



Abbey Church & Dirleton Kirk

**Church and Community
Magazine**

October / November 2026



“Come Along, All Welcome”

worship – fellowship – service - community

FROM THE NOMINATION COMMITTEE

SOLE NOMINEE

Following the appointment of a Nomination Committee (7 representatives from Abbey and 6 from Dirleton), the vacancy which arose when David Graham retired, has been advertised, applications have been received and interviews have taken place.

As Convenor of the Committee, I am delighted to report that, following this process, and after prayerful consideration, the Nomination Committee has unanimously chosen Revd Norman Smith as sole nominee for the charge. Arrangements have been made for Norman to preach at a joint service in Abbey Church on Sunday 18 October 2026 at 10.30am and, subject to the votes of the congregations following that service, it is hoped that his induction will take place shortly thereafter and that we will have our new minister in place before Christmas.

Born and raised on the Isle of Lewis, Norman was ordained as a minister



of the Church of Scotland in 1997. He was minister of Granton Parish Church from 2005- 2022 and then took up his position as Clerk to Lothian and Borders Presbytery, a role in which many of us met him. More recently, Norman has been Chief Officer of the Church of Scotland, but has taken the decision that his heart is in parish ministry, rather than in church administration.

-Robert Burgon

WELCOME

Worship, fellowship, service, and community

Two congregations, one linked charge, serving North Berwick and Dirleton.

Sunday worship

Dirleton Kirk

9.30 am – 10.20 am

Abbey Church

10.30 am – 11.30 am

Wednesday prayer

Dirleton Kirk Hall

Wednesdays at 10.00 am

Half-hour prayer service

Ministry team

Interim Moderator

Rev Dr Jock Stein

Locum Minister

Rev Geoff Berry

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FROM THE MINISTRY TEAM

Revd Geoff Berry - Our Locum Minister

Mark 10:43b-44

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, well as being a publishing theologian, was a leader in the Confessing Church in Germany and a vocal opponent of Hitler and the Nazi Party. Bonhoeffer was sentenced to death by a Nazi tribunal on the 8th of April 1945. He faced a drumhead court-martial in Flossenbürg concentration camp, without witnesses, without any evidence against him and with no records of the proceedings or defence. He was hanged the next day.

Over the last few weeks, I have spoken about Bonhoeffer in a couple of sermons and I have been asked by various Church members to list Bonhoeffer's 7 principles of Church leadership since then.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's seven principles:

1. Hold your tongue, refuse to speak uncharitably about a Christian.
2. Cultivate humility, you are a sinner saved by God's grace.
3. Listen "long & patiently" to understand the needs of others.
4. Never consider your time too valuable to help others in need.
5. Bear the burdens of sisters & brothers, freedom & forgiveness.
6. Encourage fellow believers through God's word.
7. Understand that Christian authority is characterised by service and does not call attention to the person who performs the service.



SILENCE IN THE FACE OF EVIL IS ITSELF EVIL:
GOD WILL NOT HOLD US GUILTY.
NOT TO SPEAK IS TO SPEAK.
NOT TO ACT IS TO ACT.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) is world renowned as a centre of leadership excellence. What most people don't know is the Sandhurst motto is "Serve to Lead".

Jesus words from Mark 10 are foundational to British Army culture.

Are they foundational to British Church culture?

- Revd Geoff Berry

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Abbey Kirk Session Matters

One of the songs which we sometimes sing in church starts: "Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy one." As I write this in mid- September and the sun continues to shine brightly, we have so much to thank God for in this part of the world.

It is difficult to imagine the difference that one year can make. This time last year, we had been advised that our minister of 27 years, Rev Dr David Graham would retire before the end of the year. At that time, as part of the Mission Planning process, our Presbytery had agreed that, unlike many other churches in Scotland, we would be allowed to stay open, but with only 25% of someone's time (and that person might not have been an ordained minister of word and sacrament).

Shortly after David's last service at the end of October 2025, we received unexpected, but good, news from the Presbytery of Lothian and the Borders that he had been successful in their application to the central church for our allocation to be increased from 25% to 75% of a full-time equivalent. This was warmly welcomed and the icing on the cake came in early 2026 when Presbytery advised us that they had received an additional allocation to allow us to call a full-time minister. Those were decisions which we truly must thank God for, and we saw the change as a real answer to the prayers of many.

We should also give thanks that God has been at work in the hearts and minds of members of the Nominating Committee who were elected by our linked

congregations with the task of finding a new minister. Although the process might have taken a little longer than most of us would have liked, as Convenor of that Committee, I am in no doubt that God was working in our midst and guiding our search. Details of the outcome of that process have been reported in our churches and are mentioned elsewhere in this Newsletter. Subject to the approval of our congregations when the sole nominee preaches, I very much look forward to the next phase in Abbey's journey in faith and mission.

This year at harvest, we have invited offerings to support the Christian charity, World Vision, who work with children and families in almost 100 countries. One of those countries is Nepal, and in view of the recent devastating floods in that country, our offerings will be directed to support their work there.

This year, it is Abbey Church's turn to host the town Service of Remembrance on Sunday 8

November and we look forward to welcoming representatives of civic and uniformed organisations at our service at 10.30am when we remember the sacrifices made by so many in two world wars and subsequent conflicts.

Continuing the theme of giving thanks, our church doors have been open every day from Easter until Harvest and I wish to thank those who have had the responsibility of opening and closing the doors, including Darren, Cathy, Juan Luis, Isabel, and Susan. Their help is very much appreciated, and the open doors have been welcomed by so many visitors from many countries (as recorded in the visitors' book).

The Abbey Kirk Session will have met on 21 September and items on the agenda for that meeting include a report on the preparation of our manse for new occupants and a report by our new Treasurer, Douglas Tainsh.

- Robert Burgon

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

One Century in Abbey and Only Two Organists!



Miss Ella Cowley retired as Abbey organist in November 1976, having faithfully served the church for 50 years. Little could she have known that the young man she encouraged and introduced to the organ would go on to follow in her footsteps and serve as Abbey's organist for the next half-century.

Miss Cowley was Robert's first piano teacher, and it was she who introduced him to the organ at Abbey when he was just 16. She spent about an hour with him,

showing him the organ and teaching him the basics. Some time afterwards, Miss Cowley took a Sunday off—which was extremely unusual for her—and asked Robert to play for the service. Then, when he was 21, she decided to retire and she wanted him to be her successor, and that is exactly what happened.

This November, Robert will have been Abbey's organist for 50 years. It is remarkable to think that, between Miss Cowley and Robert, there have been just two organists serving Abbey Church over the course of a century.

I would like to invite you to celebrate this special occasion with Robert by joining us for tea and cake in the large hall after the service on Sunday, 15th November. It would be lovely to mark this remarkable milestone together and to give thanks for 50 years of music and faithful service..

- Sheila Burgon

FROM THE MINISTRY TEAM

Revd Dr Jock Stein - Our Interim Moderator

Gerard Manley Hopkins once wrote a poem called 'Hurrahing in Harvest' – an odd title, but his poetry is gloriously odd, because he insisted in seeing God at work in extraordinary ways, not simply providing food through the harvest of earth and sea, but in the stooks themselves rising, 'barbarous in beauty'.

We don't see stooks any more, we see big round bales, but we keep on celebrating harvest one way or another, thirled to see God at work in nature and science as well as in church and in people. Do misread 'thirled' as 'thrilled' if you wish, because we Scottish Presbyterians are fairly good at being thirled to our work, whether it be on farm or at home, paid or unpaid, and work of whatever kind is indeed a

calling. Indeed we are not bad about being thirled to the work of the Kirk, and thank you for that. But being thrilled is something more, and I would love people to be as passionate about the work of God as Hopkins was about the world he described in verse, and indeed to link the two as the poet did. And to be thrilled about our future as it unfolds.

Is there anything in Lothian and Borders Presbytery to be thrilled about? One major thing is that we have funding to appoint someone to be a mission agent in the new town of Blindwells which has been taking shape for some time in East Lothian. And do keep your eyes on the Presbytery website – I have to confess I only began looking at it when I was asked to be Moderator, but it is certainly

worth looking at, not least the sector heading 'mission and faith'. There are good resources on offer.

But more than anything, be thrilled about God, the way God took human shape in Jesus and brought that to glorious harvest, the way Jesus likes to live in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. And be thrilled with good stories and good people. The poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins would never have come to light had he not had a friend, Robert Bridges, who made sure it was published, but nearly 30 years after his death. May God give you friends like that – and may you be a friend like that to others – as we look to God for every kind of good harvest.

- Jock Stein

*Summer ends now; now, barbarous in beauty, the stooks rise
Around; up above, what wind-walks! what lovely behaviour
Of silk-sack clouds! has wilder, wilful-wavier
Meal-drift moulded ever and melted across skies?*

*I walk, I lift up, I lift up heart, eyes,
Down all that glory in the heavens to glean our Saviour;
And eyes, heart, what looks, what lips yet give you a
Rapturous love's greeting of realer, of rounder replies?*

*And the azurous hung hills are his world-wielding shoulder
Majestic - as a stallion stalwart, very-violet-sweet! -
These things, these things were here and but the beholder
Wanting; which two when they once meet,
The heart rears wings bold and bolder
And hurls for him, O half hurls earth for him off under his feet.*

- Gerard Manley Hopkins, 1877

GET INVOLVED

Can You Help?

Abbey Church relies on the time and talents of volunteers for many roles.

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.

Interested?

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.

Interested?

Please contact Catherine Mundell.

littlenippersnb@outlook.com



Little Nippers

The new term of Little Nippers has got off to a fantastic start. We are usually seeing more than 20 children and their families attending every week and this is likely to get busier over the cold winter months. It's been great to see lots of new faces as well as our toddlers who have been attending since they were tiny babies.

We have had a generally younger cohort so far this year - possibly due to the change in nursery hours at Law Primary Nursery - which means lots of first steps, new teeth and a few tantrums along the way but it's always good fun!

All children from 0-5 years and their families / carers are very welcome

for a mix of play, crafts, singing and some yummy snacks too.

Little Nippers will take a break for the October holidays on Thursday 15th October but otherwise we will be there.

- Catherine Mundell

When and where

Every Thursday during term time
10.00-11.30 am
Abbey Church hall

More information

Please contact Catherine.
littlenippersNB@outlook.com



CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Memorable Music: five of my favourites

Second in an occasional series by Sue Oliver

Putting aside the blues, ragtime, jazz and popular music of the last six decades or so which have punctuated my life, these five are special for me:

1. In my undergraduate years, I became a committed environmentalist, charity campaigner and animal rights crusader (nothing radical - I was never arrested), so was drawn to the life and work of St Francis of Assisi. No surprise, then, that one of my favourite hymns is "Make me a Channel of Your Peace".



2. Another from Ch4 is "Shine, Jesus, Shine". My son was an army

officer, who did two tours of duty in Iraq. By coincidence, on both occasions, this hymn was played in our church on the day of his departure from Dreghorn Barracks. I cried copiously both times. Later he had it at his wedding in St Margaret's Chapel in Edinburgh Castle. In the absence of any musical instrument or even electric sockets to plug one in, the music had to be recorded on a phone and played through a speaker. To cut a long story short, there was a problem with the first version so I had to download one from Amazon on the day of the wedding: no time to listen to it. To my horror when we stood to sing it, only the chorus was on the recording. David Graham, officiating, defused the embarrassing situation, saying, "Well, let's just sing the chorus a few times!"



3. Guitar music has been a major part of my life since childhood. "Recuerdos de la Alhambra" (Francisco Tarrega) is beyond my limited skills as a solo, but as a member of the Edinburgh Mandolin and Guitar Orchestra, I could immerse myself in a beautiful arrangement of it, while playing 2nd Guitar quietly in the back row.



4. I've had a lifelong love of ballet. Prokofiev's "Romeo and Juliet" covers a wide spectrum of human emotion, my favourite part being the lyrical pas de deux (Op.64) from the balcony scene. The crypt music, where it is a variation on the balcony theme, is chilling.



5. "Farewell to Stromness" was composed for piano by Peter Maxwell Davies in protest against a proposed uranium mine in the Orkney Islands where he lived. There are many versions online, performed by various instruments from full orchestras to small ensembles and soloists. And it brings me full cycle back to my environmentalist roots.



- Sue Oliver

North Berwick Abbey FC



That's us a month into our football season so wanted to drop you an email to let you know how we're getting on. Especially as we're getting on rather well!

We've played four games and find ourselves top of the table at present with an unbeaten start to the season and sporting our new home strips in the process, kindly sponsored by Donna from Pressing Needs in North Berwick! Highlight

of the month was our player/manager Finlay Pratt with a last-minute volley to equalise against St Mary's a couple weekends ago -

<https://x.com/NBAmateurs/status/2091113639449149733>

Wishing everyone at the Abbey Church well and a massive thank you for your continued support. Fingers crossed we can keep the good run going!

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Tuesday Afternoon Group

We started our new syllabus by sharing fellowship over a Harvest Lunch together. We enjoyed baked potatoes with a selection of fillings and salad. This was followed with homemade crumbles and apple tart. Over a cup of tea there was a fruit related quiz which caused a lot of hilarity and fun.

Please feel free to join us at any of the following meetings:-

6th October – “Being a King’s Chaplain” – Rev. Moira McDonald

3rd November – “My Life in Archaeology” – Vicky Oleksy

1st December – Christmas Party and Carols

8th December – Christmas Lunch at the Glen Golf Club at 12:30pm

Please let us know if you hope to attend the lunch. Feel free to invite a partner or friend. Further details to follow.

- Sally and Sheila

Hebrews 10:24

“Let’s keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word”

- The Message Bible.



SERVING TOGETHER

Abbey Church Flower Rota

DATE	DONOR	ARRANGER
Oct. 4th	Florence Buchan	Florence Buchan
Oct. 11th	Linda McLean	Elma Danks Irene Brodie
Oct. 18th	Joan Lunn	Elma Danks Irene Brodie
Oct. 25th	Jennifer Gilchrist	Elma Danks Irene Brodie
Nov. 1st	Fiona Hutchison	Dorothy Kirkpatrick
Nov. 8th	Lorna Ferry Caroline Danks (Poppies) Anne and Richard Bell	Anne Bell
Nov. 15th	Bel Hardie	Bel Hardie
Nov. 22nd	Colin Jones	Dorothy Kirkpatrick
Nov. 29th	Marjorie Whytock	Dorothy Kirkpatrick



Flowers after worship

During the vacancy, names of anyone who would appreciate a gift of Church flowers can be added to the book in the flower room. Please speak to Robert, Elma or Dorothy.

SERVING TOGETHER

Abbey Church Sunday Tea Rota

DATE	ON DUTY
Oct. 4th	Isabel Smith Susan Ainslie
Oct. 11th	Irene Brodie Morna McClure
Oct. 18th	Katrina Hendry Irene Nichol
Oct. 25th	Anne Bell Liz Wright
Nov. 1st	Joyce Strachan Sadie Young
Nov. 8th	Fiona Gibson Linda McLean
Nov. 15th	Rose Leslie Anne Bell
Nov. 22nd	Sally Penman Dorothy Fitzpatrick
Nov. 29th	Morna McClure Irene Brodie

Thank you

Thank you to everyone who welcomes people and provides refreshments after Sunday worship.



CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

Find Out More and Hire Our Halls

VISIT OUR WEBSITES

For information about events organised by Abbey Church and Dirleton Kirk, including Sunday services, prayer meetings, Bible classes, TAG, and Little Nippers, visit:

www.abbeychurch.org.uk

www.dirletokirk.org.uk

GROUPS USING OUR 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.

Hall hire

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.

01620 892800

abbeychurch@abbeychurch.co.uk

Abbey Church



Dirleton Kirk



PASTORAL LIFE

Church Register and Pastoral Visits

Weddings

15.08.26 Eleanor Lowe &
Hamish Wilson

24.08.26 Fiona Bairstow &
Stefan Tucker

Funerals

06.08.26 George Kirkpatrick

12.09.26 Jean Meharry

29.09.26 Irene Urquhart

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.

A simple request

Please ensure that requests for a pastoral visit come from the individual concerned or from a family member.



Abbey Church & Dirleton Kirk welcome members and visitors throughout the week.

STAY CONNECTED

Contacts and the Next Issue

Abbey Church

116 High Street

North Berwick

EH39 4ED

Scottish Charity No. SCO 04761—
CCL51436

Dirleton Kirk

Manse Road

Dirleton, North Berwick

EH39 5EJ

Scottish Charity No. SC004533

Church Office

Our church office is open from
Tuesday to Friday, from 10.00 am–
1.00 pm

Tel: 01620 892800

Email: abbeychurch@abbeychurch.co.uk

Next newsletter

The next newsletter will cover
December 2026 and January
2027. The deadline for
submitting articles is Tuesday
17th November 2026. Please
send to Abbey Church Office



Thank you for reading