

Marksman

December, 2025 / January, 2026



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From the Manse



Once Remembrance Sunday is over it seems that I head straight into the Christmas and Advent preparation. It may still be only the middle of November, but I need to confirm details of the Christmas services so that the Church Christmas card can be ready for us to deliver around the houses by the end of November, and I need to start thinking about Christmas services. I'm sure you are making your own preparations for cards, presents and food for the festivities. But no matter how busy we are at this time of year, the season of Advent comes to help us stay focused and recover something of the excitement and mystery that Christmas should have.

As we approach the darkest time of the year, Advent has within it the longest night and the darkest of days, and it is almost fully dark when Mylo and I head out in the mornings, Advent offers a gleam of light. But Advent itself can be puzzling. 'Advent' means coming or arrival, and the hymns and readings used in Church around this time of year seem to speak of two different events. About waiting for the birth or 'first coming' of the baby Jesus, and about waiting for his 'second coming' when he will return to earth and put everything right in the end. How come?

The early Christians developed the 'church year' as a way of telling and reliving the story of Jesus, which stands at the heart of our faith. We start at Advent looking forward to the birth of Jesus, then Christmas itself, and Epiphany, closely followed (sometimes confusingly) by Lent, Holy Week, Good Friday and Easter Day, then Pentecost, and before we know it, we are in November again, ending the year with Christ the King Sunday, giving Jesus his rightful place as King over all.

However, this isn't a circular year, like a bicycle wheel constantly spinning round; it's more of a spiral, for each year overlaps with each other, we

come back to the same point on the wheel, but we are never quite in the same place. In our lives, in our churches, things move on. We are part of God's big plan, part of his forward purposes, his plan for the entirety of his creation, which will one day be restored when Jesus returns to his rightful place at the head of the world he created. And so, as the church year begins, it also looks back to the ancient origins of faith, to Abraham and his family whom God called as the start of his rescue plan for humanity. We follow the story of Israel's hope, that even when things went wrong, God was with them. When things still didn't go fully right, God came up with a new plan, to send his son to earth, as a messenger, as a mediator to tell people about God, fulfilling the hope promised to Israel, all of which was foretold by the prophets.

With that first Advent, it became clear that God's rescue plan for humanity had decisively begun. Jesus really did launch God's kingdom 'on earth as it is in heaven' in his public ministry, his death and his resurrection, but it became clear that his kingdom would make its way through humble followers of Jesus, following in his footsteps, living the life of love and grace that he taught, until the time came when Jesus returned to finish the work, to put things right, to end evil forever.

The 'second Advent' then overlaps with the first; we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth, knowing it has already happened, and we use that sense of fulfilment to fuel our hope that he will, one day, 'make all things new', and we use it to strengthen us in our work for his kingdom. We live between the first Advent and the second, that is what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

May we be people of the light, bringing the light of Jesus Christ into a world of darkness, and people of hope in times and places of despair.

From the Manse



Each time you light a candle, or even see a candle, or flickering electric light, remember that the light of Christ is stronger than any darkness, and that God is with you, even on the darkest of days.

I hope you enjoy our new Church Christmas decorations, hanging at the front of the church, specially designed to remind our the world (or at least our part of it) that Jesus is the light of the world, and Christmas is when we celebrate his birth, and not just the arrival of Santa.

I send my best wishes to you and your families and friends for this Christmas season.

Please encourage them to join you, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus together.

Your friend and minister,

Sonia

The Spirit Broods

***The Spirit broods
over the history of God's people,
sending shafts of light,
to illuminate the dark.***

***Long years of darkness,
and wilderness wanderings
waiting and watching
for the Messiah to come.***

***The promises of God
through the mouths
of the prophets
ignite a welcome spark.***

***Who could foresee
that a new baby crying
proclaims "God with us"?
"The light has come!"***

Elizabeth Clark

Worship Matters



Sunday 7th December	11am Advent 2 Communion 4pm 'Let Us Remember' Bereavement Service
Sunday 14th December	11am Advent 3 Gift Service (Gifts go to Renfrewshire Women's Aid and Christian Aid)
Sunday 21st December	11am Advent 4 Nativity
Wednesday 24th December	7pm Christmas Eve Family Service 11.30pm Watchnight Service (Carol singing begins 15mins before each of these services)
Thursday 25th December	10.30am Christmas Day Service
Sunday 28th December	Joint Service of Lessons and Carols at St Mark's
Sunday 4th January	Joint Service at Sherwood Greenlaw.

Funerals

20th October	John (Jack) Henderson, Newtyle Road
6th November	Ross Burns, Glasgow Road
13th November	Alvin Blackwood, Lammermuir Drive
24th November	Christine Gauldie, Elderslie Care Home, formerly Kinpurnie Road



The Haven

Drop-In Café

(for anyone living with dementia, including their families and friends)
in

Ralston Community Café

2 - 4 p.m.



Future Dates

Thursday 18 December
Thursday 22 January



Session Report



As we approach the festive period all our normal church activities are underway and a full programme of the various groups using the church is taking place. Our youth organisations are all well into their winter sessions and we are most grateful to all the leaders and helpers who give of their time and talents to run these facilities.

We are also pleased with the number of people who are helping in the church café and especially to those who have volunteered to turn out on Saturdays to manage this excellent venture. Also not forgetting those who assist behind the scene with soup making, food preparation and baking.

We had a bit of a clear out last weekend and grateful thanks to those who helped Peter fill

our skip. We will need to repeat this exercise again soon so don't rest on your laurels yet! Probably after the festive season.

Our church cleaner is still off sick and would appreciate your prayers for a swift recovery and many thanks to those who have helped with the cleaning duties in our building.

Our progress towards union with Sherwood/ Greenlaw is moving slowly but positively and hopefully in the new year we can report on a date for moving forward. Again prayers for this would be helpful.

Colin Reid- Session Clerk



Sunday Duty Team Rota

DATE	TEAM	LEADER	DATE	TEAM	LEADER
07/12/2025	2	Mr A. Taylor	04/01/2026	4	Mr G. Black
14/12/2025	2	Mr A. Taylor	11/01/2026	4	Mr G. Black
21/12/2025	3	Mrs C. Hair	18/01/2026	5	Mr A. Boyd
28/12/2025	3	Mrs C. Hair	25/01/2026	5	Mr A. Boyd



Youth work

In the last *Marksman* I spoke about providing for the young people who came along to the Junction during the summer, and how I was unsure how we did that. After much thought, prayer and discussion we decided to start a second night of *the Junction*. **The Junction** will be on every week, but will alternate between an older group (P7, S1,2,3) and a younger group (P6, P7). This means that we can get rid of the waiting list that we had for over a year and meet the needs of more of the young people attending. We started the second group after the October holidays and it has been going well with both groups well attended.

TRASH continues to meet fortnightly for the group of young people who are coming along. We are varying teaching styles to try and find what works best for the young people we have coming along. We continually try to make sure that we are meeting the needs of the young people who are coming along and engaging with scripture.

Family Work

Messy Church is a family event and act of all age worship. It is lovely to see families coming along and doing activities and crafts together before listening to, or participating in, our bible story of the day. *Messy Church* has been running monthly and continues to grow year on year. The average attendance has continued to grow and in 2025 it is currently at 32 people per *Messy Church*.

Schools Work

Work with Ralston Primary school continues in a number of different ways. As I write this, Sonia and I are preparing to go in for our next pair of assemblies where we will be thinking about Advent. We look forward to welcoming the school down for their Christmas services in December.

It has been nice to be involved with developing the relationship between the school and the *Ralston Seniors Club*. I helped coordinate the P7 classes coming down to the church to showcase their topic on the 2nd World War to the members of *RSC*. And have been involved with the Reading Leaders of the school attending *RSC* at the end of November.

Future Work

In the October + November *Marksman* I spoke about the future work with children, young people and young adults. As a church we need to seek God's guidance on what we do and how we do it. I have had a number of very positive conversations and some research done on what we could do to meet the needs of people in our church and community and I look forward with optimism about some new activities starting in the new year.

I would like to thank you all for your support of me and the work I do here at St Mark's. I am very grateful for all the people who volunteer many hours to do so much in service of Jesus Christ and his great commission.

I would like to wish you all a very merry Christmas.

Peter

1st East Rainbow Unit



In October 10 new Rainbows made their promise and joined Girlguiding.

We have been busy working on a variety of badges this session and the girls recently were awarded with their *First Aid* and *Make Change* Skill Builder.

The next few weeks are busy as we prepare for Christmas with the girls working on their *Present Maker* Interest Badge.

We have 2 Rainbows moving up to Brownies in January for their next adventure on their Guiding journey and we wish Mia and Sadie well.

We have our Christmas party on the 3rd of December which will be the last night for this session.

As a family adventure, we are attending the Girlguiding UK & Odeon cinema showing of *Zootropolis 2* on the weekend of 6th/7th December when we will have around 60 young people and parents visiting the cinema with us over the weekend.

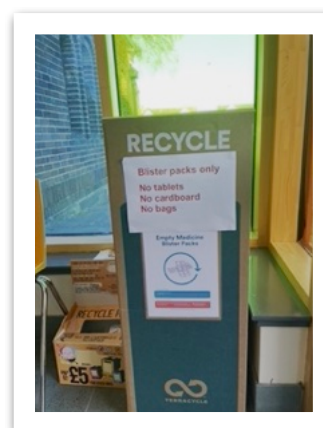
Purple



Sustainability

You may have noticed that there is a new recycling box at the Corrie Drive entrance. This is for recycling **empty medicine blister packs only** and you should not put any tablets, cardboard or bags into the box. Unwanted medicines can be handed into your local community pharmacy for safe disposal.

Currently £100,000 is wasted every day in Greater Glasgow and Clyde on unused medicines. Do your part and only order what medicines you require and don't stockpile 'just in case' you might need medicines in the future.



Ruth Forrest

39th Paisley Brownies (Tuesday)



We've been working hard since our return in September. Our new Brownies made their Brownie Promise, and everyone received the *Countryside Challenge* Badge which we had been working on. We welcomed Liz Morgan and June Chapman who came along to help us with hand sewing of animal puppets. The girls really enjoyed the activity, learning a new skill, and at the end of the evening they used their puppets to tell a story.

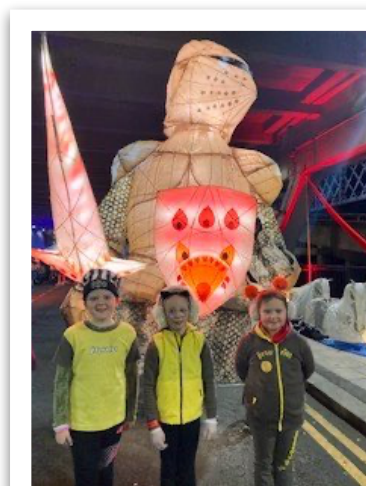
We also welcomed Lesley Hogg, our County First Aid trainer along to the Unit. Lesley helped the girls understand what to do in an emergency in the countryside, and how to apply an arm sling. The girls had fun bandaging each other. We completed the *Explore Skills Builders* within the Unit too, which meant that most of the girls had completed another Theme Badge.

We were delighted that parents came along to join us to see the girls receive their badges. As our *Promise Ceremony* coincided with *Hallowe'en*, we made Ghost Lanterns, assisted by our Visiting Elder, Irene Boyd. We then lit our lanterns and switched off the lights, as we sat in a horseshoe for our ceremony (checking first that the adults weren't too afraid!).

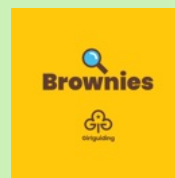


We also awarded *Anniversary* Badges to 21 girls, and a *Well Done* certificate to a couple of girls who have started on their Guiding journey during the year. In fact, one made her *Brownie Promise*, and will be heading off to join the Guide Unit within a few weeks.

A group of us took part in the *Paisley Hallowe'en Parade*, walking the circuit around Paisley Abbey, and being cheered on by the amazing crowds.



39th Paisley Brownies (Tuesday)



We've been planning holidays for the new *Holidays* Badge, and we've had wonderful presentations about *Disneyland*, a beach holiday in Alcudia, a caravan holiday in North Berwick, and even a Brownie Pack Holiday. For our new girls, completing this means that along with the Skills Builder, they will have achieved their first Brownie Theme.

Another new Interest Badge is called *Kitchen Creations*, so we've been making sweets for Christmas with the Brownies, following recipes which I've reproduced for the girls to take home and try themselves over Christmas. We've already made Chocolate Fudge, White Funfetti Fudge, and Pink/White Coconut Ice. We'll be making peppermint fondant creams, Top Hats, and various truffle type cakes to add to our repertoire.

We've also been busy creating our decorations for the GirlGuiding *Treemendous* Christmas Tree. We're hoping that we can encourage families to come into the Sanctuary, vote for our tree, and enjoy the festivities within the church and café.

The majority of the girls will join us at *Snow White* Pantomime at *PACE* in early December, and we'll be heading to the GirlGuiding cinema showing of *Zootropolis 2*.

As we come towards the end of the year, we'll be wishing Good Luck to three of our Brownies, as they move on up to join the Guides. We've also got one Rainbow moving in to the Pack to join us in January. We look forward to welcoming her.

We wish everyone within St Mark's a very Happy Christmas.

Sheena Tonner, Brownie Leader



39thA Paisley Brownies



In October, we had a lovely finish to a meeting. We joined with the 1st East Rainbows to welcome Parents to a *Promise Ceremony* for both Brownies and Rainbows. Congratulations to the Brownies who spoke confidently in front of this big audience :

Daniela, Grace, Jessica, Jess O'L, Mia and Summer.



At the end of October, we had a fun night with a theme of 'Autumn'. The Brownies were invited to come along out of uniform, but wearing autumn colours. During the evening, we played lots of games and had craft activities too. The meeting finished with the fun of 'dooking for apples'!



Meetings usually end with the presentation of badges. In the last couple of months, a few of the Brownies have been working at home on Interest Badges. We have been able to present the following :

Aoife : *Charities ; Mindfulness*

Eve : *Book Reviewer ; Folklore ; Performing ; Speaking Out*

Tilly : *Crafts ; Imagination ; Kitchen Creations*

We have also had several *Anniversary* badges issued :

1 year : Jessica

2 year : Grace ; Jess O'L



One of the groups of Brownies has been working on a Skill Builder entitled *Reflect* as part of the *Know Myself* theme. We discussed *Remembrance* and the Brownies produced their own poppy images. I hope you saw them in the vestibule on *Remembrance Sunday*. The Brownies took a bit of persuasion to leave them with us for a week and not take them home!



We are delighted that all the Brownies are going to be joining in our December trip to the Pantomime. There will be a group of 40 going to Paisley Arts Centre on 3rd December to watch the performance of *Snow White*. I am sure it will be a fun outing – ‘oh yes it will!’

Also in December, we will be joining with the Church family at the *Treemendous* event. Plans are in place to produce some decorations to add to the Girlguiding tree.

The volunteer leadership team is always planning ahead. Currently, we are gathering numbers to attend the County Event to celebrate 100 years of *Thinking Day* in February. This is taking place in Park Mains High School in Erskine. Also ‘in the pipeline’ is a trip to a *Festival of Friendship* which will even involve a train trip to Greenock! This is in April. Finally, our annual trip to the outdoor centre in Dalguise is booked for a small group in May.

If you know of anyone [young person or adult] who would like to join Girlguiding, a warm welcome awaits them!
[www.girlguiding.org.uk]

Christine Hair

Brown Owl

Recycling opportunity

Did you know that St Mark's collects empty printer ink cartridges?

This reduces the waste that ends up in landfill as the cartridges are remanufactured or recycled. The proceeds from remanufacturing are donated to St Mark's. We have received over £100 from this in the last year.

If you or family or colleagues have a printer and usually bin the empty cartridges, please drop them in the collection boxes at the doors of the Church.

Help to make St Mark's **greener**.



Prayer Diary



		DECEMBER, 2025
Mon	1	Pray for the Guild as they meet weekly.
Tue	2	Remember the Brownies tonight as they go to <i>PACE</i> for <i>Snow White</i> pantomime. Kirk Session this evening.
Wed	3	Mid week service this morning. Prayer group on Zoom and in the church. Brownies are attending the Pantomime at Paisley Arts Centre. We pray they have a great evening.
Thu	4	<i>The Junction</i> meets this evening. Our streets this week are Springfield Avenue, Strathmore Avenue, Tylney Road and Woodend Drive.
Fri	5	Boys' Brigade and Anchor boys on tonight.
Sat	6	<i>Treemendous</i> Festival event on today. Pray it will be well attended.
Sun	7	Second Sunday in Advent. Pray for Sonia as she leads us through this advent journey. Communion service today at 11:00. <i>Let us Remember</i> Bereavement Service at 4:00pm. Brownies at ODEON for girl-guiding showing of <i>Zootropolis 2</i> .
Mon	8	We remember the Renfrewshire Food Bank and their work helping others.
Tue	9	Remember all who help in our Green Team, keeping grounds tidy, reusing, reducing and recycling where they can. Brownies – party and final badges being handed out, as well as saying goodbye to 3 Brownies moving on to Guides.
Wed	10	Mid week service this morning. Prayer Group on Zoom and in church followed by the last Bible Study in church. <i>Pastoral Care Christmas Afternoon Tea</i> today.
Thu	11	Our streets for prayer are those outside our district.
Fri	12	Pray for those in areas of war or conflict.
Sat	13	Final Bible Study on Zoom this morning (rescheduled).



International Day of Persons with Disabilities
Wednesday 3 December

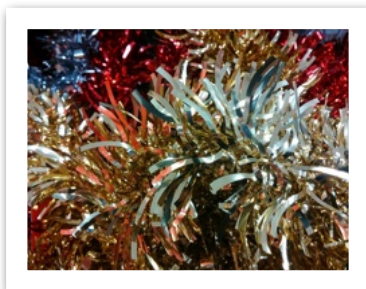
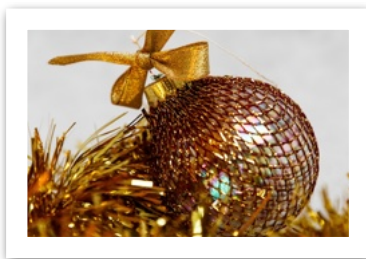
Prayer Diary



		DECEMBER, 2025
Sun	14	Third Sunday in Advent. This week is Gift Sunday for Renfrewshire Women's Aid.
Mon	15	We pray for the Women's Refuge and the care and support given to those in need.
Tue	16	Pray for the Administration work of the church.
Wed	17	The last Prayer Group meeting on Zoom and in church until the new year. Thinking especially of 9 brownies who have finished their Brownie journey. We wish them well in their future.
Thu	18	Pray for the people who live in Allanton Avenue, and Atholl Crescent. School services in church this morning. Haven Café this afternoon.
Fri	19	Tomorrow is Human Solidarity Day.
Sat	20	Pray for persecuted Christians throughout the world.
Sun	21	Fourth Sunday of advent this morning. We think of Jesus' birth through our Nativity Service today.
Mon	22	The work of Erskine is our focus for prayer today.
Tue	23	Pray for the Pastoral Team and all the work they do.
Wed	24	Christmas Eve Services. Family service at 7:00pm and Watchnight Service at 11:30pm.
Thu	25	Christmas Day Service at 10:30a.m. A joyful Christmas to everyone.
Fri	26	Pray for the whole community this Boxing Day.
Sat	27	Pray for places hit by natural disasters.
Sun	28	Morning worship led by Sonia. Lessons and Carols service at St Mark's jointly with Sherwood Greenlaw.
Mon	29	Local businesses are in our prayers this week.
Tue	30	Streets for prayer this week are Auchmannoch Avenue, Balfron Road, and Barshaw Place.
Wed	31	Give thanks for the year gone by, for your love towards us and for your support and comfort in difficult times. Help us look forward in faith to the coming year and all you will do through us here in St Mark's.

A child is born to us! A son is given to us! And he will be our ruler. He will be called, 'Wonderful Counsellor,' 'Mighty God,' 'Eternal Father,' 'Prince of Peace.' ***Isaiah 9:6***

Christmas Traditions



Decorated Tree

The Christmas tree tradition originates from Germany, but has its roots in ancient pagan winter solstice celebrations that revered evergreen trees as symbols of life.

In the Middle Ages 'paradise trees' began appearing in Germany. Meant to represent the Garden of Eden, these evergreen trees were hung with apples and displayed in homes on December 24, the religious feast day of Adam and Eve.

The tradition evolved into a Christian custom in the 16th century, potentially popularised by Martin Luther who, according to legend, is credited with being the first to decorate the tree with candles as he is said to have been inspired by stars twinkling through the branches of evergreen trees in winter.

A 16th century German glassblower, Hans Greiner, created glass beads to be used as decorations. Early baubles often represented the fruits and nuts that were originally used to decorate trees.

The tradition of using tinsel began in Nuremberg in about 1610 and was originally made from real silver strands to reflect the light of candles. The glittering effect symbolised the starry sky of the Nativity.

In the early 19th century Queen Charlotte, the German wife of King George III, introduced a Christmas tree at a party, but it was her granddaughter, Queen Victoria, who popularised the decorated tree when she, Prince Albert and their family were featured gathered round a tree in a widely published illustration in 1848, bringing it to fashion in Britain and beyond.

Edward Johnston, a colleague of Thomas Edison, introduced the first tree to be lit by electricity in 1882 and it was in the 1880s that F.W. Woolworth started selling glass ornaments to decorate trees.

Nowadays, many of these traditions persist, although artificial trees are often used, decorated with meaningful family items or travel souvenirs.

Christmas Traditions



Why does Santa avoid sooty chimneys ?

To reduce his carbon footprint.

The Christmas cracker was invented by London confectioner, Tom Smith, in the 1840s. Inspired by French bonbons, the cracker was initially a sweet wrapped in a paper twist with a motto inside.

The '**pop**' was added later, after Smith was inspired by a log fire's crackle, and was achieved with a strip of chemically impregnated paper that exploded when pulled.

He perfected the mechanism by 1847, patenting a device using two strips of paper with an abrasive surface and silver fulminate to create friction and a small explosion.

The Motto: To make his sweets more popular, Smith started adding love mottos inside the wrappers. These were later replaced with corny jokes and riddles, becoming a staple of the cracker's contents.

The Paper Hat: Tom's son, Walter, introduced the idea of colourful paper hats inside the crackers, which are thought to symbolise the crowns of the Wise Men or the hats worn during Saturnalia celebrations.

By the 1870s, Christmas crackers were widely popular and were featured on Christmas cards, securing their place as an essential part of British festive traditions.

Today's crackers typically contain a paper crown, a small trinket or toy (replacing the sweets), and a printed joke or riddle.

Beyond the Christmas table, crackers were made for a variety of special occasions throughout history, including royal events, bachelor and spinster parties, and celebrations for war heroes.

During World War II, the Ministry of Defence even used cracker snaps to simulate machine-gun fire for training purposes.





She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger - there was no room for them to stay in the inn.

Luke 2 : 7



• **Saturday 6th December**

10am-1pm

St Mark's Church

mince pies

tea

coffee

shortbread

Community stalls

Christmas Tree

Display

Treemendous

Scottish Charity
SC011210

Hourglass (Safer Ageing) (SC046278)



At the recent Church of Scotland Safeguarding Conference we heard about the work of *Hourglass*, a UK charity focused on keeping you and your loved ones safe from abuse.

Every year, more than a million older people are physically, psychologically, financially, or sexually abused, or neglected in the UK. That's one in six older people who are victims of abuse.

Abuse is defined as a single, or repeated acts, or lack of action, within a relationship of trust, that causes harm or distress. Abuse can take many forms, financial abuse (42%), psychological abuse (29%), neglect (15%), physical abuse (13%), sexual abuse (2%), although often there can be an overlap. These percentages are the breakdown of the primary abuse for the people *Hourglass* support.

A common public misconception is that abuse happens primarily to those living in care homes, but 86% of elder abuse happens within the person's own home. It could be to you, or your neighbour. 44% of abuse is carried out by sons and daughters, (30% and 14% respectively), 11% by partners. Much happens close at home, not by strangers.

One of the most prevalent areas of financial abuse at the moment is through impersonation scams, for example where you receive a text or *WhatsApp* message from someone claiming to be your son or daughter who has lost their phone and is therefore messaging you on a friend's phone, or to provide a new phone number. Consider these messages carefully, before you reply. Do they sound as if they are from one of your family members?

Other scammers target people and establish a relationship with them, sometimes claiming to be a famous person – ask yourself why would Paul McCartney suddenly be interested in getting to know you? And even if he was, why would he need you to lend him some money? Sometimes they give sob stories : someone stuck in prison, or unable to escape an abusive relationship, or needing money to go to college. These scammers can fraudulently take thousands of pounds from people before they get suspicious or tell someone else what is happening. The banks cannot return your money if you have paid out in good faith. The scammers target anyone, but people who are lonely, or isolated, with reduced mobility and independence, or those with a lack of financial awareness, and a lack of digital confidence, and those aged 80-85years old are most at risk.

The primary message is if something looks too good to be true, it probably is. Protect yourself. Take five. Stop. Challenge. Protect. Stop and think about the offer. If there is an urgent time pressure it is often a scam. Look elsewhere to see if what is being offered or asked for is reasonable. Talk it over with a friend. Call *Hourglass* in confidence.

Hourglass works to end the abuse of older people (who they define as anyone over 60 years old) and they promote safer ageing for all. They can provide information on all these areas, and more.

Hourglass is there to help by offering advice and support to any who need it. On their free phone line 0808 808 8141 or text 07860 052906 or via their website : www.wearehourglas.scot.



Flowers in Church

07.12.25	Mr + Mrs G. Black
14.12.25	Mrs K. McLauchlan
21.12.25	Mrs Reba McNeil
28.12.25	
04.01.26	Mrs N. Dryburgh
11.01.26	Mr + Mrs R. Tonner
18.01.26	Mrs E. Macdonald + Mrs B. Warnock
25.01.26	Mrs I. Ritchie



Ladies Delivering Flowers

07.12.25	Mrs K. McLauchlan	
14.12.25	Mrs M. Scobie	
21.12.25	Mrs M. Robin	
28.12.25	Mrs K. McLauchlan	
04.01.26	Mrs M. Currie	Mrs E. Boyd
11.01.26	Mrs A. Christie	
18.01.26	Ms J. Chapman	
25.01.26	Mrs E. Macdonald	

Sending warmest Christmas and New Year wishes to all those who kindly contribute to the work of our church by donating and delivering the flowers after the Sunday Service.

As we move forward to 2026, if there is anyone who would like to help with the Church Flowers or fill the vacant weeks, please contact Kate, Isobel, June or Janice.

Thanks for your help.

Regards.

Kate



Prayer Diary



		JANUARY, 2026
Thu	1	Pray for the Flower Team this week.
Fri	2	Pray for all who have been helping with the cleaning of the church and halls.
Sat	3	Pray for those who are lonely or alone and who find this time of year hard.
Sun	4	Sunday worship – first Sunday of the New Year. Joint Service at Sherwood Greenlaw.
Mon	5	Pray for the following streets : Bathgo Avenue, Blair Road, and Buchlyvie Road.
Tue	6	We pray for Sherwood Greenlaw and all who attend. May we get to know each other better.
Wed	7	39 th A Brownies recommence and a new girl is joining them. Pray she will quickly settle in and make friends soon.
Thu	8	Pray for our Presbytery elder.
Fri	9	Remember those who live in residential or care homes. May they be well cared for.
Sat	10	We pray for the Presbytery and all the work they do for our churches in quite a big area.
Sun	11	We come together to worship this morning and pray you will be with us all and we will know your Spirit with us today.
Mon	12	Our streets this week are Crookston Drive, Dalfoil Court, and Darvel Crescent.
Tue	13	Probationer ministers, newly ordained ministers and other lay members, e.g. Worship leaders are in our prayers today. Brownies start up again this evening and will be joined by Rainbows moving up.
Wed	14	Mid week service starts again? Prayer Group meets on Zoom and in church.
Thu	15	Pray for the Organisations in the church.
Fri	16	Pray for the Green Team and for their work.
Sat	17	Pray for all the emergency services who work tirelessly to support our communities.

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World Braille Day
Sunday 4 January

Prayer Diary



		JANUARY, 2026
Sun	18	Church Service this morning. Pray for Sonia as she leads us.
Mon	19	Pray for the people in Drummond Drive, Duchray Drive and Dunchurch Road.
Tue	20	Pray for the homeless and vulnerable within our community. May they access help when needed. Brownies during January tackling 2 badges: Compendium of Games and a new Bird Watching badge. They will take part in the RSPB Big Bird Watch.
Wed	21	Midweek Service this morning. Prayer Group meets on Zoom and in church.
Thu	22	Pray for the Haven Café.
Fri	23	Remember the Street Pastors and their work, and Sonia as she serves with them regularly.
Sat	24	Pray for our Community Council and the work they do.
Sun	25	Sunday worship led by Sonia. Bless her preparation and prepare us to come ready to hear what you have to say to us.
Mon	26	Our streets this week are Gartartan Road, Gartmore Road and Glasgow Road.
Tue	27	Our prayers are for the Brownies again tonight and tomorrow and Guides and Rainbows too.
Wed	28	Mid week service this morning. Prayer Group on Zoom and in church.
Thu	29	Pray for the Property Team.
Fri	30	Continued prayer for ongoing situation in Israel/Gaza and Russia/Ukraine.
Sat	31	Give thanks for the month gone by.



National Croissant Day

Friday 30 January

Why not try one in our café?

From the Church Archive



In 1933 it was first discussed by the Presbytery of Paisley to build a church for the rapidly growing area of Ralston. The building of St Mark's church began in 1935 as a Church Extension charge, with the first sod cut on the 23rd April.

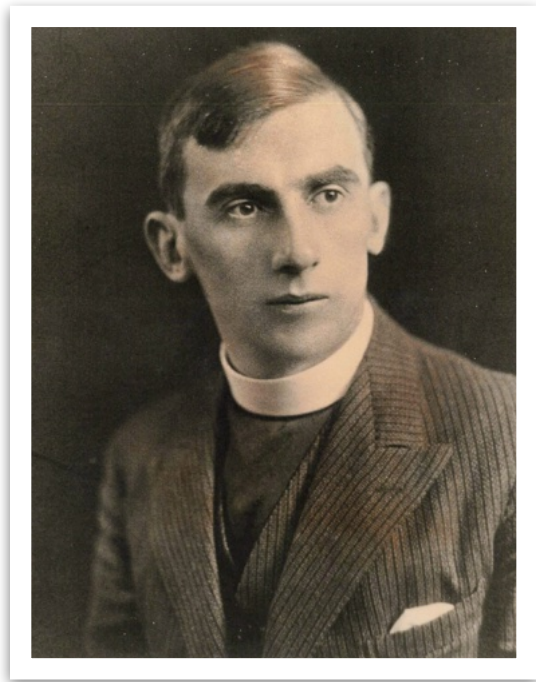
The ceremony for the *Laying of the Foundation Stone* took place on Wednesday 25th March, 1936. Sir Hugh Shaw-Stewart laid the foundation stone and the Rev. Robert Aitken (Moderator of the Presbytery) then marked the stone for the stone mason to cut a cross in it.

On completion of the building of the church, a service of dedication was held on the 15th April, 1937. The service was conducted by the Moderator of the Church of Scotland, the Right Reverend Professor Daniel Lamont, assisted by members of the Presbytery.

The Moderator had to knock on the door three times before being admitted to bless the building and read out seven scriptures relating to the life of the church.

The church was designed by Andrew Balfour of *Balfour and Stewart* and in the end cost £11,426.





Rev. Gilbert M. George

After the church was dedicated on the 15th April, 1937 there was the induction service of Reverend Gilbert M. George on the 22nd April. The following night a reception was held to welcome Mr. George.

The Rev. David Swan of Maybole Old Parish Church conducted worship at 11am on Sunday the 25th April and he introduced Mr George. The Rev. George took his first service in the church that evening at the 6.30pm service.

Under his leadership, the church had its first *Communion Service* on the 24th October, 1937 with a church roll of 503. In 1940 the church was granted full status on the 1st July in the *Deed of Constitution of the Church and Parish Quoad Sacra of St Mark's Oldhall*.

As the war continued, the church hall was a Rest Centre if needed and a services canteen was set up providing 37,000 meals in 10 months. The church later saw an increase in membership with the building of houses in Penilee.

In 1943 a student minister, John McQuarrie, was appointed to do work in Penilee with plans for a Church and hall to be built in Penilee. By the end of 1944 the roll of St Mark's stood at 876 with 111 on military service.

On the 9th May, 1945 a *Victory Thanksgiving Service* was held.

St Mark's was still heavily involved in the development of the church in Penilee and on the 28th February, 1946 it was officially opened. A year later it was granted Church Extension status, relieving St Mark's of much of its responsibility to the church in Penilee.

At the end of 1973 Rev. George retired, having served at St Mark's faithfully for thirty-six years.

Ralston Seniors Club

Where friendship, fun and good health meet.

Every Friday at St Mark's Church

11.15am – 2.00pm

Fitness

Support



Enjoyment

Inspiration

Health and Wellbeing

Membership & Volunteering Enquiries

Phone: [07721 911 234](tel:07721911234)

Email: ralstonseniorsclub@stmarksoldhall.org.uk

and leave your contact details.





**Training Session in
Basic Life Support (CPR)
and use of a Defibrillator**

**Sunday 18 January 2026 2pm
St Mark's Church, Corrie Drive, Ralston**

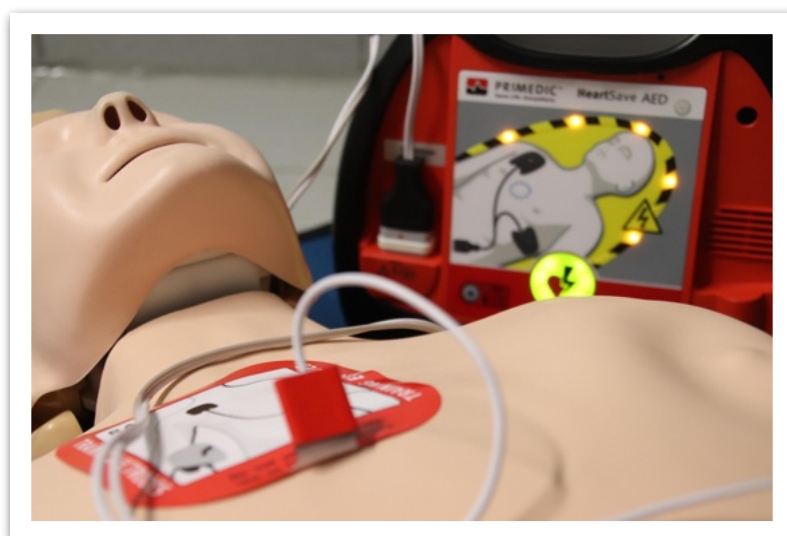
2 hour session by Heartstart providing instruction and hands-on experience. CPR, defibrillators, recovery position, choking and chest pain.

This training session is free. Places are limited and advance reservation is essential.

Reservation requests to:

billwhyte031@gmail.com / phone 07824 722 372

Event organised by Ralston Community Council



New Year Traditions



2026

Scotland

Hogmanay (New Year's Eve in Scotland) is celebrated with parties and music. Food at these parties may include shortbread and black bun (rich fruit cake).

Opening Doors: A superstition suggests opening the back door just before midnight to let the old year out, and then opening the front door to welcome the new year in.

As the clock strikes midnight, people in countries across the world link hands and sing the traditional song *Auld Lang Syne*, a poem by Robert Burns that reflects on old friendships and times gone by. Many of the world's cities now also have large fireworks displays.

First-Footing: The first person to cross a home's threshold after midnight is believed to bring luck for the year ahead. Traditionally, a tall, dark-haired man is considered the luckiest 'first-footer' (possibly an echo of Viking times, when a fair-haired stranger meant trouble).

Gifts: The first-footer should bring symbolic gifts like a lump of coal (warmth), a silver coin (prosperity), bread/shortbread (food), salt (flavour), and whisky (good cheer).

New Year's Resolutions: A common modern tradition is making New Year's resolutions to improve oneself in the coming year. Many, of course, do not last very long.

Ireland

Banging the Bread: An Irish custom involves baking special Christmas bread and banging it against the doors and walls of the home to chase out bad luck and bring in good spirits for the new year.

Wales

Calennig: In Wales, children traditionally go door-to-door on New Year's Day, singing for gifts of money, food, or a good-luck symbol (also called Calennig), which is an apple skewered with dried fruit and evergreen sprigs.

Mari Lwyd: An ancient Welsh folk custom where a group goes from house to house with a decorated horse skull (*Mari Lwyd* or *Grey Mare*), engaging in a ritual of exchanging rhymes to gain entry and bring good luck.

Spain

12 Grapes are eaten at Midnight In Spain. It is believed that if you eat one grape in time with each chime of the clock at midnight, then you will be rewarded with luck and happiness in the coming year.

Denmark

It is customary for residents of Denmark to celebrate New Year's Eve by throwing old plates and glasses against the doors of their family and friends to banish bad spirits.

They also collectively stand on chairs and jump off them at midnight to 'leap' into January in hope of good luck.

Colombia

In a hope for a year filled with travel and adventure, it is a tradition for Colombian residents to walk around the block on New Year's Eve with empty suitcases.



Please send articles for the *Marksman* to the editor at :

marksman@stmarksoldhall.org.uk

Contribution deadline for the next edition : 12 noon, 15 January, 2026.