



November 2025
Newsletter

Old High St Stephen's Church of Scotland

SUNDAY SERVICES

Following the closure of the Old High Church for Sunday Worship, all Sunday services are now held at St Stephen's Church at 10.30am. Services are recorded and are available via:

OHSS website:

www.oldhighststephens.com

Youtube:

www.youtube.com (type in Old High St Stephens)

OHSS Facebook page:

www.facebook.com/oldhighststephens

Links are also sent to our e-mail list following the service.

To go on our e-mail list, please contact our [Church Administrator](#).

CONTACT US

Church Administrator:

(079 342 85924)

invernesschurch@gmail.com



If you would like us to keep in touch – please send us your up-to-date e-mail and address details

Registered Charity No.
SC035073

THOUGHTS FROM REV JAMES If you take a walk through nearly any town in the UK and look at the walls, there will usually be the stumps of old iron railings sticking out of the wall. Back in the 1940's, when scrap iron was collected to aid the war effort, railings and other ornamental ironwork was removed to add to the scrap collection. There was a feeling that this was everyone doing their part to help.

When I say nearly any town, when you get north of Inverness, there are still places where original iron remains as it was too expensive to remove them and transport them to be melted down. Stornoway in particular has some exceptionally well preserved ironwork which was studied by Historic Scotland.

What has been left behind however is ugly stumps and ugly scars, a permanent reminder of the sacrifices of war from back here on the home front. While Inverness was spared bombing during WW2, mainly because our area was considered insignificant, many thousands of people served in wars and their names are recorded on memorials throughout the town and beyond. Their loss left scars on families and communities, perhaps not as visible as the damaged stonework, but still their loss left a void.

In the intervening years, conflict has not ended, and in my lifetime we have had 2 Gulf Wars, the Falklands Conflict, the Balkans and the War on Terror. Thousands of lives lost, thousands of families with aching voids where a loved one used to be. And for those who served and have come back, there is the lingering burden of physical and mental scars.

As we draw close to remembrance Sunday, may we all pray that we may all know peace. In the name of the King of Peace himself, Jesus Christ our Lord. James.

NEWS FROM THE CONGREGATION

OHSS PRESBYTERY CITATION Dear Friends, As you will know from the recent intimations, I was tasked with representing the view of the OHSS congregation at Presbytery on Tuesday 28 October 2025. I was allowed 5 minutes to present our case. Mr Bob Forrest spoke on behalf of Crown congregation and I followed with our submission which you can read below. A vote was taken in favour of the union between OHSS and Crown, 59 votes for with 28 votes against. I was personally very disappointed that over half of Presbytery members abstained from voting. Thank you very much to everyone who has supported and encouraged me. Very best wishes, Rachel.

Presbytery Citation I am Rachel Hutcheson Deputy Session Clerk at OHSS. I stand before you representing our congregation. I am grateful for the opportunity to speak.

As you will be aware our congregation have voted twice against the union by a significant margin. I think it is important to note we at OHSS recognise and appreciate it is logical for our congregation OHSS and Crown to unite, however, we do not feel as though we are progressing towards a union, the majority of our congregation feel we are being pushed into a takeover by Presbytery. Many OHSS members feel as though we are losing our name, our beautiful church building, our halls and our substantial financial resources; which include two significant legacies left by dear friends of the St. Stephen's congregation, with no gestures in return. I can say with confidence that OHSS are accepting of a union, however, the two votes (2023 and then again 2025) against accepting, demonstrates how deeply unhappy the congregation are about the current terms of the Basis of Union.

As we are in a state of vacancy it is very unfortunate that we have not had a consistent minister to guide and support us, although we are extremely grateful to our current locum minister James Bisset for his support. For the first three years we do not feel we were adequately represented and we still feel this today. The Presbytery refuse to take notice of matters that deeply concern us. It has been acknowledged that minutes of meetings concerning our proposed union are lost and in Presbytery's view these minutes were '*less useful*' than the Presbytery Mission Plan, however we are left feeling that this demonstrates a lack of open and transparent practice.

A second major concern for the congregation of OHSS is the building classification and the lack of transparency in this process. The AMBA report has been described to me on more than one occasions as a 'tick box' and subjective process. In your presbytery papers it states: '*it shall be the duty of the presbytery to make every effort to secure approval of the office bearers and congregation.*' We have repeatedly expressed our concerns regarding the buildings review and this matter has yet to be resolved. Some of the matters still awaiting to be addressed are as follows:

- Crown's lack of disabled access - our church has three disabled access doors which all comply with current regulations and can all accommodate motorised mobility scooters.
- Crown's lack of car parking facilities during the week and in the evenings

- Crown's lack of car parking facilities for disabled and less mobile - St. Stephen's has parking at the door. We have several members in our congregation who attend regular Sunday worship some of whom do not feel that they will physically be able to make it into the Crown building. It may be passable for wheelchair users but it's certainly not easily accessible for frail and less mobile members who depend upon sticks and trikes.
- Crown has no outdoor space for children to play safely; St. Stephen's has a beautiful garden which can be fully enclosed.
- The Crown building does not have a Highland Council Licence for Public Entertainment and would not be able to obtain one without incurring significant expense. This is something St. Stephen's (although a category B building) already has and has held for a number of years. It is illegal to hold concerts and the like without such a licence.
- Safety concerns about access to the upstairs hall in Crown as members are fearful that they will be stuck in the current lift.
- Concerns about large amounts of expenditure required to keep the Crown building going e.g. expensive organ repairs and outdated boiler.
- Relating to St. Stephens, insurance implications for buildings no longer being formally used for regular Sunday worship - speaking from experience this is an expensive lesson not to be repeated.

One of the factors that determined that Crown would be the principal place of worship was that they had a serving minister at the time. From our point of union this will not be the case, therefore adds further reason to review our catalogue of buildings as a whole.

On behalf of the OHSS congregation I put it to you that to push us into a union with Crown at this stage is premature and should not be enacted until the position of the buildings has been re-assessed, as suggested by The Principal Clerk and that this be done with openness and transparency. Also, the principal place of worship should be decided by the new joint kirk session and that until such time that we are able to formally unite, Sunday Morning Worship should be held at St Stephens so we do not exclude and discriminate against our less mobile and disabled friends.

SERVICE AT SOUTHSIDE NURSING HOME there will be a short service in Southside Nursing Home on Sunday 2 November after our morning service. All welcome to attend.

BLYTHSWOOD CARE SHOE BOX APPEAL Leaflets with details of the annual Shoe Box Appeal are available at both doors at the end of morning worship. Each box should be filled with small, practical items such as toiletries, stationery and clothing. Boxes should be delivered to one of three locations mentioned in the leaflet by no later than Saturday 8 November.

If you are not able to fill a shoebox yourself, you can still bring warmth, joy and hope this Christmas by sponsoring a shoebox <https://blythswood.org/sponsor-a-shoebox/>. For further information, please contact Sandy Cumming 07845 908949 or sandy.cumming@btopenworld.com.

ADVANCE NOTICE - OHSS CHRISTMAS APPEAL 2025

In mid-November, the Pastoral Care Team will launch their annual Christmas Appeal. This year, we will be supporting three local charities - 1668 Café, Gateway (the Highland Homeless Trust) and the Prisoners' Children's Fund. We invite the congregation to make donations in envelopes marked Christmas Appeal or by use of online banking - Account number: 20497724; Sort Code: 82-70-13; Reference: SS Christmas Appeal. Cheques should be made payable to Old High St Stephen's Church. The closing date for donations is Sunday 7 December. For further information, please contact Sandy Cumming on 07845 908 949 sandy.cumming@btopenworld.com

Sweaty Church

St Stephen's Church Hall, Southside Road

Saturday 15 November from 4pm to 6pm

Come along for some free fun, physical activities and games.



Suitable for the whole family, all ages and physical abilities

Pizza and Juice



The theme this time is Faithfulness



OHSS Outing Sunday 2 November The next congregational outing will be held on Sunday 2 November. We plan a short walk in the Inverness area followed by afternoon tea (Venue to be confirmed). We will finalise transport plans beforehand and arrange car sharing and lifts, as required, for the group. We need to confirm numbers for catering by Friday 31st October so please confirm attendance with one of us by then.

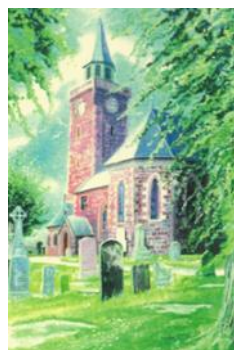
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DEDICATION OF PLAQUE FROM OLD HIGH CHURCH

When we removed the brass memorial to Lieutenant Lachlan ("Toffee") MacKintosh from the Old High, so that it could be relocated to his old school, Sedburgh, Cumbria, you asked for photos/details so the parish could be informed about where it had gone.

The memorial is now mounted on a wall in the Sedburgh School Chapel. Earlier this year it was installed there and re-dedicated on Saturday 3rd May during the School's 500th Anniversary commemoration of the founding of the school in 1525. The re-dedication was conducted in presence of a large congregation by The School Chaplain Rev Paul Sweeting. I attach a photograph. The group in the photograph are (L to R): Daniel Harrison, the Headmaster; Captain Neil McKerron (wearing Cameron of Erracht tartan); The Chaplain, Rev. Paul Sweeting; and the Foundation Director, Jan van der Welde. It was Neil, a former regimental trustee, who when visiting the Old High, spotted the memorial and alert me to its existence and possible transfer.

I attach some other photos showing the location of the plaque from a variety of angles. It is on the left of the nave as you look towards the altar, or on the right when looking to the rear of the chapel. It's an excellent position and very visible to the congregation. P D M Watson, Chairman, Queen's Own Highlanders Regimental Trust.





INVERNESS STREET PASTORS are seeking a Senior Co-ordinator: a paid, permanent, part-time post, working 3 days per week, helping us to reach our goal of doubling all that we do over 3 years. I attach a link to the job description which also includes my contact details and availability, how to apply, and our timeline for selection and interviews. [Inverness Street Pastors Job Description](#)

We'd be very grateful if you could share this in your networks, churches, and with friends and family over the next several weeks (the closing date for applications is Thursday 27th November). The job description includes some initial paragraphs that summarise the post which you may find helpful when sharing. Anyone who is interested can email me for a copy of the job description (even when I'm unavailable, via a download link in my out-of-office reply).

Please also join us in praying for a match made in heaven between the right candidate and Inverness Street Pastors. Thanks and blessings, Mark Hadfield, Co-ordinator 07761 293108



OTHER NEWS

ARTICLE FROM SCOTLAND ON SUNDAY Please see below copy of an article published by Kenneth Roy and contributed by Jim Alexander.

SCOTLAND ON SUNDAY Article 24/2/91

SMALL COUNTRY

KENNETH ROY

celebrates the Sabbath and ponders the Gospels

When I am in the mood for interesting gossip, I go to Cafe Rogano in our former culture city which is a favourite haunt of self-conscious people with that unmistakable "slightly well-known in Glasgow" look. It is particularly useful for finding out who is doing what — and to whom — at the BBC.

As a result of a recent overheard conversation, I can reveal that a documentary is being planned on the forthcoming Scottish visit of the American evangelist, Billy Graham. Actually, I had forgotten — if I ever knew — that Dr Graham was intending to come and save us all. But after my eavesdropping of the BBC table in Cafe Rogano, I am able to let you in on a few secrets. Someone senior in the Graham organisation was talking candidly — perhaps even a little indiscreetly — about the thinking behind the mission.

"People don't want to know about theological issues," said the high-powered chap. "They want to know about their family, their marriage, their health, their finances." Now, there he and I must part company. For like any other gull-ridden Calvinist Scot, I am keenly interested in theological issues, but reluctant to have my personal life dragged through some football stadium.

Then the conversation turned to churches — the actual buildings — and my blood pressure rose suddenly. "People don't want to go in there and meditate," said Billy Graham's man. "They want something that works. The buildings say 'old', 'tired', 'inept'. I'm stereotyping, but what I am saying is that you can't overcome your buildings." I was tempted to interrupt with some irreverent riposte, but the Christie's sale beckoned — it was the day I invested in two Orlando Greenwoods and an A Watson — and reluctantly I had to leave.

However, I had made up my mind: I would visit, as soon as possible, and as a direct response to the provocation I had suffered in Cafe Rogano, the oldest, fuddy-duddyest minister. So last Sunday I went to the most-churchured town in Scotland, Inverness,

across the river while the Piskies' bell chimed innocently in the distance. A waitress at the hotel had recommended Ness Bank C of S, outside which a tramp foraged purposefully in a brown paper bag. "Is it a traditional service in there?" I asked a parishioner. Evidently, yes. "No guitar-strumming ministers, then?" Evidently, no. But I was unconvinced. Ness Bank seemed too young and cheerful for my purpose. Pursued by the tramp, I set off to the Old High as soon as I saw it. It was very old indeed — 14th century, bits of it — and solemn, even forbidding in appearance. But to me, it did not say "old", "tired", "inept"; it said "peace", "sanctuary", "meditation".

The minister — Dr McIntosh — was as serious as the building and got straight down to some extremely scholarly business. He offered no prayers for Her Majesty and Her Majesty's government. He did not insult his congregation with guff about health or personal finances or any of the other lifestyle nonsense that fill the pages of weekend newspapers. He did not ask us to come forward and be saved. But he did ask us to think seriously about the Gospel according to St Mark. Absolutely fine by me.

The day Jesus was arrested, "a certain young man" (Mark XIV, 51) clad only in a linen cloth arrived too late to help. He was set upon by the mob and fled naked from the scene. Who was this mysterious figure? Dr McIntosh believes that the streaker was Mark himself. The anecdote appears in no other life of Jesus because, doubtless, it was considered too trivial to mention — but if the young man was Mark himself, its inclusion in that book alone makes sense.

I will not detain you with further Biblical theory on this Sabbath morning, except to say that since Dr McIntosh's sermon at the Old High I have developed a fresh and lively interest in the New Testament. I suppose I have Billy Graham's man to thank, indirectly, for that. But I will not be going wherever it is Dr Graham wants me to go in order to be saved. It has to be tougher than that.

NESS BANK CHURCH
Registered Charity SC010870

Messy CHURCH

Sunday 2nd November 12.30-2.30pm

for children and families

God's ARMOUR OF LIGHT

games
crafts
lunch
stories
music

ALL WELCOME ADMISSION FREE

Future Dates – 2025/26
14 Dec 8 Feb 29 March 24 May

