



St John the Baptist Scottish Episcopal Church Perth

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April and May 2024

Pastoral Letter

Easter is early this year and it coincides with the appearance of spring flowers, daffodils, hellebores and crocuses, which make a colourful display along the South Inch, for example. The sunshine is warmer and the days are growing longer, by four minutes every day, so I hear. The winter has been dreich, although we have escaped extreme cold and the drenching rain further south. Nature may encourage us to be optimistic, but humankind has never seemed more threatened by conflicting ideologies, divisions and wars, the fruit of human folly. How can we have hope in such a situation?

The story of Easter is revelatory on many levels: the adulation of Palm Sunday followed by the public humiliation of the Crucifixion; the weakness of spirit shown by Peter who denied Christ, the betrayal by Judas, Pilate's resort to expediency rather than justice, the cries of the mob, the mockery of Christ, the contrition of one of the robbers, the grief of the women round the cross, the recognition of Christ by the centurion...and so forth. At every turn a significant story can be told. There are also the mysteries: the sudden darkness, the rending of the temple shroud and the greatest mystery of all, the Resurrection.

Millions of words have been devoted to this theme, yet I will add a few of my own. There is sin all around us, and within us. Yet the burdens of our sin, the punishment and remorse, have been taken by Christ upon himself through his submission to God's will. If we accept God's will for us and confess our sins, then, our sins forgiven, we will experience the new life that the Resurrection has provided, a life of hope for those beloved, like Christ, of God. 'For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive' (I Cor. xv.22).

A very happy Easter to you all.

Dean Graham

Weekly Services

Sunday 8.30 a.m. Holy Communion

Sunday 10.30 a.m. Sung Eucharist

Every third Sunday there will be prayers for healing

Thursday 11.00 a.m. Communion, coffee
and a chance to chat

Special Services

9th May 11.00 a.m. Ascension Day

12th May 10.30 a.m. Confirmation Service

Announcement

At the Vestry meeting on Sunday 17th March Judy Norwell stood down as Vestry Secretary, as pre-arranged with Dean Graham and Vestry members, after completing 11 years of service (*not 10 as reported at Vestry!*). Holly Scott was unanimously appointed to the role in her stead. Judy wishes to acknowledge the privilege it has been to serve St. John's through these first ten years of Dean Graham's Rectorship, and wishes him, the Vestry and the whole congregation well in every way in the future. As many people will know, Holly has been working as Bishop Ian's secretary in Balhousie Street since February 2023 and so is excellently placed for us to liaise with the Diocesan Office.

Synod Report – 9th March 2024

Synod began with registration from 09:00 to 09:15.

Synod Eucharist

At 09:15 we assembled in the Cathedral to celebrate the Eucharist and hear Bishop Ian's charge to Synod. (This is available on the Diocesan Facebook Site)

Session 1

Bishop Ian welcomed all to Synod including all invited guests especially those representing the Bishop's Lent Appeal for 2024 "Ray of Hope", a project of the Cathedral Relief Service in the Diocese of Calcutta. This plans to ensure lasting change for women, young girls and children of Ashakiran.

The annual reports and accounts which had previously been sent out were approved. Election and Appointments previously submitted were passed. Date of next Synod will be 8th March 2025.

We then broke for coffee.

Session 2

5 - 10 year plans:-

Introduction

We were referred back to the image Bishop Ian gave us last year, that for "vines to remain healthy they need pruning".

We then went into Working Groups with a facilitator.

The Groups discussed:

1. What aims of their 5 - 10 year plans were in common?
2. What challenges do your 5 - 10 year plans have in common?
3. What would you like to see in the Diocesan 5 - 10 year Plan?

The comments of the Groups were taken forward by the facilitator to the Plenary Session. Unfortunately this was cut short due to lack of time. We then broke for lunch.

Session 3

Domestic violence project – presented by the Mothers’ Union

Isabelle Pottinger spoke about Mothers’ Union Domestic Abuse Strategies:

1. To raise awareness of domestic abuse issues within the Mothers’ Union, SEC, and our communities.
2. To help our churches to be recognised as Safe Places for survivors to get help and support.

She then spoke about training and resources available.

Diocesan net zero plan – presented by the Diocesan Environmental Group:

The Rev. Elaine Garman, Convener of the Climate Change Group, introduced a session on the progress that the Diocese had made by showing videos of the different groups explaining their progress, which included one from St. John’s. She concluded by emphasising the importance of sharing ideas and information.

From General Synod

Changes to Canons 15, 16, 35 and 65 were discussed and passed. The New Liturgies for Lent, Holy Week and Easter in present use were also approved and passed.

The Acts of Synod were confirmed.

It is a privilege to represent St. John’s at Diocesan Synod. If you have any questions or queries about my Report, please contact me.

Christine Bracewell (Diocesan Lay Rep.)

Church Embroidery

As I watch the Sunday service I often think about the people who created the various needlework in the church and wonder if the many newcomers to the congregation notice them and may be interested as to how they came about.

The colourful altar rail kneeler is the first thing to catch your eye. This was designed and worked by Jean Bean who came to Perth from the south with her husband Desmond who was the Chief Accountant with General Accident Fire and Life Corporation which had been founded in Perth and was one of the City's main employers. Jean also worked the beautiful tapestry which hangs in the church above the entrance to the Threshold.

As an irreverent aside, St John's was often referred to as General Accident at prayer as so many people came from elsewhere to work at the Company Head Office and were Anglicans.

I'm not sure what happened to a beautiful white altar frontal which was in the Lady Chapel which had been made from the brocade of her wedding dress by Brenda Hulsmeyer (a Secretary in the Overseas Division of GA). That had a broad wave of blue across it representing the Tay. We had frontals on the main altar in those days until it was decided to reveal the very fine carving on the main altar.

There were already matching blue kneelers in the Lady Chapel and someone else may know their history but the main kneelers were in a sorry state leaking sawdust everywhere. They were all different as people provided their own and guarded their pews zealously! There were names on the pews and I think I was told you paid a pew fee. Brenda and I had both visited Exeter Cathedral and admired their kneelers which are all different and represent the various parishes of the Diocese.

We got together a group of enthusiasts and visited the Wemyss School of Needlework in Fife via a pub lunch and sought some advice regarding materials. We decided to continue with the existing blue of the Lady Chapel but with whatever cross the embroiderer wished in order to make more variety. It was then suggested people may like to donate them in memory of family or friends and we would aim for 100. Enthusiastic sewers appeared by magic and if you were unable to sew someone would work a kneeler for you. It was arranged that the canvas and wools came from Wemyss and was sent to me to be cut to size ready to be worked. We found a very helpful gentleman to make the cushions. He was a Roman Catholic and very interested in the project. There used to be a book containing photographs and the names of the people in whose memory they were worked but I am not sure whether it still exists. People seldom kneel nowadays but if you are new to the church do look down at them on a Sunday.

The next project was the banners which used to hang over the Gallery (I'm not sure whether they are still there) depicting the history of St John's. We designed and worked those in groups in each other's houses and we enjoyed many hours together doing those. Eunice will tell you about those afternoons.

The last thing I did was to bring some green silk back from India and tackled gold thread work for the first time in my life and it's lovely to see it still used sometimes on the altar on Sundays.

Meantime, the work of maintaining our lovely church continues in so many ways as it is picked up by fresh faces along with those who have continued for so long.

Sonia Dowse

King Jesus Hath a Garden

King Jesus hath a garden is one of my favourite carols. It is a seventeenth century Dutch carol, *Heer Jesus heeft een Hofken*, in which flowers are allegories of Christian virtues:

King Jesus hath a garden full of diverse flowers
Where I go culling posies gay, all time and hours.

(refrain) There naught is heard but Paradise Bird,
Harp, dulcimer, lute,
With cymbal, trump and tymbal,
And the tender, soothing flute.

The Lily is Chastity, the Violet Humility, the Damask Rose Patience, the Marigold Obedience, the Crown Imperial Charity, the Star of Bethlehem Jesus. It concludes:

Ah! Jesu Lord, my heal and weal, my bliss complete,
Make thou my heart thy garden-plot, fair, trim and neat.

The idea that flowers represent virtues is a common motif in medieval carving.

Throughout Antiquity gardens have been a place for solace and leisure, from the Hanging Gardens of Babylon onwards. Isaiah 51.3: The Lord shall comfort Zion...and he will make her desert like the Garden of the Lord (*paradeisos*), i.e. Eden. He also curses idolaters, 1.29: For ye shall be as a garden (*kēpos*) that hath no water. Persian kings had extensive gardens or parks – *paradeisos* – with cool running water from mountain springs, and shade. In the Song of Solomon the beloved is described *inter alia* as a colourful garden (*kēpos*), fragrant with flowers and with cooling fountains. *Kēpos* is the word closest to our domestic garden.

The so-called Garden of Gethsemane is just outside the eastern wall of Jerusalem, adjacent to the Mount of Olives, across the brook of Kedron. The actual site of Gethsemane cannot be identified. In the Synoptic gospels it is described as a *chōrion*, an enclosed area or estate, the nearest

to the Hebrew word *gahn*, whereas only in John (18.1), written perhaps eighty years afterwards, is it described as a garden, *kēpos*. When Mary Magdalene visits the tomb (20.15) she mistakes Jesus for the gardener (*kēpouros*).

Thus we must imagine Jesus's agony after the Last Supper and his arrest taking place not in a flower bed, but probably in an olive grove. The ground is cleared of vegetation round the base of the trees. He certainly did not find solace there. He was at his lowest ebb and on his own (the disciples were asleep a stone's throw away). He suffered agony of mind anticipating the suffering to come. But in prayers reminiscent of passages from the Psalms he submitted himself to God's will. And according to the carol, he showed the virtues of violets, damask roses and marigolds – humility, patience and obedience.

David Willington





Christian Aid Week 12 – 18 May 2024 Lent 2024

Christian Aid's prayer journey into love and justice reminded me how quickly I seem to forget both countries and learning. How often do I think of Myanmar? Or recall the central importance of the journey of love?

One story centres on the women and girls' *Safe Space* at Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, where one million Rohingya people live. Humayra, who fled her Myanmar home to escape horrific violence, is a beacon of hope here to the many women and girls who still live in fear. Daily, she welcomes them, and with her team listens, offers psychological support and informs women of life-saving health and legal services. Love is indeed a place of refuge.

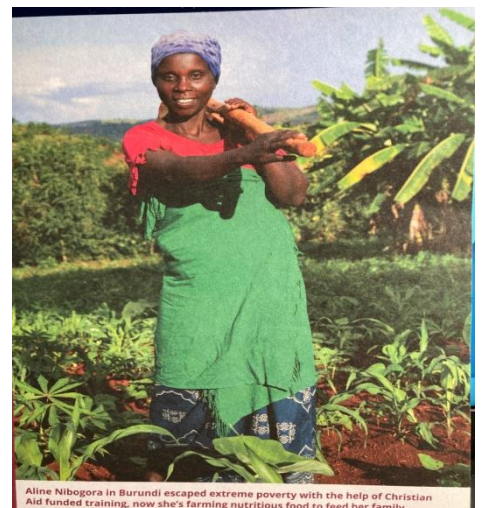
Humayra's courage reminds me that everyone is equal in God's eyes. She inspires me to stand alongside all genders, ethnicities, and abilities – all fully loved by God.

Christian Aid Gathering, February 27

The Christian Aid Gathering was a highly informative occasion. I was sorry not to have anyone from St John's with me - maybe next year?

Christian Aid Week May 12 – 18 2024

The Scottish Aid Gathering team explained that Burundi, one of the poorest in the world, will be the Christian Aid Week (CAW) campaign country. We met Aline Nibogora, who has escaped extreme poverty through various Christian Aid avenues: access to health & HIV issues, and funded training. Now she grows food, not only for herself, but also the community.



Aline Nibogora in Burundi escaped extreme poverty with the help of Christian Aid funded training, now she's farming nutritious food to feed her family.

Saturday May 11

You will remember that last year we collected books for the annual Christian Aid Sale at St Andrews & St George's in Edinburgh, raising over £60,000. As that Book Sale is not happening this year, Gerry Watson has agreed to hold it in Kinnoull Church in Perth. It will be Saturday May 11th. It will run for one day 10am till 4pm, with teas and coffees available in the Church Hall.

Gerry is again looking for second-hand books and is happy to uplift from St John's. I assured him that St John's congregation were certainly up for this! Look out for the posters!

Saturday May 18

Christian Aid has been working with the poorest and most vulnerable people in the Middle East since the early 1950s, when they provided humanitarian relief to Palestinian refugees.

The long-standing partners in Gaza are under intense pressure, but respond as best they can, with medical relief and community-led initiatives .

Jointly with the Christian Aid team at St Ninian's Cathedral, we plan to hold a lunch on Saturday May 18 in the Threshold, explaining the work of the urgent Middle East Crisis appeal. More details to follow – soon!

Sunday 19 May - will be marked as Christian Aid Sunday.

Elaine Cameron

Lectionary April and May 2024

April 7th Second Sunday of Easter

Acts 4.32-35, 1 John 1.1-2.2, John 20.19-31

April 8th Annunciation

Isaiah 7.10-14, Hebrews 10.4-10, Luke 1.26-38

April 14th Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 3.12-19, 1 John 3.1-7, Luke 24.36b-48

April 21st Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 4.5-12, 1 John 3.16-24, John 10.11-18

April 28th Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 8.26-40, 1 John 4.7-21, John 15.1-8

May 5th Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 10.44-48, 1 John 5.1-6, John 15. 9-17

May 9th Ascension Day

Acts 1.1-11, Ephesians 1.15-23, Luke 24.44-53

May 12th Seventh Sunday of Easter

Acts 1.15-17, 21-26, 1 John 5.9-13, John 17.6-19

May 19th The Day of Pentecost

Acts 2.1-21 or Ezekiel 37.1-14, Romans 8.22-27 or Acts 2.1-21, John 15.26-27, 16.4b-15

May 26th Trinity Sunday

Isaiah 6.1-8, Romans 8.12-17, John 3.1-17

‘...But already we laugh with the saints and angels...’

Church notices (or should we say intimations) are particularly prone to typos and unfortunate phrasing.

Here is a selection of authentic examples:

This evening at 7 p.m. there will be hymn singing in the park across from the church. Bring a blanket and come prepared to sin.

The Pastor would appreciate it if the ladies of the congregation would lend him their electric girdles for the pancake breakfast next Sunday.

Low Self Esteem Group will meet Thursday at 7 p.m. Please use the back door.

The Eighth-Graders will be presenting Shakespeare’s Hamlet in the Church Basement Friday at 7 p.m. The congregation is invited to this tragedy.

Weight watchers will meet at 7 p.m. at the First Presbyterian Church. Please use the large double doors at the side entrance.

The Fasting and Prayer Conference includes meals.

The sermon this morning: *Jesus walks on water*. The sermon tonight: *Searching for Jesus*.

Ladies, don’t forget the rummage sale. It is a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Bring your husbands.

The Associate Minister unveiled the church’s new campaign slogan last Sunday: ‘I upped my pledge – up yours.’

Book Review

I read a short book recently about nine women who were on the sidelines but became drawn into the centre of the drama of Holy Week. Each one had a chapter dedicated to them and it enabled the reader to look at and reflect on the biblical text afresh and challenged them to see beyond the reading.

‘Were you there when ...’ sung today at Passion Sunday reminded me at that this book said ‘later everyone ran away, but we were there. People often forget it, but we were there.’

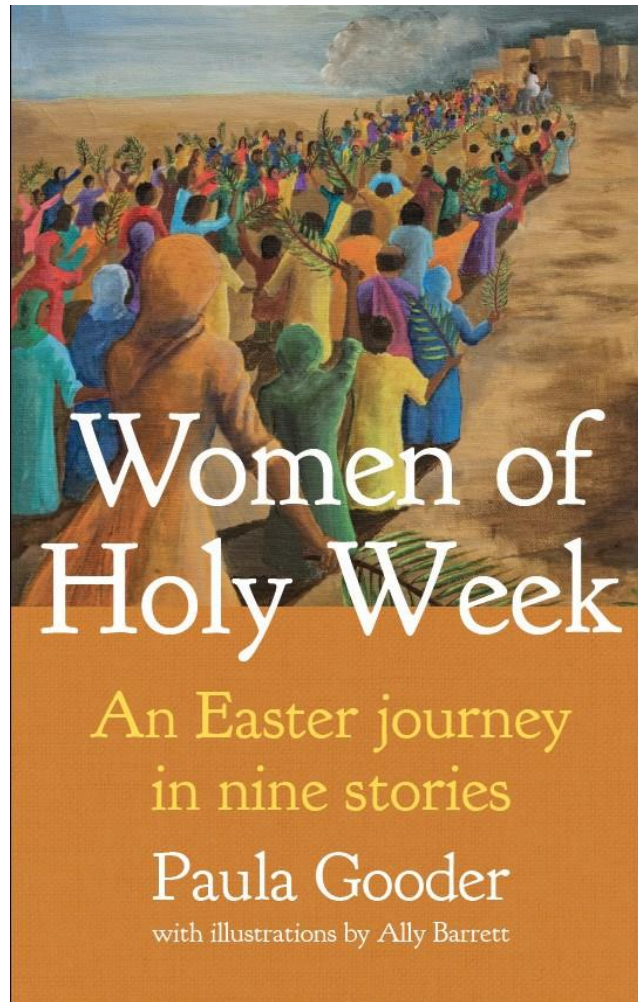
The book is well crafted and highlights the encounters with Jesus of Miriam, Sarah, Anna, Susannah, Joanna, Salome, Mary Magdalene, Clopa’s wife Mary and Jesus’ mother Mary during that week. Written as if by these women, the book throws a light on how we should see, as Jesus did, those that we perhaps perceive as marginal or on the fringe but are in fact at the very heart of the gospel. Thought provoking indeed with 21st century thinking on times gone by.

The notes and resources at the back of the book invited the reader to read passages indicated from the Bible and also raised questions on these women’s experiences with, in some cases, helpful pointers to encourage further reflection.

Worth a read and time to reflect thereafter.

God Bless

Jackie Thomson



Hellebore and other Spring flowers photographed by Mary Willington

Fellowship

As anticipated in the previous Quest we were treated at both our February and March meetings to Presentations to very far-flung parts of the planet, both in the Southern hemisphere. In February David and Jane Savage showed us photos of their trip to New Zealand last year. They also included photos of Singapore, where they broke their journey on both their outward and return journeys. Their New Zealand photos reinforced everything I have ever heard about how beautiful a country it is and with their descriptions confirming how welcoming it is to visitors. It is clear they would have liked the trip to be a bit longer but David is still limited by how much time off he can get from work as unlike all the audience he is not yet retired!

Peter and Shelley Marsh must have been on their far South Cruise to South America and Antarctica at about the same time that David and Jane were in New Zealand. It was an incredible trip where, after calling at the Azores and Bermuda as they crossed the Atlantic, they went through the Panama Canal and then down the whole length of the coasts of Ecuador, Peru and Chile, diverting inland for a few days in the Atacama Desert where they somehow seem to have experienced a thunderstorm! After a calm passage round Cape Horn they then sailed down to Antarctica which clearly was a major highlight of the trip. Their journey North was via the Falklands, Uruguay, Argentina and then up the coast of Brazil taking in Rio de Janeiro and Salvador before making their way home. When in Argentina they had another inland diversion, this time to the Falls of Iguacu on the Argentinian / Brazilian border near to the point where both countries meet Paraguay! I recall them saying that the total distance covered was around 25,000 miles but Peter will be able to give a more accurate figure.

For our next meeting on 8th April at 2.30pm we will be hearing about another faraway place but in a very different context. There will be a presentation from Swarthick Salins, who is known to some of you

through his work with the Bethany Trust. They are involved with St John's in our Warm Spaces Drop in on a Wednesday afternoon in The Threshold in Winter. Their van continues to operate for the rest of the year on Wednesdays but from our Church parking spaces. This presentation will be about an Eye and Leprosy Hospital that he and his family are very involved with in India. He seems to spend much of his Annual Leave from the Bethany Trust out in India at this project. I am sure it will be interesting and we will learn a lot from him as to how it operates and the patient group that it serves and how they benefit. All are welcome.

Jean Hendry



Eco Group News

The good news from the Diocesan Synod is that DEG (the Diocesan Environment Group) plan for 2024 was accepted.

One of the actions St John's eco group had to do, to gain the eco congregation silver award, was to draft a plan of actions for 2024. We decided to base this on the SEC Net Zero Toolkit's checklist. The structure of the Toolkit follows the ten categories (or 'petals' as they are described) outlined in the action plan. Some are of these are:



Clean energy – we have completed the Heathack workshops and hope to take actions later this year. We are very grateful to Alan McPherson, Chris Rose, Bill Bracewell, Liz Thompson and Gordon Murch for their time and preparedness to bear with this.

Active travel – Alison Swanney now coordinates various drivers to bring folk to church. The anticipated bike rack is a work in progress!

Zero Waste – note that blister packs are NOT collected in the grey bins! We're happy to collect them, and batteries, at back of church.

Training & Education – We're trailing on this one! We'll possibly have an environment course during the Season of Creation. I have contacted St Andrews, St Andrews about coming to speak about their 'green ticket' programme. They are very willing to do this, but no date yet.

Rooted Worship – note that **Sunday 22nd September** there will be a Diocesan Environment afternoon at St Ninian's Cathedral. Details coming soon.

Build a Movement - the Vestry have agreed **Sunday June 9th** for the next Fairtrade stall. We continue to support Foodbank, Starter Packs, and

the International Café. The last seems to be well rooted in Perth's monthly cycle, with a venue now in the City Hall.

Finally, a question. The DEG (see above!) are trying to pull a short booklist together. Please, if you have any suggestions – either general, or specific, I'd welcome hearing them!

Elaine Cameron



Fundraising Concert



As some of you may know my husband, George, has had quite a journey with his health over the last few years. Thankfully at the moment all is well and he just needs to attend the Oncology/Haematology Departments, P.R.I., as a day patient once a month.

After one of his visits I was listening to him speaking so highly of the staff at the hospital, how hard they worked without complaint and sometimes how they struggled to find equipment and would have to share with other departments. I felt I wanted to do something just to show our appreciation and thanks for the care they have taken of George. At that moment the seed was planted and being no stranger to fundraising, lots of different ideas came flooding into my mind.

However, one idea really stuck in my mind and with being a member of Perth Rock Choir, a fundraising concert seemed the most appealing.

A date was set and St John's seemed the most perfect venue to hold it. Therefore on 2nd March I held my fundraising concert in aid of the Oncology and Haematology Departments at PRI. I was absolutely thrilled how everything went and was overwhelmed with the support I received from St John's members, by their attendance at the concert, the purchasing of raffle tickets or the donations they made.

A grand total of £1300 was raised and this will make a big difference to the two wards. Many thanks again for all your kindness and generosity.

Eleanor McGourty
Office Administrator

From the Editor

Thanks very much for everyone's contributions to this issue. All entries to the editor, Mr David Willington dwillington@hotmail.com for our June/July issue by **Sunday 19th May**

Just a reminder that there is a tin at the back of the Church if you wish to make a donation towards the costs of producing *Quest*.

Members of the Vestry April 2024:

Very Rev. Graham Taylor
Rev. Annie MacKay Hughes
Hamish Shankland
David Willington
Christine Bracewell
Jean Hendry

Jackie Thomson
Caryl Steeves
Chris Rose
Cath Bodrell
Holly Scott (Vestry Secretary)

chansons

Perth's Chamber Choir

Opera choruses

Carmen
La Traviata
Dido & Aeneas
Marriage of Figaro



Nabucco
Magic Flute
Don Giovanni
& much more...

Areti Lymperopoulou conductor

Andy Johnston piano

7.30pm Saturday 20th April

St John's Kirk, Perth

Tickets £17.50 (inc. £1.50 booking fee) Concessions £5 (U 25)

At Perthshire Box Office, www.chansons.co.uk and on the door

Contact Information

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Alternate Lay Rep	Jean Hendry	623603	
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Finance	Jackie Thomson	07946 784687	
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Website/Facebook	Shelley Marsh	575040	
Children	Jean Hendry	623603	
Buildings & Eco	David Maclehose		
Social	Fundraising Group		
Church Activities			
Intercessors/Readers	Liz Thompson	245968	
Flowers	Christine Bracewell	552817	
Magazine	David Willington	813787	
Fellowship	Jean Hendry	623603	
Young Church	Jean Hendry	623603	
Links	Ruth Harris	621379	
Christian Aid	Elaine Cameron	441172	
PACT	Jean Hendry	623603	
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