



December 2024
Newsletter

Old High St Stephen's Church of Scotland

SUNDAY SERVICES

Following the closure of the Old High Church for Sunday Worship, all Sunday services are now held at St Stephen's Church at 10.30am. Services are recorded and are available via:

OHSS website:

www.oldhighststephens.com

Youtube:

www.youtube.com (type in Old High St Stephens)

OHSS Facebook page:

www.facebook/oldhighststephens

Links are also sent to our e-mail list following the service.

To go on our e-mail list, please contact our [Church Administrator](#).



If you would like us to keep in touch – please send us your up-to-date address and email details

CONTACT US

Church Administrator:
(079 342 85924)

invernesschurch@gmail.com

Registered Charity No.
SC035073



THOUGHTS FROM REV JAMES

It's the tail end of November as I write this, and still, I've already asked someone if we can postpone something until after Christmas. It wasn't a big thing, but it was said with the shared realisation that we both have a lot in our diaries before then. Everyone has a certain capacity for the things which are going on in our lives, and if we get too busy, we'll end up missing something, or doing half a task and leaving something incomplete. I wonder if Mary or Joseph said to friends or family something like, "I'd love to meet up with you for a coffee, but can we get Christmas out of the way first" And yes, I did just Google when coffee was invented. And no, there wasn't a Starbucks in Bethlehem.

Advent is a time of preparation, as we wait for the coming of Jesus, and remember that first Christmas, two thousand years ago. Advent in the church includes the four Sundays leading up to Christmas, and marks the start of a new church year. I read someone once described Advent as being like the preparation of your house for a guest, and I thought that was a great way of describing the preparations which we may make for the Christmas season. Many of you will have family or friends visiting, or you yourselves may find yourselves off on a journey to visit others at Christmas. Last Christmas I was amused with pictures from social media of the places where people were staying at Christmas, and their varying sleeping arrangements, from sofas, inflatable mattresses in spare rooms, caravans and tents, and in one case, a person who had a sleeping bag in a garage so they could stay with loved ones. No stables however.

Regardless how we prepare for the hospitality of Christmas, we should also spend time preparing our hearts to receive Christ. The prophets of old told the people to keep looking, to keep our eyes wide open for the day the Lord would come. Yet, when he did come, he chose the most unexpected manner to arrive. If Advent is all about the preparations for a guest, may we all take time away from the bustle of the Christmas preparations to have a quiet moment to give thanks for the most wonderful guest of all.

May you all have a good one when it comes. And perhaps I'll see you in the New year for a brew. ☺

NEWS FROM THE CONGREGATION

PARISH GROUPING – FROM OUR INTERIM MODERATOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, I was delighted to meet with the Kirk Session last week and familiarize myself with the various aspects of church life in OHSS.

We spent some time discussing the draft Basis of Parish Grouping and it was approved and will be brought to the congregation for approval in January at the latest. I believe you have all had sight of the document, so will have some idea of what is happening. I just want to clarify that this does not have any legal effect on OHSS, it is basically a guidance document on how we will try to work together over the coming year. I hope that you are all comfortable with the proposal and we will have an opportunity to discuss it in January (unfortunately that is the earliest that I can meet with the Kirk Session and congregation).

If you have any queries please speak with your elder or feel free to contact me - Abinner@churchofscotland.org.uk; tel: 07708820860. Meanwhile I pray you will have a blessed and peaceful Christmas season. Aileen Binner, Interim Moderator

PARISH GROUPING

As you are aware a copy of the document was circulated in the September 2024 newsletter. Three small changes have since been made to the document:

- 1 Start date changed to 1 January 2025 and remain in place for up to one year
- 2 Change of Interim Moderator from Rev James Bissett to Mrs Aileen Binner
- 3 Adding Christian Aid to the list of joint activities

An amended copy is attached to this newsletter. Please note that the Kirk Session of Old High St Stephen's approved this document at their meeting on Tuesday 13 November 2024.

Members of the congregation now have to approve the document and a meeting is being arranged for Tuesday 7 January 2025 at 2.00 pm in St Stephen's Church. This meeting will be chaired by our Interim Moderator, Aileen Binner.

Each year we have to have an **Annual Stated Meeting**. The Trustees (Kirk Session) approved the accounts and the audited copy was circulated with the August newsletter. However members of the congregation are entitled to ask questions about the accounts and other matters and this meeting will be held on the same day - **Tuesday 7 January 2025**.

The Kirk Session of OHSS and Crown held a joint meeting on Wednesday 20 November to discuss the Parish Grouping document and now hope to work together to form new focus groups going forward. Christine MacKenzie, Session Clerk.

SALE OF OLD HIGH CHURCH It is with much regret that I have to inform you that the seller has not completed the deal within the deadline laid down. The Trustees (Kirk Session) agreed last week that no further extension was to be granted.

This has been a long protracted process with nothing at the end of it and is costing us considerable sums of money, particularly with regard to insurance.

Following advice from our Solicitor in 121 the Church will go back on the market.

Not the conclusion we had hoped for and a considerable amount of work has been done over the last 12 months to try and get the deal concluded without success.

There is likely to be considerable press interest in this development and I wanted to let you know before it hits the press/social media. Christine Mackenzie, Session Clerk.

OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CHURCH NATIONALLY – NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

Dear fellow members of the Church of Scotland, The Church is going through a time of significant change, locally, regionally and nationally.

The people who make the decisions about the Church nationally include staff, those who attend the General Assembly, and those who, between times, make time to participate in a national group or committee. The Nomination Committee now needs your active support to find the right people to serve on these groups and committees.

Maybe you, or someone you know, have the potential to rise to the occasion. We are looking for people with vision and determination, who are willing to help our Church in the years ahead as we work our way through the challenges and the necessary restructuring to make the Church of Scotland fit for the future. A short video, accessible [here](#), explains the process in further detail.

Those who wish to serve are invited to complete an online nomination form, accessible [here](#) on the Church of Scotland website, with someone - from their local congregation or Presbytery - saying they support the nomination. The form may seem long. That's because the more relevant information we have, the better we are able to do our job of placing people on the various groups and committees.

Serving nationally is a good way of getting to know the Church better, and engaging with others from across the country and beyond. While it needs commitment and can be time-consuming and demanding, it is a real opportunity to extend one's Christian service and witness.

Nominees must be members of the Church of Scotland. In addition, due to the high expectations placed on Candidates in Training, Probationers and Ministers in their first year following ordination, they are not normally invited to serve on committees.

Nominations must reach us by Monday 6 January 2025. We will treat the forms confidentially and consider them carefully. We meet on Wednesday 29 and Thursday 30 January 2025 and those selected will then be contacted. This is to seek permission from the individual for their name to go to the General Assembly in May 2025 for approval. Appointments commence after the General Assembly.

Not everyone will be asked to serve, or sometimes they may be asked if they are willing to serve on a committee or group other than those they have mentioned on their form. Please could you ensure that people know this when they are considering nomination.

We are keen to receive nominations from a broad representation across the church and depend on you and others spreading the word and actively encouraging involvement.

Any queries on the nomination process should be emailed to nominations@churchofscotland.org.uk.

Many thanks, Rev Dr Andrew Gardner, Convener of the Nomination Committee (07411 989344)

RECENT FUNERALS



Christmas at OHSS



CHRISTMAS IN ST STEPHEN'S 2024

Wednesday and Thursday 18 and 19 December

Church and Community Choir Concert

Starting at 7.30pm.

Tickets : Adult £10; Children £5

Proceeds from the concert will be divided between Highland Hospice (in memory of Ken Cantlay) and Blood Bikes

Sunday 22 December

10.30 am - 9 Lessons and Carols

Tuesday 24 December

18.00 - Carols round the Christmas Tree in the Church

Garden with Hot chocolate and Mulled Wine

23.30 - Watchnight Service in the Church

Thursday 26 December

10.30 am - St Stephen's Day Service with sacrament of Holy Communion



CHRISTMAS APPEAL This year's annual Appeal is all about supporting our chosen charities to bring some cheer at this time of the year. We are asking for donations - similar to the amount of a Christmas gift for:

1668 Café

Gateway, Highland Homeless Trust

Prisoners Children's Fund

Please bring your donation to Church in a marked envelope or give by bank transfer to the Church account, the details are on the poster. The Pastoral Care Team are very grateful for your continued support. **The closing date is Sunday 8 December.** Many Thanks. Sandy Cumming.

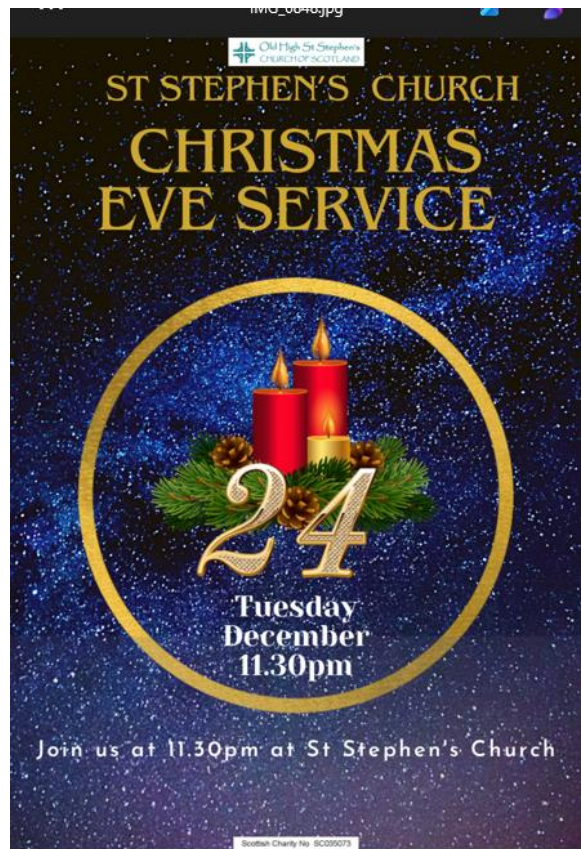


SING AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE Join us for a singalong on Christmas Eve - Hot Chocolate and Mulled Wine will be served



CHURCH AND COMMUNITY CHOIR CONCERT

The Christmas Concert is back on Wednesday and Thursday, 18 and 19 December at 7.30pm. Tickets available (£10.00 for adults and £5 for children) from Susan MacLeod (01463) 220886, or any Choir member will pass on an order to Susan. This year we are supporting Highland Hospice and Highland and Islands Blood Bikes.



OLD HIGH CHURCH



SOME HISTORY Continuing our series of articles on the history and silver belonging to the Old High

We have six silver communion cups from the Old High. They are straight sided bowls on a reeded knopped stem with a reeded spreading foot. They are inscribed 'Gift from John Baillie, House Carpenter to the Kirk Session. They were made

by Alexander Stewart, Inverness circa 1810. They weigh 120ozs troy. Height 24cm x 13cm base diameter x 12 cm top diameter. Note they are made from rare Inverness Silver. Christine Mackenzie, Session Clerk.



FOOD FOR FAMILIES

Once again Gateway Highland (formerly Highland Homeless Trust) are co-ordinating. This is a project we have supported annually since it's

inception and I am looking for about 10 volunteers willing to cook mince and tatties. I have been allocated a slot on Wednesday 8 January and everything required will be provided. I can deliver the bags to you and you just need to drop off the cooked food to their offices on Church Street (beside the Co-op Supermarket). Each pack will probably provide around 8-10 portions. The food is much appreciated by those in need in our community. Let me know by the end of December if you would like to help. Christine MacKenzie

Old High St Stephen's Church of Scotland
Fitness Class for all abilities at St Stephen's Church Hall
FIT AS A FIDDLE
Gentle Exercise To Aid Well-Being
Lorraine O'Brien
Magic Movers
Wednesday 15th January
AT
2PM
Join us for Tea/Coffee after Class
Contact Pat invernesschurch@gmail.com or phone 231258/241042
Scottish Charity No. 02050273

FIT AS A FIDDLE get your fitness back after the over-indulgence over Christmas and the New Year and come along and join Lorraine for the first class of the New Year.

BEE CRAFTY will resume on Wednesday 22 January. These activities are held fortnightly on a Wednesday afternoon at 2pm. They are social gatherings always with a cup of tea to follow. All crafters welcome. Please bring your craft with you. Also, if you would like to learn a craft we will do our best to help you as we learn from each other. Enjoy the camaraderie and a cuppa. We hope you will join us. Margaret McAleer (01463) 221393

SWEATY CHURCH 2 NOVEMBER 2024 - MIRACLES We had a slightly reduced attendance at Sweaty Church in November however the children there are all regular attenders and enjoyed some exciting new games. Healing the Sick Dodgeball, Cure the Blind Man Teamwork Race and Parting of the Red Sea Ten Pin Bowling. Stewart Robertson lead the devotion and prayer on Miracles at the beginning, and we finished off with the usual pizza, fruit and crisps. We hope to encourage a few more children along in January. **Next Sweaty Church 18 January 2025** 4-6pm with the theme - 'In the beginning. Deborah Macrae



OTHER NEWS



ST MARY'S RC CHURCH on Huntly Street are providing Hot Sunday lunches in their hall for the four Sundays of Advent, starting on 1 December at 1.00 pm All welcome

INVERNESS CHURCHES TOGETHER CHRISTMAS CAROL



CRAWL on Monday 23 December will begin in Ness Bank Church at 5pm and proceed via St Andrew's Cathedral, St Mary's and the Methodist Church to Trinity Life

by 7pm. 1.2 miles and finish with hot chocolate!

PRISONER'S WEEK SCOTLAND Prisoner's Week Scotland is always the third week in November. The Theme this year was : "Hear My Voice"

Prisoner's Week is arranged by a consortium of Churches, Prison Alpha, Prison Fellowship and Scottish Prison Service (SPS) Chaplains and Governors to encourage action and support for Prisoners on release, their families, and Victims of Crime. Liberated men and women do best if they have purpose and routine, eg a job, regular income, secure housing, stable family relationships, and a new circle of friends who will not drag them back to negative activity. Some of the above may be in the gift of congregational members to offer and make a difference to someone's life.

Inverness Prison is currently in the Parish of OHSS, (this will change in 2026/7 when a new prison is opened between UHI and The Range).

So what are OHSS doing in this connection as a community church?

At Christmas over many years the congregation has supported prisoners, their children and families through The Giving Tree, or the opportunity to provide a cash donation of around £350. This has been used to buy presents, provide toiletries, and for some mum's and children to go to the pantomime.

Recipients of OHSS contributions to The Food Bank, and Cafe 1668, will include ex-offenders.

During previous Prisoner's Week there have been ' Moments for Mission' by SPS Staff and from Prison Fellowship, and this year this article in the newsletter to inform the congregation.

OHSS also allow Prison Fellowship to meet, and park, in our premises.

In the 1990's the then OHSS minister Rev Colin Anderson, who was also a prison chaplain asked David and Ruth Martin to be elders to a prisoner, they readily agreed and have run the Prison Fellowship Inverness ever since and so another connection was made between the OHSS congregation and the prison and their families.

Prison Fellowship has grown over the years and now has 15 volunteers who are trained and go into Inverness Prison. They work under the Chaplaincy and have developed trust and very good relations with staff and the around 1,000 prisoners who chose to come to the PF activities, week in and week out over a year : Monday afternoon Bible Study. Thursday evening Crafts and Alpha or Restorative Justice Courses. Friday attend weekly service and take the Service

on the last Friday of the month. Friday Evening Music Night, singing songs and there are plans for musical tuition. PF also attend Prison events such as Easter Service where they supply Easter eggs, Remembrance Service where they supply the poppies, Remembering Service where prisoners can remember family and friends whose funerals they were unable to attend, and send Christmas Cards to all 110 prisoners, and also to staff.

Although Prison Fellowship is a Christian organisation with members from various churches and fellowships, not all sessions are gospel based. A strong emphasis is put on the 'Fellowship' aspect. Prisoners are genuinely amazed that PF volunteers give their time for no payment and respect PF as being nonjudgmental and lifting the boredom and inane banter of regular conversation. PF provide 'decent' tea coffee and biscuits for most sessions, translations of bibles or books in foreign languages for non English speakers, distributes Gideon bibles and study bibles and generally provide a highlight from routine boredom and a safe place where prisoners can re-evaluate their lives and past actions through Meeting Jesus and his teaching.

A sobering thought is that Scotland has the highest prison population per capita in Europe for both men and women, with around 8,000 on any day, and the scary fact is that we may not be much different from those 8,000, just that we were not caught! "Hear my Voice" could be a prisoner, or Jesus. Could we be better listeners? David Martin (Prison Fellowship, Inverness)



WILL YOU HELP SHARE COMFORT AND JOY THIS CHRISTMAS Christian Aid

are asking our Church to support their Christmas Appeal. We have our own appeal for local families but if you could please consider sharing some money with Christian Aid's Christmas Appeal. £15 will buy a blanket for a child far from home. And if you gift aid £20 becomes £25 buying even more food and essential supplies for refugees. Donate at aid.org.uk/christmasdonation Thanks Deborah Macrae.

AND FINALLY ...



Wishing everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the Editorial Team

BASIS OF PARISH GROUPING

The congregation of Inverness Crown (SC0108159) and the congregation of Old High St Stephen's (SC0035073) (shall form a Parish Grouping for a period of up to 12 months from the first day of January 2025 , and that on the following terms and conditions:

- Name:** The name of the Parish Grouping shall be Midmills Church Parish Grouping.
- Territorial Responsibility:** The bounds to be served by the Parish Grouping shall be as already advised by the Presbytery of Inverness and West Moray – now part of CIE or as the Presbytery may determine.
- Property and Funds:** The property and funds belonging to or held on behalf of each congregation shall remain the property and funds of each congregation as at present.
- Kirk Sessions:** The Moderator of the Crown Church Kirk Session is Rev Douglas Robertson. The Interim Moderator of the OHSS Kirk Session is Aileen Binner. The two Kirk Sessions will come together to discuss specific issues as and when required. Currently Crown meet 6 times per year and OHSS 8 times per year. A joint meeting of the two Kirk Sessions has been arranged for November 2024 and will continue quarterly if required.
- Congregational Management:** The temporal affairs of each congregation shall be administered as at present.
- Ministry Team:** The Ministry Team shall be
Crown – Rev Douglas Robertson
OHSS Locum – Rev James Bissett
Jackie MacKenzie – Youth Worker – note that Jackie is locally funded by Young Crown which is operated as a separate charity.
- Ministry Team Support:** The stipend of the minister(s) shall be payable in terms of the National Stipend Scheme.
- Manse(s):**
The Crown manse is currently occupied by Rev Douglas Robertson and his wife. The OHSS manse is currently rented out.

9. **Areas of Co-operation:** The following areas are currently shared:

A	Sweaty Church (OHSS) meets every two months
B	SNAC (Crown) meets monthly

C	Friendship Club (Crown) meets fortnightly
D	Memorable Melodies (OHSS) – meets monthly
E	Alpha – to meet in September
F	Fit as a Fiddle – meets fortnightly
G	Advent/Lent Calendars/Parish Newsletter
H	Other charities such as Blythwood, 1668 cafe, Giving trees at Christmas
I	Young Crown – set up as separate charity but Trustees from both congregations
J	Launchpad – set up as separate charity but Trustees from both congregations.
K	Christian Aid – annual appeal

Going forward it may be possible to combine both newsletters.

Crown have contact with North Street Church, Kingston, Jamaica and an invitation to visit Jamaica is likely to be given in 2025 with a reciprocal visit to the UK in 2026.

10. Power to Adjust:

While the articles and terms shall form the Basis of Parish Grouping for the congregations now agreeing, the congregations shall be free, like any other congregation, to adjust arrangements under the authority of the Presbytery as need may arise.