

CASTLE-HILL PARISH HERALD 2025

Editorial

The front cover for this Edition of the Herald was created by Emma from P6/7 at Kincaidston Primary. It was a tough competition however we felt Emma depicted the Christmas story well. Thank you to all the entrants, the Publicity Committee will be providing a prize for the winner.

There are many activities to take part in during the festive period, highlighted within the magazine. A lot of the groups within the Church have festive activities planned in the run up to Christmas. We will also be entering the 70th Anniversary of Castlehill Parish Church. Plans are well underway for many activities throughout the year to mark the occasion. Hopefully there will be something for everyone to join in.

On behalf of the Publicity Committee I would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Thank you for all the support with the magazine throughout the year.

Rachel Queen, Editor

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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 Manse

Dear Friends,

I don't know if you noticed that Christmas on TV starts even earlier than in some shops: this year you could watch Christmas movies from June right through to December [I presume]. Now we could try to guess why this happens: we may not know the exact date of Jesus' birth but we can be fairly certain it did not last six months!

We could be cynical and say that since these films are American made, and the Americans prefer to address Christmas as the holiday, they maybe hanker after long holidays! My theology doesn't offer any logical explanation for this. I prefer to stick to our usual pattern of Advent and Christmas and follow the journey of meaning contained in it. So you will find the dates for these services in this magazine and they will be advertised in the weekly intimations. Oh, and by the way, in Scotland they are not called holidays!!

One of the features of Christmas films as mentioned is that the content is generally trouble and suffering free. If in no other sense, that makes the content unlike the real Advent/Christmas. Mary, Joseph and Jesus were refugees before and after Jesus' birth. They had to flee to Egypt and stay in exile. Not exactly trouble free nor was Jesus' life. That means that Advent and Christmas slot into our twenty-first century suffering world. Whether that is personal suffering, community suffering or nationwide suffering, we believe in a God who understands and empathises with all our suffering. Bad things happen all year round: Christmas is not immune to them. When they happen to us around Advent and Christmas, we must recall that name for Jesus: God is with us and will be if they feature in this Advent/Christmas. If that is your experience, may you hear again the "tidings of comfort and joy". Right now we may be very conscious of the absence of good news in our news bulletins. Our mission this Christmas is to be more aware of the good news of God's love that cannot be overcome by the circumstances of our present age.

Jump a week on and in 2026, we enter the seventieth anniversary of Castlehill Church, and it has been decided to celebrate that all year with a variety of activities. You will hear a lot more about these different activities after Christmas. On 4th January, we are looking back to former Church practice: if you wish, you are invited to wear hat and gloves that week – as was probably normal in 1956. There will be other times when we remember our past practices.

The anniversary year will be an opportunity to give thanks for those who gave us Castlehill but the focus of 2026 must be looking to our future as a Church in our community and how that can be meaningful for all generations – those in the congregation and each generation not presently part of our activities. Our watchword must be welcome and to everyone the assurance that each belongs in Castlehill to share our faith in the years ahead. Who can we invite to join us on our faith journey? Something to ponder on New Year's Eve! If you have ideas of how we can add to next year's activities, the current list is not closed – talk about them!

Meantime, will you worship with us through Advent and Christmas and may you know God's richest blessings on you and yours as we embark on that journey.

With our warmest Christmas wishes.

Paul



CASTLEHILL ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS SERVICES

ADVENT 1	30 NOVEMBER	11.00AM	6.00PM
ADVENT 2	7 DECEMBER	11.00AM	6.00PM
ADVENT 3	14 DECEMBER	11.00AM	6.00PM
ADVENT 4	21 DECEMBER	11.00AM	6.00PM

ALL EVENING ADVENT SERVICES LAST 30MINUTES.

CHRISTMAS EVE ALL AGE SERVICE 7PM

CHRISTMAS DAY SERVICE 10.00-10.30 AM

BELMON T ACADEMY CHRISTMAS CONCERT 11 DECEMBER 7PM

KYLE CLUSTER CHRISTMAS CONCERT 16 DECEMBER 7PM.

70th Anniversary

2026 is the 70th Birthday of Castlehill Parish Church. The logo on the right has been designed by Tabitha and Hamish from Belmont Academy, we would like to thank all the designs we were sent, it wasn't an easy decision to make. We have also chosen to use another design, by Arran, this black and white design will feature on printed items in relation to the 70th Anniversary.



There will be various activities throughout the year to mark the Anniversary, starting off with a hats and gloves service on Sunday 4th January. It is hoped as many people as possible will wear their favourite hat and gloves to the service, you might even be lucky enough to get a new set for Christmas!

There will be a bunny hunt on Saturday 28th March, Easter Sunday breakfast on Sunday 5th April, an afternoon tea on Thursday 11th June and a 70s night including quiz night on Saturday 12th September. There will also be a celebratory dinner on the actual Anniversary, 10th October, this will be similar to the celebratory dinner 10 years ago.

There was a time capsule buried in the Church grounds in 2000 to mark the millennium, we are hoping to retrieve it and create a new one. If anyone has any recollection of where it was buried can you please let a member of the Publicity Committee know—before there are a lot of holes dug!

Various events will be organised throughout the year, these will be noted in the intimations and on Facebook.



Our help is continuing to be needed by families, couples and single people with a steady number coming on a Friday.

We have three new volunteers starting in the New Year and look forward to working with them. Our volunteers turn up faithfully to do their duty on a Friday and without them we could not function, thank you one and all.

We also say a big thank you to everyone who, week after week, donate money and goods to help fill the boxes we give out.

If you were shopping in Tesco on 27th, 28th or 29th November you might have seen some of us helping with the South Ayrshire Foodbank collection which helps keep their stocks topped up ready for the Christmas period.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Margaret Gerrard

Meet the Teams

Do you ever turn up to church on a Sunday and know the faces of the people greeting you but not their names? Below we have introduced Team 6, with an update for Team 2, if you've learnt a new name go up and introduce yourself to them—chances are they don't know your name either!

Team 6:



Elizabeth Graham



Elspeth Rae



Isobel Miller



Marlene Forbes

Team 2:

Liz Hunter, right, has taken over from John McPherson in Team 2. We would like to thank John for his dedication and commitment to being a member of the welcoming team.



Finance

Our financial year runs from 1 January to 31 December.

The Giving to Grow payment to the Church of Scotland was £62,372 to be paid over 12 months. It was agreed we could reduce this to £2,500 each month and we have paid the shortfall of £8,093 every 3 months and will pay the full amount by the end of December. We have not been notified yet about the Presbytery of the South West dues. We continue to get income from outside groups which use the halls and this is a welcome addition to our finances.

To the end of October income from FWO envelopes was £5,317, Standing Order income was £35,907 and Open Plate income was £3,820. During this period gas and electricity costs for the church and halls came to £13,376. Insurance costs were £2,302 and cleaning the church and halls cost £13,198.

We claim Gift Aid each month and to the end of October we received £13,474 of refunded tax. Under the Listed Places of Worship Scheme we claimed a refund of £964 on VAT for eligible work done on the church and halls.

The radiators in the Main hall were replaced at a cost of £6,574.03 and the floor was refurbished at a cost of £3,000. Smaller repairs have been ongoing and cost £7,767.19 to the end of October.

Margaret Devlin, Treasurer

Social Report

The Christmas Fayre is our yearly fundraiser and is always a great success.

Next year there are a few events planned, we will give you more details in due course but of course we will have a beetle drive on the 15th of April.

The Social Committee

Dust if You Must

Dust if you must, but wouldn't it be better
To paint a picture, or write a letter,
Bake a cake, or plant a seed;
Ponder the difference between want and
need?

Dust if you must, but there's not much time,
With rivers to swim, and mountains to climb;
Music to hear, and books to read;
Friends to cherish, and a life to lead.

Dust if you must, but the world's out there
With the sun in your eyes, and the wind in your
hair;
A flutter of snow, a shower of rain,
This day will not come round again.

Dust if you must, but bear in mind,
Old age will come and it's not kind.
And when you go(and go you must)
You, yourself, will make more dust.

ARMISTICE DAY - 11TH NOVEMBER 2025

WHO DO YOU REMEMBER - MY DAD - JOHN GRAHAM

Today I remember my Dad, let me introduce you to him.
No 282906 Acting Lance Sergeant John Graham originally from Glasgow.



When I was born in August, 1952 he was a Church of Scotland Minister at the age of 33, working in Merkinch - St Mark's, Inverness.

Like many of us I did not know anything of his War time service until shortly before his death in March 2021. We never spoke of it. On looking into his history after he died, I was somewhat surprised to find, through The Forces War Records in 2020, he served Royal Engineers, British Army, serving in 1945 in Italy (including Mont Casino, Anzio, Salerno, San Narino, etc).

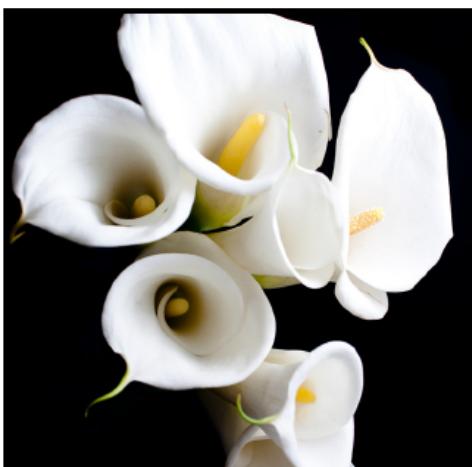
In his own words from the sermon given when he celebrated 50 years in the ordained Ministry in 2020.

“Four young men, all deeply involved in the life of High Church, Dumbarton, were called up for military service. Three of them died during the war. As sole survivor, I felt even then more obliged to serve the church that had lost these potential leaders and teachers.

Two years after the outbreak of war, when called up to military service, I went reluctantly as a pacifist, yet in five years of military service, including three years in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, I never once had to fire a single shot against a fellow-being, for which I was intensely relieved and thankful. As a soldier in the Royal Engineers, I gained a distinction for the quality of my service being “mentioned in dispatches” for gallantry in Sicily. From war time service, I gained a wealth of experience of the wide variety of human beings that make up a modern army or community, and after the war a government grant for study at Glasgow University”

He then, in 1950, was Inducted and Ordained to Merkinch St Marks Church, Inverness and 1960 Inducted to St Andrew's Clermiston, Edinburgh. Retiring from there, in 1984 back to Inverness. Other achievements were as the only minister in Inverness who had served in the war being asked by the Chaplain of Royal British Legion - Inverness Branch to take their Armistice Day Service at the Northern Meeting Ground and Celebrating his 50th year in the Ordained Ministry in 2020 preaching in his local parish church St Stephen's, Inverness.

I am proud to have his War Medals in my possession.
Andrew Graham



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This session has started very well for the 17th Ayr.



The highlight so far has been our dedication service on 26th October. We celebrated the installation of our original Colours during the service. The service also saw us promote two boys from the Junior Section to the Company Section, Sam Grant and Kyle McClymont. Also promoted from the Anchor Boys to the Junior Section were Nathan Ball, James Finlay and Harris Reid.

The main part of the service was our presentation of badges. We presented Connor Graham with his President's Badge. We then presented our first ever King's Badges. These were presented to Caleb Black, Matthew Doolan, Logan Dunwoodie, Cameron Frame, Finlay Wright, Callum Murray, Fraser Murray, Callum Scrimgeour.

We also attended church for the Remembrance service. For the first time we had a mother and son carrying the Colours, Sharon Reid and Matthew Doolan. Laying the wreath on behalf of the Boys' Brigade were Anchor Boys Harry and Riley Pettigrew.



On the Friday night before Remembrance Sunday the boys painted the silhouetted soldiers black. These were placed in the poppy displays which had been made by other members of the congregation.



We also took the Junior and Company Section away for the weekend to Lapwing Lodge, a scout facility in the Gleniffer Braes above Paisley. We took the boys on a treasure hunt round Paisley on Saturday morning. After lunch we went to the Coates cotton mill where we visited the thread museum. A fascinating insight into what was the world's largest producer of thread. The rest of the weekend consisted of team activities, games and quizzes.

On Friday 14th November the Junior Section held a sponsored silence. The boys were concerned as to whether they would manage a full hour in silence. They raised an amazing £300. This money will cover our Christmas event with the balance going to Company funds. Our Christmas event for the boys is a Lego themed programme provided by a Company called Let's Go Construct.

The Anchor Boys are finishing their session on Tuesday 9th December with an event which includes their parents. Their Christmas event is a craft evening with some catering provided. The Anchor Boys have benefited from having two of our young new officers, Caleb Black and Connor Graham, now working with Margaret and her staff. In addition, Connor's sister Abbie, is volunteering with the section to

help towards her Duke of Edinburgh Award

We are now looking forward to the Christmas season. We would like to wish you all a Merry Christmas from all at 17th Ayr.

Ian Queen, Captain

Defibrillators

There are now a number of defibrillators located round the church, below are the locations:



The North Hall



The Fellowship Area

PRAYER

We thank you God for the life you've given us. For the families that we are part of.

Today we remember particularly those who served during World War One and Two serving in our Armed Forces from British Isles and the Commonwealth. Those who gave their lives for our freedom at the cost of their own lives.

For the Veterans who returned from war with memories of those left behind, who returned with life changing injuries. The Royal British Legion the services and support offered over the years.

Those who serve in modern warfare in the services today. We think of those that are away from home, presently serving in foreign lands of conflict. For their families left behind.

We ask your blessing on them and theirs. God our Father we thank you for your everlasting love and guidance in our lives.

Amen.

Andrew Graham: 01292 261486

REMEMBRANCE DISPLAYS

The Publicity Group encouraged groups and individuals involved in the life of Castlehill Church to come together to create these displays.

We all remember in our own ways, but we also remember how communities were impacted by the loss of so many lives.

Girl Guides: Our display is to decorate the cross with poppies and incorporate the service of animals. We have a dog on one side of the cross and a horse on the other both coloured in purple, and a dove coloured in white at the top of cross.



Flower ladies: A field of poppies.



The Guild

The two 4ft x 4ft Remembrance panels is the offering from The Guild under the supervision of Christine Prout.

Handyman, George Jedrzejewski, supplied the panels and hung the finished articles either side of the Cross in the hall.

Stella Nixon supplied the lightweight frame in the shape of a heart and the mesh to support the poppies.

The ladies of The Guild helped to assemble the silk poppies for the heart and the posies.

The paper materials used on the left-side panel was supplied by Margaret Graham from the activity's cabinet. The black material on the centre of the right-side panel was provided by Rena Mundell, a member of The Guild.

Grateful thanks to all The Guild ladies who were encouraging and supportive during this project.



Warm Spaces:

At the end of last year the idea was put forward that, as a group, we should make poppies to decorate the church. It was agreed that we would, over the year, gradually make these poppies.

We ended up with a variety of poppies – knitted, crocheted – variety of patterns and sizes. We even had origami poppies which have been put on the two trees in the Fellowship Area. Crocheted tea-light holders are displayed around the base of the poppy trees.

Patterns and examples of poppies were put on the table in the Church vestibule to allow members of the congregation to be involved. This was very successful.

We also discussed adding a few purple poppies to represent the many animals which were lost throughout conflicts.

The idea of putting a post-box topper on the nearest box – the one at the corner of Castlehill Road and Chalmers Road – was discussed and taken on as a project. This has been done and the family living in the house next to the box were highly delighted to have this happen. A post was made on social media of this by the resident.

All poppies made have been tied onto garden net and hung from the pulpit. Poppies can continue to be added to this display in coming years in honour of those lost/affected by ongoing conflicts.



Remembrance Tree of Cranes: Anyone wishing to remember a loved one may write their name on a 'paper crane' and leave it to be attached onto the tree. Tree preparation by Lynn McDermott and Brenda Mullins. 'Cranes' by Margaret Graham.



Outside: Poppies made by Brenda Mullins and our Boys' Brigade provided the silhouettes of soldiers.

Our thanks to all who participated, Publicity Group.



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



As we near the half-way mark of our season, we are almost through our competitions for the 2025 year, hopefully they will be completed for a prizegiving at the Christmas party on 15th December. The winners will be announced in the spring magazine.

It is encouraging to know that we have 30 members this year, and the new arrivals seem to be enjoying themselves.

Attendances have been good and hopefully that will continue. One or two of our members have been under the weather lately and we wish them a speedy recovery.

Wellwood Grierson, Secretary

Fabric Report

The maintenance of the church is never ending.

The main hall floor has been repaired and varnished and we have put blinds up on the road side of the hall.

The drain in the main car park was sinking so this has been repaired and a new cover put on, also a new inspection cover has been put on the drain on the grass, all this work cost £900.

The wall around the church is nearly finished, it has been a bigger job than expected and the weather has been against us but hopefully in the next couple of weeks it will be completed.

The boilers and water heater have undergone their periodic maintenance. As has the piano and organ. All the electrical goods get P.A.T. tested. We have another two fire bells one at office door and one in the north hall .

When you think everything is ok we now have a small leak in the main roof but, after inspection, there are a few areas needing attention we think this could be the seagulls that are up there throughout the summer.

The Fabric Committee

COMMUNION

In 2026 we shall return 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. Officebearers will pass along these 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 before the March communion.

The Guild

"Whose we are and Whom we Serve"



The Guild started a new session in October with numbers remaining constant. At enrolment we had 40 members, but we still have room for more if you wish to come along.

The Guild strategy for our second year of the theme 'Let us Build a House' is 'Living Stones'. It is not always easy to be positive in a world of conflict, climate change and uncertainty but we have the assurance that God is always at our side.

The first meeting of the new Ayrshire Guilds Together, 'The Autumn Gathering', was held at St Nicholas' Church in Prestwick. It was well attended by Guilds from all over the County including those from Arran who came despite the problems with the ferries.

We have a very varied programme of speakers including seaside entertainers, Woman's Aid, a talk on Africa and an author on her recently published book. It won't be too long before we have our outing to the Panto at the Gaiety Theatre and our Christmas meal at the Chestnuts. We try whenever possible to support local businesses. How quickly the year has gone.

We wish you all a happy, healthy and prosperous year ahead.

Dorothy Jack, Secretary

Winter Activities Afternoons

Our Warm Spaces has resumed for the Autumn/Winter months. We meet in the main hall every Thursday afternoon 2.00pm to 4.00pm. On average we have 30 people who attend regularly and have been pleased to welcome some new people in the last few weeks. The aim of our group is to combat loneliness by providing a warm space to enjoy the chat and activities on offer. We also over the months, welcomed nursery children and senior pupils from Forehill and Belmont as part of intergenerational activities. These are always enjoyable sessions.

If you are free on a Thursday afternoon and would like to join us you will be made very welcome, while making new friends as you chat over a cup of tea. It has been proven that being involved in such a group reduces the feeling of isolation and loneliness and helps to promote positive wellbeing. Hope to see you any Thursday afternoon.

Liz Hardie, Lead

This Special Time

It was the year before the Millennium. I was at a concert in the Birmingham Symphony Hall. The programme included Gustav Holst's orchestral piece 'The Planets' which he wrote in 1917. I was particularly moved listening to the Jupiter Suite and I whispered to my neighbour 'I'd love to write words to that.' She responded 'Just do it!' Over the years I have written poems and reflections as well as prayers but had never written words to match music. So with the Millennium in mind I did. This is the result:

'Our God, we want to worship you at this most special time
for in you all promises come true and nothing is in vain.
There are always disappointments, maybe suffering and pain,
but your covenant in the rainbow reassures us once again.
It's your love which baffles evil, your love which makes us whole;
your hold that changes people - body, heart and soul.

Lord Jesus, it's through you we pray in times of need and joy;
it is you who take our breath away, defusing rage and spite;
you heal where hope has withered, challenge wrong and show us right,
teach all victims they have value, make our future free and bright.
It's your love which baffles evil, your love which will defend
the poorest and the lowest who on your grace depend.

Wise Spirit, source of all that thrills, as year eclipses year,
you amaze us your ensouling fills every emptiness.
Your prompting draws us onward, means we trust that life will bless,
that our striving will be fruitful, not leave us purposeless.
It's your love which baffles evil, your love we can't confine;
you confound our proud attachment to any place or time.'

The tune is a familiar one, Thaxted, which we sing to Cecil Arthur Spring-Rice's words 'I vow to thee my country'. It can be found in the Church Hymnary 4th Edition at number 704. Perhaps we can use it during our Platinum Jubilee year?

Pamela Turner

Weddings

Ella Bryant & Lexi Mackie 25 September 2025



Funerals

October

Isobel Reid Cunningham Crescent, Ayr

Our thanks goes to the following people for donating flowers to the church between September and December:

Marion Rae, May Harris, Stella Nixon, Christine McLean, Pamela MacDougall, Pat Colquhoun, Wilma Thomson, Anne Massie, Shirley Russell, Elizabeth Graham, Margaret Grierson, Brian Christie, Jackie Christie, Janice Blair, Linda Telfer, Rita Walker and Marion Reid.



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 Elizabeth Reid.

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

I'm going to take an angel upstairs

I'm going to take an angel upstairs with me,
tiny, two inches (if that) of paper; with wings;
left over from Christmas.

She will watch and cheer
and, since I trust her, is always dear -
even if the messages warn.

Her stalwart, curved wings like upthrown arms,
loosely, ecstatically illustrating
her silent song to God
and me.

Pamela Turner



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