



**Abbey Church and  
Dirleton Kirk News  
October/November 2025**

**Minister:**

**Rev. Dr David J Graham, BSc, BD**

**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**



Dear Friends,

In my time as Minister here, I've conducted more than a thousand funerals, over two hundred baptisms, and a similar number of weddings. These are some of the statistics from my ministry.

They are not just numbers, however. Each one represents the lives of individuals, families, friends and, much more importantly, pastoral bonds. Some of the closest personal relationships built up over the years have been in times of great joy, but also many through days of sorrow. Life events such as these are much of what it means to minister, and to be a Church family. I also hope that some of the two and a half thousand sermons, and other studies, have encouraged and comforted you in your Christian life!

As our time of ministry with you comes to an end, the bonds of friendship will continue with Mary, Lucy and myself. And the congregations are in good heart, and in good hands.

Another pair of good hands - human ones this time - are those of the Interim Moderator, and a Locum Minister who will be appointed, when our churches come under the 'guardianship' of Presbytery.

There's a hymn which has the line 'strength for today,  
bright hope for tomorrow'. May these be yours in full,  
now and in the future.

Wishing you every blessing.  
Your minister,  
David





# ABBEY KIRK SESSION MATTERS

## OCT/NOV 2025



### GIVING THANKS

We are now in the season of the year where we traditionally give thanks for the harvest and we celebrated this with our Harvest Thanksgiving service on 28 September (preceded by the Harvest Buffet Supper the previous evening). This year, our harvest offerings were directed to the charity WaterAid, which does so much to alleviate water poverty in many parts of the world where people do not enjoy the benefits of readily available clean drinking water. As we give thanks for the harvest in this part of Scotland, we need to remember the millions of people worldwide for whom "harvest" does not have the same positive connotations and for communities which worry about whether there will be enough food (and water) on a daily basis.

One of the hymns which we sing in church starts "Give thanks with a grateful heart" and we should focus on those words as our Minister, David, prepares to spend his last few weeks of his ministry with us here at Abbey and Dirleton. When David was inducted as our minister in December 1998, I suspect that few of us could have imagined that he would go on to be our pastor and teacher for 27 years (making his ministry the longest

in Abbey since that of Rev Robert Small (1903-1937) and the third longest in the entire history of Abbey Church). I am in no doubt that God led David and Mary to us and we should give Him thanks for His guidance and for the way in which David and Mary have led and supported us during these years. Individuals will have different reasons to be grateful for David's ministry. For me, he has been an excellent teacher, always inspiring and often challenging us with his clear preaching. He has demonstrated the meaning of a truly pastoral ministry, being alongside many in our congregations and wider community who have experienced loss, challenges, and indeed happy occasions in their lives, sharing the love of God and the strength which he provides. Above all, he has been there when we have needed him and we do indeed thank God for David's ministry and wish David and Mary every blessing in the next chapter of their lives as they return to their family home in Lanarkshire.

There will be an opportunity for us to thank David and Mary personally immediately after the Abbey morning service on Sunday 26 October 2025 (David's last service with us) when you are all invited to join in an informal time of fellowship with sandwiches and cakes.

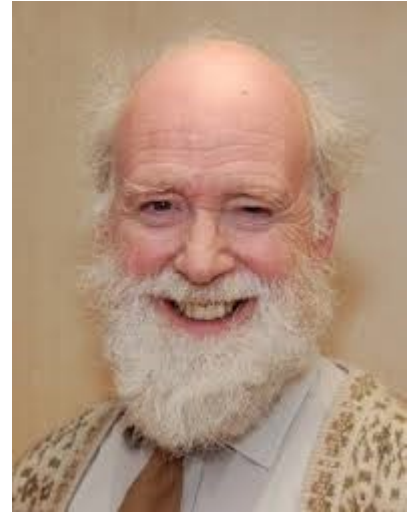
Continuing the theme of giving thanks, Abbey Church has just received a very generous legacy (£101,000)

from the estate of the late Doreen Adams, a long-standing and much-loved member of the congregation who died at the beginning of this year, at the amazing age of 99. For many years, Doreen and her late twin sister, Gladys, would be found in their usual place in church (initially in the balcony and later in the back row of the sanctuary). This legacy is very much appreciated and careful thought will be given by the Kirk Session as to how best to use this legacy to support our future ministry.

## LOOKING AHEAD

While David's retirement does bring about some uncertainty about what will happen next, I would like to reiterate that Abbey Church and Dirleton Kirk are NOT closing, in spite of the unhelpful rumours which have been circulating in the town. Although we may not be happy with the decision of the Presbytery that our future minister will not be full-time, at no stage in the process has it been suggested that we would close. We are financially sound, have well attended congregations (some of the best attended churches in our whole Presbytery) and we have mission very firmly in our sights.

In practical terms, the Presbytery has appointed an Interim Moderator, Rev Jock Stein, who will chair meetings of our Kirk Sessions and lead us through the vacancy process.



Presbytery has also to assist in the appointment of a Locum Minister to assist with leading worship and other pastoral matters. We will continue to hold services of worship at the usual times and these will be led by the Locum Minister (when appointed), a range of visitors and a number of people in our congregation who have undertaken training on leading worship. During the period of vacancy, we pray that everyone leading worship and continuing the work of the church will have the full support of our congregation.

At this point in the life of our congregation, let us all pray for the future and God's continuing guidance.

Robert Burgon

# DIRLETON KIRK SESSION MATTERS OCT/NOV 2025



This newsletter note will be the last one written while David Graham is our Minister. That fact touches it, inevitably, with a tone of sadness. After so many years of devoted service, by a Pastor so kindly, so approachable, so hospitable and so inspiring in our life as a church, it could scarcely be otherwise.

But as we prepare ourselves for David's stepping down, it is important to reflect on the achievements of the past few years. While his departure will inaugurate a period of change, as we seek a new Minister, we face that change as a church which is growing in numbers attending our worship. There is no room whatsoever for complacency, and while we must find ways to engage with others in the parish- bringing them the Good News, in a society where what were familiar patterns of work and leisure have changed enormously, and where the way in which people associate with one another is changing- we should not be downhearted. By our witness, and our work, and our fraternity, we are by far the biggest expression of 'community' in and around Dirleton. Thanks to the diligence and care of our members, in particular our Property Convenor, and the prudence and foresight of those who ensured that



we have the necessary money, work on the church tower is approaching completion. We can say, then, that our position as a congregation is reasonably solid, and so is the fabric of our church building. When David steps back from his duties as our Minister, we will have to take up burdens which he was accustomed to shouldering for us, without complaint and with good humour- but let us do so with ready hearts.

We shall miss David and Mary, and Lucy on her visits, tremendously, and we wish them every happiness in the next stage of their lives. As a manse family they have been all that we could have asked for. In the pulpit, and leading worship among us, David has blended ready practical wisdom, good humour, and deep learning, to guide us on our way through life. And with the pangs of parting we should be ready to remind ourselves that there is a postal service, and the internet- we shall not lose touch.

In the Parable of the Talents, one of the more "difficult" of the parables, which David has expounded with such clarity, we find the following: we thank him for his work among us, and will not forget his kindness.

His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things; enter into the joy of your lord.

K.D.S.

## REV UJWAL RAI VISIT

A REMINDER OF SHARED FAITH ACROSS CONTINENTS.

Abbey Church and Dirleton Kirk were thrilled to welcome the Revd Ujwal Rai, Presbyter in Charge of the Tadong-Nandok Sikkim Pastorate in the Church of North India, Diocese of the Eastern Himalaya. His visit to the Presbytery of Lothian & Borders gave us the chance to joyfully renew our partnership agreement and to share a wonderful day of fellowship together.







The day began with a tour of Castlemains Farm in Dirleton, hosted by Bob Simpson, where Rev Rai reflected on the striking differences between farming in Scotland and India—our heavy use of machinery here compared with the large workforce back home, as well as the very different landscapes. Later in North Berwick, he joined Abbey Church members for lunch and enjoyed a moving video of a previous twinning visit, lovingly put together by John. Many of those who had travelled on the trip were there to watch, which made the moment even more special, and to everyone's delight Rev Rai spotted his aunt and cousins in the film too! He then shared his love of organ music with us, joining Robert in leading a joyful time of song. Our heartfelt thanks go to Isabel and Sadie for their warm hospitality, and to Richard for making sure everything ran smoothly on screen and sound. The afternoon finished with a trip aboard the Sula to Bass Rock with Ken, followed by a seaside stroll and a well-earned ice cream.

In the evening, Rev Rai was welcomed back to Dirleton Kirk for a historical tour, accompanied by bagpipe music and a display that included a plaque celebrating our church partnership. The day came to a happy close with a meal together at The Open Arms.



Throughout his visit, Rev Rai spoke with warmth and passion about his ministry in India. He serves across seven churches and leads a thriving Sunday School and youth programme for children and young people from birth right up to 35 years old. He also shared honestly about the challenges of keeping teenagers engaged when many now work on Sundays, but it was clear how deeply he is committed to education and to creating new opportunities for the young people he serves. His time with us was a joyful reminder of the deep bond between our congregations and our friends in Kalimpong, and of the hope and faith we continue to share for the generations to come.

Judy Lockhart-Hunter



## 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](mailto:littlenippersnb@outlook.com))



## BOOK REVIEW

### THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD (An Eyewitness Account) by BEAR GRYLLS

Are you looking for Christmas present ideas (I know that it is only September when I am writing this)?

Bear Grylls is well-known as an intrepid adventurer and his television programmes have shown him in all sorts of dangerous environments. He was Chief Scout between 2009 and 2024 and is also known as a confident and passionate promoter of the Christian faith.

As a birthday present, I received a copy of his latest book "The Greatest Story Ever Told", the subject of which will be familiar to many (especially those who remember the 1965 film with the same title, starring Max von Sydow as Jesus, Charlton Heston as John the Baptist and, in a cameo role, John Wayne as a centurion).

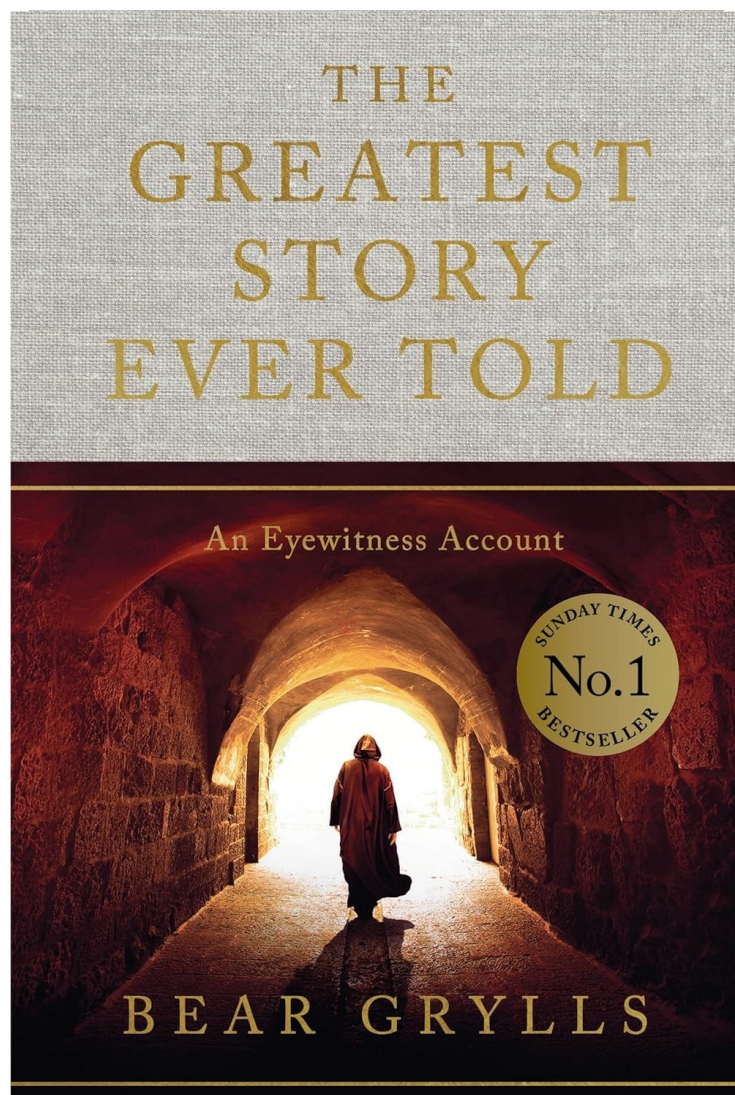
In this book, Grylls tells the story of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection from the eyewitness perspective of five people who knew him- Mary, the mother of Jesus, Doubting Thomas, Simon Peter, the disciple John, and Mary Magdalene. Grylls uses the names which would have been in use at the time, so Jesus is Yeshua and Jerusalem is Yerushalayim. It took me a little time to get used to these names, but there is a helpful list at the end of the book.

The author has used some licence in describing the words and feelings of the eyewitnesses, but he asserts that he has not changed a single word said by Jesus as written in the New Testament accounts.

Although I was very familiar with the events described in this book, I found it refreshing to read about them from the perspective of eyewitnesses.

The *Greatest Story Ever Told* by Bear Grylls is published by Hodder & Stoughton. RRP £14.99 (It is also available from Amazon and on Kindle).

Review by RDB



## WHAT IS TAG?



Tuesday Afternoon Group is open to both women and men and it is an opportunity to meet together and hear a speaker on a theme. Meetings usually last for about an hour in total. Hot drinks and biscuits are offered at the end should you wish to stay.

There is no joining fee however an offering box is available should you wish to contribute at any time. Please look at the syllabus which is available in the foyer of both Abbey and Dirleton churches and on the TAG noticeboard beside the small hall in Abbey. Newsletters and intimation sheets also provide information about upcoming meetings. Feel free to attend any meeting which may be of interest to you.

The meetings in Abbey large hall all start at 2pm. The next three months' topics are as follows:-

**October 7th** - Table Photographic Quiz on objects, hymns and foods found in the Bible. Tea and cakes will be served.

**21st** - "Life as an Army Chaplain" Rev Geoff Berry. Geoff has been an army chaplain for 15 years and has recently retired.



**November 4th** - Desert Island Discs - Linda Scott and Ken Gordon

**18th** - "The History of Piping" - Richard McLauchlan. Richard will play his pipes to demonstrate his talk. He was recently invited to speak at an event held by Toppings Bookshop in Edinburgh.

**December 2nd** - Celebrating Christmas in Music and Words

**9th** - Christmas Lunch at the Glen Golf Club at 12.30



# LITTLE NIPPERS

It's been fantastic to see so many families at Little Nippers after the summer break. We regularly have over 20 children coming along with their parents, grandparents or childminders. So it's busy in the hall - but lots of fun!

It's been great to welcome lots of new faces this term - some crawling, some whizzing around on the big toy trucks, and some just needing a nice hot cup of tea! Our baby area is being well used and our older children are singing along at song time with gusto.

Thank you as always to our volunteers from the church who welcome our families in and make sure they are fed and watered. If you're interested in joining the volunteer rota, please get in touch with Catherine.



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](mailto:littlenippersNB@outlook.com)

## BLYTHSWOOD SHOEBOX APPEAL 2025



Thank you to everyone who is taking part in this year's Blythswood Shoe Box Appeal. We were very grateful for the shoe boxes you saved and donated, which gave us a great supply. A limited supply of wrapped shoe boxes are now available at the Abbey so that anyone who does not have one to wrap themselves can collect one, and there is still plenty time before the boxes are collected at the end of October / early November. Please refer to the Intimations for the final confirmation of collection dates, which should be known soon.

Since the first Shoe Box Appeal in 1993 Blythswood has sent more than 2.7 million boxes - each one different, each one personal, each one an expression of care and kindness towards a stranger in need.



Filled with small, practical items such as toiletries, stationery, and clothing, the individually-wrapped boxes have been distributed in schools, hospitals, orphanages and care homes, and to households in very low income communities. Many have gone to people affected by the war in Ukraine.



## ABBAY CHURCH FLOWER ROTA

DATE	DONORS	ARRANGERS
5th Oct	Florence Buchan	Florence Buchan
12th Oct	Linda McLean	Elma Danks Irene Brodie
19th Oct	Joan Lunn	Elma Danks Irene Brodie
26th Oct	Jennifer Gilchrist	Elma Danks Irene Brodie
2nd Nov	Fiona Hutchison	Fiona Hutchison
9th Nov	Lorna Ferry Caroline Danks	Anne Bell Anne & Richard Bell
16th Nov	Bel Hardie	Bel Hardie
23rd Nov	Marjorie Whytock	Dorothy Kirkpatrick
30th Nov	Dorothy Kirkpatrick	Dorothy Kirkpatrick





## ABBAY CHURCH SUNDAY TEA ROTA

DATE	ON DUTY
5th Oct	Isabel Smith Florence Buchan
12th Oct	Katrina Hendry Irene Nichol
19th Oct	Irene Brodie A. N. Other
26th Oct	Anne Bell Bel Hardie
2nd Nov	Joyce Strachan Sadie Young
9th Nov	Fiona Gibson Linda McLean
16th Nov	Liz Wright Anne Bell
23rd Nov	Dorothy Kirkpatrick Isabel Smith
30th Nov	Sally Penman Morna McClure



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  
REGAL, WALT, Alpha, 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, Aileen Orr yoga, 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](mailto:abbeychurch@abbeychurch.co.uk)



## Church Register

### Weddings

13.9.25 Jason Aird and Geraldine Williams

12.10.25 Benjamin Smith and Caroline Johnstone

15.11.25 Bruce Johnston and Kathryn Garrett

### Funerals

18.8.25 Jean Donald

05.09.25 Janice McCluskie

11.09.25 Helen (Ella) Aikman

## Pastoral Visits

The Minister and Pastoral Assistant are happy to contact church members if requested. In the first instance, please contact the Minister (892410) or 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](mailto: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 December 2025 and January 2026. The deadline for submitting articles is Tuesday 17th November 2025. Please send to Abbey Church Office on the email address above.

[Abbeychurch.org.uk](http://Abbeychurch.org.uk)

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Abbey Church, North Berwick (Church of Scotland)  
Scottish Charity No. SCO 04761—CCL51436