

The Herald

Castlehill Parish Church

Autumn 2017



Editorial

Once again summer is behind us. Our memories are of holidays, probably lots of happy events and some sad. We are also aware of the number of tragedies that have beset our country and indeed the whole world. Many will ask, "Where is God in all this?"

Sadly, most of these tragic events were 'man made' and humans were given the opportunity of choice and how many wrong choices have we all made. But God was seen in the humanity shown by countless hundreds who performed so many acts of bravery and provided help and reassurance wherever it was needed.

Maybe we sometimes feel neglected here in Castlehill because we still await a new minister. The fact that there are a lot of vacancies across the country and not least in our Presbytery does not lessen that feeling. We are fortunate to have Christine Stewart as our locum, but in the limited time she has to give, she cannot perform all the duties she would like. We must have Faith in God's plan for us

Looking to the future it is important that we have that belief and remember what we have learned in our Christian upbringing. A picture comes to mind of a large group of African villagers on their knees praying for rain after a long drought. Amongst them was one small boy and he was the only one carrying an umbrella. That is Faith, but we must all carry our umbrellas, one is not enough. Praying together strengthens our faith and in that strength, we can accomplish many things.

Wellwood Grierson

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Have your say

If you have any comments to make on the Magazine, please feel free to do so by letter or email to herald@castlehillchurch.org We are always pleased to consider any articles for the Magazine from members of the congregation, These can also be sent to the same email address.

From the Interim Moderator

“By this shall all people know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another” John 13:35

Having attended the General Assembly in May, I can say that the Church of Scotland has somewhat imperceptibly and slowly moved forward toward a changing Church fit for today. It has been said that when the Church cannot reach a common mind this sends out a wrong and weak message to the wider world. However in debates and decisions that divide, when the Church agrees to learn to live in a mixed economy, in peace and harmony, respecting each others points of view, even if not agreeing theologically, surely this sends out an even stronger message that it is possible to live in a world where respect and compromise enables everybody to be valued and accepted. This is the position, in permitting in congregations that are agreeable, same sex marriages. Ministers will have the right to refuse such services on the basis of conscience. This is already the case with divorcees and with couples that live together before marriage. There is no great departure from current legislation in the decisions made in this respect.

The number of buildings across the church with the membership falling creates a looming financial crisis. We cannot afford both church buildings and ministers for each. It would seem that congregants wish to retain buildings and share ministers rather than increase ministers and share buildings. Presbyteries are instructed to consider new models of ministry fit for today with all the restrictions that apply. This the Presbytery of Ayr is currently doing in shaping a revised Presbytery plan fit for today and tomorrow. These plans will be discussed at Area Group Meetings over the next few months. One model is that of ‘hub’ ministry which will operate along the lines of a medical practice. A group of churches in a geographical cluster will be ministered to by a team of ministers. One or two may be ministers of Word and Sacrament whilst others will be specialist in other areas such as pastoral care, youth ministry, outreach, mission, or specialist aspects of ministry identified as a specific need to an area – outreach to the addicted or elderly for example.

The Guild report spoke of all the good work carried out through the movement locally, nationally and internationally. This was supported by the Chief Executive of Christian Aid when she spoke specifically of the Guild’s support to Christian Aid. Working in partnership the project “Caring for Mother Earth” in Bolivia, providing solar ovens which save many trees previously used to cook with, has transformed individuals, families, communities and a nation. So successful has it been that Christian Aid is now taking the same project to Malawi where it is anticipated that the same transformations will happen there. Small steps resulting in enormous change influencing and improving people and God’s created world.

The Guild in conjunction with the National Youth assembly presented a very informative paper on Intergenerational working which is much more than people of different ages being involved in projects and church work. I recommend the report to all in the church that people of all ages can be engaged, listened to and respected as we travel together on our common Christian journey.

The work of “Crossreach” was reported and it remains the largest organisation in Scotland, caring for people in need where they are; disabled, the elderly, mentally and physically challenged, clients suffering from dementia and those resident in Crosseach care homes.

After a debate on the Israel Palestine situation, and the tragic events of Manchester, Prince Ghazi of Jordan, a Muslim committed to peace and strengthening talks between Christian and Muslim, twice nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, movingly addressed the Assembly. In his address he restated the need for peace and denounced the horrific actions of Muslim radicals and fanatics stating, “They have no place within Islam”.

The whole week spoke volumes of how much the Church is required in society today, and the fact that we have to learn how, in a very broad church, to live in harmony with respect for each other. Bound together in one family, through our baptism into Christ, we can be a family with different opinions, theological perspectives and outlooks without being dysfunctional.

The whole church was called to be a church on the move but a church called first to prayer and then to action. With God’s help and vision we can be the church of today preparing for tomorrow, but only if God has our undivided attention, obedience and loyalty. How we conduct ourselves as a Church has tremendous bearing on how we are perceived from outside the church and has implications for the Church’s mission. As we love Christ and Christ loves us so we must love one another.

By this shall all people know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another” John 13:35

Rev John Paterson

Hello again,

I hope Wellwood will forgive me for another mention of Dundonald Games. I won't mention after this sentence that William was Chieftain this year – but he was and we really enjoyed the day. However, the following quotation was a fragment of an article which I wrote for Contact (the magazine of Dundonald Church) in August 2007. Ten years ago! It seems like yesterday.



“The Dundonald Games are now a highlight of the year. We saw and heard everything in the company of our good friends from the Birmingham area this year – and we were proud of the achievements of such a small community. It did not happen without dedication and hours and hours of work from a large number of people. “

I could write exactly the same thing this year, and I pray that I will never take for granted how good it is to be part of groups of people who work hard for the benefit of others. Since coming to Castlehill Church I have seen this commitment and dedication in action by so many more people. I am not going to try to list all the activities, but we are at that point in the year when the Church will soon be buzzing with everything that gets under way in the Autumn of each year. Then, of course, many of our people are involved in things quite apart from those that take place in the church.

Did you know that in organisations where charities look for match funding, one of the things that is often overlooked is that you can claim the cost of wages for all the hours put in by volunteers – at a rate commensurate with the type of job that they do – as part of your claim? If everyone in the church claimed for their hours in real terms we could be matched to a fortune...

In spiritual terms, of course, we cannot measure the ways in which God blesses us either now or in eternity. Let us all continue to strive to be a blessing to others now, in Jesus' name. There is wisdom in these words from Helen Steiner Rice, for as we respond to others, we forget our own needs and hurts for a while:

“But pray for a purpose to make life worth living;
And pray for the joy of unselfish giving;
For great is your gladness and rich your reward,
When you make your life's purpose the choice of the Lord.”

May everyone be richly blessed in their service in the name of Christ this season.
Love and prayers, Christine.

Just Call Me Kirsty!

I've been thinking about how we all face the devil's fire at some point in our lifetime and what makes us as individuals is how we deal with the heat of the flames. I believe that Jesus is with me in the fire and I always put my trust in him to lead me through the shadows and into the light with what I call a spiritual breakthrough because I have boldly declared my faith in Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. Although they are times I feel unqualified, unworthy of such love and attention. I have been thinking about how I've changed in the last thirty years and who I've become. Am I meant to be the woman I am, or someone else? While these thoughts are whirling around in my head I've been drawn to scripture and the story of Jacob. We are told in Genesis 35 verses 10 to 13 that *God said to him, "Your name is Jacob, but you will no longer be called Jacob; your name will be Israel." So, he named him Israel. God said to him, "I am God Almighty; be fruitful and increase in number. A nation and a community of nations will come from you, and kings will be among your descendants. The land I gave to Abraham and Isaac I also give to you, and I will give this land to your descendants after you."* Then God went up from him at the place where he had talked with him. I sometimes feel like Jacob did when he pretended to be his brother Esau just to feel special, but I have come to understand that it's better to be truthful to myself and who I am no matter what because I've been called by my name to serve the Lord in my own way. Now don't get me wrong, there have been times when I haven't seen my way out of a situation or feeling and wonder why is this happening to me but I always build myself up again in the middle of everything that is going on around me. I don't even have to be seriously unhappy to feel like this. For instance, I could be in a mood about something and then I watch a film or television show or listen to music and my mood begins to change. I can be talking to someone and that makes me realize that I can change my attitude towards the matter or towards life in general. I'm always drawn to scripture to help in me many situations. One of my favourite passages is John 14 verses 25 to 27 where Jesus tells us, *I'm telling you these things while I'm still living with you. The Friend, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send at my request, will make everything plain to you. He will remind you of all the things I have told you. I'm leaving you well and whole. That's my parting gift to you. Peace. I don't leave you the way you're used to being left—feeling abandoned, bereft. So, don't be upset. Don't be distraught.* This message is what keeps me from going crazy when I am dealing with something heavy or confusing because I know that Jesus is with me every day of my life.



Kirsty Wyllie

National Youth Assembly 2017: My Chronicle

For the last three years now I have been attending the National Youth Assembly (NYA): an event organised by The Church of Scotland that is open to young people aged between 17 and 25 from all presbyteries within the church. Whilst at the event young individuals are encouraged to express their views and ideas on issues arising within the church over a full weekend of debate and workshops. These viewpoints are then collected as votes which are then used as data that will be utilised at The Church of Scotland's National Assembly to take into account the opinions of the young people within the church when discussing ideological, social and ecumenical positions within the church. This year was, in my opinion, a truly intriguing, informing and at times emotional gathering unlike any other.

The weekend began like any NYA in the previous years: with the journey. On Friday the 21st of August, after two train journeys amounting to a total of 90 minutes, I arrived at Stirling Railway Station where I was greeted by faces both familiar and new who were also attending the Assembly. Very soon we were guided onto the coach which would take us to Gartmore House and soon enough, after dosing off whilst leaving Stirling, we arrived at the familiar place. This year all those over the age of 21 such as myself were fortunate enough to stay in the main building with the quaint hotel style rooms with the comfy beds and the odd Victorian styled baths. The rest of that Friday evening consisted of the usual introductions to our assigned small groups, introduction to the Moderator and clerk for this year's assembly and was concluded with evening worship.

The following Saturday was filled with discussion and debate regarding discipleship amongst young people within the church and how it can be promoted with our own congregations and presbyteries. From what was established from both assembly and group discussions it was clear that the key requirement was to promote long term relationships with the church amongst young people that last well into adulthood. Many methods to promote this trend were discussed and notified by the churches Mission and Discipleship Council. That evening a human library was hosted in which religious leaders gave presentations on their respective religions and the similarities they had with Christianity as an insight into the discussion that would be conducted on Sunday regarding interfaith relationships within the church.

On Sunday we had our usual service at Gartmore Church conducted by Reverend Elaine MacRae which is enjoyed unanimously during every NYA. After lunch a Mental Health First Aid Workshop was presented which I found very informative. The rest of the afternoon involved the discussion of interfaith relations which highlighted the benefits of helping people of other faiths and building strong relationships within our communities. After evening service our yearly Ceilidh took place which is one of my favourite parts of the yearly NYA as it feels like a fulfilling reward after an intense week of debating and discussing.

Overall I enjoyed my time at this year's NYA which has provided me with ideas and inspiration that I look forward to pass over to the Castlehill Church Office Bearers, Congregation and our community neighbours as a whole.

Ruairi Wallace

Seniors Afternoons

Our last meeting in April was well attended and everyone enjoyed the singing of Kate Gieben. She offered a selection of jazz items and old favourites.

It seems a while now, but suddenly we are thinking of the next session which starts in October.

We would extend a welcome to newcomers and as we have said not only to Church members but anyone in the Parish. These days we hear a lot about loneliness and folks being unable to get out and about to meet others. This is where we can play our part by bringing along a friend or indeed a neighbour. They can enjoy entertainment, have a chat over tea and cakes and relax for an afternoon.

We meet on the second Tuesday in October, February and April at 2.30pm in the North Hall and the December meeting is in the Main Hall taking the form of a Christmas party.

Lifts can be arranged for those who are not too mobile by phoning the office or contacting me on 737459 See you on 10th October.

Wellwood Grierson

Castlehill Boys Brigade

Our recent trip to Romania was probably our best trip of the three we have experienced. Our relationship with the Foundation's children became closer on this trip. I wasn't aware until this visit that, although other groups have visited the Foundation from various countries, the 17th Ayr are the only group who have returned. Given their sense of abandonment our continued relationship with them is of greater value than we could have imagined.

Our report of the trip is detailed below. The week after our return Gavin Drysdale, as a UK Cerebral Palsy Teen ambassador, was asked by the organisation to publish an account of his trip, this is his report:



Hi guys, I hope you are all well! As some of you may know from my social media accounts, I was in Romania last week on a charity visit. It was the 3rd time that my Boys' Brigade have organised a trip to an orphanage in Târgu Mureş - north east of Bucharest – but it was my first time traveling to the orphanage (Rhema Foundation). It was definitely one of my most surreal, rewarding and enjoyable experiences that I have been a part of! I had literally no idea what to expect when I signed up to go. No matter how many devastating stories you hear, it really only hits home when you witness the negative consequences for yourself...

Between 1974 and 1989, Nicolae Ceauşescu served as Romania's first president and he was responsible for causing the revolution in 1989, which saw him executed in December that year after he was convicted of multiple charges relating to the mass disruption throughout the country. During his leadership, he increasingly showed a strong prejudice against the gypsy community. As he threatened to dehumanise them, many families abandoned their newborn babies as they attempted to seek asylum. It was not long before government officials found these neglected children and sentenced them to years of torture in industrial orphanages. All of the children contracted HIV and developed delayed development issues.

The first time that I learned about this tragic period was through the Boys' Brigade. This was something that I was really surprised at. Then I realised that not many people nowadays get to hear about the smaller-scale discriminatory acts that have occurred in the past. At school, you learn all about WW II and the Holocaust and while it was on an unprecedented scale, the problem of hatred towards minorities was much more universal and sadly still is to an extent.

Thankfully, following the death of Ceauşescu, the brutal treatment began to cease and charities like Rhema Foundation stepped in to help. Founded in 1996, Rhema Foundation started to provide residential care for some of the victims of Ceausescu's regime. The charity gave them new hope by ensuring they got the support and love any child should have. 21 years later, Rhema Foundation continues to provide unconditional love to the residents by making sure their life is as bright as it can be despite the adversity they face. It was a pleasure to experience their great work when we visited.

We finally arrived in Târgu Mureş at around 11pm on the Sunday after a 6 hour bus journey from Bucharest Airport. The residents of Rhema Foundation had stayed up to especially welcome us. Their joy on our arrival



was so indescribable. It was so contagious that it lifted our weary spirits. They were keen to reunite with their friends that had been before and also introduce themselves to the newbies on the team. They helped carry the suitcases to our rooms and assisted me as I walked through the darkness. Nobody asked them to do these things - they just wanted to help!

On Monday, having spent the day getting to know the residents, after dinner they invited us to the local cemetery to help plant flowers next to the graves of former residents who have sadly passed away in the last year. This was understandably emotional for the residents and it was truly touching to be able to share the moment with them. Their condition means that they are vulnerable to catching infections and do not have a very strong body mechanism so they struggle to fight the infections off.



Also, Romania has a very varying climate; in Summer it can reach up to 40 ° C but in Winter, it can be as low as -20 ° C so the weather makes their challenge even harder. Their lives are essentially a ticking time bomb!

From Tuesday to Thursday, we had the task of entertaining the preschool children from the local gypsy community. Due to the low status of gypsies in Romania, the government does not pay for the children's preschool education which is up to the age of 7 so Rhema Foundation gives a helping hand. The children were very excited to discover that we were taking their nursery classes for the week. We did the activities that every child should get to do when they go to nursery: draw, paint, blow bubbles, dress-up and jump on the trampoline. We even went to the zoo on the Wednesday as a little treat. The one thing that struck all of us was the fact that they had never seen paint before so I am happy



that we provided them with the opportunity to be kids.



On Friday, we visited Hill Street, which is where the local gypsy community reside. We provided lunch for around 130 children. As soon as we arrived, the children were queued up desperate to be fed. Their standard of living barely meets poor - the houses mostly have only one room. They get no funding from the government and have to survive on what they can gather. When we left, the children climbed into the back of the van, obviously protesting that they wanted to come.

During my time in Romania, I really realised that you can find happiness from the simplest of things and I think the happiness of the children and the residents is evidence of this. They don't have half the opportunities we have in the UK but they appreciate the simple things much more than we do. The sheer joy of the children painting for the first time is a perfect example.



We had an overnight bus trip back to Bucharest Airport to catch an early morning flight to Glasgow on Sunday. Saying goodbye was definitely the hardest part of the trip. As each day passed, I became closer to the residents of Rhema Foundation as we chatted, laughed and told each our stories. Their English is not perfect and my Romanian is a mere average but that didn't stop us from forming great friendships. When the time finally came, a lot of tears were shed as the residents expressed their love for us. And as the bus pulled out and started to leave, they ran to follow us down the driveway. That's why we have already started to plan our next trip to Romania.

Gavin Drysdale

So much of our trip was emotional, from the minute we arrived until the moment we tore ourselves away from their farewell hugs. The staff and residents constantly humble us by giving. The moment we arrived they presented my wife Wilma with a birthday cake. On the Friday evening all the staff and residents gathered together to tell us what a wonderful job we had done, this is when they told us we are the only group who have returned to support the charity. The praise didn't sit well but they went further by giving us all handmade thank you cards signed by all the residents along with a woven bracelet made by Rafi. Our response was simple but sincere, we will return in 2019!

The director of the Foundation, Ibi, along with two of the residents, Mundra and Alin, will be visiting Scotland at the end of October. They will be attending our regular BB meeting on Friday 27th October. At this meeting, the boys will be presenting a Powerpoint of our trip, hopefully as many family and friends will attend and I would love to have as many members of the congregation as possible. Hopefully you will hear of our activities in more detail.

As always we are so very grateful to you for your continued support for our trips to Romania without which our boys would not experience the character building times as described by Gavin. Also without which, a group of disadvantaged youngsters who have experienced abandonment and discrimination in their lives would not have had the benefit of our boys' support and friendship.

Our next session starts with our enrolment on Friday 25th August, it's between 6.30 and 8pm and as always takes the form of a family barbecue.

Ian Queen

Castlehill Boys Brigade—Junior Section

On the morning of 22nd July 8 boys and 3 leaders set off to spend a week at a residential activity centre at Kirkham, near Blackpool. The centre is owned by the North West District of The Boys' Brigade and is used as their HQ and training centre. The venue is one I have used on many camps and is fully equipped with bedding all supplied and kitchen ready to use. On site there is a large sports hall marked out for all types of sports and games and equipment supplied.



Archery, wall climbing, caving (with experienced instructors) boats and water balls were enjoyed by the lads on the first day and the week continued with each day filled with activity.

Being so close to Blackpool meant, of course, time spent at the Tower where they enjoyed a visit to the Circus, with the 17th Ayr getting a special public "hello" from "Mooky" the star clown at the show, and then a trip to the "eye" at the top of the Tower. Some were very confident walking on the glass floor with others not quite as enthusiastic without something (or someone) to

hang on to!

We could not let the lads miss out on a trip on the trams so we took them to the South Pier, opposite the Pleasure Beach, and back just for the experience!

Time was spent in Southport with 2 visits to Splashworld for swimming and a short trip along the shops.

The Sealife centre and Madame Tussauds in Blackpool were also included. At Madame Tussauds the boys were able to be one Scottish team to get their hands on the "World Cup"! Illuminasia in the Winter Gardens fascinated the lads with its different themed areas, very much Blackpool illuminations indoors.

Time was spent in St. Annes "relaxing" with crazy golf, putting and trampolines then a stroll along the pier.



During the week the lads had been told there would a prize for "Best Room". I had put this in the booklet and had mentioned that they should keep the rooms the way they would at home - that bit I know they did read! At the end of the week they all got a prize for "effort"

Added to the above, evenings were filled with games in the hall, DVDs watched ("Finding Nemo", "Greyfriars Bobby" , "Joseph & His Technicolour Dreamcoat") and a selection of table games, Connect Four, Jenga etc., all making for a great week of activity, fun and memory building.

Feedback so far indicates that it was enjoyed enough for them to want to repeat the experience. The venue is booked for next year (21st - 28th July 2018) when I'm sure, if more take part, we will be able to put extra activities and visits into the week, adding to the memories they will build up during their time in 17th Ayr. It is not possible to put into an article like this the whole atmosphere of the week when it was a time getting to know the lads in a way not possible in a weekly meeting. Overall they were a joy to be with and a real credit to their families and the Brigade. I would add my gratitude to Gordon Reid for his excellent assistance during the week and trust that the experience has not deterred him from future events!

Doug Wilson

Choir Update

I hope that everyone has had an enjoyable summer and batteries have been recharged for the winter ahead. The choir had a lovely " end of session" meal at the Chestnuts hotel where we shared fellowship and stories. Although it was end of session, the choir faithfully continued to lead worship throughout the summer. I am also grateful to Kate playing for me while I was on my holiday.

Our rehearsals start again on 25th August at 6:30pm and we would be delighted to welcome new members. If you enjoy singing please come along and " give it a try"! If you would like to have a chat about the rehearsals please just speak to myself or a member of the choir - singing is good for the soul and would be a great way to start the weekend.

Liz Kelly



Fabric Report

Hopefully you will have noticed a few things that have been done. The outside doors and windows that have been painted and varnished, all done with the help of a few helpers from the congregation. The manse has weekly checks done and the kitchen has been painted. The bushes around the manse have also been trimmed and the overhanging trees have been cut back. Maintenance work on the Bell Tower is going to be necessary and this will cost in the region of £1000/£1500, this to ensure it is kept safe and waterproof. We will be getting a quote soon for redecoration of the Main Hall. Nothing has been done to this for many years.

My thanks are due to the team of helpers who assist in keeping the maintenance of the building and tidying up the outside from time to time. Anyone wishing to help at any time, please contact me.

Liz Reid. Fabric Convenor

Annual Fabric Appeal 2017

The maintenance and repair of the church buildings is ongoing and from January to the end of July has cost £9,315.67. During the same period gas and electricity costs were £5111.83.

There will be maintenance carried out on the bell tower before the winter. The choir and organ area is unheated because the pipe under the front pew in that area does not work. A wall mounted heater could be installed in the alcove behind the organ and the Congregational Board has approved this at a cost of £2,169.

We are fortunate in having a Property Group which works tirelessly to keep the buildings in good order. They do small maintenance jobs themselves but larger projects need to be done by tradesman. If you are able to make a donation to the Fabric Appeal to ensure the buildings are well maintained this would be gratefully received.

Congregational Board

Moanin' Minnie

It's me again.!

Ah suppose you wid get a wee envelope askin' for donations tae the Fabric Fund. They aye seem to be wantin money. Mine jist came through the letter box so Ah couldnae ask onybody aboot it. When Ah wis in havin' ma tea efter the service [dae ye ever go in there, its great for catchin' up on a' sorts o' things. Ah aye mean tae pit ma name doon for helpin but Ah aye forget] Oh aye, a said tae the wummin next tae me " Mair money!!Ah've pit in a pound every week regular for the last ten years whit mair dae they want?"

She says tae me "Hae ye no heard o' inflatin?" Of course, Ah had, "it's a kinda Government thing" "No" she says. "Your pound ten years ago wid have bought a couple of cones now you wid only get half a cone". "Whit's cones got tae dae wi' the Kirk" says I "Well" she says" ten years ago yir years' money might have painted yin o' the halls, Noo it wid only dae yin wa"

Ah thocht about that. Maybe she's right, I'll pit something in the envelope and maybe up ma pound. Ah suppose Ah should pit ma name doon for the teas as weel. See the things ye get inveigled into when ye gaun in for a cup o' tea.

Last Issue's Competition

There were five correct entries received for the Books of the Bible Quiz and a draw was made, the winner being Douglas Owens. Thank you for all your entries

Pilgrimage to the Holy Land

All who have never visited the Holy Land only have a vision of what it might be like. The village of Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, the surrounding countryside through which Jesus travelled, each of has their own picture in their mind.

But those who have journeyed there can tell us of these places and show us pictures, albeit modern views. We have two stories from two different generations. How did their views differ, if at all.

A Young(ish) person's view of the Holy Land



Having been in the privileged position to have travelled extensively in my short 31 years I thought I knew what I was going too when I recently visited Jerusalem and Bethlehem. I was expecting war torn damaged buildings, machine guns a plenty together with an element of third world poverty and a dash of Disney Land thrown in. As soon as I stepped off the plane I realised just how wrong I was and for my entire trip my expectations were dashed at every turn.

The first thing that strikes you is the beauty of the country. For a region that gets very little rain it is remarkably green and clean. This combined with the large amounts of limestone that make up 99%of the buildings leaves you with this beautiful bright and clean place. The second thing that struck me is the peace that is present

wherever you go. Despite the difficulties that are ongoing within the region and the violence we see reported on the news when out and about in down town Bethlehem and Jerusalem you would not know there was any unrest. The people are incredibly respectful and simply get on with their daily lives happy to see tourists enjoying the sights and cultures of the area.

The predominant branch of Christianity within the Middle East is the Russian Orthodox Church although there are still some Catholic churches as well and each of the main pilgrimage sights tended to have two sanctuaries to cater for all needs. What I really enjoyed is the lack of distinction that people placed over the branches of Christianity. You were simply identified as a Christian and it was not used as a tool of divisiveness. People understood why you were there and were very happy to allow you to perform whatever act of worship you should so choose. I even managed a few verses of Amazing Grace on the organ at the Church of the Nativity.

During my relatively short trip of 5 days I went to some of the main Christian pilgrim sights including the Church of the Nativity, Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Mount of Olives and my favourite place of all the church of the Patre Noste. This church and garden were built on the sight were Jesus taught the Disciples the Lord's Prayer. Within the garden and church there are hundreds of versions of the Lord's Prayer tiled on the walls in almost every language and dialect imaginable. I had a smile on my face when I discovered not only the Gaelic Lord's Prayer but the Doric Lord's prayer too. I think this was my favourite place because it truly brought home the world wide element of Christianity and how the word of the living God is not stopped by barriers such as language or indeed branch of the Christian Church. Hearing some of the pilgrim groups engage in acts of worship in the church truly brought home the world wide nature of Christianity to me and gave even more evidence that we do indeed follow the living God.

Now as for my reference to Disney Land I must admit that I was slightly sceptical before I went that some of the pilgrim sights would be dignified for the tourists and perhaps this would detract from the sanctity of what you were seeing. Yet again I was totally wrong and each of the sights that I visited gave me a better understanding of what happened to Jesus during his time on earth.

I defy anyone to go and visit the Holy land and not feel closer to God in the process and I would indeed encourage everyone to go and visit.
Christopher Watt.



Galilee and Nazareth

In 1967, only ten days after the Six Day War ended, my father led a group of Scots to Israel. His many slides and information of holy places he visited were admired by those who viewed them in the North East and beyond.

Fast forward to December 1981 and Tom and I were in Jerusalem for its annual Week of Sacred Music so we were able to do some sightseeing in between orchestral /choral rehearsals and concerts by Scottish singers. One of the highlights of our stay **then** was the visit to Masada. Unlike my parents' visit there was now a gondola to whisk us up to the ancient site. They had to hike all the way up the steep slope. Army recruits have to make the climb with full gear on and then listen to the story of the siege of Masada before swearing loyalty to their country.

Move forward again to April 2017. Tom and I enjoyed a Mediterranean cruise which included a two day visit to Israel. What would we do and visit in the northern part of the Holy Land ? Definitely Galilee and Nazareth.

Our ship docked at Haifa with the impressive Mount Carmel soaring above us. From the decks we could see the magnificent Bahai faith gardens with its Temple standing gleaming among the trees. That area was lit up in the evening with tiny lights on each tree.

We resisted the temptation to climb up and up through the gardens to the summit of Mount Carmel- the heat was too much for us. We just stood at the base of the Mount and marvelled.

Day one, Easter Sunday, was spent wandering in the city, third largest in Israel and discovered that this was a special holiday week for Jewish people. Shops, cafes and restaurants were closed for almost the entire week as this was Passover time. It seemed strange to walk in an almost deserted city with one casually dressed young man guarding the entrance to the dock holding a sub machine gun in his hands.

Day two and our long-awaited visit to Nazareth and Galilee! We journeyed there along wide roads unlike what we had seen in the 80s. No soldiers in tents by the roadside this time !

The countryside reminded me so much of Scotland, greenery in amongst rocks but a new sight- irrigated fields of fruit trees was evident. Occasionally by the roadside we passed a tree of thorns, the only place in Israel where this species grows and they reminded me of the crown of thorns on Jesus' head. So the thorns had come from His native region !

The one thing missing in the entire journey was the sight of shepherds LEADING their long-eared sheep by the side of the road. Times change and only the occasional animal could be seen in the distance. Shepherds had been encouraged to live in one place rather than roam the countryside Many new towns had been built and we could see minarets pointing to the sky. Our guide told us that when Muslims moved to the new towns Jewish residents chose to leave the area. How sad !

Our first stop was at the Mount of Beatitudes, into the beautiful garden and stopped at a tree so that the Beatitudes could be read aloud by volunteers. While waiting for my turn to read two verses I suddenly realised the 50 years ago my father had stopped at this spot too and read from the Bible. It was a moving experience to hear voices from different countries reading from the Bible belonging to our Jewish guide. We all admired the beautiful church nearby and the gardens with the "Beatitudes", carved on small stones.

Looking across the Sea of Galilee towards the Golan heights I recalled my mother telling me that during the 6 Day War, Syrian machine guns were trained on Galilee and soldiers were chained to their weapons to avoid desertion. To see how close these guns had been sent a shiver down my spine.

We travelled through Tiberias where the Church of Scotland has a 5 star hotel (formerly a hospice) and church, St. Andrew's . David Torrance, one of our student assistant ministers at Castlehill, was surprised that I knew about his ancestors serving in Tiberias and he kindly lent me two of his precious books about their time spent there. Living in Galilee years ago was fraught with health hazards. Sadly, the wife and children of one of the Torrance family died-possibly of malaria.

On to the River Jordan and yes, I DID paddle in it unlike some young folk who hired gowns choosing to swim from side to side. Definitely a tourist spot, Yardenit is where the Jordan separates from the Sea of Galilee. The garden around the carpark was filled with young olive trees. A long, tiled wall led down to river and we saw the Lord's Prayer written on it in many languages including Gaelic. This brought home to me just how many nations come to the site of Jesus' baptism.

Our final visit to was Nazareth, a place I had always wanted to see. Described as "the Forgotten Son of Israel" it is the largest Arab city there and in 2009 the then Pope visited it. This visit resulted in government grants to improve the area as a tourist site.

Streets were packed with traffic and there seemed to be a clutter of old crumbling buildings, new and garish buildings and many Arab people wandering around. Abandoning our coach we toiled up a steep hill toward an immense church building- the largest I have ever seen and indeed it is the largest Christian church in the Middle East. The Church of the Annunciation is a **two** storied building and stands directly over the cave where Mary, the mother of Jesus lived as a child. Nazareth became the home town for the Holy Family after they returned from fleeing to Egypt to escape Herod's soldiers.

The grandeur of the two churches was in contrast to the grotto where we walked down to pay our respects and say a prayer- recalling that 14 year old girl Mary who was visited by the Archangel Gabriel who bore momentous news. Out into the sunlight we went and as our coach moved away from the site we passed Mary's Well. Wells in Israel are **authentic** places and we were reminded that the women of the town had to walk there and back daily with the family's water and so of course would sit by the well and chatter..

Finally, I have just read that a GOSPEL TRAIL has recently opened so that pilgrims may walk "in the steps of the Master" tracing the His footsteps from Nazareth to Capernaum along the shores of Galilee. It takes a few days to hike but can be done in short stages.

Does this tempt **you** to visit Galilee and Nazareth ?

Morven Petticrew

Tuesday Night Guides - Trip to London

On 4th April Tuesday night Guides excitedly set off on a Virgin train from Glasgow for a trip to London.

Arriving in London about 2.00p.m. we immediately set off to Guide Headquarters in Buckingham Palace Road, there we had refreshments and picked up the Girlguiding Walking Challenge Adventure. While we were in the area, we went to have a look at Buckingham Palace. The Queen was not at home so we couldn't pop in for tea! We then made our way to Pax Lodge, where we were staying. This is the Girlguiding World Centre in London, which is in the Hampstead area.



On the Wednesday it was up early to make our way to Salford to spend the day at the Harry Potter Studios. This was brilliant and magical as most of the girls were into Harry Potter and it really



brought it to life for them. The highlight was seeing the real Hogwarts Express.

On the Thursday, we made our way into London to do our Walking Challenge. This took us all round the tourist area of central London. The girls had to look for various sites and answer questions to complete their book in order for them to get their challenge badge. The Fitbit recorded about 14,000 steps by the time we were finished. After all our walking we finished the day with a Theatre Trip to "Mamma Mia" which the girls thoroughly

enjoyed.

We were able to do this trip with the help of all the fundraising we do and we would like to take this opportunity of once again thanking the congregation of Castlehill for all the support that they give to Girlguiding.

TARTAN GIG

Another highlight for the Guides was attending the Tartan Gig concert in the Hydro Glasgow in June. This is a concert arranged for Girlguiding members only and there was over 10,000 members from all over Scotland. Various well known pop artists performed at it. It was a wonderful experience to see so many young girls and Leaders enjoying themselves and to know that Guiding is offering great opportunities.

Linda McClurkin

Afternoon Tea at Castlehill

Another successful afternoon tea was held in the Main Hall and enjoyed by all and the proceeds of £315 was sent to Erskine Homes. Thanks are due to all those who attended, for their generosity. Also thanks to the team of ladies who did all the work and provided the "goodies"



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Castlehill Bowling Club

Our Bowling Club continues to go from strength to strength and 36 members attended the Annual General Meeting on 29th March. The minutes of the last A.G.M. were read and approved. The President, David Kerr gave a comprehensive report of the year's events, which had been extremely hectic with the Diamond Jubilee competition and the Club competitions.

Hall repairs meant that we had to utilise the Lesser Hall on occasion but this did not cause too many problems. The President made reference to the passing of Miss Betty Taylor who had been a loyal supporter of the Club since the beginning. He also thanked his Vice President, Michael Hardie, Moira Alexander, Treasurer and the "Tea Ladies" for their support throughout the year.

The Treasurer's report showed a fairly good balance and it was agreed to donate £900 to the Church. The office-bearers for the new session were as follows: President, David Kerr, Vice President, Michael Hardie. Treasurer, Moira Alexander and the Tea Convenors: Joan Macfie, Sheila McKenzie, Frances Russell and Kathy McCreadie.

Dates for the next session were set at an opening date of 4th September, Christmas break - 13th December to 8th January 2018 and closing date and A.G.M. 28th March 2018.

Subscriptions and fees stayed the same at £5 membership and £1 for teas.

Prize-winners for the year were presented by Pat and Jean Patterson and were as follows:

	Winners	Runners up
Ladies Singles :	Rita Macey-Lilley	Dorothy Jack
Gents Singles:	George Johnstone	Sam Storrie
Ladies Pairs:	Rita Macey-Lilley/Sheila McKenzie	Moira Alexander/Linda Telfer
Gents Pairs:	Ronnie Duff/George Neil	George Johnstone/David Kerr
Mixed Pairs:	Mary Smith/Harry Lorimer	Frances Russell/Sam Storrie
Monday Points League	George Neil	Wellwood Grierson
Wednesday Pts. League	Liz Hunter	Rita Macey-Lilley
Monday Points League First Session	Winner: Elise Henderson	
Wednesday Pts League First Session	Winner: Liz Hunter	



The prize winners 2016/2017

On 19th July, we had our annual Outing to Girvan Bowling Club. Despite the ominous weather forecast, it turned out to be a very nice afternoon. There were 44 in attendance several of them being spectators, and there were a few guests. It was good to have friends and relatives, but not only that we had members of Alloway Church, St. Leonards Church, St. Quivox and the Auld Kirk. It was good to have fellowship with other Churches through the medium of bowling.

The Girvan Ladies Committee did us proud, as usual, with a lovely tea, followed by Michael Hardie reading out the names of the winners. The first touching bowl was won by Margaret Gerrard. The winning team was George Johnstone, Andrew Cree and Elizabeth Graham. The winners of the Booby prize were Robert Forrester, Marion Reid and Linda McClurkin. It was an enjoyable afternoon for all concerned.

Flowers and chocolates were presented to the Girvan Ladies as a small token of our thanks for their hospitality. We regret the passing of Irene Storrie, but it was great to have Sam join us at Girvan. She will be sadly missed by the Club.



Castlehill Church Of Scotland Guild

The Guild resumes on Wednesday 4th October at 7.30p.m. in the North Hall, with our Opening Social. We look forward to everyone gathering back for another Winter Session. As usual we would very much welcome any "new faces".



If you require any information about the Guild please contact Sandra Wyllie, the Guild Secretary.(01292 286115)

Best Wishes From The Guild Committee

Dates for your diary

Beetle Drive Wednesday 27th September North Hall 7.30 pm

Seniors' Afternoon Tuesday 10th October 2.30 pm

Autumn Fayre Saturday 21st October 2.00 pm

"PowerPoint" presentation of B.B. Trip to Romania 27th October 7.30

Church Dinner Saturday 4th November Main Hall 7.00 pm

Funerals

March

Mrs. Isabel Brown Cornhill
Mr. Daniel Kerr Fenwickland Ave
Mrs. Jean Lapsley

April

Mr. James Watson Belmont Drive

May

Mr. Irene McMahon c/o Dalmilling Cres
Mr. Andrew McKay Hillfoot Road
Mrs. Irene Storrie Willow Park

July

Mr. David Shankland Forehill Road
Mrs. Mary Adamson Orchard House
Mrs. Elsie Fraser Craigston Avenue
Mrs. Mary Steel Dundonald Care Home

August

Mr. Eric Linden Gorse Park
Mrs. Irene Roney Celandine Bank

Baptisms

April

James John Hynds



I am in the dark.
Outside the sun is shining,
all is bright
I hear the sound of laughter
That's not right

I am all alone
I have lost the one I love and
though I listened,
there is no comfort from
above

I am lost
As in the dark I grope,
What has happened,
where is my Faith, my Hope

I see a chink of light
The sun is bright again
I breathe fresh air.
What has changed
in to myself I ONLY said a
prayer

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