

ECCLESIASTICAL ACCOUNT OF PARISH

Although Stonehouse's ecclesiastical history can be traced to at least the 9th century, the sessional records can only be recorded to the days of Rev. Archibald Foyer around 1696. Documentation prior to this period may have been lost during the covenanting conflicts, or the early days of the Jacobite uprisings. What remains, provides valuable and enlightening information on the discipline, organisation and educational influence of the church in Stonehouse.

The records depict the strict authority of the church by ensuring parishioners compliance with the teachings and principles of such. The ecclesiastical leaders of the day held considerable influence in civil disputes, whereby the church was able to exact punishments, or fines, on persons for minor offences, or acts against the church. Although there are no records of such punishment being carried out by the parish church in Stonehouse, in some parishes an iron collar was affixed near the door of the kirk to reprimand parishioners, not complying with fines imposed.

Drinking was frowned upon and closely monitored by the congregation. This led to the establishment of local organisations such as the Total Abstinence Society (1858), which publicly rebuked those who dabbled in the demon drink. In more serious crimes, such as incest, the perpetrator had to stand at the kirk door, bare footed and legged, from the ringing of the 'second bell to the last', at every church in the presbytery.

Prior to 1752, the minister and his session were predominantly responsible for providing education within the parish. An Act of Parliament in this year ensured that the parish kirk provided a building, until such times as a school house could be found. This provision also ensured healthy numbers of congregations, that would be the envy of every minister today. Early extracts indicate several schoolmasters appointed by the church including; John Watson (1697), Alexander Cochrane of Avondale (1698), Richard Steil (1701), William Walker (1702), Gavin Hamilton of Vicars (1707), Walter Weir (1718) and Thomas Clark (1722). A school house was procured in 1708, provided by Thomas Cure.

Other indications of the authority of the church include a document in September 1696 stating, "the session unanimously appoint that no persons within the congregation be married out of the church unless a fourteen pence levy be given to the poor". Complying with such principles and in particular the day of the Sabbath was to be strictly adhered to in every respect. In November of the same year a complaint was made with regards to, "servants wandering up and down among their friends on the Lord's day, to the dishonour of God and offence of people", further intimating "that both masters and servants be warned against such an evil publicly, with certification of censure to be inflicted upon the disobedient".

The power and influence of the church was all too apparent in January 1698, when the parish records stated, "John Fleming and Robert Wilson being called, acknowledged their playing cards, for which they professed their sorrow. The session rebuked them both. Both of them promised amendment, and Robert Wilson engaged himself to burn the cards when they went home".

The church, however, not only provided for the educational and spiritual needs of the parish, but in times of hardship, charity and understanding. In June 1697, "Thomas Robertson, the kirk treasurer, declared that he had got a sentence against some who had not paid their fines for their fornication, but the session, in regard of their extreme poverty, delayed to exact anything for the time". This reflected the generous nature of local dignitaries of the period, for in 1790, Rev. Morehead stated, "The produce of the year 1782 fell short of what was necessary, for the consumption of the parish. The deficiency was made up, by some of the more wealthy inhabitants, who purchased foreign grain, and sold it without profit". He further observed, "none of the parishioners are allowed to beg, though we are troubled much with beggars from other parishes".

Prior to the turn of the 20th century, it was uncommon not to be a member of a kirk. In 1836, Rev. Hugh Dewar wrote, "The due observance of the sabbath is likewise a characteristic mark of the inhabitants of Stonehouse. The hallowing of the Sabbath day is here most scrupulously attended to, by all ranks of persons, both in town and parish; except in going to and from church, you will hardly see a person on the street. All public houses are shut on the Sabbath, unless to the traveller for refreshment".

In Scotland today, around 12% of the population are members of a church, a figure that has halved over the past 70 years and is still declining. In 1891, over 33% of the population of Stonehouse attended a church regularly on the Sabbath. The Roman Catholic adherants attended the Chapel Hall in Wellbrae before it was sold in 2019. Stonehouse today retains two churches serving the community. These churches still play an integral part in the rural life and affairs of the village, promoting community participation and the welfare of the people of Stonehouse. 'Wha's like us?' provided a brief history of the churches origins and the influence of Ninian in the parish. The following time lines of the local churches, past and present, provide an easy to understand account of the ministry of the church and important events in the history of the various congregations.



Clerical Terms

Episcopal: Governed by bishops, the Episcopals split from the Established Church in 1705 to become the Scottish Episcopal Church and the Cameronians split from the Established Church in 1712 to form the Reformed Presbyterian Church.

Presbyterian: Restored in 1690, the Presbyterians were governed by elders, all of equal rank.

Covenanter: A supporter of the Scottish National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant (1643) proclamations, defending Presbyterianism and resisting the religious policies of Charles I.

Patronage: The law of Patronage made it lawful for heritors of the Parish (being Protestants and Elders) or, the town councillors and elders (in the Burgh) to nominate a person to be a minister to the congregation.

Associate Synods: A Synod is a council of clergy and church officials convened for discussing ecclesiastical affairs. As a result of a dispute over the Burgess Oath of 1747, the Associate Synod split from the Established Church. Some members of the Synod held that the clause in the oath "the true religion presently professed within this realm" was equivalent to an approbation of all the errors and defects of the Established Church. Others maintained that the clause simply bound the person taking the oath to approve of the true religion and that Seceeders might lawfully take the oath. With the opposing sides divided, each side claimed to be in the right and each holding the name of "Associate Secession". Those who were against the Burgherer's oath were called the 'Anti-Burgherer's (General Associate Synod) and those for the oath were called the 'Burgherer's' (Associate Synod).

Lichts (Auld and New)

The 'Burgherer's' and 'Anti-Burgherer's' split within their own ranks into the 'Auld' and 'New Lichts'. The moderate, or more liberal element (New), as opposed to the stricter conservative and evangelical section (Auld). In 1799, the 'Auld' Lichts of the Burgherer's formed a reunion with the Established Church, while the 'Auld' Lichts of the Anti-Burgherer's became the Original Secession Church in 1806. The 'New' Lichts of the Burgherer's and the Anti-Burgherer's joined in 1820 to form the United Secession Church.

In 1852, many members of the United Secession Church broke away to join the Free Church after the 'disruption' of 1843 within the Established Church, as did most of the Cameronians of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in 1876. In 1892, some members of the Free Church broke away to establish the Free Presbyterian Church (Hamilton Memorial Church). The United Secession in turn became the United Presbyterian Church, before joining with the Free Church in 1900 to become the United Free Church of Scotland. In 1929, the United Free Church and the Established Church created a union of churches, though some members of the United Free carried on as such to the present date (Paterson Church).

Evangelical: The Protestant Churches, basing their claim pre-eminently on the gospel.

Disruption

The split which took place in the Established Church of Scotland (St. Ninian's Parish Church) in 1843, when 474 of its 1200 ministers formed themselves into the Free Church (Congregational Church).

Dissenter: A member of a sect that has separated from the established church; a non-conformist.

Seceder: Formally withdraw from an organisation.

Advowson: The right in English Law to select and name the person to be appointed to a vacant church benefice (an ecclesiastical living). It is considered a right of property and as such can be sold.

Sasine: Law; the act or procedure of giving possession of feudal property.

The Church after the Reformation

After the establishment of reformed religion in 1560, Scotland was divided into five districts, over which superintendents were placed to look after the spiritual interests of the people. A number of parishes were combined and placed under the charge of a minister, and then probationer style readers were appointed to each parish to read common prayers and scriptures until such times as a suitable minister could be found. The first reader in the parish of Stonehouse was William Hamilton in 1560.

Today Stonehouse is still affected by the conditions set by past proprietors. A probationary clause in the sale of land agreement forbid the erection of religious dwellings other than Protestant places of worship. This agreement I believe was for the term of 999 years. A previous Duke of Hamilton when releasing his grounds, made a condition that no chapel be erected on his land (as was the condition of much Templar land).



PARISH CHURCH

Despite the industrial revolution, the ever changing environment and man's lust for war, Stonehouse has retained its character and much of its architecture. This could be seen in the old Parish Church built around 1772, once seating 900 and of late a wholesale 'cash and carry' owned by Ginestri's. The church was demolished to make way for a housing development on New Street in 2006. In John Morehead's statistical account of Stonehouse around 1790 he states, "the church was re-built in 1772". Whether he meant there was a church previously on the site or built to replace the decaying old St. Ninian's Church at the glebe is uncertain.

The first recording of anyone connected with the church in Stonehouse was 'Sir Rodger, the rector' in the year 1297, the same year Wallace defeated the English at the Battle of Stirling bridge.

The parish kirk bell was gifted to Rev. George R. Robertson, (minister of Hamilton Memorial Church, Stonehouse 1919-1930) by Mrs Sophia MacLeod of Galloway & MacLeod Ltd and taken to Lochee Road Church, Dundee where Mr Robertson was minister in 1943. When the church building in Dundee was demolished in 1990, an arrangement was made to have the bell returned to St. Ninian's, Stonehouse. Unfortunately, the ancient relic was stolen from the site and the bell's fate is unknown. The church bell and its clock were formerly situated in the old jail house in 12/14 Lawrie Street during the 18th century. The county jail was later relocated to Kirk Street at the end of the 19th century. During the 1870's, the village had its own town crier and bellman, Peter Gray.

It was not until 1894 that it was decided that a new church was needed due mainly to a lack of space. On Saturday 18th December 1897 the new church was opened. It was not until 1929, after the Union of the Churches that the church was renamed as we know it today 'St. Ninian's Parish Church.' The memorial stone was laid on the 17th October 1896, when a large crowd turned out to witness the ceremony. Under the memorial stone a bottle was placed containing The Scotsman, Glasgow Herald, Hamilton Advertiser, British Weekly, Mission Record of the Church of Scotland, Life and Work, the magazine of the Church of Scotland, Year book of the Church of Scotland, the coins of the realm, from a sovereign to a farthing and three church communion tokens dating to 1736, 1752 and 1835. There were many local dignitaries at the celebrations including invited speakers, one of whom was the appropriately named 'Rev. Pagan'. The church was built using sandstone from the quarry at Overwood.



OLD PARISH CHURCH (NEW STREET)

In 1894, the poor condition of the Parish Church resulted in a survey being requested to investigate whether or not the church could be adapted to accommodate a congregation of 900. John Wilson (112 Bath Street, Glasgow) was commissioned to survey the church and report his findings.

Prior to his investigation concerns had already been expressed regards the suitability and safety of the church. Having served the congregation as the Parish Church for over a century, it was clearly apparent that the building would not sustain the needs of the congregation.

The following extract is the report submitted to the management committee for their consideration and provides a valuable resource, enlightening the reader as to the interior of the former church.

The Condition of the Parish Church Stonehouse

"Plan - The Church is a plain rectangular building of the old square box type, with no architectural pretensions, and is situated near the centre of the town, with streets on all four sites. It is entered from two ends, and at each entrance stairs lead up to the galleries. The pulpit is placed in the centre of one of the long sides, and a very deep gallery surrounds the Church on the other three sides.

Seating - The seating is of a very primitive and uncomfortable form, with upright backs and narrow seat boards, and is much to narrowly spaced throughout. The front seat of the gallery of the only one with reasonable space, being 3 ft 11 inches. wide, a few are 3 ft 5 inches. wide, but the other average from 3 ft 4inches. to 3 ft 2 inches. from back to back. The minimum space allowed in modern churches is 3 ft 8 inches. from back to back. It is difficult to accurately compute the number of sittings, as they do not appear to have been planned with any regard to a fixed seating place. Taken upon the basis of 20 inches to each sitter, I reckon the number of sittings at 604 in all, inclusive of Choir; or at 18 inches per sitting, the number would be about 716. If the Church was seated in accordance with modern requirements, at the minimum space of 36 inches by 20 inches to each sitter, the number of sittings would be under 550.

Vestry, etc. - There is no ministry accommodation of any kind attached to the Church, neither Hall, Session House, nor Vestry. Rooms on the other side of the road are used as Vestry and Session House, from which the Minister has to cross the street in going to and returning from the Pulpit.

Heating and Ventilation - Two iron stoves have been at one time in use for heating the Church, but they are worn out and disused, and the fire pipes for them, which are carried through the wall to the outside of the Church, have partly disappeared. There are no appliances or arrangement of any kind for ventilating the building, and the damp and unhealthy atmosphere was very apparent on the day of my visit.

Structure - Structurally I consider the building to be in a very dilapidated, if not dangerous condition. The walls have been erected and repaired in several places and are also off plumb at ends and back. Upon examination of galleries I find that at each end there are plain stairs of movement, the gallery joists having been drawn about $1^{1/2}$ inches from their rests on the walls, and the linings also separated from the walls. The gallery facing pulpit has also moved from the wall, though to a lesser degree. On lifting a portion of the floor the ends of some of the beams and joists were found to be rotten, to what extent this prevails could not be ascertained without further opening up of the gallery floor. From what I saw, however, I consider that the galleries would be very dangerous with a crowded congregation.

Stairs - The stairs from the gallery on each side I consider to be highly dangerous in their construction having long and narrow straight flights of steps, with insufficient egress at the foot, and would, in event of any panic or rush, were veritable death-traps.

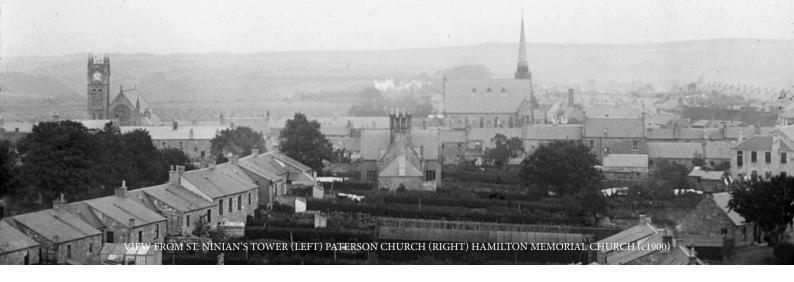
Roof - The roof has been from the first of light and insufficient construction. The main couples, of which there are only three completely framed, are too light in scantling and of improper form for the span they have to cover, though they appear to be still in good condition and of fairly sound and good material. The end couples are not fully framed, and have sunk considerably, cracking the ceiling underneath. The rafters and ceiling joists seem to have been composed of indifferent material and are of varied and random sizes, and in many places are badly rotted away, and at the eastern end and the roof has sunk considerably. There is also leakage in several places, but this would I think, be capable of repair.

General - As a result of my examinations, I am clearly of opinion that the building is quite unsuitable for the requirements of a Parish Church in almost every respect. Apart from the uncomfortable nature of the pews, the space is too small, and to reseat the Church, even at the minimum seating allowance, would still further reduce the accommodation. There is also the need of Hall, Vestry, Session House, as well as the essentials of Heating and Ventilation, all required to properly carry on the work of the Church. Unfortunately the situation of the building surrounded by streets, and with no available spare ground, precludes the idea of extension or enlargement and even if this were not so the condition of the structure would make rebuilding the only alternative.

The question of cost of enlargement to seat 900 persons which has been put, I have not gone into, as I have already pointed out that there is no place for extension. The only possible way of enlargement to that size would be by two tiers of galleries, which would mean practically a new building, and even for that plan the site is too limited. On the whole, I am unable to advise any scheme of alteration or rebuilding as either advisable or practicable, and am of opinion that the requirements can only be met by the erection of a new Church upon another site. I am, gentlemen, your obedient servant, John Wilson."

After a great deal of debate and disagreement over the future of the Parish Church, it was decided to establish a fund to raise the necessary finance to construct a new Parish Church and identify land for its erection. Having uncovered this survey have I was able to reconstruct the interior of the church.





ESTABLISHED CHURCH TIME LINE

Note: (b: born, d: death, c: around and m: married)

9th century *Old kirk dedicated to Ninian.*

- 1116 Bishopic of Glasgow founded, whereby Stonehouse continued under the diocese of Glasgow.
- **1267** 'Sir Roger, the rector'

 Earliest recorded association with the church in Stonehouse.

1298 Hugh de Burgo

In September, 1298, Edward I of England made appointments to certain churches in Scotland. 'The King to John de Langeton his Chancellor. Commands... Similar in favour of Hugh de Burgo clerk, to the vacant church of Stonehouse in the diocese of Glasgow'.

1319 Unnamed Cleric

King Edward II of England presented persons to several churches in Scotland, and among these was 'Stanhous', in the diocese of Glasgow.

1368 Archibald, Earl of Douglas erected Bothwell Church into a Collegiate Church and mortified the teinds of Stonehouse (Hessildene and Kittymuir) for the upkeep of the three prebendaries in his Collegiate Church. Thereafter, Stonehouse Church sunk to the level of a vicarage, served by vicars supplied from Bothwell, few of the names of which have been preserved. The lands for these vicars lay between the village and the Avon.

1557 Mathew Sandilands

Matthew Sandilands was 'notar and curate Stanehouse' in 1557 and earlier. In October of that year he took part in a marriage ceremony of a peculiar nature (when a marriage pall or 'cair claith' was used) whereby Claud Hamilton, son of John and Elizabeth Hamilton was legitimated.

- 1560 William Taylor (prebendary) and Robert Hamilton (prebendary)
 William Taylor (Tailzifer) held the prebend of Stonehouse in 1560 producing £30 13s. 4d., which he paid
 a substitute £16 to officiate for him in the Collegiate Church of Bothwell. Robert Hamilton held the prebend
 of Hezildeane, and the rectory of Torrance.
- 1560 Year of the Reformation. Scotland was divided into five districts over which were placed superintendents to look after the spiritual interests of the people. John Willock was appointed to Glasgow and the West district. A number of parishes were combined and placed under the charge of a minister; and under him a class of probationer styled readers, one being appointed to each parish to read common prayer and scriptures until such times as a suitable minister could be found.

1560 William Hamilton

First reader in the parish.

1561 *Vicarage given up by the provost of Bothwell.*

1565 Sir Thomas Wilson

Sir Thomas Wilson was Vicar of Stonehouse in 1565 and 'with consent of the provost and prebendaries of the Collegiate. Church of Bothwell, who were patrons of the said vicarage', he rented out the vicarage lands to John Hamilton of Brumhill.

1565 Thomas Neilsoun

In February 1565-6 he was styled perpetual vicar. 'The King and Queen confirm D. Thome Neilsoun as perpetual vicar of the parish church of Stanehouse with consent of John Hamilton prepositus (provost) of the Church of Bothwell'.

1571 John Rankine

Reader

1574 Alexander Hamilton

Translated to Strathaven in 1576 as first ordained protestant minister, later taking up ministry of Glassford in 1580.

1579 Andrew Hamilton

Reader previously officiating in Dalserf and later returning to Dalserf.

1585 Rev. Robert Darroch

First ordained protestant minister in Stonehouse Parish, later translated to Kilbride in 1586.

1586 Rev. Archibald Normand (b.1563, d.1644)

Translated to Strathaven around 1589.

1591 Rev. Andrew Law (d. c1639)

Translated to Glassford in 1593, he was possibly related to Margaret Law (buried Stonehouse Graveyard 1678) the wife of John Nisbet (Covenanter).



- 1593 Rev. Luke Stirling
- **1595** Rev. Alexander Thomson (m. Anna Duncan, d. c1641) *Ministered until c1630 holding prebendary of Hezildene, within the collegiate of Bothwell Church.*
- 1625 Rev. James Johnston (m. Helen Hamilton, d. c1659)

 Assistant to Rev. Thomson in 1625, translating to Monkland in 1626 before returning in 1630.
- **1652** Rev. Thomas Charteris (b. c1626, m. Anna Hamilton, d.1656) *Translated to Kilbride in 1654*
- 1656 Rev. John Oliphant (1st m. Jean Campbell, d.1698)

 Deprived of living by Acts of Glasgow 1662, when more than 400 Church of Scotland ministers were cast out of their charges for conscience sake.
- 1685 Rev. Angus Macintosh
- 1687 Rev. John Oliphant (2nd m. Jean Hamilton in 1694)

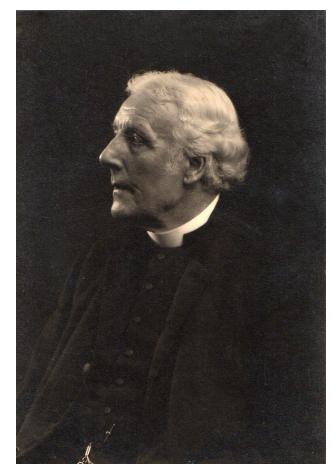
 Translated to Carluke in 1691 and later to Carstairs in 1693.
- **1696** Rev. Archibald Foyer (b. c1668, m. Agnes Goodlet (b.1668, d.1734) d.1710) *Buried in old kirk cemetery.*
- **1713** Rev. John Scott (b.1683, m. Ann Sommerville (d.1774), d.1759) *Buried in old kirk cemetery.*
- 1734 Restoration work carried out on old Kirk graveyard.
- **1760** Rev. James Muir(ore)head (b.1732, d.1800)

 First minister in the new kirk, he wrote statistical account of village in 1790.
- 1761 Manse built at Glebe replacing older building, later upgraded in 1781, 1806, 1816 and 1905.
- 1772 New Kirk built in New Street accommodating 600 people, at a cost of £450. An article from the Hamilton Advertiser in 1895 suggests the building was erected sometime between 1760-1771. The bell was removed from the belfry in 1929 and held by Mr MacLeod until 1943 when it was removed to Dundee. The old church subsequently became a hosiery factory, S. A. headquarters and meal mill.
- **1790** Statistical Account states there are around 140 dissenters in total, of which 4 families are Cameronians, 5 families-Antiburghers, 21 families-Presbytery or Relief and 5 families are Burghers.
- **1801** Rev. William Stark (b.1772)

 Formerly minister in Airdrie, later translated to Dirleton in 1805.
- 1806 Rev. Daniel Wilkie (b.1781, d.1838)

 Originator of the first Stonehouse Auxiliary Bible Society in 1813. Translated to Yester in 1821, thence to New Greyfriars in 1829 where he was later laid to rest.
- **1822** Rev. Hugh Dewar (from Fenwick, b.1794, m. Jessie Henderson 1822, d.1861) *Buried in old kirk cemetery.*
- **1836** Statistical Account by Rev. Hugh Dewar states 360 families attend the established church and around 120 families are dissenters or seceeders.

- **1861** Rev. James Dunn (from Doune, b.1821, d.1887) *Buried in old kirk cemetery.*
- **1866** *Stonehouse Auxiliary Bible Society formed.*
- **1887** Rev. James Wyper Wilson (d.1925) *Last minister of the Parish Church in New Street.*
- 1893 Girls' Brigade formed
- 1894 Stonehouse Boys' Brigade formed. The Boys' Brigade was founded by William Alexander from Thurso in 1883, making the Stonehouse company among the oldest in the country.
- **1896** Memorial stone laid for new church in Vicars Road by Major-General Lockhart.
- **1897** Parish Church officially opened.
- **1922** Installation of pipe organ, donated by the congregation in memory of those who gave their lives in the Great War.
- **1926** Rev. Thomas McCaughan Resigned in 1935 due to ill health



- 1929 Union of the Churches. The kirk session agreed in recognition of the event to rename the Parish Church as St. Ninian's Parish Church of Scotland, Stonehouse. Church bell was removed from Old Parish Church in New Street.
- **1934** Installation of electric lights completed.

1935 Rev. Hugh R. Munro

Received call from Bo'ness as an assistant to Rev. McCaughan before becoming his successor. He received a call from another church in 1943.

1944 Rev. George K. Wood

Received call from New Galloway. Accepted call from another church in 1946 to facilitate the union of St. Ninian's and Hamilton Memorial Church.

- **1946** Union of Hamilton Memorial Church and St. Ninian's Parish Church. United charge renamed Stonehouse Church of Scotland. United Guild of Stonehouse Church of Scotland formed.
- 1947 Rev. Robert C. Pollock Served as Army Chaplain during war. Accepted call to St. Andrew's, Falkirk in 1951.

1951 Rev. W. A. J. Gardiner

Served as Interim Moderator until new minister appointed.

1952 Rev. William R.F. McGhie (d.1968)

Served as Army Chaplain during war. Accepted call for missionary work in Jamaica in 1957 and was responsible for the design of the Jamaican flag. Undertook research project of tracing the history of the church in Stonehouse from 1560 to 1956.

- **1954** Boys' Brigade re-established after lapse of nearly half a century.
- 1955 New hall opened incorporating stained glass windows from Hamilton Memorial Church.
- **1956** Rev. W. A. J. Gardiner Served as Interim Moderator until new minister appointed.
- 1956 Parish Church Woman's Guild formed.
- **1957** Rev. Alexander Gemmell (d.1984)

 Appointed Clerk to the Presbytery of Hamilton in 1980.
- 1958 'Mens' Club' formed, meeting in Adult Education Centre in Green Street.
- **1959** Young Woman's Fellowship formed.
- **1960** 400th anniversary of Reformation.
- **1961** Opening ceremony of new church gates.
- **1962** AGM of congregation agreed renaming of church as St. Ninian's Parish Church.
- 1970 New small hall opened, dedicated to Rev. Alexander Gemmell. The armorial bearings of Hamilton of Raploch, who resided at Patrickholm incorporated into the vestibule, gifted by Mrs Euphemia Hamilton of Crofthead farm. (formerly imbedded above the entrance door to Patrickholm House).
- **1971** *Twelve hundredth anniversary of dedication of the Parish to St. Ninian.*
- **1981** Rev. C. Raymond Vincent Retired in 1992 to New Galloway.
- 1992 Rev. Tom Nelson inducted
- **1996** Centenary Year in which three services were screened by Scottish Television.
- **2003** Rev. Paul Grant inducted *Later served at the Royal Infirmary, Glasgow before accepting call to Law Parish Church.*
- **2010** St. Ninian's Parish Church formed an Ecumenical Partnership with the Congregation United Reformed Church, Angle Street.
- 2017 Rev. Stewart Cutler inducted