguarding@burnsideblairbeth.church)

[Marjory.maclean@ntlworld.com](mailto:Marjory.maclean@ntlworld.com)

## The next Issue of Contact

**Copy Deadline:** 3 March 2024  
**Available for distribution:** 17 March 2024

Articles can e-mailed to the editor - [contact@burnsideblairbeth.church](mailto:contact@burnsideblairbeth.church)

Services are on YouTube – search for:

**Burnside Blairbeth Church live stream**

- CDs will be available as soon as possible after the Sunday morning services and will be delivered to homes. If you, or someone you know, would like to have a copy delivered, please contact:

**Kate Airlie Mob: 07787 558 790 // [kate.airlie@burnsideblairbeth.church](mailto:kate.airlie@burnsideblairbeth.church)**

- **Contact** magazine is available to view on our website, [www.burnsideblairbeth.church](http://www.burnsideblairbeth.church), under ***What's On/News*** tab.

If you would like to view Contact this way rather than have a paper copy delivered please send a message the office:

[theoffice@burnsideblairbeth.church](mailto:theoffice@burnsideblairbeth.church)

### Data Protection Act, 1998

It is normal practice to include the names, addresses and telephone numbers of our office-bearers and other individuals in our church publications. If any person does not wish to have their personal details included they should inform the Communications Team Leader, Lesley Mackintosh.

**Burnside Blairbeth Church \* Scottish Charity No. SC006633**

**Church of Scotland Congregational Reference: 160844**

**[www.burnsideblairbeth.church](http://www.burnsideblairbeth.church)**