

Abbey Church and Dirleton Kirk

February/March 2026

Interim Moderator
Rev Dr Jock Stein

Locum Minister
Rev Geoff Berry

Sunday Morning Worship
at
9.30 am (until 10.20)
Dirleton Kirk

10.30am (Until 11.30)
Abbey Church

Dirleton
Wednesdays 10am
Half Hour Prayer Service

Come along.
All welcome.

Our Locum Minister Rev Geoff Berry

It has been great to spend time with you in Abbey and Dirleton over the last couple of months. It has definitely been a pleasure to spend time with old friends and meet new ones.

My original plan was to return to parish ministry gradually after my service as an Army Chaplain and possibly look for a part time post. When your Interim Moderator, Jock, suggested Locum Ministry (two days a week plus Sundays), it seemed ideal as it would allow me to take care of my other commitments. I should have been more aware of the timing.

Christmas is great in the Church and I love the chance to share the Gospel message with so many visitors; but it really can't be described as "part time". However, the impact of so many members of the two congregations visiting and hosting the wider community during Advent and Christmas-tide was a powerful Christian witness during a time when our country seems to have lost its way. You just being there was an undeniable pointer toward something beyond self, family or even this life on Earth.

Christ was born in the original manger to be the Way to our eternal home. We in turn, by our words and actions, may be the first contact many in our com-

munity have to the message of a glorious future in the very presence of God.

So, thank you for your warm welcome back and for putting up with my sense of humour.

P.S. We may have been busy but, thankfully, I don't have to wear all the kit in the pouring rain any more. It is amazing how heavy dress uniforms and academic hoods & gowns get as they fill with water.



ABBAY KIRK SESSION MATTERS FEBRUARY/MARCH 2026



It was really encouraging to see so many people in church at various special services during Advent and Christmas. Our annual service for those who have been bereaved was well supported and appreciated by those who were able to attend. This year, attendees were invited to light a candle in a central display and to take away a pebble as a mark of remembering someone they have lost. Our Christmas Eve Family service, led by Geoff Berry, took the form of a Flashmob Nativity with the opportunity for those (of all ages) who attended to dress up and play a part as the story was narrated. It was a particularly happy occasion, and we pray that many who were there will have left with a better understanding of the reason we celebrate Christmas.

December was a particularly busy month for Revd Geoff Berry, and we are grateful to him for the many services which he led for us. It has been good to see the way that Geoff has settled into his role with us and it has also been encouraging to welcome new people to our Sunday services.

As I write this note, we are preparing for our next Joint Kirk Session meeting (on 28 January 2026) when the next steps in the process of seeking a new Minister will get underway. The meeting will be attended by

two representatives of Presbytery whose role is to advise the Kirk Sessions on the processes to be taken. A Parish Profile, which will be used to advertise the vacancy, is being prepared, and arrangements will be made for the election of a Nominating Committee. Over the last few weeks, work has been carried out on our Manse (which is widely seen as an attractive modern home for a Minister and family) to ensure that it is in a move-in ready state when a new Minister is appointed. Our grateful thanks go to our Property Convenor, Willie Leslie, who has coordinated contractors and ensured that all of the work has been carried out.

Abbey Church values the links which it has with the care homes in our parish and considerable work is undertaken by our volunteers who lead the monthly services and by elders and our Pastoral Assistant and Pastoral Visitor who visit our members. Our Locum Minister recently conducted a service of Holy Communion for our members at Tantallon House (which is not in our parish) and at Fidra House. These services were much appreciated.

The parking restrictions and charges for North Berwick which have been the subject of much public debate over the last few years come into force on 2 March 2026. While many businesses and individuals have concerns about the impact of these changes on the town, there is one small aspect which we welcome

in Abbey Church. Following representations (by us and other churches in the town) it was accepted at an early stage of the consultation that the charges and time restrictions should not come into force until 1.00pm on Sundays. This concession is welcomed and will enable those attending our Sunday morning services to park without worrying about incurring a penalty.

Robert Burgon

Abbey Door Keys

We currently have a shortage of keys to the glass side door of the Abbey and we are having great difficulty sourcing new sets. With that in mind could I ask that if you are not currently using your key, or could go without it until late spring/summer, could you drop it back to the office?

- Darren Barber

Do You Have Green Fingers?

In the Abbey the plants in the pots inside the side door and the pot at the bottom of the corridor are looking very sad and are looking for a person or persons to look after them. If you are interested, you could remove some of the dying species and plant others or you could try and nurse them back to life! Expenses will be given to make this a cheery display for users passing this area. If you are interested, please speak to Darren in the office.

- Sheila Burgon

**DIRLETON KIRK
SESSION MATTERS
DECEMBER 2025-FEBRUARY 2026**



Our first Christmas since David's retirement prompts further reflection on the care and love shown by him during the course of his Ministry to us, and memories of Christmases past. We think too of Mary's support and service from the Manse: and reflect that, even if she were not singing to us at the Watchnight service, somewhere perhaps, Lucy's beautiful voice was raised in praise and thanksgiving for the gift of the Saviour!

Dirleton and Abbey congregations responded with characteristic generosity to the Christmas appeals for charity. Thanks also to Lily and to Alba for their participation, at Sunday worship, in our recreation of the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel gave the glad tidings to Mary. It was arranged at short notice, and the girls did really well and their costumes were beautiful. Lily was able to create further cheer by giving us a Christmas song on the piano. There was further seasonal cheer at Abbey with the flashmob Nativity, orchestrated by Geoff from the front, who kept his cool in the face of the challenge of suddenly failing technology- commencing our worship on Christmas eve, which culminated at Dirleton Kirk with the Watchnight Service.

Our praise and worship was able to reflect the wonder of Christmas in its different aspects: solemnity and silliness, wonder and laughter, foreboding for the future, and deep joy that all the suffering can end in salvation.

We are well served by our locum Minister, Rev. Geoff Berry, who has been winning golden opinions for his work with us in church and in the wider community; and by Rev. Jock Stein, our interim moderator, for the patience and skill with which he is bringing our linked charge through the shoals of procedure to the point at which we will see a new Minister with us.

Let us look forward to 2026 with prayer and with confidence.

K.D.S.

Bethany Donations

Thank you everyone who generously donated warm socks, underwear, clothing and toiletries to the Bethany Care Shelter. It was very much appreciated and needed especially in this cold weather. Abbey is now making 70 rounds of sandwiches once a month for Bethany and these are taken up to Edinburgh by North Berwick Christian Fellowship who man the Care Van.

- Dorothy Kirkpatrick



**Bethany
Christian
Trust**

A Message from Jackie Ley

I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the Abbey Church family who have held me in their prayers throughout my recent weeks of hospitalisation. I admit to having felt more than a little peeved with the Almighty at whisking me out of occasional, rewarding opportunities for ministry at Sunday church services, and initially found myself asking 'why'? I discovered that our faithful God deigns to answer even the most peevish prayers.

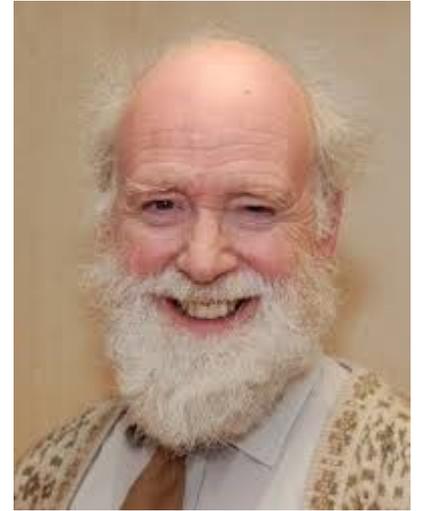
I had been allotted a bed in a bleak female ward, peopled by women who suffered illness and disease ranging from chronic dementia to cancer. Mine was the only bed available on my admission to a hard-pressed general hospital. I succumbed to a bout of depression and self-pity, before our gracious God intervened with a reminder that his presence is by no means confined to church services.

In his earthly ministry, Christ proved himself an inspiring preacher, but he also spent much of his time surrounded by crowds of sick people, all pleading for bodily healing for themselves or their loved ones. Such was his compassion, he never turned one of them away. This same divine compassion extended to my bleak hospital ward. He invited me to picture him there, moving between patients' beds, engaging with their suffering, offering healing comfort. The insight spurred me to pray for each patient in my ward, to converse with them individually where possible.

On my return to participate in Abbey Church services, I've been touched and humbled by the welcome back from so many. The joy of belonging to church family.

Thank you God.

Our Interim Moderator Rev Dr Jock Stein



This year marks a century since Hugh MacDiarmid wrote his famous poem about Scotland, 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle'. It contains the line, "I'll aye be whaur extremes meet." As a believer, I see the life of Christ as where the extremes of divine and human meet, and that encourages us to look for God at work in odd places. Poetry also has a habit of putting things together in unusual ways, and I offer you a poem I wrote in 2025 for this period of the year:

Abbey Church Flowers

During the period of vacancy, if you can think of anyone who would appreciate a gift of Church flowers after the service please let Robert, Elma or Dorothy know to put their name in the book in the flower room.



Book-Keeping in Lent

Season of Spring and longer days,
but also borrowed time, a loan
not written down, but off, our own
rough gym to build up stronger ways.
Life's advanced from nature's bank,
and full of interest; Lent's a hook
for double entries in the book
that God writes with us, full and frank.
Yet journals should have value worth
some sweat, not simple Sunday matins:
more than crossing out the sins
that blot the books of heaven and earth.
So jot the notes, and keep the days
of Lent well spent on every ledger:
pay it forward, raise and pledge a
bonus bond for Easter praise.

- Jock Stein

Tuesday Afternoon Group

At the start of 2026 Sarah Barlow entertained us with her travels to Georgia. We learned lots of interesting facts about this independent country and Sarah's amazing photographs and her stories about her travels with three other companions and guide entertained us all.



We were also privileged to have the Rev. Moira McDonald explain to us about her work as a King's Chaplain. There are 10 chaplains in Scotland who typically serve in this role until they are 70 years old.

Our meetings for the final two months of our syllabus are as follows:-

February

10th - "Operation Hope" (Release International) with James Fraser. This is a joint project meeting held in Abbey.

Release International is a UK based Christian charity, supporting believers around the world who are persecuted for Christ and the gospel. The Operation Hope project aims to support 2000 people in around 100 villages in Upper Egypt. It is hoped that money raised will support multiple practical needs so that the Christian community in this area will be strengthened and enabled to flourish.

24th - Women who shaped the Christian Church - We will look at the lives of five women who lived out their Christian faith by serving God in both extraordinary and ordinary ways.

Please note the change of date for this topic. It has been necessary to swap it with the following meeting.

March

10th - "Growing up in North Berwick" with Robert Burgon

Robert was born and bred in North Berwick and has many tales to tell us about his life growing up in this picturesque seaside town.

17th - "Bare Necessities - Build My Church" This is a joint project meeting in St. Andrew Blackadder.

Bare Necessities for Bulgaria is a non-profit fundraising group initially supporting social and educational projects in rural areas of Bulgaria. The Build My Church project will work with women to plant a church at the centre of the large residential district of the city of Sliven, offering a holistic approach to include a variety of services.

24th - Easter Afternoon Tea - please note the time of 1:00pm for this final meeting.

All our meetings unless stated otherwise start at 2pm and all are welcome to join us.

Sheila Burgon and Sally Penman

CAN YOU HELP?

Like most churches, Abbey Church relies on the time and talents of volunteers for many roles. There are usually opportunities for people to help in new ways and we would currently like to see more people helping in the following areas:

THE CHOIR

We have a small, but dedicated choir, leading praise at our services and would like to see this number increasing. Currently, there is only a short practice immediately before the service- and an ability to read music, while useful, is not essential. Do you enjoy singing and think that you could help by joining the choir? If we see a few more people in the choir, then we might even be able to return to singing occasional choral items to supplement our congregational worship. If you would like to help, please contact Robert Burgon.



LITTLE NIPPERS

Although we have seen an increase in the team supporting our Little Nippers Coordinator, Catherine, at the term-time Thursday morning sessions for pre-school children and their carers, we can always do with a few more who might have a spare Thursday morning once or twice during a school term. If you would like to help, please contact Catherine Mundell (email: littlenippersnb@outlook.com)



LITTLE NIPPERS

It's been a great start to the year at Little Nip-

pers. We've had lots of children and their parents / carers coming along - including a number of new faces.



It's so rewarding to watch our younger Little Nippers become our older ones as new babies come along - and it's a delight to watch them change and grow from week to week as they take their first steps, start talking, and join in with lots of the actions at song time.

We will take a break for the February holidays on Thursday 19th February but otherwise we are here every week with toys, crafts, songs and hot drinks for the adults, with our last session before Easter on Thursday 2nd April.

If you would like to join our group of volunteers who welcome our families and help with snacks / teas & coffees, then please let me know. The more volunteers we have, the less commitment it is for everyone.

Little Nippers meets every Thursday during term time from 10.00-11.30am in the church hall. All children age 0-5 and their parents / carers are very welcome so please do spread the word.

If you want any more information about Little Nippers, please contact Catherine at: littlenippersNB@outlook.com

ABBEY CHURCH FLOWER ROTA

DATE	DONOR	ARRANGER
1st Feb	Margaret Scott	Dorothy Kirkpatrick
8th Feb	Anna Jardine	Isabel Smith
15th Feb	Violet Lamont - Tantallon House	Isabel Smith
22nd Feb	Sadie Young	Sadie Young
1st March	Maureen Sharpe	Irene Nichol
8th March	Janice Cobb	Irene Nichol
15th March	Kate Campbell	Kate Campbell
22nd March	Clare Aitken	Clare Aitken
29th March	Alison Bell	Elma Danks Irene Brodie



ABBHEY CHURCH SUNDAY TEA ROTA

DATE	ON DUTY
1st Feb	Sally Penman A. N. Other
8th Feb	Sadie Young Dorothy Kirkpatrick
15th Feb	Katrina Hendry Isabel Smith
22nd Feb	Bel Hardie Morna McClure
1st Mar	Joyce Strachan Rose Leslie
8th Mar	Fiona Gibson Linda McLean
15th Mar	Liz Wright Anne Bell
22nd Mar	Sally Penman A. N. Other
29th Mar	Sadie Young Dorothy Kirkpatrick



Please have a look at our website

<https://www.abbeychurch.org.uk/>

To get information of all the events organised by
Abbey Church and Dirleton Kirk.

Sunday Services, prayer meetings, Bible classes, TAG,
Little Lights, Little Nippers, to mention but a few.

We have many other groups using our church halls,
Pilates classes, Jo Jingles, Conexus Tuition, The Drama
Mill, The Brownies, Dunedin Dance, Freedom and Form,
Interoception Yoga, JKA Bass Rock Karate, Kundalini
Yoga, Dirleton Playgroup, Yoga with Helen, Wild Tide
Yoga, The Scone Café, Scots Tots & Scots Fling, Erin
Taylor Yoga.

If you are interested in hiring our halls on a regular
basis or for a 'one off' event please get in touch with
Abbey Church office on 01620 892800 or
abbeychurch@abbeychurch.co.uk



Church Register

Funerals

19.12.25 George Hunter

22.12.25 Douglas Watt

09.01.26 Jean Ravenhill

Baptisms

18.01.26 Annabelle Grant

Pastoral Visits

The Pastoral Team are happy to contact church members if requested. In the first instance, please contact the Church Office (892800). For privacy reasons, any request for a pastoral visit should come from the individual or a family member.

It would also be helpful to have a mobile number, and the details of the person's next of kin.

Abbey Church,
116 High Street, (at Church Road)
North Berwick

Church Office: 01620 892800

abbeychurch@abbeychurch.co.uk

*Office Hours are Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday
10am until 1pm*

Dirleton Kirk,
Dirleton Kirk, Manse Road,
Dirleton. EH39 5EJ

Newsletters

The next newsletter will cover April and May 2026. The deadline for submitting articles is Tuesday 17th March 2026. Please send to Abbey Church Office on the email address above.

Abbeychurch.org.uk

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Abbey Church, North Berwick (Church of Scotland)

Scottish Charity No. SCO 04761—CCL51436