



June 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

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](#).

CONTACT US

Church Administrator:

(079 342 85924)

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 This newsletter should be going out on the 1st of June, the start of Pride month, and this afternoon we'll have a service of reflection in the church to mark the start of the month. Sadly for this year, I won't be attending the parade in the town as I've got another church conference, however I hope you'll consider going along and share in the love, even if I can't hand out Love Hearts by the handful.

But what does Pride month really matter for us as a congregation or as the wider church? While I've not done a survey of our congregational roll, there's probably not that many LGBTQ folks in the congregation. So should we focus our time on other issues, and leave the LGBTQ folks to look after themselves?

Human Rights Watch stated recently that "In recent months, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights have faced significant setbacks in many countries, with populist and authoritarian governments passing draconian laws curtailing LGBT rights.

Countries as varied as Uganda, Ghana, Iraq, Russia, Hungary, and the United States, among others, have sought to limit the fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and assembly of LGBT people." And as so often happened in the past, those in power will often target a minority in order to cover up their own failings. And when one set of rights is deleted, other rights will fall. Will your rights be next?

As I was writing this, a story appeared on my news feed of a woman who was attacked in a toilet because she didn't look female enough. In Australia, a gang was using social media to track down and attack gay men, while here in the UK there's 24,000 hate crimes against people because of their sexual orientation. Hatred is being stirred up everywhere.

I want our church to genuinely be where everyone who walks through our doors on a Sunday finds a welcome here. I think we are good and welcoming, but the wider church hasn't been great over the years. However I believe the church is for everyone, and that the message of love is for all.

We have a solid foundation in the example of Christ himself. In the gospels you find Jesus being compassionately concerned for the outcast and other. Christ went to the margins – to those otherwise excluded from society. It doesn't seem like too much of a stretch to imagine the LGBTQ community in that category, does it?

So the next time you hear a world leader or public figure blaming the LGBTQ community, or any other minority for the ills of society, ask yourself who is really to blame, because the person pointing the finger has three other fingers pointing back at themselves.

Peace and love
James

NEWS FROM THE CONGREGATION

PULPIT SUPPLY FOR JUNE 2025

1 June 1030am Rev James Bissett
3.00pm Pride Service

8 June 1030am Rev Susan Cord

15 June 1030am Rev Tommy MacGregor, Assistant
Minister Kinmylies Church

22 June 1030am Rev James Bissett

29 June 1030am Rev James Bissett - Ice Cream
Sunday!

SERVICE AT SOUTHSIDE NURSING HOME there will be a short service in Southside Nursing Home on Sunday 1 June after our morning service. All welcome to attend.

MISSION CONFERENCE AT ST STEPHEN'S At the Congregational Meeting on 30 April our Interim Moderator, Aileen Binner, agreed to come to Inverness on **Saturday 14 June** to convene a Discerning Mission conference to look towards missional use of St Stephen's Church.

The programme for the day can be found on the last page of the Newsletter. Please note that we cannot meet until **11.00 am** as the hall has a let which does not finish until 10.30am. Parking is available at the Dentist's Surgery or the Architects next to the Crown Court Hotel. There will be limited parking at the church.

Please let Pat know as soon as possible if you are able to attend, mainly for catering purposes and to advise if you have any food allergies. We also look forward to welcoming friends from Crown Church. Christine MacKenzie, Session Clerk.

FUTURE OF ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH A group within our church has recently come together to explore the possibilities of enhancing community engagement at St Stephen's Church. We recognize the great potential for growth and unity, especially in light of the disharmony surrounding the proposed union that has been present among us. We believe that open dialogue is essential for moving forward, and we would love the opportunity to discuss this further with all of you. If you're interested, please feel free to reach out to the following individuals to arrange a meeting:

Sandy Cumming, Freda Charters, Val Cantlay, Ron Stevenson.

ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH GARDEN Come along and join us - our next meeting will be on Tuesday 3 June at 10am.



OHSS June Walk The next outing will take place on **Sunday 15 June** at Reelig Glen, followed by afternoon tea at the home of Stuart and Ruth MacKenzie.

It would be helpful to have a note of numbers, so please let one of us know if you can come. Non-walkers welcome as always, and transport and car sharing will be available.

Malcolm

Steven mmsteven1@btinternet.com 07773017928

Derick

Robertson roderick43r@btinternet.com 01463790372

Iain Russell iainrussell01@gmail.com 01463 239344

HIGHLAND CROSS 2025 · 21 JUNE 2025 After a gap of 21 years I plan to run the Highland Cross and would be very grateful for any donations to my fundraising efforts. You can donate using the following link or put an



envelope in the collection plate marked for me. Morag and Fiona last ran the Highland Cross together, 21 years ago as part of team "Atomic Cats". and are now part of the rebranded "Atomic Cats Reborn" and joined by Cat Graves. The Highland Cross is a duathlon across Scotland from Kintail to Beaully comprising a 20-mile run and a 30-mile cycle. It is organised by volunteers and raises money for local charities. Fiona Kelly [Just Giving Page Fiona Kelly](#)

MEMORABLE MELODIES Once a month we hold a gathering of people who like to listen to music, and sometimes join in and sing. We have had all kinds of music over the last few months including Scottish, Irish Songs, sounds of the Sixties and Country sounds. It seems to be fun for us all to join in the familiar tunes, with words to help us sing. We then have tea and home baking together, and lots of chat.

Over the last year we have collected enough money to replace the garden seat on Southside Road. This seat is

used a lot by passers-by, and sometimes some of the residents of Southside Care Home or Isobel Fraser Home enjoy a rest there to admire our garden.



We have one more session on **Friday 27 June**, before we have a rest for the Summer. Everyone is welcome, so please join us if you can. Val Cantlay, Joan Darcy and friends.



ANNUAL AFTERNOON TEA The Pastoral Care Team at St Stephen's will host their annual Afternoon Tea on **Saturday 28 June at 2.30** in the Church Hall. This is a social occasion for all members of the congregation and is an opportunity for those who

don't often get out or find it difficult to get to Church in the mornings to meet up with old friends! It is very informal and allows time for plenty of conversation. There will also be some musical entertainment. Please speak to your elder about this event and let them know if you require transport as this can be arranged by members of the Team. Remember the date- **Saturday 28 June**, the last Saturday in June.

ICE CREAM SUNDAY - 29 JUNE 2025



GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2025 REPORT

A RETURN TO THE MOUND Moderator's Theme - 'Extravagant Love'

The opening ceremony of the General Assembly is always a colourful occasion and the King's representative Lady Elish Angiolini brought dignity and grace to the post. She has had a glittering legal career and is a member of the Order of the Thistle.

Because Lady Angiolini is a Roman Catholic a special Act of Parliament had to be passed to allow her to take up the post. The Most Rev Leo Cushley (Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh) who was attending the Assembly as an Ecumenical guest, congratulated the Church in making this appointment in line with the St Margaret's Declaration, signed in 2022.

The Right Rev Rosie Frew was then appointed Moderator of the General Assembly for 2025-26. A difficult job for anyone but throughout the week Rosie showed compassion and dignity in all she did. She rarely took a break from proceedings.

Now to the business.....

The Business Committee intimated they were looking at a shorter General Assembly going forward. More about that later.

Roy Pinkerton, who has been on the group who produce minutes of the Assembly was presented with a certificate to mark 54 years of service.

The Bible Society presented the Moderator with a Bible.

The Assembly guests, from the UK and overseas were presented to the Assembly, including Most Rev Mark Strange, Primus and Bishop of Moray, Ross and Caithness.

I was very pleased to meet Rev Muriel Pearson our Mission Partner who is a Minister based in Tiberias.

All the new Presbyteries are subject to review but a move to get on-site visits was rejected on the grounds of cost.

A service to mark the 80th Anniversary of Christian Aid was held in St Giles on the Saturday evening. This was well attended and a very happy occasion. I understand that a similar service will be held in September in the Cathedral.

Sunday saw the morning service at St Giles. Another happy occasion, similar to a Kirking of the Council with the Moderator preaching the sermon.

On Sunday evening most of the in-person commissioners (20) from Cleir Eilean I got together for a meal. A lovely occasion to meet colleagues you normally only see on-line.

The Most Reverend Hosam Elias Naoum, Anglican Archbishop in Jerusalem, Primate and President Bishop of the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East, addressed the General Assembly and was thanked by the Moderator. The Moderator presented the Archbishop with

a framed print of the Prayer for the Ephesians and the theme for the 2025 General Assembly 'Extravagant Love', as a memento of his time in Scotland.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion was celebrated on Monday morning, always a highlight of the week.

The Assembly Trustees report could only be described as depressing - membership down (245,000 members in December 2024 - down 5.5% from the previous year), givings down, properties for sale, staff being made redundant from 121. The forward plan for the national offices will see moves towards a smaller staff group focusing on areas designated a 'priority'. As a result some work will be stopped and some reshaped.

As a result the free reserves available to cover the church's day-to-day charitable activities were about £51.2 million as at December 2023 - about 5 months of operating costs. In 2024 the Church reported another operating deficit. The goal is to break even by 2027 which means a reduction in costs across the Church to bring expenditure down to a sustainable level in line with income. There is real concern at what happens to Presbytery funding after the transitional funds terminates.

Seeds for Growth Funding has been cut. Currently it is supporting around 70 projects bringing spiritual and numerical growth to the church. Congregations need to look at innovative income streams around the five marks of mission and radical action plan.

In 2026 there are 600 ministers but many are aged 55+. Congregations who cannot meet their costs are likely to become insolvent.

We moved on to the Assisted Dying Debate (3.5hrs). The group who had been appointed to report to the Assembly had recommended that the church move from being against assisted dying to a neutral position. This was fully debated and the Church moved back to their original stance of opposition by 4 votes. John Williams, who has spent over 50 years dealing the AV needs of the Assembly addressed the commissioners. John is terminally ill and called for good palliative care for everyone.

The Guild held their 'Big Sing' on the Tuesday evening. Around 250 members attended, including some commissioners. A lovely evening of praise and readings.

Tuesday was devoted to the work of the Faith Action Programme Leadership Team (FAPLT), this encompasses Public Life and Social Justice, People and Training, Mission Support, Mission Planning and Ecumenical Affairs.

A considerable number of deliverances, counter motions etc were discussed during the day.

Mr Nick Georgiadis, Director of Fundraising and Supporter Engagement, Christian Aid, addressed the General Assembly and presented the Moderator with a stole. The Moderator thanked Mr Georgiadis and presented him with

an 80th Birthday Card made by children at Bowden and Melrose "Messy Church".

Life and Work

Note that the circulation of Life and Work in December 2024 was 6,328, made up of 5,162 copies sold in print, 554 sold in digital and 612 promotional digital copies (sent to parish ministers and parish magazine editors). However, it has become unsustainable and will cease to be published from October this year. Income in 2017 was £424,000 reduced to £209,00 in 2024 and advertising revenue down 50%. The end of a long era - 146 years but the Church needs to find another way of keeping members informed and they hope to bring something to the 2026 Assembly.

On to Wednesday the Guild report is always well received and I thought it worth sharing some history of the Guild. They were so ahead of their time.....

Guild

In 1887, the General Assembly in response to a proposal by Archibald Charteris, agreed to the formation of the Woman's Guild. This bold and historic idea took time to find acceptance and the Guild of 2025 records its gratitude and thanks to Charteris and his supporters for the vision and commitment that led to the creation of the Guild and for the sure foundations they laid on which we now build.

That the organisation continues to be so important to so many some 138 years later is testament not only to those who founded the organisation, but to the generations since then, the pioneers of the faith, who have built on those foundations, enabling the Guild to grow and develop whilst facing challenges both within and out with the church.

The Guild began before women had the right to vote, before women were ordained to ministry or were elders, yet into that world the Guild gave women a voice within the church and the opportunity to express their faith in the wider world through worship, prayer and action.

The Guild has been able to survive because of its ability to adapt to change and to re-invent itself to suit the day. The constants have not been about structures or constitutions, but rather about faith and fellowship; about commitment and concern for the world we live in.

From its earliest days the Guild has stood alongside the most marginalised in society, the homeless, refugees mothers struggling with post-natal depression and today the Guild continues to speak up against injustice and inequality both at home and overseas.

The Young Adult Guild relaunched as LIFT (Love in Fellowship and Trust) at last year's General Assembly is progressing well, meeting online monthly and discussing a range of issues and ideas that have challenged and inspired in equal measure.

The six projects chosen were:

Blether with Beat, supporting people living with and affected by eating disorders run by BEAT.

Finding homes for vulnerable children through fostering and adoption with Home for Good.

Chocolate Heaven, ensuring a fair price for cocoa producers in South East Asia working with Pioneers UK.

Finding a Light in Every Child, working with Starchild to build a school for children with special educational needs in Uganda.

Hear my Voice, supporting women to gain theological training with UNIDA in Brazil.

Kazunzu Village of Hope in Tanzania, where Vine Trust have built homes for children orphaned as a result of HIV and other diseases.

Despite all the challenges Guilds across the country embraced these projects and found new and innovative ways to raise money. To date over £550,000 has been raised to enable these projects to fulfil their objectives, a truly remarkable amount.

Wednesday was also Forces Chaplains Day. The Convener was pleased to advise that there has been an uplift in numbers applying to all three services. Major General Robin Lindsay addressed the Assembly supporting the considerable work done by Chaplains.

Thursday saw the remainder of business and in the afternoon a number of long serving members of staff who are retiring were presented to the Assembly. Considerable experience is being lost. The Lord High Commissioner addressed the Assembly advising on her visits to Stirling and Dundee during the week and expressing her deep gratitude to the King for giving her this opportunity which she clearly cherished.

A long, tiring week with two long days (Monday 9.15 to 7.30pm and Tuesday 9.15 to 6.25pm). Quite how they will fit in all the business into four days remains to be seen. The reason for moving to four days (Friday to Monday) is to try to encourage younger working people to attend. Fine if you live near Edinburgh but for those in the north it will still be a 6 day trip having to be there early on the Friday morning and no doubt late on the Monday evening. There will be less time for debate - some committees may only report every second year and less time for fellowship with others which is so important. **The message was that the Church of Scotland is broke.....**

All the Assembly Reports and speeches are on line on the Church of Scotland Website they are well worth reading.

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/general-assembly/general-assembly-2025/reports-and-additional-documents> Christine MacKenzie, Session Clerk

CHRISTIAN AID FUNDRAISING WEEK 11-17 2025

Christian Aid Coffee Morning with Plant Sale and Baking Stall On another sunny morning on Saturday 10 May the annual Coffee Morning for Christian Aid took place at St



Stephen's. Plants were snapped up from the stall on the grass raising £504 in donations; the Hamper raffle raised £165; the Baking Stall £249.60, and donations for refreshments £785.70. This total came to £1,704.30 which was an increase on the £1,590 last year. Well done and thank you to all who set up the hall, baked, served at stalls and tables, cleared up in the kitchen and counted the money. Great to have such a successful event raising money for the parts of the world badly affected by climate change harming their agriculture.

CHRISTIAN AID ENVELOPES AND ONLINE GIVING Many thanks to the army of volunteers who delivered envelopes again this year. We were a slightly depleted crew so anyone new who would like to help next year please let me know. We raised £1,006.70 including Gift Aid from the envelopes and £1,287.50 was donated to our online page so far, including gift aid. A total of £2,294.20 which is a big increase from £1,426 last year so worth the shoe leather!

So a grand total raised so far including our coffee morning of **£3,998.50**. Well done to everyone for making this possible. This is up nearly 30% on last year's total. Deborah Macrae.

80th Anniversary of Christian Aid A service to celebrate was held in St Giles on Saturday 18 May. Those attending were all given a small card to take away and I thought it would be good to share the words on the card:

The unstoppable power of hope

Lift up the weak and humble the powerful

Make love our foundation

Let peace and justice flow like a river that never runs dry
Amen

Prayer by Peter Nasir

General Secretary, East Jerusalem YMCA

Year after year, mair mountains climbed
mair lang miles walked, mair red tins filled
mair bridges crossed, mair banners waved
mair choirs and dancers, shows and speeches, cakes and scones

mair prayers raised tae the heavens year after year after year

"the ones that give life" by Rev Kathy Galloway - Kathy has worked for Christian Aid and Church Action on Poverty, and in 2002 was elected first female leader of the Iona Community. Christine Mackenzie

80TH ANNIVERSARY OF VE DAY As Chair of Inverness town-Twinning I was privileged, along with the Provost and Civic Party, to attend the celebrations in St-Valery-en-Caux.

Thursday 8 May At 9.30am we followed the Colours which were piped in to the oldest Catholic Church for Mass, following which we walked behind the Inverness Pipe Band to the Railway Station (now a memorial) for a short

ceremony and wreath laying. This was followed by lunch hosted by the Mayor and the Town Council in the Hôtel de Ville (Town House). The next ceremony took place at the 51st Highland Division Memorial which is situated high on a hill overlooking the town; again we were piped from the car park to the memorial. More speeches in French and English and more wreath laying. From the monument we headed to a small cemetery where there were some Military Graves for a short ceremony was held. From there we visited the Military Cemetery for one of three ceremonies. All together we attended six ceremonies. All speeches were translated from French to English, and English to French. A very moving and emotional day.

Friday 9 May Again at 9.30 am, we assembled at the Hôtel de Ville, when the Pipe Band played a selection of music suitable for the occasion, as requested by St Valery. We then followed the Band through the streets, with citizens joining in, to a service which was held at the Memorial Plaque for Charles de Gaulle. After lunch we headed to a small town close to St Valery called Ville de Rose, where there is a small Military Cemetery. On arrival at the cemetery we each received two cream roses; we stood between two graves and laid one rose on each grave. The graves I laid my roses on were the last resting place of a 19-year old, the other known only to God. Very emotional afternoon. Christina Cameron.



A further selection of photos can be found at the end of this issue.

FUNERALS

30 May 2025 Dr Morag Bratten, formerly of
11 Harris Road

PARISH EVENTS - CROWN AND OHSS

SWEATY CHURCH/SNAC BBQ Come along to this all-age event for fun, food and fellowship.

A colorful poster for a BBQ party. At the top, it says 'SWEATY CHURCH' in large red letters and 'CROWN SNAC' in red letters. In the center, there is an illustration of a barbecue grill with food cooking on it, including corn, vegetables, and meat. Above the grill, there is a small logo that says 'Young CROWN'. Below the grill, it says 'Please come to the End Of Term Games & BBQ for OHSS Sweaty Church and Crown SNAC'. A large red banner across the middle says 'BBQ PARTY ALL ARE WELCOME'. At the bottom, it says 'CROWN PRIMARY SCHOOL PLAYING GROUNDS (CROWN CHURCH IF POOR WEATHER) Free parking available at school 28TH JUNE 5PM TO 7PM'. At the very bottom, it says 'Donations can be made on the day to Young Crown SCO45802 if you wish.'

OTHER NEWS

Tuesday, 17 June 2025
20.00
St. Stephen's Church
Southside Road at Old Edinburgh Road
Inverness. IV2 4XA

Choral music
from the 17th
to the 21th century

Henry Purcell
Heinrich Schütz
Joseph Gabriel Rheinberger
Ola Gjeilo
John Rutter and more

Degerlocher Kantorei
Michaelskirche Stuttgart-Degerloch
Barbara Straub, conductor

Free entry with retiring collection



GREETINGS TO OLD HIGH ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH

Rebecca, Sharon and I want to thank you for your Easter Sunday hospitality. We greatly enjoyed Easter service and the incredibly warm welcome we received from the entire congregation. We had the best time on our tour of Inverness, Loch Ness, Loch Rannoch, Dunkeld, St. Andrews and Edinburgh. We have all returned home to the Seattle, Washington area and wanted to extend our thanks.

Should you find yourself in Kingston, Washington please stop by my library and say hello! Leigh Ann Winterowd.

80TH ANNIVERSARY OF VE DAY - A selection of photos.



Mission Conference At St Stephen's Hall at 11am on 14 June 2025

Discerning Our Mission

Saturday 14th June

Venue: St Stephen's Church Hall

Purpose:

To equip our congregation to develop a Mission Development Plan (MDP) that reflects our calling, place, and the Five Marks of Mission.

Overview of the Five Marks of Mission:

1. **Tell** – To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom
2. **Teach** – To teach, baptise and nurture new believers
3. **Tend** – To respond to human need by loving service
4. **Transform** – To seek to transform unjust structures of society
5. **Treasure** – To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation

Programme Outline

11.00	Welcome and Introduction
11.15	Exploring the 5 marks of mission
12 noon	Our story/history
12.30	What's missing/needed
13.00	Lunch
13.30	Imagining the future
14.00	Shaping the plan
14.45	Closing

As it is a relatively late start, we will begin sharp at 11am, hopefully everyone will have had time for a coffee before they arrive. Car Parking is available at the Southside Dental Practise (28 Southside Road) and Accountants next to Crown Court Hotel. There will be limited parking at the church. Please confirm if you can attend by e-mailing Pat MacLeod on invernesschurch@gmail.com or telephone 07934 285924. For catering purposes please confirm if you have any food allergies.