



The Herald
Castlehill Parish Church
Autumn 2026

Editorial

I can't believe Summer is now over and the nights are starting to draw in once again. As you will see throughout the magazine, many groups have kept busy over Summer, ahead of their new sessions starting again. You will see the front cover is photographs from the Boys' Brigade's trip to Romania, there is further information on their trip within the magazine.

As groups are starting up again I hope there is something that you can get involved in. There are also a number of events taking place to celebrate the 70th Anniversary of Castlehill Church, I hope there is something for you to get involved in.

On a personal note, thank you for all the kind words following my marriage to Shane, for those that didn't know, your Editor hasn't changed—I've just changed my name!

Rachel Power, Editor

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Charity Number	SC001792

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 Manse



Dear Friends

Much of our discussion just now centres around our 70th anniversary celebrations, particularly the meal on 10th October in the Main Hall. We hope as many from the congregation can attend as possible and we are inviting previous ministers to attend as guests if they are able. We are conscious that not many will want to walk in the dark so arrangements are well underway for transport to and from the meal – please indicate on your blue form if you would like transport. It would be helpful if you could give us the earliest indication of your interest.

It is good to give thanks for the heritage of our faith. I heard a story recently which summed up for me the priority of our focus for this year.

You may have seen the rope bridges which are often stretched between the top of trees for people to walk across. As someone who has no great love of heights, when I undertook such challenges, usually when our children were small, I found them challenging until I discovered the secret of how to walk across them. The tendency was always to look down – and that emphasised how high up you were! – or to look back to see how far you had come. Both actions would draw me up to a halt. But if you looked up and forward, you could continue forward not necessarily with confidence, but with determination. Celebrating the past has the same risk. We look at how things “aye used to be” and long for that or we draw to a halt because the way ahead is uncertain as is the case in the Church of Scotland. We must look forward in faith in and after this anniversary year.

Many people in and out of the congregation have asked me recently how Castlehill will be affected by the Church unions. We know the original plan, most of the very large Southwest Presbytery has been united according to the Presbytery plans, but things have come to a temporary pause as, at the time of writing, there is no Convener of Presbytery Planning. That should change in the near future and as South Ayr and the Machars are the only remaining areas to be united, we hope to hear something reasonably soon. You will be kept informed at every stage when that starts to happen.

Looking forward, Advent Sunday this year is on November 29th and our Christmas worship begins with that – probably before the next magazine is out.

Since our last magazine, our Editor, Rachel has been very happily married and we would like to extend our best wishes to her for a long and happy marriage.

Every blessing to all in our congregation and all who worship with us and share in our activities.

Paul

UNDER 45S?

We have been privileged to have been joined by a number of young people who have become a regular presence in our Sunday worship. It is our hope and prayer that this will continue and to enable this to happen and encourage other young people to augment our numbers, we plan to set up a monthly group for our current young people and prepare the programme with them.

If you know any who may be interested, please let Paul know as soon as possible so that we can invite them to the group. This is part of our looking forward as a congregation.

ALL ARE WELCOME TO JOIN THIS GROUP IF THEY WISH.

70th Anniversary

Anniversary Dinner

In October 1956 the first service was conducted at Castlehill Church. In the building which is now referred to as the Main Hall, this was the sanctuary where Rev. David Munro conducted Castlehill Church's very first worship. It is very fitting therefore that 70 years on from this event we are holding a 70th Anniversary dinner in the space which hosted the first service.



We have invited all our past ministers along with other ministers who have a close association with Castlehill.

The dinner is on Saturday 10th October at 6pm and is being catered by McKinstry Catering, a renowned local caterer. We will enjoy a three course dinner with wine or soft drinks at a cost of £30. The menu is:

Starters

Cream of Tomato Soup or Egg Marie Rose

Main Course

Breast of chicken Rob Roy (stuffed with black pudding with a creamy peppercorn & whisky sauce)

Or

Roast beef with Yorkshire pudding and gravy

Both served with glazed baton carrots, garden peas and new potatoes.

Pudding

Mixed berry cheesecake with cream Or Eve's pudding with custard

Tea or Coffee

To order tickets please email Margaret Graham: maggie641mg@gmail.com
If paying by cash please see Margaret Graham or Ian Queen. Please let us know if you have any dietary requirements when you order your ticket.

You can also pay online, the account is:

Acc Name: Castlehill Parish Church

Sort code: 82 60 30

Account number: 90171036

If paying online please make sure the reference has your name so we know who has paid for tickets.

Some members who can't come have indicated they would like to donate. If you are donating without coming to the dinner please make the reference "donation" because we need to have an accurate number for the dinner in order for the caterer to know how many to cater for.

Please make sure you book your tickets before the 30th September.

Merchandise

As part of the 70th year celebration the 70th anniversary committee decided to invest in some branded merchandise. Having considered a variety of products the committee settled on very practical products. We have, for sale, printed jute carrier bags and pens carrying the 70th logo of the church.



The carrier bags are £5 and the pens, which are very high quality, are £4. If you would like to buy either of these please speak to Margaret Graham.



YOU ARE INVITED

There will be a celebration of flowers for our 70th Anniversary.

Join us at Castlehill Church to view our floral displays.

Friday 2nd October 2-4pm

Saturday 3rd October 10-12noon

Sunday 4th October – Celebrate our Harvest Service at 11am

There will be tea and coffee available in the fellowship area with afternoon cake and biscuits and morning scone and biscuits.

When attending, all we ask is for a donation to our Flower fund.

Finance

This is an update on the church finances and our monthly income continues to be less than the expenditure.

Our gas and electricity supplies continue to be part of a contract the national Church of Scotland has and to end of July cost £9,234.00.

We recently upgraded the radio microphone system at the sound desk at a cost of £1,814.40.

Our Giving to Grow contributions to the national church is £62,821. This should be paid by 12 monthly payments of £5,235.08 but I arranged to pay £2,500 each month and payments of £8,205.25 every 3 months and so far have been able to fulfil these payments. We have not been told the amount for Presbytery of South West dues yet but last year it was £2,046.

As well as electricity and gas costs our costs for salaries, insurance for church and manse, cleaning church and halls, garden maintenance, manse council tax and the council emptying the bins have all increased. Repair and maintenance of the church, halls and manse is ongoing.

I claim Gift Aid each month and once a year have claimed on the Gift Aid Small Donation Scheme. The Listed Places of Worship Scheme which let us claim back VAT charged on eligible work done on the premises ended in March and I made a successful claim before then. A similar scheme with a budget of 1 million pounds will start on 1 October for one year and I will make a claim on that. I also claim under the Scottish Government Water and Sewerage Charge Exemption Scheme and so far have been successful in being awarded 100% exemption of the charges each year.

We have some groups which hire our church halls and they are charged monthly. This is an important part of our income. Church groups, local community and charity groups are not charged for using the halls but give a donation when they can.

Money from the congregation is received by standing order, the Free Will offering envelopes or is put in the offering plate on Sundays. Some people increase what they give each year and we hope more people would feel able to do this. We realise the current financial situation in the country and people's income might mean some people have to give less to the church and we completely understand this. We are grateful for everything members of the congregation are able to give.

Margaret Devlin, Treasurer



A lot has happened since our last article. Several of our longer serving volunteers were awarded certificates from VASA (the volunteer organisation) for dedication to Castlehill Foodbank.

The South Ayrshire Foodbank invited all their volunteers for a thank you lunch/afternoon tea on the 30th March which was very much appreciated by all.

We have helped with supermarket collection days in Tesco on 24th April and Asda on 27th June and 11th September.

Once again we are very grateful to Forehill School donating their Nativity collection amounting to £181.92 to our Foodbank at Castlehill Church and also their summer collection of £97.91.

We have had two further large donations from private individuals one of money and the other goods. One of the donors had need of the Foodbank a short time ago but are now on their feet and wanted to help others going through hardship.

We also had a donation of goods from Station 16 at Ayr Hospital who chose us for their charity drive.

This does not detract from the weekly donations of goods and money we receive from you the congregation which cannot be underestimated and is greatly appreciated

Carrier bags are placed inside the boxes we receive from South Ayrshire Foodbank and they are in short supply so if you have any you can spare please bring along to the church or phone the office and we can arrange to pick them up.

Margaret Gerrard

Social Report

We have had a Quiz night in the North Hall on 5th September, this was part of the 70th Anniversary celebrations.

We also had a Beetle Drive on the 16th September in the North hall both events were a great success, we hope you all enjoyed them!

The Social Committee

A close-up photograph of several white calla lilies with yellow centers, arranged in a cluster.

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The logo for Funeral Partners, featuring a stylized 'F' and the text "Funeral Partners".A small circular logo featuring a royal warrant.

In July the Company made our seventh trip to Romania. In itself this is a tremendous achievement given that sixteen years ago I thought it would be an impossible task to organise a trip to Targu Mures at all. The 17th Ayr's biggest achievement is our support of the Rhema Foundation. It is no exaggeration to say there is an emotional bond between the Foundation and Castlehill. I deliberately say Castlehill rather than 17th Ayr because the Foundation in Targu Mures fully understand we only do what we do because of the support of the whole congregation at Castlehill.

On 10th July we left Castlehill Church at 8pm to travel overnight to Luton Airport. At 7.30 the following morning we flew from Luton to Targu Mures.



We spent most days running our day care for pre-school age children. We had children from Hill Street as usual but for the first time we had children from another Gypsy community called Strada Barajului. This is a community which the Foundation have started supporting since our last visit.

Strada Barajului is a community of twenty homes with approximately 80 residents. They have no electricity, gas, water or sanitation. They live on the margins of Targu Mures on a piece of ground of which the local council allows them to use. The local council allows them to use this site because it is of no value and it keeps the Gypsies out of site. The houses are of very poor construction with corrugated iron and even plastic and corrugate being used as walls and roofs. The Foundation is trying to find ways to support the community who desperately need it. I hope we can also find ways to help them.



On our first day in Targu Mures we all went to the local cemetery to pay our respects to Rafi, the latest resident to die from the complications brought about by her HIV. In the end she died from liver failure.

During our trip we spent time at the local waterpark, The Weekender. It is always a highlight for the boys spending time there. We also treated the boys and the Foundation staff to a meal at a local Hungarian restaurant. We took a day trip to a fascinating geological area called Racos Geological Complex where we visited a volcano and 12 meter tall basalt columns which are the same as the columns at the Giants Causeway and Fingal's Cave. On the way back we stopped at the town of Sigiswara which is where Count Dracula lived for a period.



With the successful fundraising we did for the trip we had an amount left over which, at the time we were in Romania we believed to be around £1500. We discussed with the director, Ibi, what we could use the money for. The suggestion was we would fund the replacement of the boiler in the Day Care Centre. When we returned our figures showed that we had a surplus of £3000. We decided to send the Foundation £2000 and use the remainder as a starting fund for our trip in two years.

At the beginning of September Ibi sent me an email which I have copied below.

I am writing to you because we have a very serious issue to resolve and need help.

Regulations have changed, and to renew our sanitary operating permit, we need to purchase and install a water tank capable of meeting our needs for at least three days in the event of a water supply outage.

The cost of such a tank and its installation ranges from £3,500 to £4,000—funds we do not currently have. Without the tank, we risk losing our operating license, leaving us with no solution for the young people at the Iona House.

I was wondering if you might have any remaining funds from your Romania budget—much like the support you have provided in the past for various projects or small investments—and if you would be willing to help us with whatever amount is possible.

In addition to the funds we had, we received a rebate from the bus company who took us to Luton and back. We decided to send all the money in our Romania fund as well as the rebate. We were able to send the Foundation £3,500 which hopefully will be enough to cover the cost of the new tank.

Ibi emailed me to say her “prayers had been answered” and “God is good, may he bless you all”. You should all feel, your help with our fundraising, has truly made a difference to the Foundation in their hour of need.

Thank you.

Ian Queen, Captain

Winter Activities Afternoons

After Covid many people had lost confidence and did not like to leave the house or be with groups of people. Covid undoubtedly had a huge impact on the mental wellbeing of many. It was with this fact in mind that the idea of Warm Spaces evolved. We started with a group in the church hall where people could be in a large area and feel safe and relax with a cuppa and just chat. We then introduced activities and members shared their passion for crafts, knitting, jigsaws or just trying different games. We welcome each week, on average, 30 people who attend regularly.

Many friendships have been made and there is a warm, friendly atmosphere in the hall. Warm Spaces will start again on Thursday 17th September from 2.00pm to 4.00pm and will be every Thursday throughout the winter. If you are free on a Thursday afternoon and think you might enjoy coming along it would be great to see you, where you will receive a warm welcome.

Liz Hardie, Lead

GIRLGUIDING REPORT

Monday Night Brownies



One of our Brownies, Orla, was very brave and had her hair cut for charity and raised £320 which she donated to the Little Princess Trust. This charity makes wigs for children suffering from cancer or other hair loss.

Well done to Orla a very kind thing to do.

Linda McClurkin



17th A Castlehill Guide and Ranger Unit Mondays

Unit numbers continue to be strong and we have new and exciting members. The unit has been busy with learning outdoor cooking, earning badges and awards

We weeded and planted all the railway hutches at Dunaskin Heritage Railway. They were very overgrown and neglected and in need of a bit of TLC. We all had some lovely tea and cakes in the Signal Box Cafe so thanks to all our parents and girl gardeners.

We had a lovely evening at Dunure crab fishing, paddling and a takeaway tea from the chip shop. We were joined by girls from Mauchline Guides and we played football and games in the park.

Our next adventure was a residential at Dailly, the sun shone and we had a fun weekend walking, paddling in the river, doing a treasure hunt, a nature trail, playing in the woods round the old castles, karaoke, crafts and games.

We also completed the once upon a Scotland challenge badge. Our break finished with us painting a mini canvas and saying our goodbyes until the next term.

Our congratulations to Ava and Molly who are off to uni to have new adventures we shall miss them and wish them well. Both girls completed a leadership award as they have volunteered with the Rainbows.

Luli received her Bronze award at Dailly. Sophie and Laura enjoyed a weekend away in Loch Eill on an outward bound weekend and came back with exciting stories of water sports, wild swimming, hiking, camping and hillwalking.

Our new session has began and we look forward to all that it brings.

Christine, Angie and Rhian

John Douglas Owens



It was with sadness that we heard of the passing of Douglas last December. His association with our Church spread almost 50 years when he and his wife Margaret, joined our Church in 1976. In 1980 he was ordained as an elder by Rev Michael Dickie and in 2003 he became Session Clerk. We perhaps think that the Session Clerk does not do a lot, but in his time in office Douglas had to preside over two vacancies and the tribulations of covid. These tasks were dealt with in his usual competent manner.

He was a regular member of the breakfast club, and he was also active for some time on the publicity committee. He was particularly helpful in the series of articles in the magazine "Where are they now?". He contacted all but one in the search for the Assistant Ministers. He regularly supported the coffee mornings in the early days and many will remember the long discussions with Margaret Irvine on the "wee stinker" crossword.

His support for Hamilton Accies football club [his middle name being the name of their ground] and was prepared to discuss their fortunes with others who had alternative loyalties. As a keen golfer and a hockey referee there was always a source of conversation at the church door each Sunday.

He will be missed for his dedication to his Church and the friendship he had with so many members.

Moderator Visit

On 10th May Gillian Lynn, Moderator of South West Presbytery, visited Castlehill to present 10 elders with long service awards. Following the service, Gillian was presented with a gift from the church and everyone enjoyed a lunch to celebrate the elders achievements. Those receiving certificates were: Margaret Morgan, Wellwood Grierson, Margaret Devlin, Liz Reid, Stephen Moore, Mike Hardie, Ian Queen, Elizabeth Graham, Moira Alexander and Linda Telfer.



You will never be asked
for any monies to watch
the stream of any
service at Castlehill
Church.

**If you are asked it will be a
SCAM.**

CASTLEHILL BOWLING CLUB



Another successful Outing was held at Girvan Bowling Club, The sun shone and everyone had a great time enjoying the games and the tea afterwards. There were winners and losers of course. The winning rink was Harry Lorimer, Elizabeth Graham, Christine Prout and Mike Beezley. Liz Hunter received the prize for the “first toucher” and the photos below are the proof. There were booby prize winners as well, but they will remain anonymous.

Wellwood Grierson, Secretary



Fabric Report

We have a great team of volunteers for our clean up mornings that keeps the outside areas of the church tidy.

The boilers and water heater are both due a service - this will be completed this month. We also need to renew our Electric check which is done every five years. These checks all come at a cost but are necessary to keep everything updated and maintained also for safety. The church roof will be checked and any repairs and the manse roof will also be checked.

I hope everyone is enjoying sitting on our cushioned pews, the cushions came from St. James Church along with the chairs in the main hall. This was at no cost- a big thank you to Alfred for transporting them over to the church.

We hope we are keeping on top of the maintenance of the buildings but if you see something that needs attention let us know, either report it to the office or put in diary.

The Fabric Committee

COMMUNION

In 2026 we have returned to the celebration of communion using small glasses and bread on a silver plate. To continue our care for all sharing in communion, you are asked to sit only on the centre pews at each side, leaving one pew vacant between each row with people on it. Servers will pass along the empty pews and you alone will touch the glass and bread. After the years of Covid Communion, this may be a hard change to make but we ask for your patience in adjusting to this means of serving the elements which we hope will bring us closer together. If anyone has strong feelings about this, please speak to Paul.

Moanin Minnie

"Hello Jean, Ah hivna seen you for a while, where have ye been? [A'll no ask how she is or A'll be here a' day"]

"A've been abroad at ma sisters. Ah went wae the bus". "That must hae been a long journey" "Naw it wis only a few hoors, Carlisle's no that far."

Whit hae you been up tae, Ah suppose it will hae been stuff tae dae wi the Kirk"

"Oh aye its an excitin' time its oor 70th anniversary this year an' there's lots o' interestin' things been goin' on"

"Tell me"

"Weel Ah wis at a tea and music efternin. Whit Ah didna ken wis there wis dancing as weel. Ah should hiv had ither shoes wae me",

"Whit kinna dancing"

"A'sorts some fancy stuff and some line dancin'"

"Ye should hiv had yer cowboy hat wi ye. Did Ah no see somewhere that some elders or somethin' were getting' certified."

"Naw Jean ye mean they got certificates for long service. It wis a great occasion. A lot o' them were getting on a bit mind but well done to them all. Then we had a concert wi the Dalmellington Band"

"Whit wis that like?"

"It wis great. They had a band fae the Faroes wi them."

"Ah seem tae remember fae the Sunday School that Moses had somethin' tae dae wi them"

" Fir goodness sake Jean these are islands. Moses lot wir some kinda kings"

"Oh a'right then, sae whit else went on?"

" Weel Ah think there is tae be a 70s nicht, a bit before my time."

"Ye are jokin'. Ah mind fine o'you and the nichts oot ye had, dae ye no mind thon lad Jim somebody"

" That enough Jean let's forget about him."

"Whit else wis goin' on?"

"Weel at the beginnin' o' the year there wis a service where a' the wimmen had tae wear hats and gloves and things that they used tae wear 70 years ago. That wis really guid tae see them." "Did ye hae yer fur coat on?"

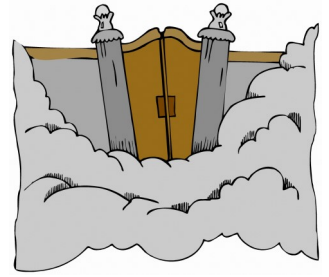
" Naw Ah don't think they wid hae allowed that nooadays. Oh a'h jist aboot forgot, we got some new cushions frae some Church that is closing' doon. My whit a difference, nae mair sair backs or ither bits. Mind you its auffa easy tae doze aff. A'hll hae tae watch that. They got a lot o' fancy seats as weel for the hall, nae mair catchin yer finges in the metal bits. Oh! there's a fancy dinner or something near the actual anniversary date."

" Will ye be gaun tae that?"

"Aye probably. Weel A'll tell ye a' aboot that some ither time. Ma feet are killin me, dae ye fancy a wee coffee?"

"That seems a guid idea. Come on"

WELCOME to the PEARLY GATES



When you get to the 'Pearly Gates', you may well be asked for reasons why you should be let in.

What will be your response(s)? Would you say that you had been a good person, donated to charity, went to church every Sunday, kept the Commandments and led an honest life?

There is one response that you probably wouldn't give but that is the one that would gain you entry. I'll come back to that response.

However, let me first take you back to the first ever Good Friday. You can imagine that lots of folk were arriving at the Pearly Gates as every other day.

But there's one filthy, confused looking, long haired guy dressed in a ragged loincloth with marks on his hands and feet, looking around at the scene before him. It was certainly not where he expected to be. When asked what he was doing there, his reply would probably have been, "I don't know."

Those at the gates would have been intrigued and would have continued to ask him questions.

Eventually, when they would have asked him if he could recall his last moments on Earth his response would have floored them.

"The last thing I remember is being on a cross next to a friend of mine and a man who had no right being there. Where am I?"

"This is the entrance to Heaven."

"But I've been a robber, brigand and an outlaw all my life! I've no right to be here."

"Do you know who that 'good' man was?"

"No."

"Did you say anything to each other?"

"I told my friend to stop bad-mouthing him and I asked the good man to remember me."

"Did he say anything back to you?"

"Yes, he said I would be with him in Paradise."

"That's why you are here. All your sins are forgiven. Your belief in the 'Son of God' has saved you and your place in Heaven is assured."

There you have it. The key to getting into heaven is belief in Jesus Christ - Nothing else.

Allan Jack

Funerals

April

Jack McLean	Pine Brae, Ayr
Helen Belford	Carrick Nursing Home, Ayr
Jean Brown	Windyhall Nursing Home, Ayr

May

Patricia Duff	Hillend Cottage, Waterside
Margaret MacCormick	Castlehill Road, Ayr
Anne Doherty	Holmston Road, Ayr

June

June Andrew	Fenwickland Avenue, Ayr
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Baptisms

Bruce Morrison 26 April 2026



Our thanks goes to the following people for donating flowers to the church between May and August:

Barbara Mossie, Eileen McGilp, Margaret Gerrard, The Choir, Sandra Struthers, Joan Macfie, Jackie Christie, Allison Smith & Pat Colquhoun, Margaret Graham, Stella Nixon, Jean Hunt, Hamish Wilson, Allison Smith, Marion Reid, Liz Reid & Liz Hardie, Moira Alexander and Sheena Gray.

Thanks also to the flower arranging team and delivery team:

Frances Russell, Stella Nixon, Catherine Holland, Allison Smith, Margaret Gerrard, Lyn McDermott, May Harris, Margaret Grierson, Margaret Devlin, Liz Hunter, Moira Alexander and Liz Reid.

There are still a few spaces available for anyone looking to donate flowers. Please contact Stella Nixon for further information.



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