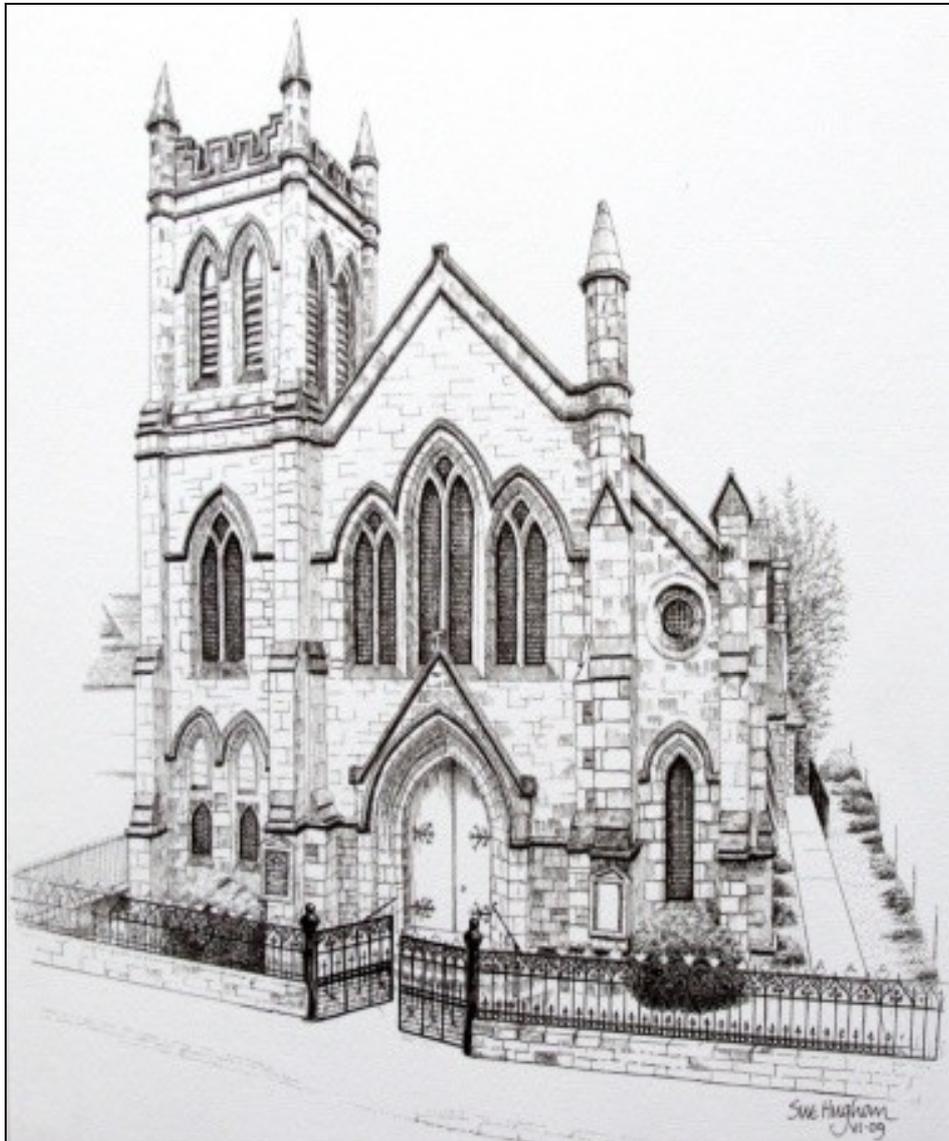


Castle St. Church of Scotland Dingwall



Annual Review 2025

Dear friends,

As we look back on the year 2025, my heart is full of gratitude for the many ways God has been at work in the life of Castle Street Church. In so many different areas, signs of His grace, faithfulness, and creativity have been evident among us.

Our work with children continues to be one of the most joyful parts of church life.

Each week, a dedicated team has served faithfully, bringing energy and imagination to help children (and probably parents and grandparents) discover the love of Jesus and the stories of the Bible. Near the end of the year, some members also joined forces with Scripture Union to bring the good news into our local primary school. This is a wonderful example of the church reaching out beyond our walls.

Throughout the year, our regular gatherings have provided moments of fellowship and encouragement for all. The Well has continued to offer space for community, conversation, and spiritual reflection. Our Soup Lunches have drawn friends and neighbours together, reminding us how food shared in love can open hearts and build relationships. The Mission Department has also done fantastic work, praying faithfully for our missionaries, supporting them financially and emotionally, and welcoming several of them into our Sunday services to share their stories. Each visit reminded us that the Kingdom of God stretches far beyond Dingwall.

Two especially memorable prayer meetings, along with prayer times on Mondays, Thursdays, and Sundays, united us in deep worship, intercession, and Bible teaching, strengthening our connection to God and to one another. Alongside these, our year-long study and discussion of Psalms 1–50 has been a blessing. Well attended, it grounded us in the Word, offering wisdom for life, and deepening our shared discipleship. I must also mention those involved in the Learning Communities sponsored by the Presbytery Cleir Eilean Í, who have been exploring fresh ways for the church to grow in mission and renewal.

In all these things, we can say with confidence that Castle Street Church is alive and active; a community serving faithfully even amid uncertainty about the future. Speaking of the future, I know many of you were surprised to hear that I will be leaving this year, 2026. I was surprised by the invitation myself, and yet I know, with complete assurance, that this step is part of God's will. I take comfort in knowing that Jesus, the good Shepherd, will continue to watch over Castle Street Church and lead this wonderful congregation to greener pastures for His Name's sake.

With love and prayers,

Dráusio

Session Clerk's Report 2025

It was somewhat reassuring to hear folk of all ages commenting about how swiftly 2025 seemed to go by as I had assumed that it was a sign of my advancing years! Perhaps it was the constant unexpected changes occurring in the world around us which broke any sense of rhythm, and sometimes reason, but we rest in the assurance that our God is in control.

We started the year with services in the hall which provided a comfortable setting in which people found opportunity to become better acquainted with each other in the relaxed atmosphere. It was interesting to see how we reverted to our original seating patterns when we returned to the sanctuary in June. We are all creatures of habit!

With a view to the prospective union with Strathpeffer congregation, about 14 of our fellowship accepted the invitation to join in an early morning Easter celebration on Cnoc Farrel followed by tea and bacon rolls at Contin community centre. The climb was challenging for some, but it was truly a time to celebrate together. As Christmas approached, our Session extended an invitation to unite for a pre-Christmas service but this did not occur as the Strathpeffer congregation had made arrangements for a service at Garve on the date suggested.

Our church garden again provided a pleasant venue for the annual church BBQ which was well attended by those who attend church and church-related activities for children and families. Some thought was given as to extending the use of the garden and using it to create a welcoming area for the wider community in Dingwall as a result of which, the Session Clerk and Property convenor were delegated with the task of exploring options and identifying costs and sources of funding. Our Property Convenor was out of circulation for some time due to surgery and with the changes initiated by our minister's pending departure, this has had to be put in abeyance at present.

When, in early December, our minister announced that he would be preaching as Sole Nominee for a congregation in Dundee, the response of the congregation was one of sadness and apprehension. Sadness; as Drausio and Lia had a warm and respected relationship with people who appreciated Drausio's faithful preaching of the gospel and the genuine concern shown by both for the church family and those with whom they interacted on a daily basis. Apprehension; an awareness that the vacancy would initiate change and create uncertainty as regards the future of the congregation. Change is not easy for any of us: we pray that God will be with Drausio and Lia as they meet new people and settle into a new congregation and for ourselves, as we rest on God's promise that He has a plan for us, a plan to prosper and not to harm, even though there may be turmoil and disappointments on the way.

We are grateful for the contributions of all those who share their talents in service to the smooth running of the church, to those offering hospitality, keeping buildings and gardens clean, tidy, looking attractive, set up appropriately as required and in good repair. For

those who ensure communication both within and outwith the church, those who share musical, administrative and financial skills, those who are prepared to communicate with families and teach the young. Those who welcome strangers or take time to listen, encourage by being part of the church family or encourage and pray for God's working in our lives, fellowship, community and further afield. We are not very good at recognising the importance of our individual contributions to the church fellowship but, I have been very aware of how crucial each person has been and thank you sincerely.

Congregational details: At 31st December 2025, congregational numbers stood at: 63 communicant members, 60 adherents and 30 children under 17 years. (Children include those associated with mainly music, Girls Brigade and Top Tots as well as Sunday attendances). The Session consisted of 4 male and 4 female elders. The minister conducted 2 funerals, no baptisms and one wedding.

Fiona Brown (Session Clerk during 2025)

Outreach and Evangelism Team Report 2025

Prayer and Bible Studies

Prayer and Bible studies are a very important part of our church life. We used to meet every Thursday in the Session Room but the decision was taken to join together via Zoom due to uncertain weather conditions. This decision has not taken away from the fellowship and sharing aspect of Prayer and Bible studies.

Over the last few months we have been looking at various passages of Scripture and identifying with them, e.g. our own life experiences. It has also opened our eyes to aspects of Truth that we hadn't 'seen' before. Listening to others sharing from their own lives has been enriching and exciting.

Please feel free to join us each Thursday (3rd Thursday is House Group), whether just to listen but certainly to learn from God's Word and from other members of the group.

House Groups

Our house group continues to meet on the 3rd Thursday of each month. At present, there is only one venue – 'Fourways', 8 Gladstone Avenue.

We completed our study of the Beatitudes and are now going through the book of Esther. Our meetings are very informal and contributions from those who attend have benefitted all the group and, at times, have been thought-provoking. We have 11 regulars but there is room for more folk!

Visiting Group

Several of our original visiting group folk have had to deal with various health issues over the last year so are not able to visit regularly. However, there are people in the church who are able to visit and enjoy doing so. Visiting is a two-way activity. The people being visited and the visitors both receive mutual encouragement. If you would like a visit or know of someone who would like a visit – not necessarily with Castle Street connection – please let the minister or myself know or fill in one of the visiting cards on the pews with the necessary details.

Messy Church – Activities

Board games afternoons combined with our church barbecue meant that the children (plus adults!) had opportunities to be together, although not Messy Church. The garden area was used for outdoor games and food when we combined with the barbecue. The fun and laughter attracted the attention from some passers-by so it was a good advert for Castle Street Church. Hopefully, depending on what happens in the future, we will be able to have Messy Church in the full sense of the word.

Children's Church

Very few children attend Children's Church but we are so thankful for those who come regularly. For the last few months we have been looking at The Life of Jesus, Christmas and Easter related stories and Prayer – all related to the children whatever age they are. All that we learn is applicable to our own lives. It is so encouraging to hear the children give answers to stories they have heard in the past. We trust, as the children grown up, that they will remember what they have heard about God and His love for them. (Delighted that Anne-Marie Visagie has offered to help with the Children's Church)

Christine Craig

Hall Report 2025

Our halls continue to be in regular use both for congregational activities and by external users with varied interests.

A quick summary of use of Main hall:

| | |
|--|------------------------|
| Mon. - a.m Rythm and Rhyme | ev Camera Club |
| Tues.- a.m Kevin's shop for St Clem'sSchool | ev Girls Brigade |
| Wed.- a.m Top Tots | ev Session/ Teams |
| Thur.- 2pm 3rd of month U3A | ev Choral Society |
| Fri. - a.m Kevin's shop | ev Prayer 1st of month |
| Sat - Soup lunch, Coffee Morning, BBQ, Family Fun Day. | |
| Sun- Service or Children's Church & Coffee. | ev Cafe church. |

Small Hall Wednesday: The Well, Thursday: Prayer and Bible Study, Sunday: Children's Church

As you can see, use is almost daily for the large hall.

In the autumn, it was agreed by Session that proposals for development of the garden would be explored with costs and potential funding sources investigated. This has had to be placed on hold however due to the announcement of our minister's departure and consequent requirement that the Presbytery plan for union be initiated.

Fiona Brown (hall convenor)

Rhythm and Rhyme 2025-2026

Rhythm and Rhyme evolved after breaking away from the Mainly Music company who required us to pay them fees.

The Monday morning session is still aimed at babies and toddlers. The program continues to be stimulating, educational through: play, nursery rhymes, singing, counting rhymes and bible stories.

We have had a steady attendance of 10-11 families. We are blessed with a willing parent who puts notices on "facebook" regarding our opening times.

Rhythm & Rhyme could not continue without the dedicated volunteers: Laura Stuart, Jenny Burgess, Anne Macleod and Fiona Brown.

"All your sons will be taught by the Lord, and great will be your children's peace." Isaiah 54 v13

Christina McCrae

Mission Team Report

Our giving to mission has increased again this year, up from £5,100 in 2024 to £5,600 in 2025. Our team therefore decided to increase our monthly giving to our five partners from £75 to £80 monthly. We will have a balance remaining for other visiting speakers over the coming year.

The Mission Team decided this month to add Matthew and Naomi Scott and their family as mission partners in place of Fraser and Dawn Jackson who have ended their time in South Africa to work for a church in Lincolnshire. We previously supported the Scotts when they had hoped to work with the opium addicts in Pakistan. They have now moved to Japan where Naomi's Japanese father and Scottish mother have a small church. Matthew hopes to make regular trips to Pakistan to work with the opium addicts.

India Village Ministries continue their work with orphans, widows, children from poor families, families living in slums and pastors in the state of Andhra Pradesh and beyond. As James tells us in the first chapter of his epistle – "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." We had Suresh speak to us earlier this year when he visited with his wife Roja.

Balazs chats with me online from Romania every fortnight or so about Blythswood's outreach to young men in the Daniel Centre and Adi's work with mainly gypsy children in the Talita Kum houses. Balazs is now Blythswood's overseas co-ordinator and they continue to channel money into neighbouring war-torn Ukraine and organise the distribution of shoeboxes into 7 of the Balkan countries.

Steadfast Global continues to support the Persecuted Church in Eastern Europe, Africa and the Middle East and we welcomed Malcolm MacLeod to speak to us on the Sunday of the Girls Brigade re-dedication.

Morag MacLeod, originally from Kyleakin in Skye, works in Bahrain in the Arabian Gulf, having returned to that island in October after being cleared of a battle with

cancer. She still runs a Bible stand in a mall on the island, helps workers from various poorer Asian countries who often struggle in Bahrain and has multiple good interactions with local Bahrainis.

We post updates from our five partners on the Mission Board in the hall as they come in and mission flashes in our weekly church notices. Our prayer meeting in the hall on the first Friday evening of each month from February to November covers 1 of the top 10 countries on the Open Doors World Watch List – countries **where it is most** difficult to live as Christians because of government persecution. We hope to have a short slot in our Sunday morning meetings from time to time to highlight those countries for the congregation.

Robert MacNaughton

Social and Hospitality Report

Social and Hospitality has been involved in many church events this year bringing a sense of friendship and fellowship over a cup of tea or a bowl of soup. The first event was the church A.G.M. in March when there was a welcome cup of tea and home baking served after the meeting and again there were refreshments served after the joint Easter service in April.

The sun shone brightly in August when the annual church B.B.Q. was held and we were all able to sit out in the garden. Adults and children alike enjoyed eating al fresco and the burgers and hotdogs went down very well. This was followed by teas and home baking. It was so lovely to see the children enjoying the sunshine and the space to run around the garden playing games. It was a lovely afternoon.

We celebrated Harvest Thanksgiving a little later this year in October and unfortunately the Girls Brigade could not join us for the usual joint service and their dedication service. Afterwards we had a time of fellowship in the hall when the lovely large harvest sheaf loaf, made and donated by Robert MacKay was cut up and served with butter, jam and cheese and the usual tea and coffee. There was bread left over and that was shared among the congregation to take home. It was enjoyed by all present.

As usual there were plenty of mince pies and Christmas cake served with tea and coffee after the services leading up to Christmas and there was a time for shared fellowship.

We are now into the third year of running monthly soup lunches during the winter time. This was started as an outreach to be more involved with the congregation and locals after the period of covid isolation. It has been very successful and it is pleasing to see regular faces every month and the shared fellowship and friendship.

There are many jobs done in the background that make the soup lunches run so smoothly and these are done by the many volunteers who help. It is very much a team effort and we also enjoy a lot of laughter along the way.

We have held 5 soup lunches so far with 3 more to go, because of the team effort and the customers who support us so faithfully every month we have been able to contribute over £900 to church funds.

I would very much like to thank all the many people who have been involved in anyway with S & H events this year. Without your help and commitment those times of fellowship would not of happened.

“and whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”. Col 3 :17

Maureen Morris

Property Report 2025

MARCH 2026

Once again, the Church Property has been on a lean maintenance regime this year: keeping maintenance to a minimum and carrying out emergency repairs as necessary.

The issues identified last year are still valid. However, the Presbytery Buildings officer has inspected the building as well as a dilapidation survey carried on Presbytery’s behalf in light of the Presbytery plan.

There was an EIC report for the Church & Hall carried out. Initially there was an earthing problem identified which Scottish Power came out and fixed and thus the Hall was deemed passable. The Church didn’t fair so well and the recommendation not to use the Church has been implemented until further investigation to bring it up to regulation standard.

Quotations are being sought for a full requiring and heating overhaul

On capital project for other works:

🕒 Water ingress at the Tower – We have had emergency repairs to the “secret gutter” at the junction of the roof and tower but are still experiencing water ingress. The

flashings around the tower roof need to be completely redone. (We previously patched them). The tower also suffers from historic pointing repairs in sand cement mortar (which doesn't help the moisture to evaporate) instead of lime mortar.

🕒 PIR at side of Church required investigation.

🕒 Replace the ridge tiling on the Hall roof – we are currently patching this as areas break.

🕒 Total decoration of all areas.

Marianne McLeod (Property Convenor)

1 st Dingwall Girls' Brigade Report 2025.

September saw us start back for year 5 and we have a core of 3 Brigaders, 6 Juniors and 7 Explorers.

We have lost Lia this year. We appreciate your prayers and would ask that you keep on praying for additional leaders. Whether it is every Tuesday night 1hr or 1 ½hrs during term time Sept to March: or every once in a while, we would appreciate the help. You can have as much or little involvement that you can spare. Even if you know someone who is at a loose end and this is just what they need to fill that Spirit led urging, please speak to me.

Our Dedication service was on the 2nd November where we rededicated the Company and dedicated our new Company Colour

Badgework has been full on this session...

The Explorers are doing Space and lots of crafts that go with it.

The Brigaders & Juniors are doing Body Percussion for Physical & finding out about Adopt-A-Child charity for Service. The Brigaders have been learning about their roles in Teams and the Juniors were building Lego structures for Educational. For Spiritual the Juniors are doing Parables, and the Brigaders investigated Women of the Bible.

We are having our sleep over on the 22-23rd May 2026

We have a Coffee morning planned for Saturday 14th March 2026 10:30am-12:30pm in support for Adopt-A-Child

And we thank Jesus for the fun and friendship that Girls Brigade brings, and the support Castle St Church gives us.

Marianne McLeod

Leader in Charge

Acknowledgements: Sincere thanks are due to so many individuals who have ensured that they have faithfully used their gifts to further the work of God's Church in Dingwall. You are too many to name individually but thankfully, God sees and rewards everything that is done to honour Him.

On a personal note, my thanks to all who submitted their reports so promptly and for all your encouragement through your commitment and service through the year.

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