



**LEITH AND
RESTALRIG CHURCH**

**FEBRUARY AND
MARCH 2026**

larch.org.uk Scottish Charity no. SC012680

LEITH AND RESTALRIG CHURCH (LARCH)
MINISTER REV. ROB MACKENZIE

We welcome articles and thank you letters from members and friends. Articles are published in both the printed magazine and on-line, unless otherwise arranged with the co-ordinators (eg, for the online version, where personal information is concerned, either names and other details are omitted or specific permission to use details has been received). All contributors must provide their name, please, which is normally attached to the article. We reserve the right to edit articles. Changes other than spelling or grammar will, where possible, be discussed with the contributor. The views expressed are those of individual contributors and not necessarily those of Leith and Restalrig Church or the Church of Scotland

The church office is the address for all correspondence.

Office Hours (Angie Egan) are as following:

Mondays from 8.30am to 4.30 pm at the Leith Walk office

Wednesdays and Thursdays from 8.30am to 12.30pm at the Restalrig office.

Intimations for Church events should be sent to the Church Administrator at mail@larch.org.uk by lunchtime Wednesday.

Minister Rob MacKenzie AMacKenzie@churchofscotland.org.uk

Session Clerk Stuart Lithgow session.clerk@larch.org.uk

LARCH: Restalrig, Restalrig Road South,

Edinburgh, EH7 6LF

The church offices are within the McLaren Halls and in the Leith Walk Building

McLaren Halls and Hanlon Centre, 48 Restalrig Rd. South, EH7 6LE

LARCH: Leith Walk Building 1b Pilrig Street, Edinburgh EH6 5AH

LARCH Easter Road Building 410-412 Easter Road EH6 8H

This is a reduced version of the magazine for general publication.

Members and adherents who would like more information should contact the Church office.

WELCOME TO THE FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2026 MAGAZINE

Thank you very much for all the articles and posters. It is excellent to have so much information. Any items for the next edition should be received by 23rd March, and emailed to:

Richard at thorburnr2000@yahoo.com or

Catriona at catriona6849@gmail.com There is also a box for short articles or thank you notes in the entranceway to LARCH: Restalrig.

SUNDAY SERVICES - 11^{am} in LARCH RESTALRIG BUILDING

Restalrig Road South, Edinburgh, EH7 6LF

and on Facebook and YouTube, to watch live or later.

IN THE MCLAREN HALLS, including Hanlon Centre

Restalrig Road South, Edinburgh, EH7 6LE

Craft Group, Every Wednesday, 2pm-4pm Hanlon Centre page 17

Guild -meet on the first and third Thursdays of the month page 21

The Book Group meets on the last Tuesday of the month. page 16

Thursday Club Meets monthly in the McLaren halls, unless otherwise stated. see page 18

IN LARCH, Leith Walk Building.

1B Pilrig Street. EH6 5AH Wheel chair users - please ring the bell at Pilrig Street, middle door

Oasis of Peace, See page 7

Open Doorway café. See page 16

25th February and 25th March.

Midweek Worship

on the last Wednesday of each month at 7.30pm

25th February *Love, Agape: Charity in Practice*

25th March: *Lament.*

Dear Friends

“How good and pleasant it is when people live together in unity” writes the Psalmist (Psalm 133, verse 1). This is what merits the blessing of God (verse 3), which means that the planet is not stoking up much merit for itself at the moment.

Every time I write an article for the church magazine, I think the world is bound to be in a slightly better place than at the time of the previous article. It feels like it can't get worse, and then it does. And, of course, it always can.

Some of it you couldn't make up because reality has become much stranger than fiction. At least there is a weird form of comedy in it all. The would-be dictator of the USA proclaimed to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, “I'm helping Europe. I'm helping NATO, and until the last few days when I told them about Iceland, they loved me,” the President said, misnaming Greenland. “They called me daddy. A very smart man said, ‘He's our daddy, he's running it.’ ... But now what I'm asking for is a piece of ice, cold and poorly located.”

I'm sure there are many pieces of ice, “cold and poorly located” on top of Ben Nevis, or perhaps some other less popular, but extremely high, distant mountain, where he could spend his time imagining that he is a father of nations or whatever other delusions he's conjured up.

When you read the Bible, there's a continual call to unity, to be One, to stop quarrelling, and to make love the cornerstone of our lives. That doesn't always mean following the herd or always agreeing, but it does mean seeking unity, listening with mutual respect, welcoming people irrespective of their status. I have to

wonder how people who continually sow the seeds of division, dissension and hatred can seriously call themselves Christian, unless it's simply a handy mask for their crimes against humanity.

Vladimir Putin's Kremlin spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, appeared to support the USA's wish to annex Greenland, even though the main reason the USA gives for doing it is to stop Russia from invading! Russia loved the idea of the USA taking Greenland, of course, because they have longed to split up NATO and the Western Alliance for decades. "By resolving the issue of Greenland's annexation, Trump will undoubtedly go down in the history books. And not only in the history of the United States, but in world history," he said, clearly appealing to the President's elephant-sized ego. Sadly for him, it looks like Greenland will remain Danish for the foreseeable future.

Blessed are the peacemakers, said Jesus. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after justice. Blessed are the persecuted. When you look at what ICE are doing in the USA – attacking innocent people (many of them U.S. citizens), brutalizing children and pensioners, acting as a lawless army against its own people, murdering Renee Good, a mother of three, in cold blood, and then firing ten bullets into the back of Alex Pretti, an unarmed nurse who was defenceless and on his knees – and then hearing the U.S. government lie through its teeth about those murder victims being "dangerous agitators", I honestly don't know how Trump and his pathetic minions can live with this on their consciences, but they seem quite able to. I wonder how easy it would be for this to happen in the UK. And how many people who insanely say "We need a Trump here" would lend their support. This is anti-Christian and must be resisted.

And then we have the Board of Peace, nicknamed the 'Bored of Peace' by its opponents. For only \$1 billion (that's £1,000,000,000!

In case anyone is in doubt), a nation can have a seat on this board, chaired lifelong by Trump (and his appointed successors), who will also control the money. To make things even funnier, the board could vote unanimously to do something, but Trump has a veto – he can vote down anything he personally doesn't want to do, even if everyone else does! Although, what exactly the board can do that the United Nations Security Council can't is unclear. It is a total scam. If the UK joins (unlikely) this power-grabbing joke initiative by the time you read this, I despair! But surely no nation with the slightest integrity and sense of dignity could accept these terms. We'll see. At the time of writing, 35 nations have accepted – like Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Hungary, Qatar, Mongolia, Pakistan, UAE – all led by right-wing oligarchs or ruthless dictators. The French leader, Emmanuel Macron, has asked for clarification on exactly how these billions of dollars are likely to be used! I suspect he won't be holding his breath waiting on an answer.

All this threatens democracy and freedom of expression and, if it can happen in the USA, it can certainly happen here, or anywhere. There are people who want to make it happen, who have the support of certain newspapers and media moguls, and are well financed by billionaires and others (including Russia) with an interest in causing chaos in the UK and other European countries. Nigel Farage is their puppet, but he's not pulling his own strings. We all need to be vigilant and committed to preserve freedoms we've often taken for granted, so that future generations can enjoy them too. Journalist, Oliver Kamm, wrote this weekend, "For us in Europe who admire the US..., these are dark times. But this episode [the shooting by ICE of Alex Pretti] is beyond shocking: there's a grave risk of *under-reacting*." We can have faith, at least, that God will be with us in whatever struggles lie ahead for the UK.

Rob Mackenzie (minister, LARCH)



Photo by Brett Saviles on Pexels.com

OASIS OF PEACE

The **FIRST** Oasis of Peace for 2026 will take place on **Ash Wednesday - 18th February 2026** at LARCH: Leith Walk **EVERYONE IS WELCOME** to attend this short service where we sing some

hymns, pray for others and have a reflection or discussion on a Bible passage. It lasts around half an hour and we finish with tea/coffee and a chat.

PRAYER CORNER Please remember members of the congregation, their families and other friends in your prayers. Names are read out at the Services on Sunday and Wednesday. To include someone, please either add the name to the Prayer Book in the entrance to LARCH Restalrig building or email Rob: AMacKenzie@churchofscotland.org.uk

PASTORAL INFORMATION

Thank you if you have tried to get in touch with us via our email address. Unfortunately, due to a technical problem, these messages have not been reaching us. This problem has now been rectified. Please accept our apologies. We hope members or their representatives will contact us now repeating any past requests if still relevant. Thank you to the person who raised concerns.

Accessing Pastoral Care

By email to pastoralcare.team@larch.org.uk

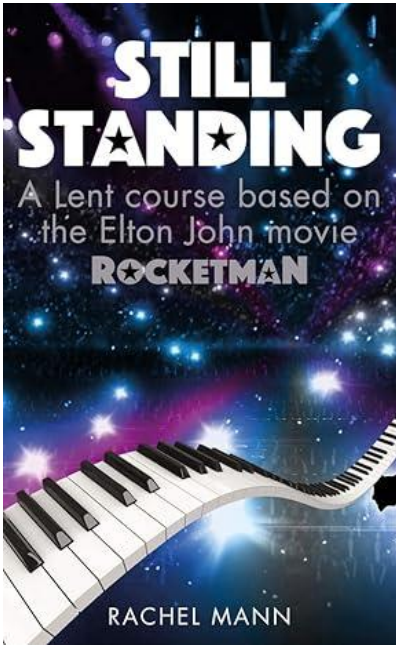
By phone to the Church Office on 0131 554 7400

Should you require urgent pastoral care, please contact:

Our minister, Rob Mackenzie, on 07803 293528 OR

Our Session Clerk, Stuart Lithgow, on 0777 225 1988

Pastoral Team



**LENT BIBLE STUDY with our
Minister ROB MACKENZIE
Week beginning 22 February 2026**

Rob will be holding an online weekly Bible Study on Zoom during Lent from the week beginning with 22 February (we'll choose the best day and time to suit people who want to participate) and finish on the week beginning 22 March.

We'll be using a small book of materials called *Still Standing* by Rachel Mann (£6.99 paperback, £2.99 Kindle), which takes clips from the film *Rocketman* (a BAFTA-nominated biopic of Elton John),

Bible passages, and discussion-starters to help us relate the movie to the scriptures and the Gospel. You don't need to have seen the film to take part or have Zoom on your computer (although you will need to have access to the Internet). Themes include: Becoming and calling. Relationships and how they shape our identities. The meaning of success and failure. Struggle, upset and forgiveness. Death and resurrection.

Please let Rob know if you are interested in participating in this course, and order yourself a copy of the book or E-book.

AMacKenzie@churchofscotland.org.uk



THANK YOU

We have received thank you notes from many members for prayers, flowers, cards, visits, phone calls, texts and support received following illness, celebrations, bereavements and accidents.

Prayer Corner

Please remember in your prayers members and friends of the congregation who are ill or infirm at this time. A full list is available in the printed version of the magazine.

Please let the editor know of someone to include in this section.



LARCH Property Team January 2026

Did you know that as a result our amalgamation on 1st January 2025, Leith & Restalrig Church (LARCH) Kirk Session & Property Team are now responsible for the ongoing maintenance, operating functions, legislative & statutory requirements and more importantly, the future of no less than 11 separate and significant buildings within the property portfolio that we have collectively inherited. This includes 3x large, listed Church buildings, 4x substantial Manse properties, 2x separate community hall venues, 2x modern flats (one currently being converted from the old St Margaret's office space) & finally 2x separate garages that are linked to a couple of the Manses. I think it would be fair to say that there are numerous businesses in Edinburgh who possess a fraction of that portfolio but are run

by a full-time staff of paid employees whose sole responsibility is property management.

That said, our property team are all just volunteers the majority of whom also undertake a number of other roles and duties within LARCH as well. However, we have managed to carry out a staggering amount of work over the last year, much of which goes on quietly in the background and out of sight.

Some of the big-ticket items that have been particularly protracted have included the replacement of the commercial boilers serving Larch Leith. This was a momentous undertaking and costly with the building losing its heating function early in 2025 and not being fully operational again until late in Autumn. This was particularly stressful as the property team had to employ tact and resourcefulness to provide suitable accommodation for the various community groups who provide much needed income using the hall space & associated rooms.

There have also been significant endeavours to secure a positive community-based future for the Leith St Andrews building whilst navigating restrictive external conditions being imposed upon the Kirk Session. This journey continues with a few dedicated and diligent members of LARCH paving the way ahead.

Additionally, with a pressure from the Church of Scotland to sell off some of our assets, the Kirk Session and Property Team looked at selling one of the Manses. After agreement to progress this at Kirk Session, we carried out an analysis on the benefits and restrictions of both the Pilrig Street & Moira Terrace Manse looking at various criteria such as where the second Minister would predominantly be based, transport links, accessibility, operating costs, expenditure to carry out immediate repairs or refurbishment and market value among others. The Kirk Session also physically undertook a walk around each property in November to get a proper look and feel for each property. A decision was made in January at Kirk Session to retain the Moira Terrace Manse and place the Pilrig Street Manse on the market.

There are of course a lot of other ongoing projects particularly the exciting one highlighted by Edmund recently to look at the feasibility of converting Larch Leith Church into a modern community and worship space with a particular focus on harnessing the potential of its location and size as a potential business / worship / community hub.

Last and by no means least, we continue to do our very best to keep all our buildings water & wind tight with appropriate heating despite a number of buildings now exhibiting temperamental & ageing heating systems including some facilities requiring utility or cosmetic upgrade, but please be assured, although the list is quite long, we are doing our very best to keep everything functioning. Lastly, if you would like to help or be involved with the property team, please speak to Alex Dickson or email: property@larch.org.uk

That is probably about all for now,
Property team



41ST GUIDE UNIT **100TH BIRTHDAY**



Inviting all ex-members to join us for afternoon tea on Saturday 21st March 2-4pm to help us celebrate the Company turning 100.
Session Room LARCH LEITH WALK,
(Formerly Pilrig St Paul's)
1B Pilrig Street, Edinburgh EH6 5AH
RSVP

Dorothy Walker - dorothywalkernewleith@outlook.com

Karen Wood – Ka_wood@tiscali.co.uk

LEITH AND RESTALRIG CHURCH – KIRK SESSION

In our first year at LARCH, we have naturally been focused on bringing the three legacy congregations together, getting to know one another better, establishing new systems and teams to carry out the day-to-day work of the church.

Now is the right time to focus on what we can do next with regards to Mission and Outreach. That is not to say that we haven't done anything. So far, we have surveyed the congregation to ascertain their ideas. We have set up an Outreach Team which has

organised two successful midweek services at Leith Walk and is busy planning for regular monthly services there. We have also set up a small team to look at how we can redevelop the Leith Walk building with a view to making it a much more flexible and user-friendly space. Judith, our MDS, has made contact with all the schools and other groups working with children, and has established 'Stay and Play' sessions at the McLaren Halls. She has recently assumed responsibility for leading the Playgroup at McLaren Halls and is in the process of setting up a Film Group with pupils from Leith Academy in conjunction with North and South Leith Church. We continue to run Foodbank sessions at all three sites, LARCH volunteers continue to support the Care Van and we hold weekly Oasis of Peace sessions at Leith Walk. We also continue to run the 'Eat, Meet and Play' sessions at Craigentenny Primary School and to support a wide variety of groups by providing accommodation in our halls.

We are now in the process of planning an Elders' Conference to enable us to focus our discussions on Mission and Outreach. Look out in future magazines as we begin to take forward some of the ideas.

Other items agreed or discussed at the Session Meeting in January include:

- After much discussion of the pros and cons of our two vacant manse, and a visit to both by Session, it was agreed to sell the former Pilrig St Paul's manse. This will free up funds which can be used towards property-related matters, as well as possibly funding some mission and outreach related projects.
- The Mission and Outreach Team has agreed to hold regular Midweek Services at LARCH Leith Walk on the last Wednesday of each month, starting at 7.30pm. They will continue the theme of 'Life in all its fullness' through different forms of

worship. The team looks forward to seeing as many members as possible.

- New Kitchen Regulations have been approved for all the church kitchens and will be publicised in due course. This is to ensure that we maintain safe working practices at all times.
- The Presbytery Property Committee rejected our proposal to lease the Leith St Andrew's building to Leith St Andrew's Trust. However, they were aware that this would impact not only the Trust's plans to eventually buy the building for community use but also the existing users of the building. On that last point, it is becoming increasingly difficult to secure reasonably-priced hall space in Leith. As a result, the Committee suggested that the proposed closure date of December 2025 be pushed back for a year to give more time for the Trust to secure funding and to give existing users more time to find alternative accommodation.
- We have now received approval for this suggestion from the Presbytery Deployment Committee.
- New arrangements for flower distribution are almost finalised, and will be publicised in due course.

With every blessing

Stuart Lithgow
Session Clerk

The next meeting of **Kirk Session is at 7.30pm on Monday 2 MARCH at LARCH Leith Walk Open Doorway**. Session meetings are open for anyone to attend, and approved minutes are available on request from me at session.clerk@larch.org.uk or through the office. Stuart Lithgow

Update of Personal Details

It has become apparent for some time that our contact details for members are not as up-to-date as we would like. To this end, you will soon receive a letter or email asking you to complete, as fully as possible, a form to update your personal details and to return it by the end of February. Please be assured that all personal information will be processed and stored in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

It is vital that you inform us of any changes of personal details so that we can keep in contact.

Stuart Lithgow
Session Clerk

FELLOWSHIP TEAM

Church Fayre

The final amount received from the Christmas Church Fayre held on 15th November 2025 was a total of £4,333.72

Thank you to everyone who helped and contributed in making this a fantastic success.

THE OPEN DOORWAY CAFE – at LARCH Leith Walk will next take place on **Thursdays 12th and 26th February, and 12th and 26th March** from 10.30am to noon.

Everyone is welcome to drop in for a refreshment (no charge but donations are welcome). You can have a chat or some quiet time and prayer and a chance to look around our wonderful sanctuary.

THE BOOK GROUP

The Book Group have chosen to read *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lochon, and will be discussing this on 24th of February. The story is based on the notes of an 18th century midwife who practised in a small village in the Maine (USA) where the body of a baby was found as the frozen river melted. Was this murder? Did the midwife's record help to solve a possible crime?



In March, we will be reading another book with insights from social history. This time, from the 21st century. Bernardine Evaristo won the Booker prize in 2019 for “*Girl, Woman, Other*” which follows 12 very different characters and their lives in black families – their struggles, pains, laughter, longings and love.

We will be discussing this book on Tuesday 31st March at 10 am in the larch Church hall.

Coffee/tea at 11 am and concluding at 11.30am. All are welcome.

THE CRAFT GROUP

The Craft Group want to thank everyone who supported them in 2025, whether by making goods or buying them. We were able to give £2,600 to Church funds. So, give yourselves a pat on the back and a round of applause for all your hard work.

The Group meets on Wednesdays from 2.00pm—4.00pm in the Church Halls (Hanlon Centre) so why not come and join us. You can be sure of a warm welcome, lively chat and a good cuppa!

LITTLE LARCH NURSERY

The outdoor nursery is working through its most challenging weather of the year, but the children still love the freedom of playing outdoors.

In December we were fortunate to receive funding to build a sensory room and this is almost completed.

We are working with Earth Calling, who are experienced in environmental education, to develop the site with tree saplings, and wildlife hedging.

The local community garden volunteers are willing to help with the planting.

A willow tunnel is being constructed late February, which the children will love.

Please remember us when you get back into your garden again in spring and pass on any shrubs or cuttings. We have a large site to cover.

THURSDAY CLUB BURNS SUPPER

51 Members and friends of LARCH gathered in the Church Hall to celebrate the birth of Scotland's National Poet Robert Burns.

We had all the traditions - the Selkirk Grace, the Address to the Haggis, then a meal of meal of Cock-a-Leekie soup, Haggis, Neeps & Tatties and Topsy Laird with Cheese and Biscuits as the dessert alternative. Tea and Coffee were available, in addition to plates of Scottish Tablet on the tables.

During the evening the attendees' knowledge was tested by two quizzes, one a Wordsearch on Burns, the other a set of Anagrams of departments to be found in a hospital.



Following the meal, the chef, performed an entertaining Toast to the Lassies, followed an equally amusing and thought provoking Reply to the Laddies.

Once again, congratulations to our chef and his behind the scenes team of Caterers and Servers for their assistance in making this event so successful. Sincere thanks also to the participants contributing the Selkirk Grace, Addressing the Haggis, Toasted the Lassies and provided the Reply to the Laddies and to our compere. A most enjoyable evening was had by all those present.

The Thursday Club AGM is on 26th February at 7.30pm

If you would like to donate church flowers for an anniversary of a loved one, a celebration or any other reason, please choose your date and put your name on the top line of the flower calendar which is in the vestibule of the church halls (notice board opposite the kitchen door).

If you are up to arranging them that would be great, you don't have to do big displays, they can be put in vases. If you would like them arranged or like more information please see Kenny McKenzie before the Sunday you have chosen.

NB - Dates that are popular will have to be shared and weddings take priority.

Donations for the Flower Fund can be put in the box located in the Sanctuary vestibule.

If you wish to donate or suggest flowers for someone who might appreciate them, please speak with Kenny, Shona or Stuart, or let Angie know in the office, so that this can be arranged. You can also email the Pastoral Care Team on pastoralcare.team@larch.org.uk .

Thank you

The Pastoral Care Team

If anyone has any spare flower bags that they don't need please bring them to church and give them to Lisa or Kenny as we can use them for distributing the flowers each Sunday. Many thanks .

We also collect milk bottle tops with a 3 on them and other tops and stoppers mail@larch.org.uk

Leith Walk Building Business Plan

Although we don't have a Sunday service in our Leith Walk building, we do have regular midweek events and a remit to try new and different things there. Shaurna Dickson and I are leading a small team exploring how we can best use the building.

We have some help from the Accelerate programme (<https://communityenterprise.co.uk/what-we-do/services/accelerate>), run by Community Enterprise and funded by the Scottish Government. They're going to help us figure out our needs and those of the local community and help us come up with at least the start of a plan to run the building in a sustainable fashion with mission firmly at the centre of activities. This is not just about what kind of events to host. It's also about refurbishment, community involvement, rental strategy, the works.

We have a building that everyone agrees has a great location and huge potential. How do we go about unlocking that?

If you're interested on working with us to come up with a business plan - if you have some vision or enthusiasm or expertise - please speak to or email me or Shaurna. There's a mixture of stuff to do from writing the plan to talking to members of the community at Open Doorway. We'll see who wants to be involved and then figure out how best to share things out.

This is a limited commitment for only three or four months as we work with Community Enterprise, so have a think and pray about it, and let us know.

Edmund Farrow - mail@larch.org.uk

THE GUILD



February 5th Operation Hope, Egypt. Guild Project

February 19th St Margaret's chapel

March 5th Establishments \$Emporiums of Edinburgh past.

March 6th World Day of Prayer St Ninian's

March 19th Bring and Buy – AGM

THE TRUSSELL TRUST

Reverse Advent Calendar



A huge thank you to all those who donated to the Foodbank in response to the Reverse Advent Calendar appeal. A magnificent total of 27 crates of food and toiletries was donated. Thank you also to all those involved in organising the crates and their distribution to the warehouse.

At the two Foodbank collection days in November at Tesco, Duke Street, 592kg (approx. 50 to 60 crates of food were collected and £200 in cash.



LARCH CHURCH REGISTER

We're sorry to record the news of the recent death of six members and friends.

Details of deaths of members are available to members and adherents from the church office.

OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS ARE WITH THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF THOSE WHO HAVE DIED.

Notifying us of the death of a member

In order to ensure that all relevant parties are informed, if you hear of the death of a member, please contact as many of the following as possible:

Rob (AMacKenzie@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Angie at the office (mail@larch.org.uk or 554 7400)

The Pastoral Care Team (pastoralcare.team@larch.org.uk)

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a % of your spend
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They pass
it on to us
:)

Plus, you'll get...



Exclusive retailer offers



Competitions



A warm feeling inside!

Over
£60m
raised for UK good causes

£0
extra cost to anyone