

A PLACE OF BELIEVING AND BELONGING



# ERSKINE PARISH

*Church*

The Brig  
DECEMBER 2025



## ERSKINE PARISH CHURCH

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# *A Word from Our* **MINISTER**



There is so much about advent that doesn't make sense. There is a lot about Christianity that seems to not make sense. Why would Jesus come in such abased conditions, to so little recognition, amid such insignificant circumstances? How can the Christianity begun by Jesus offer hope, peace and joy when our world, and the people in it are often in turmoil? How can we hope for change, for better things, and a coming Kingdom of peace amidst the wars, economic gloom and upheaval in our world? If we have ever felt or struggled with that tension, as I often do myself, I think ironically it brings us closer to the heart of the advent season (meaning Jesus' arrival), and indeed Christmas. The struggle and tension is where

God meets us, and plants faith in our weakened hearts. It is where he desires to work, and give us hope beyond reason.

I've been reflecting on our opening advent passages this year, particularly on Psalm 122 which has these lovely words:

"For the sake of my family and friends,  
I will say, 'Peace be within you.'  
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,  
I will seek your prosperity."

The psalmist envisions a community of faith-filled people where grace has been shared amongst them, because they have encountered God. We often celebrate the coming of our Lord at Christmas as the arrival of the 'Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).



I believe we are called to be just such a community at this time, to our darkened world. We saw so many glimmers of that light and peace already this year at our hugely successful Christmas Fayre. It was not only an event to raise church funds, which are so much needed, but a chance to proclaim God's peace, love and goodwill to our community which is precious to us.

We are in a challenging season. Our church finances are challenging and future uncertain. That could be merely dark and gloomy if we allow it to be.

But, Christ came as light to a dark world at Christmas. With faith in Him, and faithfulness to His call to keep being light and blessing to our community, I believe we can keep

responding together in generosity, and seeking the prosperity of our church, our whole community, our brothers and sisters and their families. We can keep working together 'For the sake of the house of the Lord', and trust that with all our efforts, God will bring the prosperity, the hope of better days, and of course the continued work of the Gospel of His dear Son where we are.

*Yours in Christ.  
Rev David Nicolson*

# *A Word from A* CORE GROUP



## Worship & Spiritual Formation

First of all, I would like to thank everyone who have taken part in leading worship in our church and to congratulate Sandra McGruther for completing the "Leading Worship" course led by our Presbytery.

Courses are available and if you think this is something that you would like to do, then please speak to the minister, me or any member of the Worship Team. Our Moderator (and I) are keen for as many members of our congregation to come forward and take part in worship by doing a reading and a prayer.

I know it can be quite daunting, but there is a degree of satisfaction in knowing that you

have conquered your inner self to stand and deliver a reading and a prayer.

If you struggle to compose a prayer there is a folder of Prayers of Intercession compiled by David in the office which can be used to help you.

If you have any thoughts about doing so, come and speak to me or David and we can help you overcome any doubts you may have.

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

*Stuart Boyne*  
Worship Leader



# *A Word from A* **CORE GROUP**



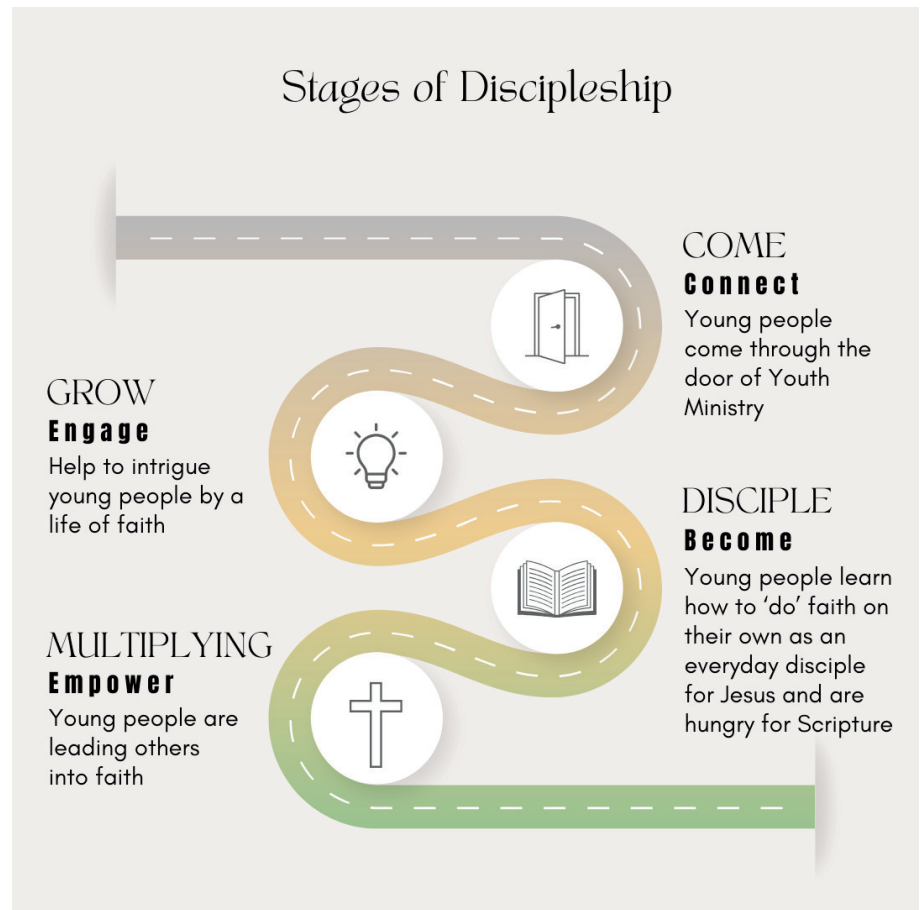
## Safeguarding

Safeguarding has been an important part of the Church of Scotland since the Cullen enquiry into the tragic shootings at Dunblane Primary. As a result of this, all churches in the Church of Scotland set up procedures to ensure our children were protected & was later extended to include vulnerable adults. All churches were instructed to appoint a Safeguarding coordinator and panel to manage all aspects of Safeguarding. EPC appointed Anne Thomson and Stuart Boyne as coordinators, and Elizabeth McDade and Irene Downie to help ensure our church is a safe environment for all. The role of the coordinators is to process PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Groups) applications, which allows the Safeguarding Service in Edinburgh to ascertain whether a person may have a

conviction that would prevent them from working with groups in the church. This year we have seen changes to the legislation about PVG. It is now mandatory for everyone in Scotland working with young people or protected adults to have a PVG. From April 2026, everyone working with children or a protected adult will require an update every five years.

We are fortunate to have panel members who are committed and supportive in safeguarding the people we serve. Although it is the role of the panel to manage Safeguarding, every church member has a role in ensuring a safe place for all and if you have any concerns, please speak to a panel member.

*Anne Thomson* 04  
Safeguarding Group Leader



"Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the change that we seek".

~Former US President Barack Obama

The opportunity for EPC to bring about change is here!

Our Youth ministry will explore and experiment with new forms of church for a changing culture and in doing so, connect with young people who do not currently come to church. We also want to take a fresh approach to Christian ministry by using new technology to share the Gospel in a way that is relevant to our times.

See I am doing a new thing. ~Isaiah 43:19

The truth of Isaiah 43:19 still stands for us today. Many young people, especially since the pandemic, struggle to find hope and encouragement for the future in a world that continues to be riddled by corruption, disaster and division. This isn't too far off how the people of Israel were during the time of Isaiah's prophecy. Our ministry hopes to disciple young people by providing opportunities and



see what God does in and through them.

In this pathway, ministry settings geared for one stage provide a golden opportunity to issue an invitation to the next.

By connecting with young people and getting them through the “door” of our youth ministry we can hopefully engage with them, meet them where they are and encourage them to find something that helps make sense of the confusing world they live in. In time, hopefully some of these young people will be ready to make a profession of faith. As previously intimated we have secured funding from Church of Scotland, Seeds for Growth Fund and we have recently also secured a grant for this project from the Bishop Radford Trust. We are in the process of applying to other funders.

The Kirk Session approved a recruitment programme for a Youth Outreach worker and this full-time position will be

advertised in January 2026 with an appointment being made in March. The contract will initially be for one year with the possibility of extending it to three years if additional funding can be obtained.

### Please include the ministry in your prayers by:

- Giving thanks for all who are working on this project and pray that God will guide and bless them in their endeavours
- Pray that funding applications are successful and bring rich rewards as we seek to extend God’s kingdom
- Pray for new opportunities for EPC to support young people in need in our community
- & think about how you can help to support the project.

*Karen Bain*

# *A Word from A* CORE GROUP



## Finance & Governance

The 2024 Accounts and Annual Report are on the church website. Paper or electronic copies are available on request from any office bearer.

2024 was a challenging year for our church's finances. We ended the year with a deficit of £31,477. Our income in recent years hasn't kept pace with inflation and our operating costs have risen significantly.

During 2025 with careful monitoring, we have reduced some costs but there will still be a shortfall at the year end.

We need to increase our income by a minimum of £700 per month to cover our costs. Ideally, in the longer term we would hope to build up reserves to make sure major repairs can be funded in the future.

In his recent presentation to the congregation, our Minister

advised that the Church of Scotland has recently introduced stringent procedures to remove ministers from churches that are unable to meet their financial obligations.

Luckily, we are not at that stage and have time to work together to keep our church thriving and solvent. God has blessed Erskine Parish Church with a kind caring congregation that is not only generous with its money, but also gives an abundance of time and talent to do His work inside and outside our church.

David has informed the congregation of the Stewardship Campaign planned for early 2026. Everyone can help by supporting the fundraising activities, and where possible, increasing offerings and Gift Day donations by a little.



	2024	2025
Average Monthly Income	£10,396	£12,310
Average Monthly Expenditure	£12,938	£12,976
Total Annual Income	£124,756	£147,720
Total Annual Expenditure	£155,266	£155,712
<b><i>Income Extracts</i></b>		
Free Will offerings	£68,072	£66,450
Gift Day donations	£4,637	£5,326
HMRC (Gift Aid)	£15,686	£19,546
Donations and Fundraising	£23,000	£25,800
Hall Lets	£9,305	£10,205
<b><i>Payment Extracts</i></b>		
Gas	£8,387	£7,046
Electricity	£8,693	£5,286
Insurance	£2,889	£3,058
Manse Council Tax	£3,117	£3,390
Compliance Contracts	£7,851	£6,132
Church and Manse Repairs	£8,572	£24,210
Employer Costs	£14,703	£13,826
CoS Give to Grow	£53,870	£63,140

# Roll Keeper's ADDRESS

I have been Roll Keeper now for more years than I care to remember! My remit is to keep a record of all those who become members of the Congregation, those who leave or move away and those who have passed away. These figures have to be kept up to date and go to Presbytery at the end of each year.



We have great pleasure in welcoming the following into our Church Family this year:

Ian Robertson	Catherine Malcolm
Scott & Coral McLaughlin	Jean & Laura Nelson

The following people have moved away to Aberdeen and are now settled in their respective new Churches:

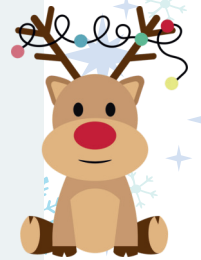
Cameron & Fiona Ballantyne	Sohrab & Elnaz Kiani
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It is with sadness the following people have passed away since the beginning of the year and we remember them and their families with love thoughts & prayers.

Fred Thomas	Jean Bramhill
Myra Jeffrey	Ellen Shearer
Ann Hutchison	Margaret Walker
Betty Fraser	Stewart Renton

*Blessings to you all.*  
*Lorna Boyne*  
Roll Keeper





I hope you have all enjoyed the seasonal decorations in The Hub over this year, and like me are looking forward to what the team set up for the Christmas season.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who comes in to enjoy coffee or a lunch over the year. It makes the working team feel very much appreciated.

With the visits you have made, you have enabled  
The Hub to transfer to the church accounts  
£12,500 from the main Hub and £1,200 from the  
Sunday team so far this year, and we will be  
looking to add to this in December.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my grateful thanks to all of the team members, who work so hard over the year to enable The Hub to open.

The Hub will be closed over the Christmas period to allow the staff to have a break and enjoy their own Christmas dates to be issued.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very happy Christmas and best wishes for a peaceful and fulfilling New Year .



*Helen Hambleton*  
The Hub Co-Ordinator

# FLOWER Ministry

*Dear  
Congregation,*

A huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to our flower fund over the months and years.

Your generosity has allowed us to distribute so many bouquets to our lonely, sick or housebound members and are greatly appreciated.

After many years, I am now passing the baton to Ann MacKichan, to whom I am sure you will give your continued support.

Thank you again.

*Janet Carson*



The Flower Ministry is an important part of our church's mission. Flowers are a simple but powerful way to say 'you're not alone', 'get well soon', 'we're sorry for your loss', 'thank you' and so much more. For more years than anyone can remember, Janet has faithfully organised the purchase, arrangement and distribution of flowers on the congregation's behalf to express our love and care for each other.

Thank you Janet from everyone at EPC for your dedication, kindness and compassion.

Enjoy your 'retirement'!



Stewart Renton was a valuable member of Janet's team, helping her with buying the flowers and managing the accounts until his eyesight started to decline. Stewart was an active church member and Elder for many years with several roles. His sudden passing in September deeply saddened everyone that knew him and he is very much missed.

Ann MacKichan joined the flower team earlier this year and will take over from Janet in January. Ann is an Elder and Duty Team member, a member of the Finance and Governance Core Group and a Junior Church helper.



‘Flowers appear on the earth, the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land’

Song of Solomon 2:12



# Monthly UPDATES

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## SEPTEMBER

At the beginning of September, EPC took part in the Erskine & Bishopton Churches Together Annual Family Fun Day which was a great success and truly lived up to its name. It was great to see the community come together!

As a church, we were able to see God's provision come through our successful application for a Seeds for Growth fund. This will help us grow discipleship pathways to encourage young people who are too grown for our primary/Junior Church program to explore their faith. This funding will allow us to hire a youth worker to carry this out.



SEEDS FOR GROWTH



## OCTOBER

In October, we had Heather Thorpe, a Church of Scotland ministry candidate, begin her placement with us. If you haven't already, please make her feel welcome and keep her and her training in your prayers.

We are also very thankful for the following generous donations:

- The Hub- £3,000
- Sunday Hub Team- £400
- Boxing for Fitness- £1,000
- Tuesday Rainbows- £400

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## NOVEMBER

In November, we held our Remembrance Sunday service in honour of the armistice, which we commemorate with the poem on the following page.

We also held our annual Christmas Fayre, which had a huge success with a grand total of £3,369 being raised for church funds.

Junior Church held their own bake sale as well, which was very successful.

Thank you to everyone who has supported each of these events in any way. We always appreciate the generosity of your time and efforts just as much as any financial donations and that does not go unnoticed. We truly are blessed with such a caring congregation!





Looking back at Armistice Day...

## Remembrance: War Poetry

Poppies  
Red and black,  
Blood and earth,  
Bodys lie on the dirt,  
Dead with despair and darkness,  
But as they lay poppies grow.  
Hope.

Marching in the mud,  
People go,  
They fall and die,  
Families Heartbroken  
But with each body,  
Poppies will grow.

Running on,  
The soldiers fall,  
One click,  
A line is cut,  
With the terror,  
People live in sorrow,  
But light and hope,  
Poppies shall show.

~Finlay Nicolson





'TIS THE SEASON TO BE

# JOLLY

🌸 30 NOV

GREAT JUSTICE TO COME

ISAIAH 2 : 1-5 & PSALM 122

🌸 7 DEC

GREAT PEACE (COMMUNION)

ISAIAH 11 : 1-10 & PSALM 72 : 1-7, 18-19

🌸 14 DEC

GREAT SALVATION

ISAIAH 35 : 1-10 & PSALM 146 : 5-10

🌸 21 DEC

A GREAT MESSIAH

ISAIAH 7 : 10-16, PSALM 80 : 1-7, 17-19  
& MATTHEW 1 : 18-25

\*\* PLEASE NOTE: PARENTS & TODDLERS WILL HAVE A CHRISTMAS PARTY 17TH DEC

## Prayer Group

Prayer requests for yourself or someone you know may be placed in the blue box in the Hall of Fellowship and will be included in our fortnightly prayer group meetings.

We do not need many details; just a name will do.

Better still, why not join us in the Quiet Room on Sunday 21st December at 9.30 a.m.

"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you."

1 Peter 5:7

*let's get in touch*

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