

Avonbridge  
With  
Torphichen

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# A place for all people

We live in a transient society - people come and go, unlike the stone and mortar of our church buildings. New relationships are constantly being formed as the congregation changes over the years. A living responsive church seeks to enable all relationships to become strong and meaningful - it is these that form the basis of a church. Listening and toleration are key to strengthening relationships.

Our vision, therefore, is to be a listening, caring, tolerant, compassionate church which has worship at its heart.



Avonbridge and Torphichen offer much more than just Sunday services - through the work of our members and volunteers we offer a wide range of activities and support numerous individuals and organisations near and far.

Space in this profile only permits the inclusion of edited highlights of our many activities, but a glance in any copy of the quarterly parish magazine (ChAT), which is distributed to members during pastoral visits, will give a fuller flavour of what we have to offer.



Avonbridge and Torphichen are Affirming Congregations which welcome all who love the Lord and seek to know more of him and his love for all.

# worship

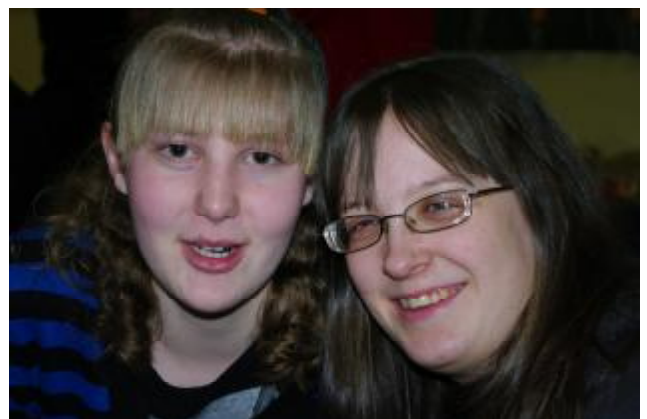
Why do we worship?

- To realise and remember that God loves us and values us;
- To appreciate what we have and what God offers.
- To discover or rediscover a sense of the spiritual - of peace, joy, wonder;
- To find a meaning for ourselves, a place and a purpose;
- To find companionship in our search;
- To understand the joy of sharing.



How do we worship?

- In church together each Sunday;
- In guided silent prayer and reflection opportunities;
- In study groups;
- In praying and singing together;
- In living out our Christian ideals;
- In creative activities - drama, dance, art and music;
- In our annual Bible reading marathon;
- In evening worship.



# in words and music

## Worship

Worship takes place every Sunday in Avonbridge at 9.45 am and in Torphichen at 11.15 am. Services at both churches follow the same basic format, and both congregations use CH4 as their main hymnbook, supplemented by Songs of God's People and other resources. Worship is led by the same organist in both churches. Avonbridge has an analogue electric organ as well as a small pipe organ, both of which are used in worship; Torphichen has a digital electronic organ and an electronic keyboard/piano.

In Torphichen, much use is made of music whose text and music has been written by members of the congregation. Members of the congregation love to participate actively in worship by choosing the hymns, reading the lessons, preparing and delivering children's addresses, writing and performing sketches and playing their musical instruments.....you name it, we'll try it!

## Adventurers

Every Sunday during school terms, the Adventurers (comprising young people of pre-school age and up) meet in Torphichen Kirk at 11.15 am for the start of the morning service. After the second hymn they go to the Community Centre or Vestry for creative activities, songs and general good fun in the Community Centre. Membership of Adventurers currently stands at about 20. The Adventurers are the proud sponsors of the Asiatic lions in Edinburgh Zoo.

There is not currently a Sunday school in Avonbridge; however, we are hoping this will be restarted as the number of younger people attending worship has begun to increase.

## Torphichen Kirk Choir

The Choir, although small in number, contributes to worship regularly and marks the highlights of the Church year at Christmas, Easter and other special occasions. It practises approximately monthly on a Friday evening from September to May and always welcomes new members.

In addition, a number of other singers in Torphichen are willing to supplement the choir for special occasions. For example, last Christmas they joined forces with the Choir and members of Adventurers to create a group of some 40 singers and which made a substantial contribution to the Adventurers' Christmas Service.

# social events

## Enjoying God's creation

Every Easter day we meet at the top of Cairnpapple for early morning worship followed by a shared breakfast in St. John's Hall. Other outings have included a summer's day on the beach, a trip to the zoo and meeting for a treasure hunt in the woods.



## Bring and Share Lunches

On selected Sundays we share a meal together in St. John's Hall to welcome a new member of the congregation, reflect on the world around us or just because we like to eat in good company.

In January 2011 we were delighted to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the linkage between Avonbridge and Torphichen with a bring-and-share lunch.



## Dance Club

Offers an informal and relaxed setting in which people can learn and practise the basics of a variety of ballroom dances.

## Sing for your Supper

Each year in late winter some members and friends of the congregation share a meal and their talents through song, dance and storytelling for an evening's joy and laughter.

# our communities...

## Community engagement

Although small, the Avonbridge congregation has undertaken a number of activities to engage with and encourage participation of the local community. These have included the World Championship Cloutie Dumpling Competition, which takes place in February each year.

Musical events have included "Sing a Song for Christmas" as well as other concerts which also help to raise funds for the congregation.

A key event in the calendar is the Pedal for Scotland event. The Avonbridge congregation, assisted by friends from Torphichen, provides a feeding station for the participants in the event. Not only is this a major fund raising event but it is also an opportunity for outreach to the cyclists and to villagers who are keen to support us in this venture.

## Village Coffee Mornings

On the first Saturday of each month St John's Hall, Torphichen is filled to the brim for the village coffee morning, which is hosted by different organisations in support of a selected charity each month. Torphichen Kirk is a Fair Trade congregation and Fair Trade products are offered for sale during these coffee mornings and at other events within St John's Hall.

## Worship at Blackfaulds Nursing Home

Each Sunday's church service is recorded and provided to Blackfaulds Nursing Home as well as to housebound worshippers. Once a month, in addition, volunteers worship with Blackfaulds residents through song and prayer.

## Art Exhibitions

Now a biennial event where well-known and upcoming artists exhibit under a common theme to transform the Kirk into a spectacular array of colours and light celebrating and praising God's creation.

## Ceilidhs

Members and friends, old and new, come and dance the night away at these fantastic fun events.

## Torphichen Summer Nights

On Sunday evenings during the summer Torphichen Kirk plays host to a vast range of talented musicians and performers.

# ... and beyond

## Magina, Kenya

As part of our World Mission responsibility we have developed a close link with Magina Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) in Kenya. This was strengthened in 2006 by our minister's visit to Magina and subsequently by exchange visits in both directions. The PCEA is very enthusiastic about our partnership and it is often used as an example to others.



The link has developed into a project (the Magina LIGHT Project) which now engages local primary and secondary schools as well as the wider community. Support from the Magina LIGHT project has made it possible to start building a much needed combined church, health centre and community facility in Magina.



## Shoe Boxes for Romania

Every year leading up to Christmas shoe boxes are filled with everyday necessities and shipped to poor and needy people in Eastern Europe.

## National and International Charities

We regularly support Christian Aid as well as making donations to other national and international charities to mark key celebrations in the church year (e.g. Self Help Africa at harvest; the Salvation Army at Christmas).

# the people

## Inclusivity

Our members are always eager to make everyone feel welcome. We aim to be caring congregations and all members are supported and encouraged towards full participation in worship and service.

## Getting together

Sunday worship is an opportunity to reconnect with friends and neighbours. Tea and coffee afterwards is a very relaxed and pleasant way to keep in touch with other church goers and visitors.

## Objectives

Our objectives are to:

- Ø be inclusive regardless of age, background, gender and nationality
- Ø welcome all and value everyone for who they are
- Ø recognise and develop everyone's talents
- Ø develop outreach into local community and in particular to younger people
- Ø build on the stewardship campaigns held in 2010

## TACO

The Torphichen and Avonbridge Church Orchestra (TACO) performs frequently during Sunday services as well at other community events. It is for people of all ages, abilities and instruments.



## Study groups

The two parishes share bible study groups; a lively morning group led by members of the Torphichen congregation meets weekly in Westfield from the beginning of Lent until Pentecost and a study group has recently started to meet in Avonbridge Church Hall.

# the place

Avonbridge parish covers area of approximately 32 square miles containing two villages, Avonbridge being the larger and Standburn the smaller. The populations of the two villages are around 700 and 120, respectively. New housing developments are planned in both villages. The semi-rural location of the parish means that local employment opportunities are limited, but Avonbridge is a convenient base for commuting to nearby towns and cities including Falkirk, Linlithgow, Glasgow and Edinburgh. The church is located in Avonbridge where there is also a URC Congregation with which there are good relations. There is the potential to develop this relationship further over time.



Torphichen parish covers an area of approximately 24 square miles within which Torphichen, the largest village, has the only place of worship as well as the Hall and Manse. The village has good transport connections, with easy links to Edinburgh and Glasgow via the M8/M9 motorways and access to stations at Linlithgow and Bathgate.



Torphichen Kirk has received the Eco Congregation award twice and continually works to weave environmental issues into its life and mission in an enjoyable and stimulating way. Avonbridge has registered an interest in the award but has not yet requested an assessment.

# facilities

## Churches

Avonbridge Church has had many changes in denominational name since it was first built in 1804. Indeed, before there was a building, there was a congregation which met in various homes. On 11 September 1889 the foundation stone of the new church was laid on the site of the first church. At the east end of the church a hall was built to hold 70 people and under the same roof was the minister's vestry and other conveniences.



Torphichen has been a place of Christian worship for more than 1500 years and has parish records dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The current parish church, which is adjacent to the historic Torphichen Preceptory, was built in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century.

## Manse

The manse is a mid-20<sup>th</sup> century detached house with seven rooms and an attractive garden of manageable size.

## St John's Hall

St John's Hall (the former Free Church) is the main venue for most of our gatherings and events.

## Schools

There are primary schools in Avonbridge, Standburn, Torphichen and Westfield. They welcome input from the Minister and lay members of the Kirk. Secondary schooling for children from Avonbridge is provided by the Braes High School, Polmont. As of August 2011 secondary school aged children from Torphichen and Westfield will attend Linlithgow Academy. Prior to that, local children were educated at Bathgate and Armadale Academies. Links with local secondary schools represent an area of opportunity for an incoming minister.

# facts and figures

## Numbers

	Avonbridge	Torphichen
Members on the roll:	81	252
Adherents:	10	6
Kirk Session:	7	18
Congregational Board:	12	21

## Youth Club

For secondary year 1 upwards; meets on Fridays from 7 pm to 9 pm in St John's Hall, Torphichen for games, crafts, food, discussions and more.

## Toddlers

This group meets every Tuesday from 9:30am to 11:30am in St John's Hall, Torphichen. All are welcome.

## Senior Citizens

Meet in the vestry of Torphichen Kirk every Tuesday September to June from 2 pm to 4 pm.

## Pastoral Care

Volunteers visit the sick and housebound to augment visits by elders and the Minister. Flowers are delivered after the 11.15 am Sunday service to the sick, elderly and bereaved in the Parish.

## Stewardship

Avonbridge congregation has worked with a Stewardship Advisor and in 2010 held a history event in the Church, "Back for the Future of Avonbridge Church of Scotland".

Also in 2010, Torphichen held a stewardship campaign entitled "Together We Make a Difference". This was very successful, both in terms of increasing donations to the Kirk and in promoting a wide range of groups and activities. Indeed, we have adopted "Together We Make a Difference" as our motto, as can be seen from the front cover of this profile.

## Finances

Following these successful stewardship campaigns our finances are currently stable. Congregational giving enables the parishes to meet all their existing financial commitments. All the buildings are in a good state of repair with no major items of work outstanding.

## Stipend

The statutory minimum stipend is offered for this position thanks to additional support from central funds.



North South East and West  
You know me. Understand me.  
Lead me. Protect me\*.

Avonbridge Parish Church of Scotland SC 007454

Torphichen Parish Church of Scotland SC 021516

\* Haiku based on Psalm 139, written by a member of the congregation in response to a study group discussion.