

Newsletter

Crown Church, Inverness

**December 2025 and January 2026:
No. 816**

Parish Minister: Rev Douglas Robertson



SUNDAY SERVICES

We have two Sunday Morning Services and Douglas is continuing to broadcast the service on Sunday mornings at 11.00 am.

Sunday 7th December The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at 9.30am and 11.00am followed by special prayers

Service of Hope 3pm

Sunday 14th December Morning Worship at 9.30am and 11.00am

Sunday 21st December Morning Worship at 9.30am and 11.00am

Christmas Eve 6.00pm Christmas Family Service

11.30pm Watch Night Service

Christmas Day 10.30am The Celebration of Christmas

Sunday 28th December Morning Worship at 9.30am and 11.00am

MIDMILLS PARISH CHURCH

2026

Sunday 4th January The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at 9.30am and 11.00am followed by special prayers

Sunday 11th January Morning Worship at 9.30 am and 11.00am

Sunday 18th January Morning Worship at 9.30 am and 11.00am

Sunday 25th January Morning Worship at 9.30 am and 11.00am



'For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'

Isaiah 9:6

From the Minister

Dear Members and Friends of Crown Church,

Advent is a wonderful season, a time of preparation for the celebration of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

As you know, this is also a season of great change for me and Alison and for Crown Church. While Alison and I have had to make certain necessary preparation in advance of moving to Glasgow, the Church has also been preparing itself for the union with Old High St Stephens Church, which we now know will happen on January 1st 2026.



The elders have worked hard over a number of years with our brothers and sisters in Christ at OHSS to bring together some of the functions that are the beating heart of the church, such as pastoral care and outreach. The Session Clerks of both churches have developed a very good working relationship and will provide excellent leadership for the coming vacancy.

One of the things that attracted me to Crown Church 6 years ago was the initiative and drive of the congregation, making significant progress with mission-shaped plans during a vacancy, plans which we see the fruits of in the way our building is now used. This vitality, together with leaders of similar faith and quality from OHSS, will stand you all in good stead for the impending vacancy.

Alison and I have really enjoyed Inverness, a town we did not know at all before we moved here. We have been blessed beyond words by the congregation, which has been incredibly supportive of us from the very start. We really do leave with a heavy heart, but believing that this is the right thing to do, a new adventure for us and a new adventure for the church.

When facing the cross, Jesus prayed for the unity of his brothers and sisters in faith: John 17:20-21..... "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

And while I am aware that some members of the new congregation will be struggling, perhaps hurting, because of the way this has all come about, let us also remember Paul's teaching that when one part of the body suffers the whole body suffers. But Jesus is the great healer, and as I've said in both church union situations and in ecumenical relations, whatever might cause us division is nothing compared to Christ who binds us together.

We really do wish you and the new Midmills Parish Church every blessing from God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Douglas and Alison

Midmills Church – worship services



Midmills Parish Church comes into being on New Year's Day – and the first united services, on **Sunday 4th January at 9.30am and 11.00am**, will both include Communion as we come together in union.

Rev Doug McRoberts and Rev James Bissett will share in leading these services, and through January and February will then share responsibility for leading the more formal of the two weekly services – **at 11.00am each week** – while the more informal **all-age family services at 9.30am** will be led by a united worship team.

All Sunday services will be in the former Crown Church building on Midmills Road, with the **9.30** services featuring worship around tables, and children's activities feeding into the worship, while the **11.00** services will be more formal in nature, featuring a wide variety of traditional and newer hymns, with the service centred on hearing God's Word through Bible reading and preaching. This service will be enhanced by the singing of the united choir.

Both services will be followed by refreshments – at 10.15, a chance for both gatherings to meet together over a cup and a chat in the sanctuary, and after the later service a "sit down cuppa" in the upper hall.

This will set the pattern for regular Sunday worship in the united congregation. We look forward to welcoming everyone in worship and fellowship.

Introducing Our New Interim Moderator Mrs Aileen Binner

Approaching her 70th birthday at a time of life when most people are thinking of winding down, if not already retired, Rev Aileen Binner has taken on a new challenge as an Ordained Local Minister (OLM).

Mrs Binner, who lives in North Connel, was ordained at her home church of St. Modan's, Ardchattan Parish, but she will principally serve as an OLM with Kilchrennan, Dalvich and Muckairn, a role she will combine with her job as ministries co-ordinator for Clèir Eilean I, the Presbytery of the Highlands and Hebrides.

This includes providing coverage for vacant congregations as interim moderator.

Mrs Binner said: "I will be 70 next year and I am so excited that I have this new role as OLM alongside working as a ministries coordinator and interim moderator.

"It shows that God has a sense of humour and He is never done with you."

Appropriately for someone born on Bute, islands have featured largely in her interim moderator duties which have seen her visiting Islay and Jura, Bute, Barra and Tiree, as well as mainland parishes including Oban and Glenorchy and Strathfillan and as far north as Old High St Stephen's in Inverness.

As an OLM, although an unpaid voluntary post, she is now a qualified Minister of Word and Sacrament and able to give the sacraments which she was previously unable to as a Reader in the Church of Scotland.

"As I worked with more congregations and was asked about baptisms and weddings, I realised that I felt called to be involved in every part of folks' lives in church instead of just handing them on to another minister. It was that call to the sacraments that really spoke to me," Mrs Binner said.

That call was reinforced early in her probationary year with Rev Christine Murdoch in Garelochhead, who allowed Mrs Binner to take the lead for most of a communion service, other than the blessing.

"That was an incredible experience," she recalled.

"The veil between us and the Holy Spirit seemed so much thinner. Being able to share every stage of the Christian journey with people is very meaningful for me."

It is the latest stage of a ministry journey that began back in the 1990s when her minister at the time suggested she try preaching.

Despite her initial reluctance, Mrs Binner took up the challenge and began training as a Reader.

"It has been an incredible journey," Mrs Binner stated.

"I have grown spiritually, I have grown in confidence and over the years, people have said to me: 'Do you not think you should go in for ministry?' But I didn't train until I was in my 40s and at one stage you couldn't train for ministry if you were over 45 so I could always say I was too old."

That changed when a visiting minister asked if she had considered become an OLM and she eventually signed up for an assessment weekend where she remained convinced she would be rejected.

"A few days later, when I checked my emails, I found out that I had been accepted for OLM training and I was ecstatic. At that point I knew what I had to do," she said.

"I didn't have a degree, so studying for a certificate in theology through Aberdeen University was hard, but God sustained me and I got through and the things that I learned doing that have helped deepen my faith and realise that it is OK to think differently."

Husband Andrew, who has been a great support through her ministry journey, was joined by son Alastair, daughter Victoria and their families at Mrs Binner's ordination service in Benderloch, which was also well attended by friends and Presbytery colleagues. However, her second daughter, Louise, who lives in Australia with her wife and sons, was unable to attend.

When not on ministry duties, Mrs Binner, who previously worked for community support charity Home Start, enjoys spending time with her grandchildren and crocheting.

Farewell Lunch on Sunday 21st December



As you will know, the Reverend Douglas Robertson will demit office as Minister of Crown Church at the end of December 2025. In order to give us all an opportunity of saying our farewells to Douglas and Alison, we would like to welcome you to a buffet lunch on Sunday 21st December at around 12 midday after the 11 o'clock service.

The lunch will be served in the upper hall. All are welcome but you must have a ticket as we can only cater for 100 upstairs and we need to know the numbers we are providing for. Tickets will be available free of charge from Fiona in the Church Office or from any member of the Socials Team.

Please make sure to let us know ahead if you have any dietary requirements – food allergy or intolerance or if you are vegetarian – so that we can cater for you.

We are looking forward to seeing you then.

Socials Team (Liz Munro, Liz Benzie, Lesley McRoberts, Dorothy Morrison and Marion Forrest)

SNAC 6th December - With Christmas Unwrapped

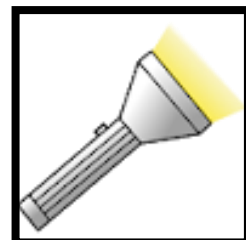
Everyone is welcome to come to the December SNAC to find out about the true meaning of Christmas. Come **at 5pm** for Christmas Unwrapped a family friendly way to discover what it's really all about. Chris Watt from Out of the Box Puppet Theatre will be with us for lots of fun and songs. Christmas food to follow.



Saturday 20th December

Starry Night Walk

Meet at 5pm at Walker Park for a starry stroll to church, carols and festive food - bring a torch!



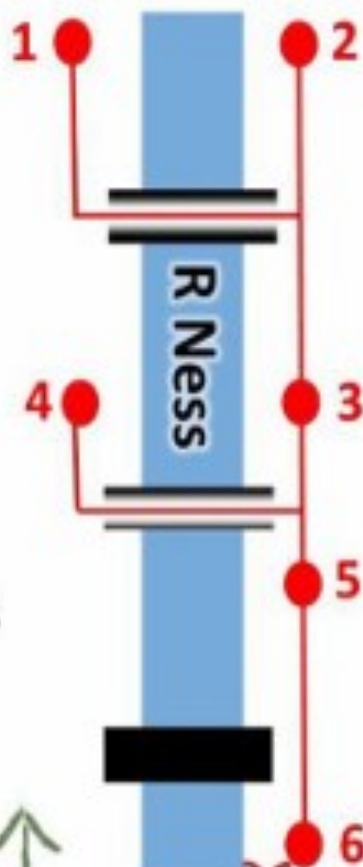
MERRY
CHRISTMAS

CHRISTMAS CAROL CRAWL

INVERNESS CHURCHES TOGETHER

Monday 22nd December

- 1 5pm—Ness Bank
- 2 5.25pm—Cathedral
- 3 5.50pm—St Mary's
- 4 6.15pm—Junction
- 5 6.40pm—Methodist
- 6 7.05pm—Trinity Life
with refreshments



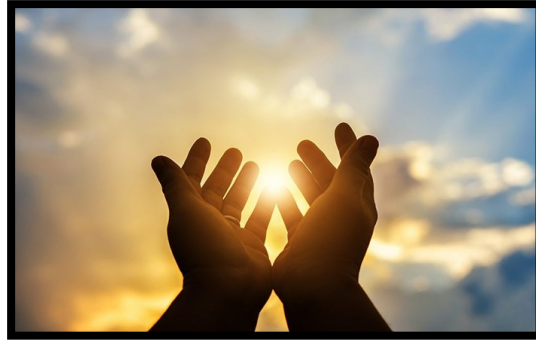
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Inverness Churches Together

Prayer Diary

December 2025 and January 2026

We hope that you will find this prayer diary useful and inspiring in your daily prayer life



December 7 - 13

Give thanks to God for the Advent season as we wait in anticipation with Hope, Peace, Joy and Love for the celebration of the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Come, Emmanuel, Prince of Peace, shine Your light into the darkest places, that the world might witness the brightness of Your glory, full of grace and truth. Amen

Lord, heal and bless our world. Bring comfort and hope as your light pierces the darkness. Amidst the doom-and-gloom reality we pray that Your love will illuminate and forge a path for all. Amen

Pray for the homeless and those cut off from their families, in particular during those long cold winter months, that practical help be made available to meet both their physical and spiritual needs. Pray today for people who have recently suffered bereavement – particularly those who are mourning a family member. Ask God to give them His comfort, strength and hope as they grieve, and to know He is their comforter.

December 14 - 22

Pray for all elderly people in our community, for those living in their own homes or nursing homes and care homes. Pray for strength, resilience and peace among them, their families and staff who support and help look after them.

Pray for our Minister Douglas Robertson and his wife Alison. Give thanks to God for his successful years of service and Ministry to Crown Church family and community. Pray for their continuing blessings and strength in responding to God's call and serving His people. Pray for the prison fellowship. Remember those in prison and pray they may feel a sense of peace and purpose as they serve their sentence. Pray that they can maintain a positive relationship with their families, wherever possible, and remembering those who have no visitors. Pray for all victims of crime and violence, that they find justice, and may they know the love and healing power of the Lord and find the support of their neighbours and friends.

December 23 - 27

Pray Psalm 33: 20-22: "We wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His Holy name. May Your unfailing love be with us Lord, even as we put our hope in You."

Pray for those who will find the coming festive season difficult; those who have lost loved ones recently and are facing the first Christmas without them or those who spend the festive period alone. Pray that God will be with them all and provide comfort.

We rejoice at the Christmas story and give thanks for the birth of Jesus, and knowing that He came on earth and died to save us. Pray that the real meaning of Christmas is not missed, and that the precious truth remains a reality in the hearts and lives of everyone. Pray Isaiah 9:6: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace".

December 28 – January 3

Give thanks to God for the New Year ahead, and hope and pray that each day of the coming year be filled with joy, peace and love.

Pray for the union of our two churches, Old High St Stephens and Crown Church, that the two congregations will continue to grow together in knowledge and love of Christ.

Pray for each and every member of our congregation and the Parish; that God's blessings and grace be upon them and sustain them in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

Pray for all who are in care or nursing homes and for their families, friends and relatives. Give thanks for the dedication of the staff who work hard together to ensure the well-being of all people in those homes. Pray Romans 8:39. 'Whether in heights or depths, light or darkness, may you never forget God's unending love for you'.

January 4 - 10

Pray for our hospitals. Thank God for the medical staff at our local hospital. Praise Him for the NHS and ask Him to lift the burden of busy workloads and long hours and to give the staff strength, joy and stamina to work hard and deliver excellent care to their patients.

Lift up the emergency services today and pray for the people in our daily lives who we often take for granted. Thank God for the everyday heroes who risk so much for us so that we can live safe lives, and pray for opportunities to thank them ourselves.

Give thanks for the Street Pastors and pray for spiritual guidance and strength for the work they do in helping and supporting vulnerable people in our town late in the nights. Heavenly Father – You give us Your peace and You are with us at all times and in every way. We pray to be reminded of that every day, and to bring that peace to a world that so often spins too quickly to remember it. Thank you for your grace and love. Amen

January 11 - 17

Pray Philippians 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."

Pray for all those living with addictions; for assurance that there is a way forward and that they can lead strong and fulfilling lives.

Pray for peace in our world; that all people may live free from violence, in safety and security, and with hope for the future. We ask for wisdom for our leaders that they make appropriate decisions on behalf of all of us. While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace, we also call for you to bring justice and equity to the peoples.

Pray for people who have been displaced due to conflicts; Give thanks for those who have been able to travel to safety and pray for support for them to adjust to a new life.

January 18 - 24

Pray for practical and political help for all those suffering from fuel poverty and for those most at risk in the cold. Ask God to open our eyes to neighbours or other people in our community who are perhaps struggling to heat their homes, and whether there's anything we can do to help.

Pray for God's light and love to shine into the minds of all who are depressed, anxious or suffering from dementia.

Lord Jesus, You come to us as Prince of Peace. Teach us to know Your reconciling way. Help us to be curious about others' stories. Give us the courage to be present. Inspire us to reimagine what's possible – finding hope by glimpsing You at work. Amen

Pray for people living in fear in their own homes to be able to ask for help. Ask God to provide help for healing of the physical and psychological wounds of those who are suffering domestic violence, and pray for health and social care services, and the police, to be able to keep vulnerable people safe.

January 25 - 31

Thank and praise God for all the children and young people in our churches, communities, country and the world. Ask that God will walk alongside them and grant them courage, strength and wisdom as they face the challenges of life.

Lord, help us not to lean on our own understanding but in everything acknowledge You so that You can direct our words, thoughts and actions, In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Father we lift up the leaders of our country and all those that You have set up in places of authority to rule and govern our nation; for wisdom and guidance in making decision about the future of the country and well-being of the people.

Pray for those who are persecuted and imprisoned because of their faith; give them courage to face their struggles, patience to bear the lies, and hope to see beyond the bars. May we do all we can to let them know that they are not forgotten.

February 1st – February 7

Offer a prayer of personal thanks to God today: Lord, I thank You for prayer – that I can come before You and call You Father; that You listen to me and care about everything I bring before You. Today, above all else, I choose to give You thanks.

Pray for God's revival in our community and congregation. Ask God to open the eyes of the people around us, that they would see His unfailing love and sense His powerful presence and purpose for our lives.

Gracious God, Your unstoppable love reaches out to us in so many surprising ways, particularly in the care we receive from others and in the ways You help us pass on that care. Open our hearts to receive Your compassionate presence from all people, of all ages, at all times and in all places. Amen

Pray for our neighbours, for people who live alone, for people who are struggling with illness and for God's peace to fall on them. Pray for protection and safety over our neighbours' homes and families, and ask God to give us opportunities and courage to share His love with those around us.



If you have particular prayer requests for February 2026 please do send them to our Church Administrator, Fiona who will pass them on, or e-mail Jude Madeleine; judedmond@yahoo.co.uk



THE OLIVE GROVE

The Olive Grove Café will be closed on the 18th of December and will reopen on the 14th of January.

As the skies darkened and the winds began to howl, Storm Amy arrived.

Named storms often signal significant weather events, and Amy was no exception. With the potential to threaten people, property, and infrastructure, the storm's approach was predicted and closely monitored by meteorologists.

As the wind howled and rain lashed relentlessly, our conservatory roof made sounds I had never heard before. Despite the storm's fury, I absolutely had to venture out in our car. However, just 200 metres along the road, I encountered a blockade of fallen trees, forcing me to turn around and return home.

Forecasters accurately predicted the timing of Amy's impact, yet her sudden and intense arrival caught many off guard. The ferocity with which Amy unleashed her power left a lasting impression, highlighting the importance of preparedness in the face of nature's unpredictable might.

The main thing about Storm Amy is that we knew to expect her and we were, to some extent, able to take certain precautions to reduce the risk of her impact.

It led me to think of another storm, not in Inverness but on the Sea of Galilee some 2,000 years ago. The geography of that area means that fierce storms can blow up suddenly and without warning, and the sea can become a frenzy of white water in a few minutes.

Thus it was when Jesus and his men were fishing on the Sea of Galilee. Although the disciples were fishing, Jesus was asleep - he'd had a busy day and was enjoying a well-earned snooze. A violent storm broke over the sea and struck terror into the disciples. They were experienced fishermen, they knew how to read the sea, they would have come through many storms in the past, but this one was different, and they were terrified.

What were they to do? Aware of who Jesus is - and they had seen him perform miracles - they woke him and asked him to intervene. He did! He said, "Peace be still," and there was a great and sudden calm.

And life can be a bit like that; things are going smoothly and well, then a sudden crisis hits. Maybe an unexpected and difficult diagnosis, an unforeseen redundancy, a sudden bereavement, etc. The calm sea of our life is churned up, the waves threaten to overwhelm us, we are in free-fall panic; the situation in which we find ourselves is spiralling out of control. That is when we need to hear Jesus speak into our lives as he spoke into the lives of his disciples long ago, "Listen, my friend. Peace be still."

If you are sailing through troubled seas just now, may you know that special peace that only God can give.

The hymn writer puts it so well:

*I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest;
Lay down, O weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast".*

STEWART ROBERTSON

Baptism at Church



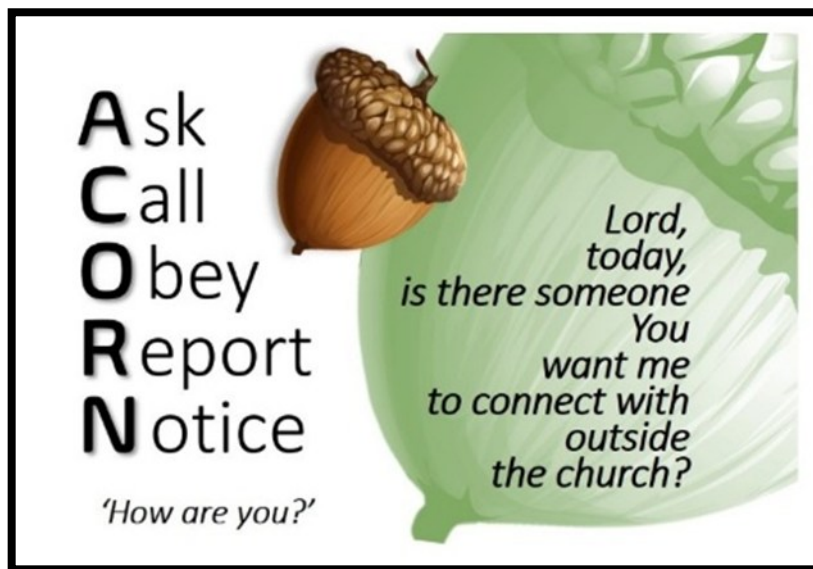
It was wonderful to be together to celebrate the baptism of Ethan Conner with his family and friends on Sunday 30th November 2025.

A Very Special Service and a Very Happy Morning

Charlie Forbes: Honorary Life Membership of Scottish Athletics



Many congratulations to Charlie with this recognition for his outstanding contribution to Scottish Athletics. He has been an influential presence, a mentor and a driving force behind so many athletes over the years, and his impact on Inverness Harriers and the wider community of Scottish Athletics has been immeasurable.



Finding God Among Us – In the park

'We had sat down on a bench in one of the large parks. A dog came up to check us out and say hello. A lady followed. I knew her. Back in the day, she used to come with her family to our church. I had not seen her for years. She recognised us too. We had a lovely chat at the end of which I was able to invite her back to church. She did not seem against the idea at all.

Interesting that it seemed so clear that God wanted us to meet. I often pray whom He wants me to connect with. It was undoubtedly her that day. The connection was already there, between our families, though it was rusty, it was easy to shake some of that off. And, who knows, she might be back, knowing we would welcome her with open arms.'

ACORN Meeting

**Every fortnight on Monday, December 1st & 15th
19:30 – 20:45**

CROWN CHURCH – Small Meeting Room

Everyone welcome for a friendly and informal discussion about doing discipleship and mission, and explore what is God doing in me, through me and in the other?

From January

**Every fortnight on Monday, starting January 12th
19:30 – 20:45**

MIDMILLS CHURCH – Small Meeting Room

'What is God doing in the other person?' Open discussion sessions

What if mission is that simple; just figuring out what He is up to and join Him? We will listen to a modern-day parable, told by Rob Rawson, former National mission worker and then ask various questions.

These will be encouraging, strengthening and deepening conversations that will deepen our faith and open our eyes and hearts, and get us going in mission in easy, but amazing ways.

Many how have done these found them 'eye-opening' and say 'I had no idea God was doing all that.'

For more information, contact/WhatsApp Jude Madeleine on 07813892280 or John/ Marion Barbour on 07810407231

Paul Haringman ACORN National Director (Scotland) Tel 07837 903277

Retiral of Flower Convener



Ruby Coe is retiring as Flower Convener -a post she has carried out with flair and dedication since 2008. Team members have come and gone during that time, but flowers have always graced the Sanctuary for services, before later being taken with our good wishes to members of the congregation whom we are particularly remembering. There have been some wonderful displays for festivals, thanks to Ruby's planning and organisation, and often she herself has arranged flowers for funerals and the occasional wedding as well as regular services. Thank you Ruby for sharing your artistic skills with us, and for encouraging so many others to believe that they too can prepare arrangements.

Eileen Ardern

Can anyone help?

We have received an enquiry from the daughter of a gentleman whom we think might have been baptised in Crown church in 1931/32.

The lady has explained that she has her father's bible, the inscription in which indicates that it was presented to him at the promotion service at Crown school on 12th September 1943.

Her father's name is William J Chisholm and his date of birth is 21/11/31. Her grandparents lived in a house in Inverness called "Hillary".

If these details ring a bell with any of our readers, I would be grateful if they could contact me and let me know.

Bob Forrest
Session Clerk

NHS Highland Spiritual Care Team

The NHS Highland Spiritual Care Team is currently looking for volunteers to join us as Service Helpers. These volunteers play a valued role in supporting our monthly hospital services by helping to bring patients from the wards to attend. The commitment is light — a maximum of 2 hours once a month — yet the impact is significant.

Volunteers help ensure that patients who wish to participate in spiritual care and worship have the opportunity to do so in a supportive and compassionate environment.

Training and guidance will be provided, and volunteers will be well supported by the Spiritual Care Team

Your support helps us extend care and compassion to the patients in Raigmore.

The poster below provides more information.

Many thanks

Warm wishes

Cate Otnes

Health and Social Care Chaplain

NHS Highland Spiritual Care Team

Tel: 01463 704463

Mobile: 07484081555

Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

Email: cate.otanes@nhs.scot



The poster is for NHS Highland Spiritual Care Team Volunteer Opportunities. It features the NHS Highland logo at the top right and the NHS Chaplaincy logo at the top left. The main title is 'Volunteer Opportunities'. Below it, it states: 'We are looking for caring, connectable people to support the work of the Spiritual Care Team (mainly in Raigmore Hospital)'. It then lists two options: 'Services' and 'Ward Visiting'. The 'Services' option includes: 'Up to 2 hours (once a month)', 'Collecting and returning patients from wards in wheelchairs', and 'Supporting patients to participate in worship...'. The 'Ward Visiting' option includes: 'Up to 2 hours a week (weekdays)', 'Visiting allocated patients on wards', and 'Liaising with Chaplains'. Below this, it states: 'FULL TRAINING WILL BE PROVIDED REGARDING:'. The training points are: 'NHS Volunteer Induction', 'PVG & Occupational Health screening', 'Confidentiality & maintaining appropriate boundaries', and 'Role specific training'. At the bottom, it says: 'For more information or to apply please contact: Cate Otnes, cate.otanes@nhs.scot, 01463 704463'. There are two circular images: one showing a volunteer assisting an elderly patient in a wheelchair, and another showing a volunteer talking to a patient in a hospital bed.

NHS Highland

Volunteer Opportunities

We are looking for caring, connectable people to support the work of the Spiritual Care Team (mainly in Raigmore Hospital).

We currently need help with either...

Services

- Up to 2 hours (once a month)
- Collecting and returning patients from wards in wheelchairs
- Supporting patients to participate in worship...

or

Ward Visiting

- Up to 2 hours a week (weekdays)
- Visiting allocated patients on wards
- Liaising with Chaplains

FULL TRAINING WILL BE PROVIDED REGARDING:

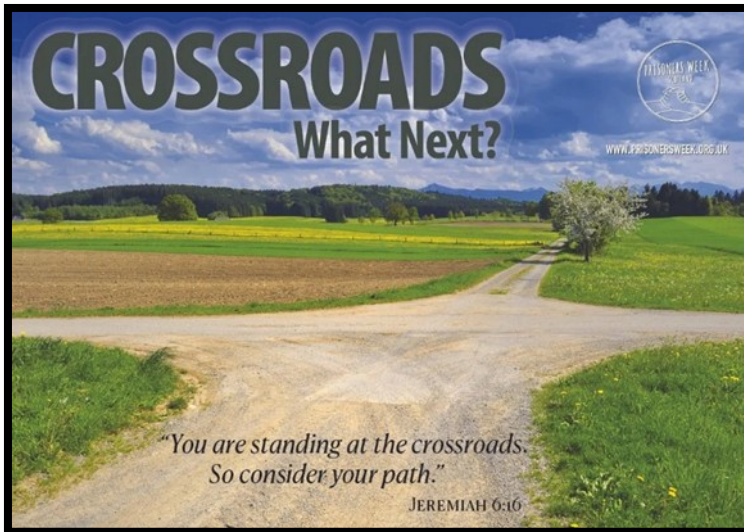
- NHS Volunteer Induction
- PVG & Occupational Health screening
- Confidentiality & maintaining appropriate boundaries
- Role specific training

For more information or to apply please contact:

Cate Otnes
cate.otanes@nhs.scot
01463 704463

Prisoner's Week Talk at Crown Church on 23rd November

by David Martin



I am aware that people will say; ***Prisoners Week, but what about the victims?***

Well, We must be mindful of both Prisoners and Victims, it is not one or the other, the spotlight is on Prisoners today.

There is Victim's Awareness Week in mid February. And we have just listened to the story of the Good Samaritan who attended a victim.

Who are we looking to for action and support? Well the public, communities, and churches.

Prison Fellowship is an international ecumenical faith organisation. so how does it work in Inverness today! As Prison Fellowship - Inverness, we are 10 volunteers drawn from Church of Scotland, The Free Church, and The new Vineyard Church. We are ecumenical and sit under the Prison Chaplains, and are always looking for new volunteers.

Is it safe for us to go into prison? We get training. We go into prison in pairs and have not had any issues in over 25 years. In fact we laugh a lot, we are among imaginative story tellers! We meet over a cup of tea and biscuits, we get to know the men, listen, never judge. For their part they respect us as different from their keepers. They can't believe that we would come in unpaid to spend time with them. We give them time, listen, encourage, introduce them to Jesus who gives them hope. One man declined a dental appointment to attend our session, another opted to come to 'The God Squad' instead of The Book Club.

On a Monday afternoon it is Bible Study, the same on Thursday evening. It is interesting comparing Doug and Lesley's bible study to that in the prison. We are never short of readers. One man was desperate to read, he explained afterwards he had only recently learnt to read in prison. The others applauded him in encouragement. On a Friday night it is Music Night where the prisoners' talents come to the fore. We attend the weekly service taken by a Chaplain, and take that service once a month. We also do Alpha, and Restorative Justice sessions. In all we will have over 1000 prisoner contacts a year, some of them are the same men. Prisoners get moved, and liberated. I would like to tell you more about Inverness Prison, capacity 110, and the expectations for the new prison, capacity 200, but don't have time this morning, but would be happy to on another occasion.

In conclusion, returning to the ***Prisoners Week theme: Crossroads: What Next?*** Many lives are at a Crossroads, especially prisoners and their families, here and across the world; in the Middle East, in Ukraine, in our politics and this week's budget, and of course this church is at a Crossroads - What Next, as the union with OHSS moves on to an implementation stage and we look for a new leader next year.

Now I am well aware that Peter Donald was a prison Chaplain, and your then minister, presented opportunities which you took up, so I feel I am visiting familiar ground. It takes an enormous commitment of time, patience, and resource to work with an individual with multiple and complex problems, as anyone in the CAB, teaching, or support services knows. But Jesus asks us to love our neighbour, and to visit people in prison. It is as clear a command as any missional work needs to have.

If we are searching for a joint missionary project may I suggest The Prison, currently in OHSS Parish. I am not sure whose Parish the new Prison will be, but we in Prison Fellowship are happy to welcome new volunteers. Not everyone in Prison Fellowship wants to go into a prison, but as you know help and a welcome are needed on Liberation. Which Church can we direct ex offenders towards ? Where will they get a warm welcome?

Some of our members, due to age or for other reasons (e.g. one lives in Orkney), just pray and that is a powerful mission.

Jeremiah spoke, was listened to, but not heeded. I thank you for your attention, and the invitation to speak! Shalom.

Life at the Crossroads

Life can be full of decisions – we make hundreds every day. Some of these are pretty trivial, others can be momentous and have long-lasting implications. At times like this we can feel paralysed, not knowing which way to turn. Life at the Crossroads.

For many in prison, this also can be a time of Crossroads in their lives. Do they change direction? Reconsider where they are wanting to go? Do they stick to the familiar trails, or venture down an unknown path?

Our Criminal Justice System is also at Crossroads. Faced with stubbornly high prison numbers, and a system that seems to be broken, what is the right path for the policy makers to take? Do they stick to the familiar trails, or venture down an unknown path?

This year's Prisoners Week theme invites us all to consider our paths. We are standing at the Crossroads – what is the right way to turn?

Prisoners Week Prayer

Lord, you offer freedom to all people.
We pray for those who are held in prison.
Break the bonds of fear and isolation that exist.
Support with your love:
prisoners, their families and friends, prison staff,
chaplains and all who care.
Heal those who have been wounded by the activities of others,
especially the victims of crime.
Help us to forgive one another.
To act justly.
To love mercy.
And walk humbly together with Christ.
In His strength and in His Spirit.
Now and every day
Amen.

HIGHLAND FOODBANK

As we enter this season of hope, joy, and celebration, we are reminded once again of the true heart of Christmas: *God's love made visible through generosity and compassion*. While many of us gather with family, share meals, and enjoy the blessings of the season, there are individuals and families in our own community who are facing real hardship.

Our local Foodbank continues to see rising demand, especially during the winter months. For some, Christmas is not a time of abundance, but a time of worry—wondering how they will provide a warm meal, or whether they'll be able to put anything special on the table at all.

This year, as a church family, we have an opportunity to shine Christ's light more brightly than ever. By giving a little extra—whether it's a few extra tins, a bag of pasta, Christmas treats, toiletries, or a financial gift—we can offer hope to those who need it most. Every contribution, big or small, becomes a practical expression of God's love.



Let us remember the words of Jesus: *"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."* (Matthew 25:40)

May we respond with open hearts and generous hands, so that no one in our community feels forgotten this Christmas. Together, we can bring comfort, dignity, and joy to families who need our support.

CHRISTMAS GIFT OF POTMUMS



Potmums is possibly a word peculiar to Crown Church. Many years ago Crown Church gifted chrysanthemums to those who were bereaved and to those who were housebound. The pot plants were named potmums. The name continues although more recently cyclamen plants have been delivered with Christmas wishes. This year it will be cyclamen once again and as before Simpsons Garden Centre has been especially helpful in providing the cyclamen. Very many thanks to them.

So if you know of someone who has been unable to attend church please contact Fiona at the church office 01463 231140 or office@crown-church.co.uk. The plants will be available on Sunday 14th of December after morning services for elders/friends to pick up and deliver.

Some 50-60 people enjoy a visit from a church elder or a member every year. The visit and the potmums bringing good wishes and cheerful news.

Thank you

Ann Johnston



The flower arrangers plan to decorate the church on Saturday, 20th December. They would be very grateful for donations of greenery, i.e. ivy, holly and conifer. Please leave them in the church either on the Friday or Saturday.

Daily Bible Readings for December and January

Sunday, November 30, 2025, Daniel 3:1, 8-30 Daniel: The Fiery Furnace

Monday, December 1, 2025, Daniel 2:24-49 Nebuchadnezzar's Dream Interpreted

Tuesday, December 2, 2025, Daniel 5:1-12 Belshazzar's Feast

Wednesday, December 3, 2025, Daniel 5:13-30 The Writing on the Wall

Thursday, December 4, 2025, Daniel 6:6-27 The Lions' Pit

Friday, December 5, 2025, Daniel 7:1-18 The Four Beasts

Saturday, December 6, 2025, Daniel 12:1-3; 5-13 The End of Days

Sunday, December 7, 2025, Ezekiel 37:1-14 Ezekiel: Valley of Dry Bones

Monday, December 8, 2025, Ezekiel 1:1-14 The Vision of the Chariot

Tuesday, December 9, 2025, Ezekiel 1:15-28 The Vision of the Chariot

Wednesday, December 10, 2025, Ezekiel 2:1-3:11 The Vision of the Scroll

Thursday, December 11, 2025, Ezekiel 40:1-19 The Vision of the New Temple

Friday, December 12, 2025, Ezekiel 40:20-37 The Vision of the New Temple

Saturday, December 13, 2025, Ezekiel 40:38-47 The Vision of the New Temple

Sunday, December 14, 2025, Isaiah 55:1-11 Word Accomplishes God's Purpose

Monday, December 15, 2025, Isaiah 40:1-11 God's People Are Comforted

Tuesday, December 16, 2025, Isaiah 53:2-12 The Suffering Servant

Wednesday, December 17, 2025, Isaiah 57:14-21 A Promise of Help and Healing

Thursday, December 18, 2025, Isaiah 59:1-8 Injustice and Oppression to Be Punished

Friday, December 19, 2025, Isaiah 61:1-13 The Good News of Deliverance

Saturday, December 20, 2025, Isaiah 65:17-25 The Glorious New Creation

Sunday, December 21, 2025, John 1:1-18 Word Made Flesh

Monday, December 22, 2025, Luke 1:26-38 Birth of Jesus Foretold

Tuesday, December 23, 2025, Luke 1:39-56 Mary Visits Elizabeth

Wednesday, December 24, 2025, Luke 2:1-14 [15-20] Birth of Jesus

Thursday, December 25, 2025, Luke 2:8-20 Shepherds Visit

Friday, December 26, 2025, Matthew 2:1-12 Wise Men

Saturday, December 27, 2025, Luke 2:41-52 The Boy Jesus in the Temple

Sunday, December 28, 2025, John 1:19-34 A Voice in the Wilderness

Monday, December 29, 2025, Psalm 32:1-2 The Joy of Forgiveness I

Tuesday, December 30, 2025, Psalm 32:3-4 The Joy of Forgiveness II

Wednesday, December 31, 2025, Psalm 32:5 The Joy of Forgiveness III

Thursday, January 1, 2026, Psalm 32:6-7 The Joy of Forgiveness IV

Friday, January 2, 2026, Psalm 32:8-9 The Joy of Forgiveness V

Saturday, January 3, 2026, Psalm 32:10-11 The Joy of Forgiveness VI

Sunday, January 4, 2026, John 1:35-51 Jesus Says Come and See

Monday, January 5, 2026, Psalm 66:1-5 Praise for God's Goodness to Israel I

Tuesday, January 6, 2026, Psalm 66:6-7 Praise for God's Goodness to Israel II

Wednesday, January 7, 2026, Psalm 66:8-12 Praise for God's Goodness to Israel III

Thursday, January 8, 2026, Psalm 66:13-15 Praise for God's Goodness to Israel IV

Friday, January 9, 2026, Psalm 66:16-19 Praise for God's Goodness to Israel V

Saturday, January 10, 2026, Psalm 66:20 Praise for God's Goodness to Israel VI

Sunday, January 11, 2026, John 2:1-11 Wedding at Cana

Monday, January 12, 2026, John 2:12 Jesus Goes to Capernaum

Tuesday, January 13, 2026, Psalm 104:1-9 God the Creator and Provider I

Wednesday, January 14, 2026, Psalm 104:10-23 God the Creator and Provider II

Thursday, January 15, 2026, Psalm 104:24-26 God the Creator and Provider III

Friday, January 16, 2026, Psalm 104:27-30 God the Creator and Provider IV

Saturday, January 17, 2026, Psalm 104:31-35 God the Creator and Provider V

Sunday, January 18, 2026, John 2:13-25 Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Monday, January 19, 2026, Psalm 127:1-2 God's Blessing in the Home I

Tuesday, January 20, 2026, Psalm 127:3-5 God's Blessing in the Home II

Wednesday, January 21, 2026, Psalm 128:1-2 The Happy Home of the Faithful I

Thursday, January 22, 2026, Psalm 128:3-4 The Happy Home of the Faithful II

Friday, January 23, 2026, Psalm 128: 5-6 The Happy Home of the Faithful III

Saturday, January 24, 2026, Psalm 129:1-8 Prayer for the Downfall of Israel's Enemies

Sunday, January 25, 2026, John 3:1-21 Nicodemus

Monday, January 26, 2026, John 3:22-30 Jesus and John the Baptist

Tuesday, January 27, 2026, John 3:31-36 The One Who Comes from Heaven

Wednesday, January 28, 2026, Psalm 139:1-6 The Inescapable God I

Thursday, January 29, 2026, Psalm 139:7-12 The Inescapable God II

Friday, January 30, 2026, Psalm 139:13-18 The Inescapable God III

Saturday, January 31, 2026, Psalm 139:19-24 The Inescapable God IV





The Church of Scotland

STAMP APPEAL 2025-2026

**Collect your stamps to
support the work of
the Al Ahli Hospital in
Northern Gaza.**



The hospital is the only Christian hospital in the Gaza Strip and Gaza's only cancer hospital. It serves in time of calm during the occupation and despite all, and through all the bombing since Oct 2023, the hospital has continued to serve the population in whatever way they can with the small resources they have and with staff working hours under difficult conditions.

The hospital is run by our partner church, the Episcopal Church in Jerusalem and the Middle East.

HOW TO CONTRIBUTE:

Post your stamps to Stamp Appeal 2025, Keith Scott, Dene Hard, Garelochhead, Helensburgh, G84 0EL.
For other options and more information visit: www.churchofscotland.org.uk/stamps

Scottish Charity Number: SC011353

www.churchofscotland.org.uk

www.facebook.com/churchofscotland
[@churchscotland](https://twitter.com/churchscotland)

Stamp Project 2025-2026

"There are no winners in war"

The Christmas 2025 appeal is in support of the Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza.

The Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Northern Gaza has been in operation since 1882. It is owned and run today by the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem, a partner Church of the Church of Scotland. The hospital is the only Christian hospital in the Gaza Strip and Gaza's only cancer hospital. It normally handles around 300 surgeries and 600 radiological and a total of 3,000 outpatient visits per month. It is supported by international charities such as Embrace the Middle East. In times of calm during the occupation of Gaza, Al Ahli Hospital runs as any normal hospital with varying departments and an Accident and Emergency dealing with the usual day to day ailments of a population.

Since the beginning of the conflict in Gaza in October 2023, the Al Ahli Anglican Hospital has conducted emergency operations 24 hours per day, operating on 30-35 people per day.

After 56 years the Church of Scotland Stamp project is coming to an end in February 2026. Over these decades an amazing total of £96,495.67 has been raised for projects across the World.

I am planning to take the stamps from Crown Church to the collection centre in Glasgow on 23rd January 2026 so all stamps need to be dropped off on Sunday 18th January at the latest.

Liz Munro

CHRISTMAS POST

If you are planning to send Christmas Greetings to other members of the Congregation this year, you might like to leave them in the Church Pigeonholes and save postage!



Welcome Team

December 7th	John & Marion Barbour, Sheena Ferguson
December 14th	John & Marion Barbour, Sheena Ferguson , Val Little
December 21st	John & Marion Barbour, Sheena Ferguson , Val Little
December 24th 6.00pm	Sheona, Brian, Ryan & Isla MacKenzie
December 24th 11.30pm	John & Marion Barbour, Sally & Frank McCubbin, Brian MacGill
December 25th	Margot Tuley, John & Marion Barbour, Jane Smith
December 28th	Douglas and Jane Wilson, Brian and Sheona MacKenzie

As we enjoy our newly refurbished premises, perhaps now more so than ever it is important that we can offer a friendly presence at our doorways.

If you feel you could help, even if it is just one Sunday, please do contact Fiona at the Church Office.

Readers

December 7th	Pat Crippin
December 14th	Fiona MacNeil
December 21st	Alison Robertson
December 24th (Watchnight service)	Brian MacGill
December 28th	Mairi Main
January 4th	Lesley McRoberts

Crown Church and Old High St Stephens Church will be uniting on the 1st of January 2026 and so this will be the last newsletter to be published by Crown Church.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to the newsletter, it has been great to have so many articles each month to publish.

The first edition of the new Midmills Parish Church newsletter will be in February 2026. Pat MacLeod, has kindly agreed to edit this newsletter and the email address and date for submissions will be confirmed early in the New Year.

Fiona Carter

Minister Rev Douglas Robertson, 39 Southside Road, 07547976054
drrobertson@churchofscotland.org.uk

Crown Church Office: office@crown-church.co.uk 01463 231140

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