

ENCOUNTER



The Magazine of Inverurie West
Parish Church

JUNE 2026



Song of Solomon 2:1

"I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys."

Scottish Charity SC016907

REFLECTION

Poet Kenneth Steven is inspired by a garden to bring us healing and quiet, qualities which we may then pass on to others.

Let it be a garden

*Unopened into light
the rose gathering her warmth
to sun the silence and to still
this step we bring inside -
out loudness and our doubt;*

*to down the noise of all our talk
and be inside a quiet for a time,
to learn what quiet means and heals -*

*to take it back at last outside
and break small pieces for the ones
who have not heard or held
what gift was ours*

From 'Letting in the Light'; SPCK, 2016



From the West Manse



I've been thinking about growth lately.

In part this is because we've had the pleasure of being able to add a few new members to our roll recently. Membership is not something everyone chooses to do - and all are welcome regardless - but it is encouraging when folks choose to express their sense of belonging through membership whether by transfer, declaration of faith, or adult baptism.

It's reminded me that it's been a while since I've run any kind of 'membership class' so I am looking at offering this in the autumn for anyone interested.

At the same time, it is a common misunderstanding to think that growth in the church is all about numbers. Sometimes we treat Christ's great commission to '*go and make disciples*' as a numbers game, driving us ever onwards to add *more, more, more*. In contrast, theologian, pastor and writer Eugene Peterson had the right idea when he pointed out that for us, growth works better as an agricultural metaphor rather than a numerical one.

Peterson pointed out that "*Growth in biology has to do with timing, passivity, waiting, proportion, maturity. There is a proper size to each thing. There are proportions to be attended to. It is an exceedingly complex and mysterious thing, this process of growth.*"

And so what if being a 'growing' church - whether as an individual congregation, a denomination, or globally, is less about how many of us there are and more about how well planted, deeply nourished, fruitful, joyful and useful we are?

Peterson, who served many years as pastor, in a moderately sized congregation in an ordinary town, also believed that "*the more*

local life is, the more intense, more colourful, more rich it is, because it has limits.”

Maybe one of the reasons so many of us love our gardens is precisely because they have limits. Nurturing growth within those limits - encouraging beauty and peace and fragrance and food, turning waste into the basis of next year's fruit and flowers - these are all possible and satisfying goals.

These self-imposed limits are not meant to stop us taking part in the world around us. This is as true in the metaphorical sense as the literal one. Jesus did say 'go' after all! But he told us to 'make' disciples, and you don't make someone a disciple simply by adding them to a column.

Discipleship-making involves knowledge, commitment, time, nurturing, watering, cultivating, pruning - you can see why Jesus himself often went for agricultural metaphors.

In any case, I feel encouraged by the growth I see around me. Whether the literal growth in our church garden, the growth in friendships over the years I have been here, or the growth in discipleship amongst so many of you. And even the dear ones we have lost have left behind rich layers of wisdom and care, laughter and memories which remain part of our West Church 'garden'.

I've never been much of a gardener in the practical sense, but God is good and has planted me in a beautiful place alongside people with whom I can grow and even do my own bit of tending.

As spring turns to summer, may we relish the long Scottish evenings, as we do our best to grow in compassion and kindness, mercy and grace.

Every blessing, *Rhona*

Extract from ‘The Glory of the Garden’ by Rudyard Kipling

Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing:—“Oh, how beautiful!” and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinner-knives.

There’s not a pair of legs so thin, there’s not a head so thick,
There’s not a hand so weak and white, nor yet a heart so sick,
But it can find some needful job that’s crying to be done,
For the Glory of the Garden glorifieth every one.

Then seek your job with thankfulness and work till further orders,
If it’s only netting strawberries or killing slugs on borders;
And when your back stops aching and your hands begin to harden,
You will find yourself a partner in the Glory of the Garden.

Oh, Adam was a gardener, and God who made him sees
That half a proper gardener’s work is done upon his knees,
So when your work is finished, you can wash your hands and pray
For the Glory of the Garden that it may not pass away!
And the Glory of the Garden it shall never pass away

Rudyard Kipling (1865 - 1936)



PLANTS AND FLOWERS IN THE BIBLE

When planning Encounter this month (yes – believe it or not it is planned!) we recognised there was an emerging theme of gardens and growth and plants running through some of the articles. It is not hard to find a number of references to these themes in the Bible – metaphors are used to point out important themes in biblical events or qualities of bible characters.

One of the most familiar of these is "**A Spotless Rose**". This is a very old English translation of the German carol *Es ist ein Ros entsprungen* which uses many biblical references. Typically, it was used symbolically to convey and celebrate the Virgin Mary (the "tender root") and Jesus Christ (the "spotless rose"). It has been used by a number of composers – most notably Herbert Howells and more recently Paul Mealor.

A spotless Rose is blowing
Sprung from a tender root,
Of ancient seers' foreshowing,
Of Jesse promised fruit;
Its fairest bud unfolds to light
Amid the cold, cold winter
And in the dark midnight.

The Rose which I am singing,
Whereof Isaiah said,
Is from its sweet root springing
In Mary, purest Maid;
For through our God's great love and might
The blessed babe she bare us
In a cold, cold winter's night.

Organ Fund Garden Party

Well, it's that time again & hopefully sunny and warmer days are ahead. The organists are having another garden party in July (details in poster) so please put it in your diaries. Let either myself or any of the others know if you plan to come - we need to know numbers for catering & seating. Hope to see you there.

Isla



SOCIAL/FUNDRAISING TEAM UPDATES

WEST CHURCH TREASURE HUNT

It's a couple of years since we've had a walking treasure hunt as part of our fundraising efforts, but **Larry and Liz Young** have put one together which will be available during June and July.

For **£5** you can pick up a clue sheet, and it's a chance to enjoy a stroll round parts of Inverurie, to get the brain cells working as you solve the clues, and to perhaps win a prize. Fun activity for kids too. **Clue sheets will be available from the church from Sunday 31st May** and from The Acorn Centre and the church thereafter.



Bennachie Bike Ride – 29th August



The Bennachie Bike Ride is on **Saturday 29 August** and, as last year, will leave and return to Fetternear Hall. The full route is roughly 23 miles but there are short cuts to reduce the distance and there is no entry fee. We just ask for a donation towards church funds please. Please highlight this to your cycling contacts and encourage lots of folk to join us.

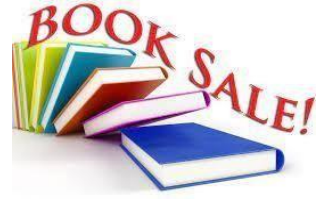


A reminder – if you prefer to tackle Bennachie on foot - it's not too late to sign up for *the Bag a Ben Challenge*. Sponsorship forms are available from the Acorn Centre.

More details are available on the Christian Aid website <https://www.christianaid.org.uk/events/bag-ben-challenge> Please note that climbers should assess their own health and fitness.



The Christian Aid Book Sale was a great success and raised **£2,456.50!** This amount will be added to as online sales will be coming in every week and over the months to come.



We had a particularly busy first Saturday. The Farmers' Market meant the town was busy, the Jams and Jigsaws were very popular and, best of all, the sun shone; all this encouraged folk to come up to our hall.



My thanks are due to many: those who donated books and those who bought books; those who helped with the Set Up and the Clear Up; and those who manned the stalls during the week.

Particular thanks are due to Robin and Alison Young for supplying tables from St Andrew's Church as well as their own gazebo, and to the Inverurie Scouts who allowed us to borrow tables too.

It is this cooperation and willingness to help that makes the book sale successful.

Let's keep up the good work for such a worthwhile cause - ***Christian Aid.***

Margaret Hearne

NEW IN UBUNTU

Two new products currently available in Ubuntu:



Enhance your salads with True Origin's grape and pear balsamic reduction made in South Africa by Turqle Trading. The vegan dressing blends the natural sweetness of sun-ripened South African grapes and pears with rich, tangy balsamic vinegar. Perfect for salads, roasted vegetables, cheeses, or desserts, it adds a vibrant, fruity depth to every dish. Turqle Trading works with fairtrade enterprises across South Africa, ensuring that every product creates positive change by supporting jobs, skills development, and long-term sustainability in local communities.

Transform your coffee into a barista-style treat at home with one of the new flavouring syrups from Tate & Lyle. Made from pure cane sugar, the syrups are Fairtrade certified and available in vanilla and caramel flavours. Tate & Lyle has a long-standing partnership with Belizean sugar farmers and by utilising **fairly traded** raw sugar from Belize, the company ensures farmers receive a fair price and helps combat child labour in the region.



Fairtrade honey primarily comes from small-scale beekeeping cooperatives in developing regions across **Latin America and Africa**.

In the Bible, sweetness derived from God's creation is expressed in many passages. Honey represents abundance, divine revelation, and spiritual nourishment. It was the richest natural sweetener in the ancient world and the most famous reference to it is in the biblical phrase **"a land flowing with milk and honey"** (Exodus 3:8). This imagery describes the fertility, prosperity, and provision which God promises to his people.

... AND MORE ON OUR PLANT THEME ...

Fig Tree: like the olive, this represents peace, prosperity, and spiritual discernment.

Hyssop: this small plant represented purification and humility. It was most famously used in ritual cleansing Psalm 51:7. It is also mentioned in John's gospel when he speaks about Jesus' crucifixion.

Lily: this is frequently referred to in association with innocence and purity. It is unlikely that these were in fact the highly perfumed and cultivated flowers found in modern gardens. It is more likely that they were the red anemones which grow wild in the middle east. In Matthew 6:28 Jesus refers to these as *"lilies of the field"*.

Mustard: the mustard seed is most famously referred to in Jesus' parable about faith and the Kingdom of Heaven. Although the seed is very small, it grows into a very large garden shrub, symbolizing the kingdom of heaven. ³¹ *He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed,*

which a man took and planted in his field. ³² Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches."
Matthew 13:31-2.

Myrrh: this was very highly valued in ancient times. The resin from the tree was used by Egyptians for embalming and cosmetics. In the Bible it is cited as one of the three gifts brought to the baby Jesus.

Olive Tree: this is referred to frequently in the Bible – then as now it is a universal symbol of peace, prosperity, and the faithful presence of God.

Rose of Sharon: this beautiful flower was highly praised for its fragrance and beauty and is frequently used a metaphor for the beauty of Christ. Song of Solomon (2:1).

Vines: these are most famously used in the Bible as a metaphor for God's chosen community and Jesus places himself at the heart of this as the 'true vine'. (John 15: 1) *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."*

Church Calendar/Ways of Connecting June 2026

If you are worshipping from home, you can connect as usual via the West church website and YouTube channels.

Sun 7 June	11 am Morning worship Hospitality time after the service 3pm – 4.30 pm Play Church Interactive storytelling/drama for the whole family
Sun 14 June	11 am Morning worship Hospitality time after the service
Wednesdays till mid June	7.30 pm Zoom Bible Study All welcome. Contact Rhona for the link
Sun 21 June	11 am Morning worship Hospitality time after the service
Sun 28 June	11 am Morning worship followed by informal communion
Encounter	If you have any material for Encounter email encounter@inveruriewestchurch.org by Wed 17 th June

Children are welcome at all services. Most weeks during term time we offer Junior Church for children who wish to go downstairs partway through the service. Activities and toys can also be found in our ‘play as you worship’ box in the sanctuary. **The prayer group continues to meet regularly** on a Thursday morning. Prayer requests can be sent to olive.duncan@hotmail.co.uk or duncan.linda1@btinternet.com **Joint summer services** in July and August will, as usual, be hosted by the West Church in July and St Andrew’s in August. However, **please note that our session has decided to try starting the July services at the West at 11**, instead of changing to an earlier summer start. Services in St Andrew’s in August will begin at 10 am, as usual. There will be a reminder of this in the summer calendar published in next month’s Encounter.

WHO'S WHO AT TH9E WEST

Minister	Rev Rhona Cathcart r.cathcart@inveruriewestchurch.org	620285
Session Clerk	Morag Mitchell sessionclerk@inveruriewestchurch.org	629312
Church and Acorn Centre Administration	Judith Will admin@inveruriewestchurch.org	670850
Church Officer	A team approach will be implemented.	
Rollkeeper	Chris Gardner rollkeeper@inveruriewestchurch.org	07791 630495
Safeguarding Co-ordinators	Valerie Napier Gail Buchan	623279 622145
Transport Co-ordinator	Linda Mathers	07842 195032
Acorn Centre Management Team	Laura Gray lauragray25@btinternet.com	620658
Environmental Matters Team	Joy Doorghen doorghens@outlook.com	620823
Fabric Team		
Finance Team	Alan Sharp sharp3@btinternet.com	
Treasurer	Alison Blair treasurer@inveruriewestchurch.org	620677
Committed Giving Envelopes	Cindy Farquhar Cindyfarquhar25@yahoo.com	
Gift Aid	Mark Paterson giftaid@inveruriewestchurch.org	01467 625675
Junior Church Team	Biff Barrow biff.barrow@tiscali.co.uk	623096
Pastoral Care Team	Rev Rhona Cathcart r.cathcart@inveruriewestchurch.org	620285
Social/Fundraising Team	Joyce Petrie joycepetrie21@hotmail.com	620932

CONGREGATIONAL ROLL

Change of Address:

Mr Robert Rodger from District 23 to Postal District

Lines Received:

Mrs Pat and Mr Robert Lawie (Postal District)

Admission by Resolution of Session:

Valerie Taylor on 5th May 2026 (Postal District)

Baptism:

Rori Ann Thomson on 24th May 2026 (District 9)

Adult Baptism & Statement of Faith/Confirmation:

Chloe Thomson on 24th May 2026 (District 9)

Please advise the Roll Keeper of any change of address:
rollkeeper@inveruriewestchurch.org

FLOWER CALENDAR – JUNE

Convener: Linda Duncan

7th June - Fran Nice

14th June – Bunty Sievwright

21st June – Irene Jamieson and Linda Mathers

28th June – Susan Rucklidge

Thanks to all who donate, arrange, or deliver flowers.



ENCOUNTER ONLINE – Currently we are producing and distributing Encounter online and in print. If you have not already provided details of your e-mail and would like to ensure you receive the online version, please contact the Session Clerk (01467 629312).



Again, thanks to Dr John Hearne who continues to assist to ensure print copies of Encounter are published and ready for distribution. Again also, a reminder that if you are happy to access Encounter online and do not require a print copy please let the Session Clerk know as it will help to contain costs.

We strive in Encounter to respect intellectual property rights. If you read or see anything which you feel infringes your copyright, please contact encounter@inveruriewestchurch.org, and the material will be removed immediately from the electronic version of the magazine.

A reminder to all gardeners – if you have surplus produce or plants as we go through the summer months could you please consider donating these to the Acorn Centre which is always pleased to accept donations of fresh fruit and vegetables.