



March 2025  
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](http://www.oldhighststephens.com)

Youtube:

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com) (type in Old High St Stephens)

OHSS Facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/oldhighststephens](https://www.facebook.com/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](#).

## CONTACT US

Church Administrator:

(079 342 85924)

[invernesschurch@gmail.com](mailto:invernesschurch@gmail.com)



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

Registered Charity No.  
SC035073

## THOUGHTS FROM REV JAMES

You may have heard the expression that there's light at the end of the tunnel. To which I will usually reply, it's not the way out, it's just someone with a torch coming to give us more work. Perhaps I should become a little less cynical. 😊

There's so much light around us, be that the light from your TV, or your phone, floodlights on buildings and streetlights, and it seems like every little electronic device has its own light. Do I really need a light on my TV to tell me that the TV is on? Surely the picture on the screen is a clue.

If you're coming north on the A9, there's a part where the dual carriageway ends just before the Drumochter pass, where the road descends, curves to the left then the right, and you have the lights of vehicles coming towards you. It can be a bit of a confusing place, especially in foul weather. However recently there's been a set of cats eyes installed which help guide you along the road, and helps focus your eyes away from distracting light.

As we look towards Easter, there's too much distracting light. For many non Christians, Easter is the chocolate holiday, with very little talk about the reason for the weekend off. There's too many other, more interesting distractions, and we have lost direction. Jesus light hasn't dimmed, but the world is cluttered with too much distracting light.

I saw recently a dark skies observatory. It was just a bowl dug into the earth, perhaps 10 metres across, so that anyone on the bowl couldn't see the lights on the horizon around them, meaning the stars above were perfectly clear, without light pollution. Perhaps that's what we need through Easter, a means of focusing on the cross and the resurrection to come without unnecessary light pollution.

As we go through Easter, I'd like to share a reading plan from Bible Gateway which walks through the gospels. The online version is below (click on the link), or go to the **back page where it is printed**.

<https://www.biblegateway.com/reading-plans/lent>

## NEWS FROM THE CONGREGATION

**A MESSAGE FROM OUR INTERIM MODERATOR** As many of you know, there was a joint meeting of the Kirk Sessions of OHSS and Crown Church last Wednesday evening. Overall it was a fairly positive meeting with the only contentious item being the Basis of Union. The question regarding what would happen if either church did not approve the basis of union was asked and the moderator explained that this would be a matter for Presbytery/General Assembly but that the likely outcome would be that the dissenting charge would be dissolved and its assets transferred to Edinburgh. I wondered whether it was appropriate to share this harsh reality in our newsletter or wait until the congregational meeting, however, I am sure the response is already being discussed within the congregation and I believe it is much better to be upfront about this challenging situation rather than spring it on you at our meeting. Although we may discuss this at our meeting I also have to say that this union is the agreed plan of the presbytery and although it is not something we would have chosen, the decision was made some years ago and I pray that we can find a way forward in which we can come together with our brothers and sister in Crown Church.

I'm afraid I have another disappointing announcement to make. Our congregational meeting was scheduled for next Wednesday evening as I was scheduled to deliver a workshop for folks interested in conducting funerals. Unfortunately we have been unable to secure a venue for the workshop and so it has been postponed. I confess, this is somewhat of a relief for me, as due to an unfortunate change in circumstance I must be in North Connel by 12 noon on Thursday and it now means that the Congregational Meeting can be held on the afternoon of 5<sup>th</sup> March. I apologise to those who are unable to attend an afternoon meeting, if the Funeral workshop did not have to be postponed, I would have held the meeting in the evening and driven home to North Connel immediately afterwards, but I believe God has had a hand in making sure I will be safe and hopefully, reasonably rested in preparation for what will be a difficult role on Thursday.

I wish this had been a more positive message because I know there are many good things happening in OHSS. I continue to pray, that God will give us the strength, courage and wisdom necessary for this journey ahead of us. With every blessing, Aileen

**CONGREGATIONAL MEETING** A congregational meeting will take place on Wednesday 5 March at 2.00 pm in St Stephen's Church. Please come along if you can. The meeting will be convened by our Interim Moderator, Aileen Binner. Christine Mackenzie, Session Clerk

**OHSS KIRK SESSION** The next meeting of the Kirk Session will be held within the Church on Tuesday 4 March 2025 at 7.00 pm.

**SERVICE AT SOUTHSIDE NURSING HOME** there will be a short service in Southside Nursing Home on Sunday 2 March after our morning service. All welcome to attend.

**FLOWER ROTA** A simple vase of flowers or floral arrangement brightens our church each Sunday and plays a part in our ministry, as giving these flowers brings cheer, consolation or celebration to someone in our congregation.

We are looking for volunteers to help with the flowers. If you feel you can help, please add your name to the rota on the noticeboard at the back door. No experience is necessary and there is a fund available for reimbursement of the cost of flowers.

You may also add your name to the list if you wish to donate flowers to commemorate a special date. Our flower team can help display them if required. If you have any further questions please speak to Jill. (07845 170307)

Old High St Stephen's  
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**SWEATY CHURCH**

Suitable for the whole family  
all ages & physical abilities

St Stephen's Church Hall  
Southside Road

**SATURDAY  
29TH MARCH  
FROM  
4PM-6PM**

FUN AND GAMES FOR  
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

FOLLOWED BY FOOD.  
FREE ENTRY.

THEME:  
THE GARDEN OF EDEN

pizza & Juice

Scottish Charity No. SC035073

**LENT BIBLE STUDY - STARTS 4 MARCH- CROWN CHURCH UPPER HALL** This year's theme is "Living Faith - Invitations From the Cross." It's based on the seven last sayings of Jesus on the cross - powerful, world-changing words of forgiveness, of determination, of family, of anguish, and of ultimate love. Everyone is welcome to join our Bible study, which will meet over six weeks, leading up to Holy Week. Starting Tuesday mornings in the Upper Hall at 10.30 for 11am, with Doug and Lesley McRoberts

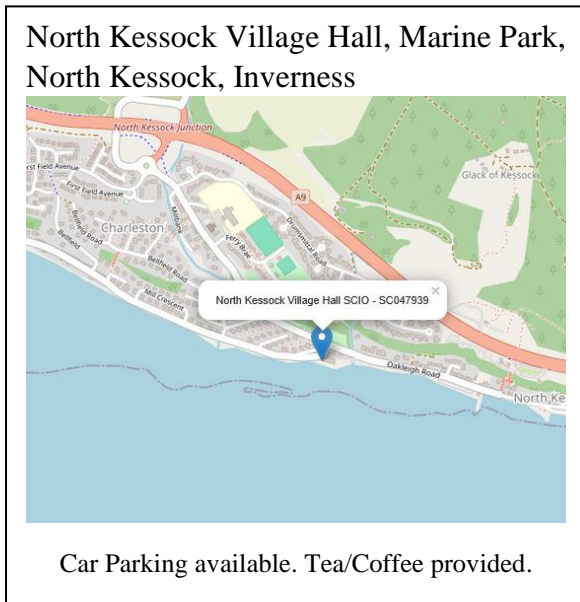
**DAY RETREAT** Invitation to Crown and Old High St Stephen's Day Retreat at North Kessock on Saturday 8 March 2025

Programme:

- 10:00 - Welcome, tea/coffee
- 10:30 - Salt & Light
- 10:45 - Sing together
- 11:00 - Quietness and prayer
- 12:15 - Sing together
- 12:30 - Packed lunch (bring your own)
- 13:15 - Walk and talk
- 14:00 - Prayer triplets
- 15:00 - Holy Communion together
- 15:30 - Blessing and depart

Please register by email to [brian.macgill@outlook.com](mailto:brian.macgill@outlook.com)

Lifts can be arranged on request.



## 80th Anniversary of the Christian Aid Movement



Christian Aid was started by Douglas Lister a Scottish minister when he saw hunger and need in Germany at the end of the Second World War. It continues to support others in

the world by sharing our resources through generous giving and calling for justice in the use of world's resources. To mark the 80th year there will be some special events including an Ecumenical service in Inverness. More details to follow. There are also worship and fundraising ideas for all ages available on the website [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk).

### Christian Aid Week 2025 (May 11th-17th)

For Christian Aid week this year the focus is on Guatemala in Central America which has been badly affected by climate change. Communities are suffering from a lack of water which impacts crops. Christian Aid has teamed up with a local Co-operative called Congcoop. They are training groups of people in small scale agriculture. Amelia a wife and mother of two has received this training to help feed her family and train others in her village.

The red 'door to door' envelopes this year are again for delivery only. Then they are to be dropped off by the recipient at the Drawing Room shop, or local church and people can also give online. <https://fundraise.christianaid.org.uk/> Last year we again increased our donations and the Christian Aid coffee morning and plant sale at St Stephen's church was even more successful. Thank you for all your help, this is very encouraging.

If you are able to deliver some envelopes again or for the first time this year that would be great, please let Pat Macleod or myself know. We will also have envelopes in pews and we will have a Just Giving webpage again for those who are comfortable with the convenience of online giving. Deborah Macrae [deb.macrae.10@gmail.com](mailto:deb.macrae.10@gmail.com)

### A Franciscan Blessing

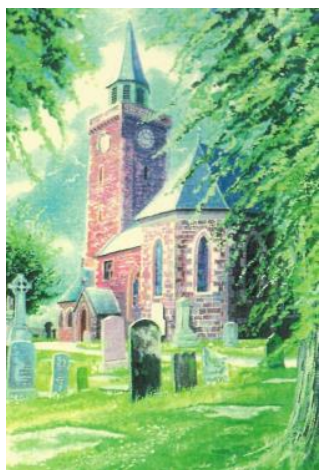
*MAY GOD BLESS YOU with discomfort,  
at easy answers, half-truths,  
and superficial relationships  
so that you may live  
deep within your heart.  
May God bless you with anger  
at injustice, oppression,  
and exploitation of people,  
so that you may work for  
justice, freedom and peace.  
May God bless you with tears,  
to shed for those who suffer pain,  
rejection, hunger, and war,  
so that you may reach out your hand  
to comfort them and  
to turn their pain to joy.  
And may God bless you  
with enough foolishness  
to believe that you can*

*make a difference in the world,  
so that you can do  
what others claim cannot be done,  
to bring justice and kindness  
to all our children and the poor.  
Amen*



**THANK YOU** I would like to thank all those dear friends in Old High St Stephen's who were in touch in many different ways on my recent ninetieth birthday. In particular for the beautiful flowers from the service on 16 February.

I'm truly overwhelmed by your kindness. Irmtraut Stevenson.



**OLD HIGH ORGAN** Although there has been some information shared about the church sale process, some updating information on the organ may be useful as well. Regular checks and play sessions continue to be done, since it is important for the instrument to remain in use. Low level heaters are in place to reduce the dampness, though the level of humidity in the building in the winter

months will have an adverse effect if the church remains unoccupied for much longer.

There has been interest in the future of the organ expressed from around Scotland, confirming the national as well as Highland importance of it being preserved, so that its special qualities can be enjoyed by performers and audiences once again. Should any new owner not have a credible plan for its maintenance and use, it could still potentially be relocated to another site.

However, the organ absolutely belongs within the heritage of the Old High, so the hope must be that the building may yet have a future that incorporates the making of music in that special space at the heart of the Old Town.

The organ has been lovingly cared for by the people of the Church of Scotland since the 1890's - including all the investment in its restoration in 2010 - so, in my mind, it would be entirely appropriate for the wider community of Inverness to now take on responsibility for its future care in the years to come. Andrew Stevenson

**AND FINALLY ...**

**THE OLD HIGH**

*I am the heart of this city,  
the heart of Inverness.  
But this heart is slowly dying.  
I have a story for every century,  
but nobody wants to listen.  
I stand here, on this hill,  
overlooking the river.*

*Together we've seen so many things,  
but nobody cares.  
I'm crumbling now  
wasting away,  
yet I do not need to be.*

*The hill on which I stand  
was telling stories long ago.  
St Columba came to preach here,  
to meet with King Brude,  
to convert the Picts to Christianity.  
It's also where he saw Nessie!*

*I've seen wars aplenty,  
between clans, cultures, and countries.  
I've seen the prisoners,  
I've housed them within my walls,  
then witnessed their executions.  
Now the battle is to save me,  
but I cannot raise an army.  
I've hosted Provosts and their councils*

*when the Kirking procession would parade,  
from Town House to myself,  
pomp and ceremony  
colours and bagpipes!  
Over 400 years I've been here for them!  
Now I need their help,  
yet they do not seem to hear me.*

*I've seen celebrations galore,  
in the shape of weddings and christenings,  
I've heard congregation in full voice,  
as they gathered to worship.  
I've also seen sadness,  
as folk come to say goodbye,  
those with money and those without,  
and I've watched over all, buried in my grounds.*

*I've told the time from my tower,  
for everyone to see,  
sounded out the curfew,  
for all to get home safe.  
Now it's time for me to be heard,  
I need help to survive,  
or I shall keep on crumbling.*

*You will all lament the day  
I lie here in ruins,  
ask questions of people  
point fingers of blame at people.  
I can be glorious!  
I can be beautiful once again!  
I can bring visitors to your door!*

*I am the heart of the city,  
but my heart is growing weak.  
My tears are silent,  
my voice is unheard.  
I need your help.*

©Mhairi Jarvie, 5 Feb 2025

## **CROWN CHURCH NEWS**

**THE LAUNCHPAD BIG BOOKSALE** A huge thank you to everyone who donated books for the Big Booksale for Launchpad at Crown. The total taken is just over £1000! This year, instead of giving most of the leftover books to the Hospice, and/or Blythswood, we are donating many of the novels to Crown 20/20, who have been offered the charity shelves in the Boots' Pharmacy at Kingsmills to sell second hand books. Many of the unsold non-fiction books went to Munloch Animal Aid, and some to the Hospice.

**WORLD DAY OF PRAYER** Prepared this year by a group from the Cook Islands. Service in Crown Church on Friday 7 March at 10.30 am. Please stay on for teas/coffees

afterwards. All welcome. Entrance from front door or garden door. Note there will be an offering during the service.

## **UPGRADING THE BUILDINGS OF CROWN CHURCH**

The final phase of the upgrade begun in 2020 and on which we are now embarking, involves the addition of ramp access to new automated glass doors which will become the main entrance to our buildings. These will lead into a new-build bright multi-use foyer and reception area which will lead straight through to the Sanctuary by extending the current transept windows -spaces to the ground to make archways. We will partly demolish the existing outdated 1980's extension to do this. The total cost is £582,946 plus VAT. Crown are hopeful that some of the VAT can be reclaimed,

We anticipate that this will significantly enhance the public's perception of the church, as floor-to-ceiling windows will provide clear visibility from the street. Currently the Victorian aspect of the building belies the activities and ethos of the congregation, and the existing wheelchair/pram access is more of an obstacle course, particularly on a windy day when a fierce draught pulls the door out of even an able-bodied person's hands. From a stranger's point of view, the provision of a clear main entrance does away with confusion over which of our five doors to use.



The current extension and narrow accessible entrance



Night-time image and welcoming lighting.



Architect's image of new ramp, automatic doors and long windows

The visible, inviting space will encourage community involvement and make the church more approachable. The Crown area does not have a community centre, and we are increasingly welcoming more community groups to use our spaces. The new, easily accessible flexible spaces we will be able to offer will, we hope, increase this use, thus adding to our financial sustainability, and that in turn will secure our future as both a centre for worship and a community resource.



Architect's image of the new foyer leading directly into the Sanctuary.

**Reading plan from Bible Gateway** *With thanks to the Central Presbyterian Church of Baltimore.*

**Day Today's Scripture Reading**

Day 1 Matthew 1-3

Day 2 Matthew 4-6

Day 3 Matthew 7-9

Day 4 Matthew 10-Matthew 12

Day 5 Take a Break

Day 6 Matthew 13-Matthew 14

Day 7 Matthew 15-Matthew 16

Day 8 Matthew 17-Matthew 18

Day 9 Matthew 19-Matthew 20

Day 10 Matthew 21-Matthew 22

Day 11 Matthew 23-Matthew 24

Day 12 Take a Break

Day 13 Matthew 25-Matthew 26

Day 14 Matthew 27-Matthew 28

Day 15 Mark 1-Mark 3

Day 16 Mark 4-Mark 6

Day 17 Mark 7-Mark 9

Day 18 Mark 10-Mark 12

Day 19 Take a Break

Day 20 Mark 13-Mark 14

Day 21 Mark 15-Mark 16

Day 22 Luke 1-Luke 3

Day 23 Luke 4-Luke 6

Day 24 Luke 7-Luke 9

Day 25 Luke 10-Luke 12

Day 26 Take a Break

Day 27 Luke 13-Luke 14

Day 28 Luke 15-Luke 16

Day 29 Luke 17-Luke 18

Day 30 Luke 19-Luke 20

Day 31 Luke 21-Luke 22

Day 32 Luke 23-Luke 24

Day 33 Take a Break

Day 34 John 1-John 2

Day 35 John 3-John 4

Day 36 John 5-John 6

Day 37 John 7-John 8

Day 38 John 9-John 10

Day 39 John 11-John 12

Day 40 Take a Break

Day 41 John 13-John 14

Day 42 John 15-John 16

Day 43 John 17-John 18

Day 44 John 19-John 20

Day 45 John 21

Day 46 1 Corinthians 15

Day 47 It's Easter!