

The Herald

Castlehill Parish Church

Winter 2014



Editorial

Many of us are familiar with the hymn "Tell me the Old, Old, Story", sadly no longer in the new hymn book. As Christmas fast approaches we look forward to hearing again of the birth of Jesus. Throughout the world the Bible in its many languages relates the now familiar story to new generations.

I was given recently a copy of the New Testament written in Doric, and while sometimes difficult to follow it throws a distinctly comfortable feeling around the story of the birth.

MATTHA Chaptir 2: Noo Jesus wis born in Bethlehem, I the lan o Judea at e time fan Herod wis e keeng. There cam, aboot att time, tae Jerusalem, some clivver chiels fae oot o the east. An they speirt far abbot they culd fin e bairnie att wis born to be a keeng o e Jews. " We've seen his starrie I the east" they says " an we've come tae wirship him" Fan Herod heard iss, he wis gie sair come at, aye an a Jerusalem wi him. He cried a meetin o the heid deesters o e temple an aa e layers, an socht them tae taul him far aboot iss Christ bairn wad be born. An they telt him "In Bethlehem o Judea, cause e prophits hiv said, "Ye, o Bethlehem o Judea, are hine fae e hinmost o e toons o Judea, fur oot o ye will come a heid bummer att will rowle ma folkies in aa Israel".

How will you pass on the Christmas message? Will it be real and from your heart? Tell it the way it was meant to be.

Good wishes to you all.

Wellwood Grierson, 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 email address quoted.



From the Manse

A season for remembering

Recently, in worship, we added pictures of the congregation to an outline of the church, a tangible reminder that all of us make up the body of Christ. Already, some of those in the photographs have gone to join the Communion of Saints and we remember them with gratitude and love. We will always miss them, particularly as Christmas comes around again. At Castlehill we make space for those mourning loved ones in our Quiet Christmas Service (this year on 17th December). In our Advent services we will remember the hope, peace, love and joy that Jesus' birth brought into the world. May you know that hope, peace, love and joy this Christmas whatever the season brings for you. And may you know the Christ child born in your heart and changing your world.

Liz Crumlish
www.liz-vicarofdibley.blogspot.com



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Advent and Christmas Services

Sundays at 11am
30th November - All age worship for Advent
7th December - Holy Communion
21st December - All age Nativity
28th December - Lessons and Carols

Midweek Worship
Wednesdays at 7pm - 3rd, 10th December
Quiet Christmas Service—Wednesday 17th December, 7pm

Carol Service with the Salvation Army and Ayr Community Gospel Choir -
Sunday 14th December –6pm

Christmas Eve
All age worship - 7pm
Watchnight Service - 11:30pm

Christmas Day Family Worship -11am



Ministry Team

Hi Friends,

It is wonderful being back with you all at Castlehill. It's hard to believe it is 5 years ago as a fresh faced rookie I joined you to explore my call from God. It's been a long journey but a very worthwhile one on which I have met so many wonderful people. I am really looking forward to working with you all again and sharing the next part of my journey with you.

I want to share with you the story of a Russian lady called Babushka, although in Russian that means 'Grandma', so we don't really know her name. She lived in a small village. One cold night, a ripple of excitement spread through the village.

'The wise men are coming', they cried. Come and see, come and see'. But Babushka wouldn't go. She was very house proud and there were still floors to be swept and pots to shine.

However, a little later there was a sharp knock on the door. Opening it, she found three visitors from the East looking for a room for the night. The old lady was delighted, and before long the house filled with the smell of a hearty soup, and the sound of her visitors' deep accented voices.

Over dinner they explained that they were on their way to visit the boy who had been born king of the world, to present their gifts to him. They enquired, kindly, if she would like to join them on their quest. 'No no' she replied, 'I have no gifts fit for a baby king' - although in truth she had a cupboard full of her son's old toys.

After her visitors had gone to bed she stayed up long into the night, taking the old toys carefully out of the cupboard, and polishing them up until they shone like new. Then at last she fell asleep and when she woke up her special visitors had gone.

She set off in pursuit of them, the shiny toys bundled in a bag, hoping to present them to the baby king. Wherever she went on her journey, the wise men had left just before her. Even when she got to Bethlehem, the stable was cold and empty, with no more than a little hollow in the manger where the baby king had lain.

So now her journey continues - always travelling, never arriving. Always hoping to catch the king around the next corner or in the next country. Along the way she hands out her toys to boys and girls who deserve them - which is why in Russia children keep an eye out for her at Christmas.

Babushka's is a sad tale of missed opportunity. Instead of seizing it, she let it slip by in all her busyness ... and has regretted it ever since. Perhaps this little, old Russian lady has something to teach us in our busy and sophisticated lives ... even today. Let's not get so busy with Christmas that we miss the point of Christmas.

I hope you have a wonderful Christmas and that Christ the King is at the heart of it welcoming you to join his journey.

Tom McLeod
Ordained Local Minister



Well, it has been two months since I arrived here in Ayr not knowing at all what I was getting myself into. Less than a year ago, I got a notion to see what other opportunities for Service I might be able to pursue. Having lived previously in the UK and having loved it, I wondered if that possibility might be able to come to fruition. Lo and behold, now here I am and wondering what things might be lying in store.

It has been in times like these, when I have put myself into situations where I have no clue what is going on, that God comes along and opens my eyes and says... see that, isn't that amazing?! It is in times when we are most vulnerable that we are able to see the goodness and grace in God and in the people that He places in our lives.

In the months ahead, I look forward to sharing this journey with you, coming alongside all of you at Castlehill and seeing what God is doing in all of your lives, and being the richer for it. In the holiday season ahead, may we journey together in finding God Incarnate in our world and in our own lives.

Kristina Hine

A word from our organist...

There are very few things from an organist's perspective that I can honestly say I hate with a passion. One of these rare things is teaching the choir Christmas anthems in October. Experience has taught me however, that if we leave it any later, December is upon us and the anthems aren't ready! This year I thought I would be really organised and so I posted the list of Christmas tunes we would require in September to give my fellow choir members a chance to dig out their music. When I started to look through my own music I couldn't believe how many years worth of Christmas music I had accumulated and what was worse when I looked back and saw how many years it had been since we had last sung some of the pieces... time flies!! In my mind I had a list of Christmas hymns that the choir had sung "recently" however, upon closer inspection it was five and six years since we last did them. Furthermore there are always tinges of sadness when you reflect upon choir members who had previously sung them who are no longer with us.

Time will tell whether or not the levels of dementia within the choir are such that they can remember the notes of the pieces saving having to go back to the beginning again, I'm not holding out much hope. However, this year's selections have been chosen in the hope that the congregation's amnesia has kicked in so they all sound like brand new pieces, or that's the idea anyway

Back in the summer edition of the magazine I gave you an annual report card on all things musical so here is my half year update. I am delighted to report that the choir has suffered no further losses and indeed we have gained another tenor. This has resulted in two things, firstly we are now fully able to undertake 4 part harmony with a good balanced sound and secondly for the first time ever at Castlehill I have had to tell the male members of the choir to pipe down as they are drowning out the women! This is now the point where I cleverly slip in a plea for extra women singers to correct the balance. I am hoping that this six months of stability might mean that my recruiting ban can now be lifted and I can start conscripting, I mean acquiring, new choir members. As you may have read in my last article the organ is now finished and we will certainly be able to make good use of its improved sound over the Christmas period. Those with a keen musical ear may have noticed that there are still one or two notes that are not quite right, yes I realise it is hard to pick out amongst my duff notes, however there are a couple. Hopefully these teething problems will be sorted in the near future. My glamorous assistant Liz Kelly continues to provide pleasant relief to the congregation once a month when I am off gallivanting. Recently we performed a duet together at the September Communion which was great fun to do so watch out for more of those in due course... Without Liz, Castlehill could not keep a big enough stock of ear plugs and oxygen tanks to cope with my offerings on a Sunday morning, so my thanks as always to her for her continued patience, support and friendship.

As I compose this article I am contemplating when to bake this year's Christmas cake and whether or not it is acceptable yet to be seen buying mincemeat pies in the supermarket. I love November because it gives me an excuse to start thinking about these things and to contemplate what music will be wheeled out for Advent and Christmas. Frankly there are so many great tunes that I struggle for choice but there are a few that are firm favourites. This year I have found myself humming 'The Little Drummer Boy', the melody has only seven notes and despite its simplicity I find the words and music very moving. The words written from a child's perspective of visiting the stable where Jesus lay. A simple understated tune describing a simple understated birth for a child that would go on to do miraculous things.

Wishing you a very merry Christmas and a musical 2015!

Christopher

Samaritans Purse Shoebox Appeal

Thank you for your generosity.

The total on Sunday 16th November 2014 for this year's Shoebox Appeal from Castlehill Parish Church was 63 shoeboxes. This is part of our targeted figure of 2,500 to 3,000 shoeboxes to go from Ayrshire.

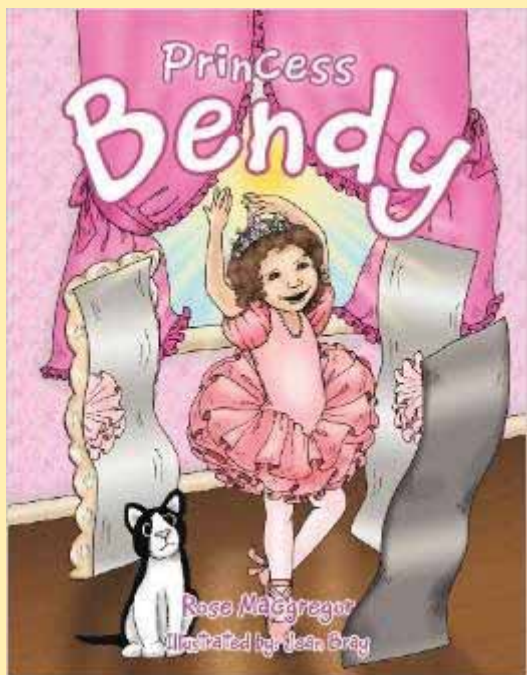
These will be collected on Monday 17th November by a driver for transfer to St Leonard's Parish Church for the team to check and sort for onward distribution prior to final collection in December.

Do not worry if you missed that date as any boxes handed in to the Church after that will be passed on. Thanking you again.

Elizabeth & Andrew Graham



Princess Bendy



One of our members, Rose McGregor, has written a book to raise awareness of Hypermobility:

This is what Rose says about the book:

Hi, Princess Bendy is all about the effects of a condition known as Hypermobility on one little girl, my granddaughter, in this story.

It was a long time before she was diagnosed with the condition and myself and her mum had such a difficult time trying to help Caitlin while not really knowing what was the matter with her.

When Caitlin was diagnosed it was a relief to know, but then the struggle was to make other children and grown-ups in Princess Bendy's life understand her condition and raise awareness of its effects on her physical abilities and her emotions

This book takes the reader into her world as a child and how it all began—What it was like for Caitlin at such a young age. I'm sure this book will be useful in nurseries and schools in raising awareness of Hypermobility especially during circle time .

Princess Bendy is available from Rose, from booksellers and on Amazon.co.uk

LAMENT TO THE LORD

*They have brought you up to date Lord down at St Cecillas
They have pensioned off the organ and they are praising with guitars
They have done it for the young ones – we want to draw them in
But I do wish they could worship without making such a din
For I am growing rather deaf Lord and when there 's all that noise
It gets so very hard Lord to hear your loving voice*

*They have written brand new hymns Lord with tunes that I don't know
So I hardly ever sing Lord though I did love singing so
They are very go ahead Lord they are doing series three
But the words are not so beautiful as the others used to be
They have modernised the Bible the Lord's Prayer and the Creed
When the old ones were so perfect that they filled my every need*

*My minds not quite so agile as it was some years ago
And I miss the age old beauty of the words I used to know
It is very clear to me Lord I've overstayed my time
I don't take to change so kindly as I did when in my prime
But it can't be very long now before I'm called above
And I know I'll find you there Lord and glory in your love
Till then I'll stick it out here though it is not the same for me
For while others call you "YOU" Lord do you mind if I say "THEE".*

For the Diary

Look out for a Flower Festival in the Church on 27th and 28th March next year. It will be advertised and in the Order of Service.



St Andrewstide at Westminster – a reminiscence.

Each year the Moderator spends a November week in London and a feature of this is a St Andrewstide service held in the Crypt of The Houses of Parliament. In 1990 I was, through a fortuitous circumstance, present at that years' service. In truth, I was there as a substitute for my brother-in-law, who preferred to remain in Perthshire.

My sister had a long-standing invitation from Lord Galpern to visit Parliament as his guest, she had known him for many years through business connections. For one reason or another she was always too busy to go. Finally, Lord Galpern indicated to her that time was running out since he was considering retirement. At that time he was in his eighties!

The invitation included Jack, my brother-in-law. He said he had important work to do in their house and couldn't make it. That was when I was roped in as sub.

So it was early shuttle flight for Chris and me to Heathrow and arrival at Westminster about 10 am. We were met at the House of Lords entrance by Lord Galpern. During our preliminary blether he mentioned that our visit coincided with that of the Moderator, Professor Robert Davidson, who would later that morning be officiating at the St Andrew's service in the Crypt. Would we like to attend? Of course we would!

The service was a special event for us. The faces of the congregation were, in many ways, familiar – being regularly seen in the Scottish newspapers and on TV featuring in articles and programmes on Scottish political matters. Professor Davidson was accompanied by the Rev Glenn Bowie and the readings undertaken by Malcolm Rifkind MP and John Smith MP.

And coincidentally, Glenn Bowie had been an assistant minister in Beith High Church about 1952/53 – our family church – after which he became a Chaplain in the Royal Air Force. Also John Smith and my sister knew each other from working in a Glasgow solicitors' office. John, while doing his Legal apprenticeship and Chris when was a secretary. So there was an opportunity to chat about times past. We were treated to a fine lunch (in the Lord's Dining Room – so much better than the Commons' equivalent said the noble lord!). Thereafter we sat as spectators in the House of Lords during a debate and observed the polite and generally well behaved members as they delivered their contributions with very little exuberance. The atmosphere was certainly very civilised, in contrast to the sometimes very raucous energy we were to experience later in the House of Commons.

Other events were taking place on that day. The Conservative members were electing a new leader (to succeed Mrs Thatcher) and there was clear public interest in the process and outcome of that. There to be seen in the lobby and corridors were supporters of the leadership contenders obviously trying to persuade (cajole?) members to vote for their favoured candidate. It was an important event. John Cole was there, in his famous herring –bone coat, interviewing MPs for his BBC News item. Later that day we were present at Mrs Thatcher's last Prime Minister's Question Time in the House of Commons. This was certainly a special occasion. The Government and Opposition benches were packed, as was the public gallery. The Moderator and his party were present and there were other notable people there to witness her final PMQs. It was noisy, brash, fiery and energetic and this observer enjoyed it immensely.

After that it was time to head for home and we definitely finished on a high. It was an incredibly interesting experience and an occasion which demonstrated the continuing role in national affairs of our Church on the one hand and, on the other, the necessary raw and committed attention to civic wellbeing required from our elected representatives. Church and State in contradistinction.

Allister Anderson.

Jesus is Coming

With Christmas approaching our thoughts begin to dwell on the birth of our Lord Jesus. I can only imagine how Mary and Joseph felt that night. Tired and afraid trudging through the streets of Bethlehem looking for shelter and getting turned away, finally finding a stable - and we all know what happened next....

.....Jesus IS coming. Are YOU ready?

Kirsty Wyllie

Where are they now?

In 1960, I was unexpectedly looking for an assistantship (The probationer system had then not quite begun). A friend who was assistant in the Auld Kirk told me that Castlehill Church, then just ten years old, was unexpectedly looking for an assistant. So began my first three years as a minister, and a very happy time in my life.

My "bishop," I soon learned, was a dynamo of energy, who had begun in a hut where Lochlea Drive is now, and had built up a congregation of a thousand in ten years. By the time I arrived, there was a hall church, a largeish hut and a new dedicated church a-building. With typical generosity, Mr Munro (there was no familiar use of Christian names in those days) flung me straight into assisting in worship (I'd to preach one Sunday in three, helping with the bible class (who were delightful, but scared me to death) and out into the parish to visit the sick, bereaved and elderly. The parish being compact, I was out on foot most afternoons. From my bishop, I learned what it was to be a parish minister, and what an active, friendly, good-hearted congregation could do.

The BB Company, the 80th Ayr, promptly informed me that I was their assistant chaplain, and a few months later took me off to Chapelstile, near Ambleside in the Lake District. I was very apprehensive, as I'd never been under canvas before, but they treated me with more respect than I deserved, and I enjoyed it immensely. We were encamped in a field next the local churchyard. While we were there the gravediggers, excavating a new layer, came on a huge rock which they were unable to move. They came across the wall and asked for help. In a short time, a squad of boys had the rock out, and the grave could be completed. The congregation had a Dramatic Club, who also informed me (you Ayr folk were good at that) that I would take a part in their next play, which retold the Easter story. So I had to tread the boards and learn my lines – as Barabbas. I had a harlot called Ziba. Fortunately for us both, she and I didn't have to do anything embarrassing together.

So many people befriended me that it would be impossible to name them, and invidious to choose only a few. But I was then and still am hugely grateful to them all.

My first charge was Larbert West, on the north of Falkirk. Then still full of foundries, it was not Scotland's scenic wonderland. But the people were delightful, supportive to a newly fledged minister, and forgiving of my many mistakes.

In 1974, I was called to Fairmilehead Church on the southern edge of Edinburgh. It was, a big, busy suburban charge, with two morning services every week and three on Communion Sundays, whose halls were scarcely ever empty, served by a large and enthusiastic Kirk Session and Congregational Board. Once again, I found myself among good people, many of whom, besides all they did for their church, took their faith out into the world in the responsible jobs they did there.

In 1991, I became chaplain to the Royal Edinburgh Hospital (not to be confused with the Infirmary), a large mental hospital in Morningside – the Edinburgh equivalent of Bellsdyke. There I was privileged to work beside many good people, staff and patients alike, They taught me about mental illness and about far more, as they coped with the often heart-breaking difficulties of their afflictions.

I retired in 2006, and greatly enjoy the much lessened pressure. As a Presbytery chaplain, I visit a number of ministers to offer pastoral support. I also do some Sunday supply, and have great fun being irresponsible in other people's pulpits. I sing in a choir, and read many books. I feel that I've not yet moved into what Rikki Fulton called God's waiting room.

I am grateful for this opportunity to say to you all, a thousand thanks. It was good to be with you. May God continue to bless you.

Murray Chalmers (Assistant 1960-66).

Since the autumn of 2010 we have been looking into where all the assistant ministers at Castlehill have ended up. This has proved interesting to some and very nostalgic to others, who knew who they all were. We started with Ian Groves followed by Iain Thomson, Elizabeth Watson, Iain Cunningham, Paul Beautyman, Iain Macritchie, Angus Kerr, Quintin Blane, Elizabeth Henderson, David Mitchell, Quintin Finlay and, in this issue, Murray Chalmers.

We think we have one to go after this issue, but if any of our older members can conjure up some other names we would be very grateful. Just speak to Douglas Owens the Session Clerk, to the Minister or to the editor and let us know. There is no competition this issue, but here is something to test your memory.

Kidz page - a tale of four Christmases

What are you going to eat on Christmas Day? Everyone eats turkey and roast potatoes at Christmas, don't they?

Well, I can tell you a few places where they don't! I've been lucky enough to spend Christmas in Austria, Barbados, Belgium and Spain and I can assure you that they don't eat roast turkey in any of them!

In Belgium there is no set menu but Belgians will make a very special meal with several courses. Our friends opened a bottle of champagne and served oysters before the meal! We had a very delicious soup made of Jerusalem artichokes, followed by celery-flavoured water-ice, which cleans the palate and gives your stomach a rest before you eat something more substantial! The main course was a succulent piece of venison and the dessert was a sort of baked Alaska.



It is a little bit difficult to get into the Christmas spirit in Barbados because it is hot and sunny so Christmas cards with pictures of snow and snowmen look totally out of place! No Bajan has ever seen snow at home. However, there is a shrub called *Snow on the Mountain*, which is covered with tiny white flowers at Christmas time and a plant with bright red leaves which you will know - *Poinsettia*. You see it in little pots in the shops here but in Barbados it can grow as big as houses! *BTW don't touch it as the sap can irritate your skin and cause temporary blindness if it gets in your eyes!*

In Barbados we ate roast pork with papaya or pawpaw drenched in lime juice as a starter. You could have banana or coconut bread or *Bajan Black Cake* (very like Scottish *Black Bun*) as dessert.

We drank cold refreshing red sorrel and rounded off the meal with a *little Tia Maria*. We didn't eat too much because we went down to the beach afterwards to have a swim!

Spain was another place where we could have gone swimming after lunch, except we were too full. We spent eight Christmases in the south of Spain and only once did we have to eat inside. We normally sat out of doors beside the beach. Cod, shrimp and seafood soup are popular Christmas dishes with the Spanish. For me, the strangest Christmas custom was in Austria, where the father of the family prepared loads of breaded deep-fried carp with potatoes. It was delicious!

Everyone sits down to Christmas lunch on 25 December at about 1.30 p.m., right?

Er no, in Belgium the traditional meal begins around 9 p.m. on Christmas Eve and goes on over midnight. In Austria and Spain they also have their Christmas meal in the evening of Christmas Eve and many people will finish in time to go to midnight mass.

Children all get presents on Christmas day morning, don't they?

Wrong again. In Austria, if the children are old enough to go to midnight mass, they will get presents on their return in the wee small hours. They will admire the Christmas tree, which they see for the first time as the Christ Child will have decorated it very beautifully while they were at church. They sing the Austrian carol, "Silent night" or "Stille Nacht", in front of the Christmas tree before opening presents. Meanwhile, in Belgium, the children will have already received presents from Saint Nicolas on 6 December and in Spain children have to wait until 6 January for the Three Kings to bring their presents on Twelfth Night or Epiphany.

One lovely custom still observed in some Dutch-speaking areas is to make up a poem for each member of the family saying how much you appreciate them and listing that person's good points. It can take more effort than going out to buy a present but, those who are used to it, soon become quite adept. Why don't you try it? It gets easier and easier with practice. It is good to write a poem - or just a thoughtful note - on a card that your loved one can treasure, telling your Mum or Dad, sister or brother, (spouse or son or daughter) that you love them. Then you will definitely all have a merry Christmas!

Denise Fisher

UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS

GIRL GUIDES

As part of our Fire Safety Badge, our Brownie Pack had a visit to the Fire Station.

We were shown round the fire engines and we got to see all the equipment which was stored in them. Unfortunately, our visit was interrupted when the Appliances got called out. Plan B was then put into effect and we were shown the river rescue equipment.

The appliances returned shortly thereafter, as it was a false alarm they had been called out to and they then allowed the girls to have a go at the hoses which they really enjoyed..

Five of the new Brownies took their promise at the Station before we left.

We had a great night and cannot praise the Firemen enough for allowing the visit and for their time and patience with the girls.



BOYS BRIGADE

The session has started well with good numbers in all three sections. The highlight so far has been our dedication service Sunday.

We awarded three Queen's Badges to: Jack Graham, David Moore and Rory Stuart. Three young men, who have successfully completed their BB journey and received the deserved congratulations of the congregation.



After the dedication service we enjoyed another full house for our soup and sweet lunch where we raised £580, thanks to everyone who attended and to those who made the soup. A special mention to Marion Reid and Margaret Houston, who organised everything while we were enjoying the service.

So far the company Section have had one competition. After winning the 7-a-side football for five years in a row we finally let Troon have the trophy (just on loan). We were a very good second place and our young team deserve praise.

The Junior Section also took part in their football competition with enthusiasm but no medals.

We are very fortunate to have a couple who have a son in the Junior Section who have decided to fund raise for the Boys' Brigade. Ben Houston's parents, Stephanni and George, ran a race night in November from which they donated £555 to the Boys' Brigade. In addition to this George is doing a sponsored parachute jump in the New Year and he will be sharing some of the money raised with the Boys' Brigade. Stephanni and George, we are very grateful to you for your kindness!

On the weekend of 21st – 23rd November the Junior Section and Company Section went on our annual weekend "camp" to Lapwing Lodge, a Scout facility in the Gleniffer Braes above Paisley. We visited the Maritime Museum at Dumbarton on Saturday morning then went to Balmaha Visitor centre on the shores of Loch Lomond for some outdoor activities. Our weekend clashed with the Battalion swimming gala, so those boys who wanted to take part came back for the evening and produced some great swims helping with our goal of Battalion championship. Those of us who stayed at Lapwing Lodge enjoyed team competitions. On Sunday, after our morning devotion, we finished the team competitions and visited the Lagoon leisure complex in Paisley. Following the swim it was lunch, tidy up and home, exhausted! A personal highlight of the weekend was some "old boys" came to spend some time with us – "once a 17th Ayr boy always a 17th Ayr boy"

We now look forward to our Christmas break.

The boys, officers and helpers at 17th Ayr would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas, thank you all for your continued support, it's much appreciated.

A View from Europe

Sometimes, we can get stuck in a rut. We think that there is nothing out there beyond our own wee world. Then we go on holiday abroad and our perspective changes, for a small time. If we are thinking churches and congregations, how much do you know about the Church of Scotland in Europe? Were you even aware that there is such a thing? Well, there is ...

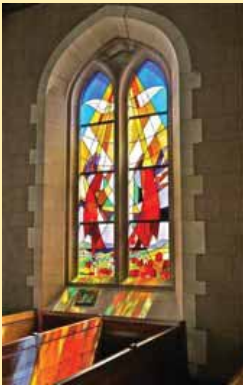
There are 18 congregations which, together, form the Presbytery of Europe - 15 of them are even in Europe!

The 15 can be found in the following 12 countries:

- Belgium (Brussels),
- France (Paris),
- Germany (Bochum and Regensburg),
- Gibraltar,
- Hungary (Budapest),
- Italy (Rome and Turin),
- Malta,
- Netherlands (Amsterdam and Rotterdam),
- Portugal (Lisbon),
- Spain (Fuengirola), and
- Switzerland (Geneva and Lausanne).

The extra 3 churches are in Bermuda, Sri Lanka (Columbo) and Trinidad. Don't ask ...!

The Presbytery of Europe itself meets twice a year, in March and October, in each country by turn. The last meeting was held in Budapest in October. The next one will be in Fuengirola next March. Each meeting lasts for 3 days. I can tell you that they are a good mixture of hard work and friendly fellowship. Here is a photo that I have snaffled from their web site taken from the meeting in Gibraltar of March 2014. I can actually recognise 4 people in the photograph!



Denise, our son and I were members of the congregation of St Andrew's Church, Brussels, for many years. There has been a Presbyterian church in Brussels from as long ago as 1898. The present building was erected in 1925 as a memorial to Presbyterians who died in Belgium during the First World War and to enable the number of Scots who had settled in Belgium after WW1, many of whom had married Belgians, to worship in their own language. It has 3 magnificent modern stained glass windows. The one in this photograph represents the poppy fields of Flanders (especially topical at this time).

The present congregation is made up of many different nationalities and denominations from all over the world. The only "restriction" is that English is the language used. About 40% of the congregation is not Caucasian, most coming from Africa.

St Andrew's is very proud of being twinned with Christ Presbyterian church in Adentan, Accra, Ghana. The twinning agreement was signed in 2007 and the relationship has flourished since then. Christ Presbyterian is a congregation with over 1000 members. It has six preaching points and a wide outreach to its local community, such as providing a cheap supply of clean water. Regular official visits take place between the two churches to strengthen the twinning. In addition, the many Ghanaian members of St Andrew's keep up the links by visiting when they are on their trips home.

St Andrew's Brussels has active Senior and Junior Choirs. Both choirs sing in the weekly services and special services.

Choir concerts are also performed during the church year. Junior Choir members must be at least 6 years old and be able to read English. Our son sang in both the senior and junior choirs and I added my voice to the senior choir.

One interesting feature of the building is that the Church hall is directly below the Church itself. This means that you get a slight feeling of going into a crypt when attending any of the varied activities taking place there: whether it's the Christmas Fayre, or Friday evening Folk evenings or even the Sunday afternoon Ghanaian services (lots of drumming!)

Next time, I will tell you about the Church of Scotland in Spain.

John Fisher



Welcome to Castlehill

Recently the Ayr Presbyterial Council o The Guild held its Autumn Rally at Castlehill Church. As is customary at these gatherings, the Minister of the charge is invited, while offering a welcome, to convey something of the history of the congregation in that place. This was the welcome offered by our minister:



I've been the minister here at Castlehill just over 6 years now. I came from the parish of Inverkip, from an 800 year old parish with a 200 year old building to a 50 year old parish with these lovely modern buildings. Castlehill parish started as a church extension charge in 1956, At that time, the area was served by the Auld Kirk but the pace of house building in this area led the Church of Scotland to create a new charge. A farm and a barn were gifted and converted to be the first meeting place

for the Castlehill congregation, known as Kirk House.

That barn is now the Mormon Church on Mossgeil Road.

Within a year, the congregation had outgrown the barn and work was started on the Hall Church that could seat 400, where you will enjoy tea after the service tonight.

It was dedicated in 1958.

The congregation was granted full status in 1960.

It was clear a short time later, when two Sunday morning services were being held to accommodate folk that another hall that was planned would not be adequate, so plans were drawn up for the sanctuary.

Even those plans changed rapidly - from a single story building to the galleried version we have today.

Work began on this building in 1962 and it was dedicated by the Presbytery of Ayr in 1964.

So this has been the place of worship for 50 years now, along with the excellent suite of halls.

The Fellowship area that links the different parts of the building and provides level access was added much later.

One of the things I most enjoyed coming from an ancient parish to a relatively new one was that the history of the growth of the church was and is a living memory.

Sunday by Sunday, folk gather for worship who bought bricks to build this sanctuary.

Folk who saw the church and community grow up alongside each other.

Castlehill is one of the few Church Extension charges that has remained at the centre of its parish - probably because of the quality of housing round about and the community created - Lots of other church extensions either suffered building problems or diminishing populations.

For some time, Castlehill has been the largest parish in the Presbytery of Ayr, serving over 11000 people within its parish boundaries.

Thanks be to God for the commitment of a small group of people who followed God's call to build a church in a community and for the enthusiasm of the first minister, David Munro who saw the work done and then moved on to allow the congregation and parish to grow up.

It's good to be standing alongside such saints today in welcoming you here.



The Guild

We have welcomed several new members to the Guild this session. This is extremely encouraging since we are now living in a time when, in a lot of churches Guild numbers are falling with some Guilds having to reduce the number of meetings they hold to fortnightly or even monthly, and unfortunately some Guilds have closed.

Here at Castlehill we feel very blessed to be able to still meet weekly and have such a healthy group. Healthy in our fellowship, healthy in our commitment and healthy in our trust in our Lord Jesus Christ - Whose we are and whom we serve.

On behalf of all the Guild members may we wish everyone a peaceful and joyous Christmas.

Marion, Sandra and the Guild Committee

Looking back...

David Munro, the first minister of Castlehill, wrote these words for Church Extension Challenge, a thrice-yearly publication produced by the Church of Scotland in 1958.



Kirk House, Forehill, the first Castlehill Church.

The full opportunity of Church Extension was not brought home to me until we compiled our statistics for the first full year. Of the 266 new members who joined, half of those were First communicants—significant proof of the need of our church in this Parish and of the opportunity for evangelism its presence affords.

The steady growth of our congregation has been maintained and now we have a congregation of over 450 ready to take over our new buildings to be opened in September. It will be a great joy to worship again in a beautiful building, and our new halls will allow the further expansion of our organisations. But there

will be a certain sadness too, for in these two years, our plain and ordinary barn has come to be to us the first home of our new congregation.

But to what is this rather rapid progress to be attributed? One factor must be the part played by the Auld Kirk of Ayr. For some years before the erection of the new congregation, this church carried on mission work in our area. The Auld Kirk continued to staff the organisations until we could replace their leaders with our own.

Another factor has been and is, of course, the loyal and willing service of our own members. They have all rallied to play what part they could.

But, having said all that, we have not given the final answer. Anything that has been achieved has come to pass under the grace of God. If, at any time, my own faith needs reassurance, I only need to stop and think of how God's purpose is being worked out in our day and generation in our parish and in many like ours throughout the length and breadth of our land.



The new Castlehill Church nears completion.

Prayer Chain

The World Keeps on Turning

"God loved the World so much that he gave his only Son So that everyone who believes in Him may not be lost but may have eternal Life" John 3 : 16

The world keeps on turning, the seasons come in sequence, and here we are again in winter and December. When the bright shining star of the Christ Child bursts into our lives it brings us the light of Life and Healing Love from God, our Father.

As we welcome and celebrate the beginning of the life of Jesus and his journey, we remember our journey in the world. Some of us are at the beginning of our Faith, others reflecting with a bit more depth, look at one another seeing that we all need this healing love and light so freely given through Christ Jesus. Hopefully we are able to pass that shining light with all its power of healing and love on to others we meet.

Jesus said" My command is this, love each other as I have loved you"

The members of the Prayer Chain wish you all a joyful and peaceful Christmas.

Margaret Cairns

Parish Registers

Funerals

October

Grace Campbell
Lynne Park
Irene Hunter
Brenda Redman
Ian McLeod
Margaret Dillon

Fenwickland Avenue
Shavin Brae
Ellisland Square
Kincaidston
Mount Charles Crescent
Woodland Crescent

November

Colin Doolan

Peggieshill Road

Baptisms

5th October

Noah Campbell Ian Irvine

19th October

Kayleigh Marie Clark

2nd November

Eden Lyle

Fabric Appeal

Thanks to all those who contributed to this year's Fabric Appeal Envelopes, raising just over £3000.

As well as the general maintenance and upkeep of church grounds and property, the Manse bathrooms and Kitchen have been refurbished in the last few months. This is the first work undertaken in the Manse since the vacancy six years ago.



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Christmas Fayre Quiz 22nd November 2014

Scottish places.....Answers

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Sounds as though Richard is looking smart..... | Brodick |
| 2. Cheap culinary expert..... | Penicuik |
| 3. A chilly river..... | Coldstream |
| 4. A garment crossing..... | Coatbridge |
| 5. The bird is in the room..... | Larkhall |
| 6. Both in your face..... | Eyemouth |
| 7. A very hot place..... | Furnace |
| 8. Many times village cricket champions..... | Freuchie |
| 9. Not much sunlight here..... | Dull |
| 10. There is a "red" one in France..... | Moulin |
| 11. Add nothing and it is a Grand National winner | Finavon |
| 12. Has lots of dots on it..... | Dyce |
| 13. A wide crossing..... | Broadford |
| 14. Not a new animal..... | Old Deer |
| 15. Is this where Nick comes from..... | Nairn |
| 16. An Archbishop's dream home..... | New Abbey |
| 17. Good news for Naomi..... | Ruthwell |
| 18. Sounds like a vehicle detective..... | Carsluith |
| 19. An angry garment?..... | Cape Wrath |
| 20. A loud shout..... | Yell |
| 21. NNCCLARAINA [anagram]..... | Crinan Canal |
| 22. A few miles from Cairo..... | Alexandria |
| 23. Garments on fire?..... | Closeburn |
| 24. Royal instrument..... | Kinghorn |

Winner Mrs Sheena Gray , Dalblair Court, Ayr - Congratulations!

Seniors afternoon.

The October afternoon was another successful occasion with a better than average attendance. A group from Alloway Church entertained us with a host of well-known songs. We all seem to know the first two lines of so many songs but not the rest. So it was great to have the benefit of all the words up on a screen for everyone to sing along to, which everybody did. Thanks again are due to the ladies of the coffee shop who provided the tea and to those who provided lifts to those who needed transport.

The next meeting will be on 9th December in the main hall at 10.15 am when we will have a Christmas party and be entertained by one of the local school choirs. Hope to see as many as possible there.

You may also want to take a note of the meetings on 10th February and 14th April in the North Hall at 2.30 pm

W. Grierson

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