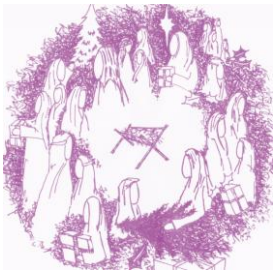
Stockethill Church News November 2026

Dear friends
As I was planning to send out information about our Advent and Christmas events I realised that it's been a while since I've written to everyone. There's lots going on in the church so I decided to produce a "Newsletter" style mailing which I hope is of interest. I hope too that I will have the chance to see you over the coming weeks but may you know the peace and joy of Christ in the coming season. With love from Sarah and myself.

Christmas and Advent 2026

Carols and Mince Pie Events



- Tuesday 8th at 2pm – Woodhill Court Carols and Mince Pies
- Thursday 10th at 2pm – Dominies Court Carols and Mince Pies
- Monday 14th at 3pm - Quarryhill Court Carols and Mince Pies
- Monday 21st at 2pm – Castleton Court Carols and Mince Pies
- Tuesday 22nd 3.30pm – Stocket Grange Carols and Mince Pies

Church Christmas Party

Saturday 12th December 1pm till 3pm In Cairncry Community Centre

We're bringing together folk from every part of our church: the Sheltered Housing Congregations, the Community Centre Congregation, the Family Church, the Youth Group and more for an afternoon of festive food, fun, games, song, and whatever else we can get up to. All welcome. Please contact us if you need a lift.

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day celebrations

Christmas Eve 3pm – Carols in the Carpark with a wonderful nativity play outside Cairncry Centre

Christmas Day 10.30am – Communion Service in Cairncry Community Centre

Community Worker

Sharron continues to work on our behalf in the local Community Centres

Generous grants from a number of bodies have allowed us to continue to employ Sharron as a Community Worker and then effectively "give her away" to other local groups. With a small team of volunteers, she runs a free café (donations welcome) in Cairncry Community Centre providing breakfast on a Monday, Tuesday and Friday as well as lunch on a Tuesday and Friday. Every second Thursday she can be found in Cornhill Community Centre cooking for the Soup and Sandwich Club and she's often using the vegetables from the Community Garden which wouldn't exist without her. Everyone is welcome at all of these events and if you've not been along to the Café in Cairncry or Soup and Sandwich in Cornhill then you are missing out. Sharron would love to see you there, if only to support her. She'd value your ongoing prayers and if you'd like to get involved alongside her, then speak to her or Ian.

Older People and Anna Chaplaincy

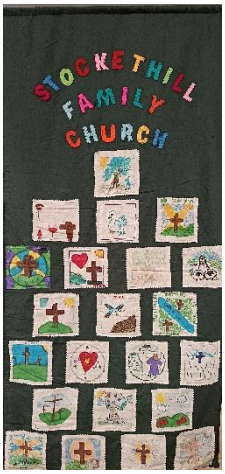
For the first time the church is present in every Sheltered Housing complex in the parish

Anna Chaplaincy for older people Stockethill Church

Woodhill Court was the venue for the first service that Ian and Sarah ran in the parish nearly 27 years ago. Stocket Grange has had a service and more, ably led by Matthew and Sian, for at least 15 years. But when Helen started a service in Quarryhill Court last year, an afternoon tea in Dominies Court this year and increased the connection to Castleton Court with "drop-ins" and more, the church had a presence in every sheltered housing complex in the parish for the very first time. Each of these gatherings (be they services or socials) is small in numbers, but when added together it numbers nearly 40 people. More importantly they are each very important to those who come along and a significant witness to those living in the sheltered housing complexes. (*over*)

Volunteering for around 20 hours a week as an Anna Chaplain, Helen not only runs these services and socials, but supports older people throughout the church, including by visiting people in their homes and leading a monthly social outing for members of the congregation who are getting a little frailer. Her care and support are offered to residents of the sheltered housing and I know that many are grateful, just as they are for her "give aways" of handmade gifts put through every door at times such as Easter and Christmas. Helen is ably supported by other volunteers (such as Donna, Judith and Mary).

Family Church



The Family Church are getting a Congregation Leader to develop it further.

On the last Monday of every month the "Family Church" congregation gathers at 5.30 for a meal, a craft and a time of worship. The congregation is made up of parents and children (plus one or two others) from 11 families – most of whom have had little or no previous involvement in church. The evenings are filled with laughter and fun, as well as Bible stories, prayer and worship. The growth of the congregation led the Kirk Session to consider how it could be developed further. An application to the Church of Scotland's "Seed for Growth Fund" resulted in a grant that will allow us to appoint someone to lead the Family Church over the next 3 years. And so, we're looking forward to welcoming Coty with his wife Nina and their young family early in the new year. Coty will become the Congregation Leader of the Family Church



Lunch Clubs

Parents meeting and chatting while their children play; then everyone enjoying lunch together.

During the school holidays we run Lunch Clubs for local families. In the Easter and October holidays Cairncry Centre allow us to use their facilities for parents and children to come and play games, do some craft and enjoy a tasty lunch. In the summer we move outside and put on a picnic in the Cornhill Community Garden with lots of games for the children to enjoy. The school holidays can be an expensive and difficult time, and parents have told us that it is a great blessing to have a place to meet and to be able to bring their children to something that is free. In the summer we were regularly getting well over 100 people turning up to the picnics and in the shorter holidays we've had up to 70 turn up. It can be quite a squeeze! The clubs are run by volunteers from the church (a particular mention to Fiona who produces wonderful food including picnics for up to 120 people!) and has been supported by a grant from the Trade Widows Fund.

Sams Club

Messy challenges; memory verses; songs and dancing; games and Bible stories

Sams Club has been running in Cornhill School on a Friday afternoon for nearly 15 years. Children from primaries 4 to 7 rush in to the school hall as soon as the bell rings for the end of the school day. They enjoy a snack with their leaders before jumping up to dance to the first of that session's songs. Team games and group tasks follow, and there's always a "messy challenge" which ends up with someone getting sticky or covered in some sort of goo. There's a chance to learn a verse from the Bible (and get squirted by a water pistol if you've forgotten last week's), to take part in acting out a Bible story and to pray. A team of 8 leaders make sure that the children have a great time and they must be doing something right as this year has seen the highest number of children sign up yet: over 50 with a waiting list on top!



Youth Group

A group of young people have started meeting monthly to learn more about Jesus.

Last year Ian and Sarah were able to run a weekly lunch time Bible club for primary 7 children in Cornhill School. It proved very popular and as the school year came to an end the children were invited to a couple of pizza and games evenings. This has led to the formation of a monthly youth group where there is still food and fun, but the young people are also learning more about following Jesus. Currently there are 7 young people coming along and a small team of leaders working with them.

Kirk Session

After many years, Fiona has stepped down as Session Clerk and Derek will soon be stepping down as Treasurer

Fiona Douglas has served the Church as Session Clerk since before we had a Kirk Session. It's a varied job, but over the years she's helped keep the administrative side of the church in order. Recently, however, she felt that it was time to lay down this particular responsibility. Of course, Fiona continues to wear a number of other hats including as an Elder, being our Safeguarding Coordinator and providing the food at Sams, the Youth Group, the Lunch Clubs, and on a Sunday morning. Without Fiona we might all starve! The Kirk Session, and I'm sure the whole church, are very grateful for all that Fiona has done, including her years as Session Clerk.

Derek Duthie took up the roll of Treasurer nearly 3 years ago and has done an excellent and efficient job. However, he is needing to take a step back from the post and will be doing so in March of next year. Again, we are all very grateful for the way Derek has served the church in this capacity and for all the work he has done.

The Kirk Session will be looking to appoint a new Session Clerk and Treasurer in the near future.

Finances

Giving stays steady but spending goes up

Earlier this year we reported that the 2025 financial figures looked healthy as we took in £3,833 more than we spent. This is mainly due to the generous and committed contributions that members of the congregation make towards the common needs of the church. However, as we went into 2026 things looked a bit more challenging.

The main items of expenditure each year are the cost of hiring the Community Centre, costs related to the manse and our payment to the Church of Scotland's central funds. In 2026 this last payment rose by 50% to nearly £25,000. This might seem like a steep rise but it is due to our having been generously subsidised by the rest of the Church for the last 25 years. And £25,000 might seem like a lot of money but we would need to be paying double that if we were to cover how much we cost the Church of Scotland (for example in paying for a minister).

A number of our ministries are flourishing, including Anna Chaplaincy, the Family Church and our work with children and families, but these do cost money. Thankfully we've been able to apply for and receive some grants, including some large amounts that allow us to employ Sharron as a Community Worker and will enable us to appoint a new Congregation Leader for the Family Church. However, with these rising costs the Kirk Session anticipate that we'll spend more than £10,000 more than we take in in 2026**.** On top of this, work has had to be done to improve disabled and general access to the Manse, costing in the region of £30,000 which brings the overall expected deficit in 2026 to around £40,000. We do have money in the bank, but unless our income goes up these reserves will only last a few years.

Let us give thanks for God's generous provision and continue to participate in God's work through the church by contributing faithfully, generously and sacrificially as we are able and as the Lord leads. If you don't already contribute regularly to the needs of the church and you are a member or regular part of the church you are urged to play your part through the offering at services or by standing order. And if you do contribute, you are encouraged to regularly and prayerfully review your contribution. More details on ways to give can be had from Ian or Derek.

Don't forget, you can contact Ian on 01224 686929 or iaitken@churchofscotland.org.uk if you need help, advice, prayer, or to ask any question about the church

Sisterland, Compassion, Opendoors and CFine

As a church we support four charities making a difference

Sisterland is the only organisation looking out for and giving shelter to homeless mothers and children living on the street of Sierra Leone. Suffering from malnutrition, disease, verbal and sexual abuse, harsh weather and loneliness they have no one to turn to. Maryama and her team give them shelter, medical care, food, clothing and training. The charity is based in Aberdeen and we support them in prayer and financially. The Family Church have taken a particular interest in their work over the last two years, giving part of their offering each month to Sisterland.
Find out more at: www.sisterland.org

Opendoors is a worldwide organisation supporting persecuted Christians throughout the world in a great variety of ways. If you are part of the church Facebook group you'll know that we post information there each week about a particular country and the challenges Christians face who live there. We also list that country on the church notices each week so that we can stand with our sisters and brothers in prayer. Find out more at: www.opendoorsuk.org

Compassion also works across the world supporting vulnerable children through a child sponsorship scheme. At least 7 children are sponsored by members of our congregation allowing us to pray for them. The names of the children sponsored are: Adrian, Esner, Stefanie, Naome, Mariam, Emma and Rubi. Find out more at: www.compassionuk.org

CFINE works to alleviate food poverty across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. They do a huge amount of work and our wee part is that we have a collection box on a Sunday morning for donations to their foodbanks. It's a small thing but I know it is always greatly appreciated. Find out more at: www.cfine.org

Manse Drive

The manse drive has had an upgrade

Good access to the manse is vital, especially as we don't have our own church building. The drive has been in a bad state of repair for sometime now making it difficult for people with mobility issues in particular to walk up it. It was so narrow that those driving up were in danger of damaging their car. The Kirk Session therefore decided that it needed widened, tarmacked and a new handrail and lighting put in. It's almost finished and is looking good!

Bits and Pieces

…and in other news…

The Community Centre congregation has around 30 folk attending each week – we'd love to see you there one Sunday (or lots of Sundays)….Ian is doing regular assemblies in the school and in the nursery…members of the church are playing important roles on the committees of Cairncry and Cornhill Community Centres and the Cornhill Community Garden…each month we gather for prayer and praise at 6.30pm on the 2nd Sunday and go prayer walking after the service on the 3rd Sunday…there is at least one small group meeting weekly around the Bible for fellowship, prayer and encouragement: would you like to be part of one?.....don't forget that our Community Centre service is broadcast on YouTube every Sunday at 11am… search for Stockethill Church on Facebook, YouTube and our website.