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THE GOOD NEWS FIRST

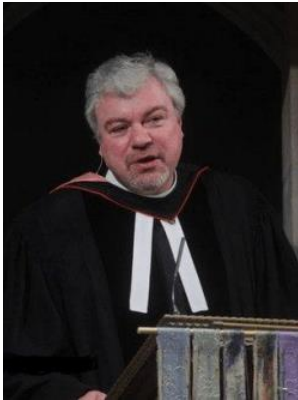
Welcome to the first edition of the new St Giles' News. We hope you will enjoy exploring the issue, whether you're reading it online or have picked up one of the print copies. For this first issue, the Communications Committee members have each prioritised one area of activity for the group they represent; so inside, you will find the Neighbourhood Group's appeal to knitters; an interview with the General Committee's Convenor about making the Kirk Covid-safe; and a message from the Treasurer about our fundraising efforts, among other things.

You'll also find a request from Anne Whiteford, Convenor of the St Giles' 900 Committee, for your thoughts and ideas as to how we should celebrate this major milestone in the life of the Cathedral. 2024 may seem a long way away, but the time will pass quickly; we need to make sure that we do everything we can to make it a splendid and significant year.

Now read on...



A LETTER FROM THE MINISTER



Dear Friends,

First, let me thank all involved in putting together the newsletter and I hope you find it of interest.

I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Rev Sigrid Marten as our Associate Minister and look forward to engaging with her in creative and thoughtful ministry at St. Giles'.

One of the books that I have found very influential is Diarmaid MacCulloch's monumental one volume history of the Church, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years*. MacCulloch, Professor of Church History at Oxford University, is the author of a well-received history of the Reformation and here turns his sights to the full sweep of the story of Christianity, beginning, as he does, one thousand years before the birth of Jesus, exploring Judaism and the world of classical Greece and Rome (thus the three thousand years referenced in the subtitle of the book.)

Reading this history reminds me of the historical context in which we seek to be faithful to living out the gospel for our time and place. Each Sunday in worship we celebrate the "communion of saints" in the creed and it is important that we understand the 'saints' not in the Roman Catholic sense, as those who have been given the official imprint of the Church through canonization. Instead, we rely on the scriptural understanding of the saints from Paul's writings in which the 'saints' refers to the holiness of the whole Church as the Body of Christ and the varied gifts which individuals bring to the life of the Church. It is worth remembering that no history of the Church can relate the stories of the countless millions of faithful saints who have kept alive the "bright lamp of faith" through the ages.

These musings are occasioned by the fact that we are preparing for the celebration of the 900th anniversary of the founding of St. Giles' in 2024.

I believe we are being faithful to the communion of saints in taking on the responsibility of marking this momentous occasion.

A group of youngsters were taunting an old man who was planting mango trees on his property. "Why are you bothering with that," they said. "You are old and will be dead by the time the trees bear fruit." "I know that," replied the old man, "but you have to realize that I have harvested fruit all my life from mango trees that were planted by others who are now gone."

My hope is that the work we do in these days will leave a strong legacy for those who will mark St. Giles' 1000.

With warm regards,

Calum



BIRTHDAY PLANNING

Anne Whiteford, Convenor of the St Giles' 900 Committee

For 900 years, St Giles' has stood at the heart of Edinburgh, a place of ceremony for the city and nation. Regarded as the mother kirk of the Church of Scotland, it is a site of pilgrimage for visitors from all over the world. In 2024, we seek to remember and celebrate its long and colourful history; to renew and strengthen its offering to today's multi-faceted society; and to equip it to continue to inspire future generations.

A committee has been set up to start planning for these celebrations, with its membership representing different aspects of the Congregation. A couple of projects are underway and the focus is now to gather ideas from the Congregation.

There are currently two ongoing projects. Firstly, the St Giles' Choirbook, led by The Friends of the Music of St Giles' Cathedral. This will commission five Scottish composers to write works for the Choir of St Giles' Cathedral, which will provide a choral legacy for many other groups. The pieces, both those planned and those already performed are detailed in the table below.

The second project is the production of new banners for the Cathedral to celebrate Saint Giles. Our beautiful banners, which follow the rhythm and pattern of the Christian year,

contribute greatly to the overall atmosphere of the Cathedral and are a focal point during worship.

Our vision for the celebrations is to involve all members and adherents of the Congregation, our friends in other Churches and faiths locally and nationally and the many pilgrims that visit the Cathedral from around the world. The celebrations will therefore be multi-dimensional.

In 2024, we will build on the special events and services that take place throughout the year. We are also looking for ideas on how we can come together as a congregation and reach out to others, locally, nationally and internationally. Some of these ideas may be new and some may be tried and tested from the past.

Composer	Piece	Planned date
Kenneth Dempster	All sons of Adam	December 2020*
Savourna Stevenson	Psalm 121	June 2021
Tom Harrold	Prayer (George Herbert)	June 2022
Helen Grime	Missa Brevis	All Saints, November 2023
James Macmillan	Jubilate Deo	June 2024

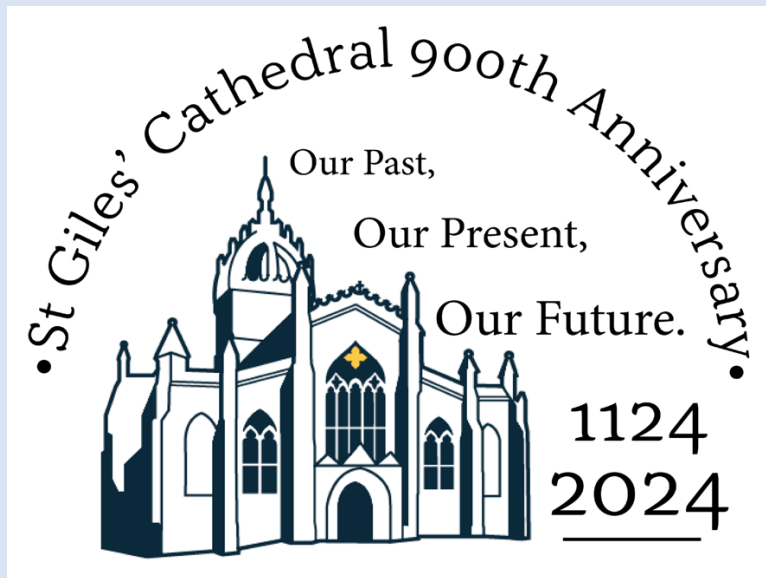
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Consultations will be set up in the next few weeks to enable people to share ideas and express interest in areas in which they would like to contribute. The consultations will comprise evening meetings in the Cathedral and electronic meetings. Some members of the committee are happy to have a chat with you individually or in a small group. We really want to hear your ideas! Details available soon.

The committee also know that the projects need to be funded and the challenge this presents in the current financial climate. Once projects are developed, partnerships and sources of funding will be sought so that sufficient finances are secured. This is an exciting time and we look forward to hearing your ideas so that the programme of events can be developed.

**Our Past – Our Present – Our Future
For the City – For the Nation – For the World**



LIVE STREAMING – BUILDING THE TEAM

We have enjoyed some success with the live streaming activities; even now that we have returned to the building, there are those who – for whatever reason – cannot attend in person, and the YouTube links are generally viewed by up to 200 people each week. Up to now, the technical side has been handled by beadles and members of the choir. However, with service responsibilities ramping up for them, we need to find a team that can take over the duty. If you would like to know more about what's involved – not very complex, and really rather fun! – then please get in touch with comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk



THE ST GILES' COVID RECOVERY FUND

An update from the Treasurer Niall Lothian

Friends, I knew when I agreed to take custody of the Treasurer's abacus from John Robertson that the job would be no sinecure, but had I had the slightest idea of the challenges ahead, I might have had second thoughts!

When we were forced in the spring of 2020 to close the doors of St Giles' to tourists and congregation alike, we immediately saw most of our sources of cash turned off; and while furlough proved a vital resource, some roles had to stay if we were to be able to reopen in anything like our usual state when restrictions were lifted. Equally, things like utilities and insurance could not simply be shelved.

So was born the St Giles' COVID Recovery Fund, with the generous support of its key instigator, Sir Angus Grossart. Many of you will recall the day in the summer of 2020 when a letter from the Minister was sent to all in the congregation, asking for assistance to tide us over until congregation and – crucially – visitors were able to return to the building.

The result was a very strong message of support, of the kind to gladden any Treasurer's heart, and our rapidly-dwindling bank account was bolstered once more. The Minister wrote to thank all those who were able to rally round, and I add my own heartfelt thanks here.

Fast-forward to the present day. Our doors are open again; and the tourists are returning. Very few are from abroad, of course; and so, although each individual

visitor is giving more than in the past, these generous souls would have to go a long way to recreate the levels of income we enjoyed when the building was crowded with pilgrims and tourists from all over the world.

Are we home and dry? Sad to say, we're not. I, and a small group of like-minded bean counters are constantly running and re-running our calculations to assess the amount of breathing space we have. We are looking to contain costs as much as we can (and this very newsletter is, I'm happy to say, being produced at no cost to the congregation, at least for now – if you're able to receive it by email rather than in a printed copy, both the Treasurer and the trees will be grateful!). At present, it looks as though we should be able to meet our financial obligations up until around the early summer of next year.

After that, however – unless the recovery from the constraints of the pandemic is speedier than we currently expect – we may once again need to cast around for benefactors who can help us navigate these very stormy waters. I will keep you updated as much as possible, and questions can be channelled back to the Newsletter's editor on comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk if there is something you think we could answer in a future edition. In the meantime, I can only ask that you continue to bear us in mind, and if you have capacity to help support the fund, it is still very much open to contributions.



KEEP KNITTING: SQUARE UP TO REFUGEE POVERTY

Lesley Elliot, Co-Convenor, St Giles' Neighbourhood Group

A big thank you from the St Giles' Neighbourhood Group to everyone who has already supported us with knitting or sponsorship money. We really appreciate it. If you would like to get involved there is still plenty of time as this appeal will be ongoing until 30th January 2022.

Imagine a Syrian mother trying to keep her baby warm on a freezing cold night in a Lebanese refugee camp. Help to keep them warm by knitting or crocheting squares which can be sewn into blankets. The squares should be 6 inches square (15cm square) and made of *double knitting wool*. The colour and stitch are at your discretion. Please leave approximately 50cm of yarn attached to the square once you cast off. Once they are finished please pop the squares into the bag in the kist at the entrance to the Lower Aisle or hand them to a member of the Neighbourhood Group. Alternatively email the Group to organise a collection.

We will arrange for the squares to be sewn together into blankets. The completed blankets will be dispatched to Edinburgh Direct Aid as soon as they ready



so that they can be delivered to the refugee camps as soon as possible.

Knitters may wish to consider asking friends and relatives to sponsor them to help raise funds for the Neighbourhood Group in aid of homelessness. Sponsorship is however not obligatory. If non-knitters wish to donate funds to the appeal this would be warmly welcomed - details below.

If you would like any further details on this or any other aspects of the work of the St Giles' Neighbourhood Group, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our email address is neighbourhoodgroup@stgilescathedral.org.uk

Any funds raised can be paid by bank transfer with the reference "**NG Blanket**" to the St Giles' Cathedral account:

Name of account: St Giles' Cathedral,
Sort Code: 80-02-24,
Account Number: 01976128

Alternatively cheques made payable to "**St Giles' Cathedral**" can be sent to: *Finance Office, St Giles' Cathedral, High Street, Edinburgh EH1 1RE*. Please state that the donation is for the '**Blanket Appeal**' and indicating whether Gift Aid can be claimed on the donation.



HERITAGE AND CULTURE – WHAT WE DO

Stephen Preston, Acting Head of Heritage and Culture

Given that St Giles' is nearly 900 years old, our department has quite a lot to wrestle with when it comes to heritage and culture. In essence, I often think our job is to explain how St Giles' got to what currently happens on Sunday morning. I hope the following three questions give a flavour of H&C through the ages. For those of you that sit in the east end, a pertinent question might be why and when the East End was extended? (And if you want to get really into it, why the pillars change style?) Moving through to the Reformation, we might field a question as to why communion in St Giles' is different from what our Catholic visitors might expect? To round off our brief tour through the Cathedral's history, often we are asked why St Giles' worship focuses on the central Holy Table rather than an east end altar? You might not be surprised to hear it is often our English visitors who are most confused by St Giles'.

Coming out of the pandemic, we are trying to engage visitors in new and interactive ways. Hazel Frost, one of our staff who also happens to be a ceramicist, led pottery demonstrations letting visitors create their own 'pinch pots' as part of her new series *Craft Showcases* which aims to showcase different artists' crafts. Rebecca McKinley organized a concert with renowned Scottish saxophonist Tommy Smith - a slightly strange evening given the socially distanced seating. Later in the year we will explore crimes and their punishments during the Covenanting period with Robin McCaig. Robin has done a fascinating job in describing what crimes the common person was committing at a time when there were many well-documented noble beheadings. Get ready for Robin to demystify some rather odd Scottish legal terms.

For those of you who have visited outside of a Sunday morning you will have seen we are sticking to some of our pandemic measures. We've found visitors have benefitted from the structure of the one-way system and clearing the East End of chairs during the week has allowed visitors to experience that part of the Cathedral in a more open way. Whilst we still haven't got the vast hordes we have welcomed in the past, those visitors we have currently are very grateful and responsive to our efforts in reopening in a safe way.

It's great to have the SGN back up and running, and I look forward to keeping you all up-to-date on the happenings of H&C- we have some fascinating stuff in the pipelines. Watch this space.





ON WITH THE SHOW

Michael Harris, Master of the Music

It is definitely the case of a new term and a new start as far as St Giles' music goes, as we have just re-launched St Giles' at Six on Sundays at 6pm after an 18 months' hiatus. The series had been running essentially uninterrupted from 1962 until March last year, and has been a highlight for many amateur music groups as well as soloists who have performed over the years. Now that things have eased somewhat we are able to begin again and hopefully build up as strong a following as existed before.

The main selling point for performers is that we offer the space to them for free and, although they do not receive any financial return, they get a marvellous platform

opportunity with great audiences. We have never charged admission for these events but we of course strongly encourage donations at the end of the concerts, which allow us to finance their running and the associated publicity.

As with everything at the moment things are slightly different as a result of the mitigations needed to deal with Covid-19, so we are strongly encouraging people to pre-register, on <http://www.eventbrite.co.uk/> so that we can comply with Test and Protect Scotland regulations. Using Eventbrite also means added publicity, as well as allowing the audience another avenue to make a donation towards our costs.



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We have a wide variety of concerts now scheduled for the remainder of the year and full details can be found at <https://stgilescathedral.org.uk/events/> where the concert diary is published on a monthly basis, as well as in the What's On at St Giles' leaflet which is now available once again in St Giles'.

The other recent new beginning is the appearance of new choir robes, which those of you who have been in church recently will have noticed, or perhaps seen on our YouTube broadcasts of the services.

The previous distinctive gowns had really come to the end of their time, with a need

for much repair to allow them to continue to be used. It was therefore decided to go for something new and equally distinctive. A committee drawn from across the St Giles' family deliberated long and hard before opting to adopt an adapted design from Watts and Co in London; the robes, which are burgundy with blue highlighting have been customised with the St Giles' crest to a design by Sheana Stephen, making them something unique to us. We have been most fortunate to be able to re-equip the choir with these robes, following a donation from an anonymous benefactor to whom we are most grateful.

COVID CAUTION

As restrictions gradually ease, St Giles' is able to deliver steadily more of its in-person services and events. For many people, though, the decision to return to church is driven as much by personal caution as by government guidance. We caught up with John Andrew, Convenor of the General Committee that cares for the fabric of St Giles', to find out what his team have been doing to help the congregation return.

How do you tackle the problem of rendering St Giles' safe?

We didn't do it alone! Following the Scottish Government, Church of Scotland and Edinburgh Presbytery guidance, we prepared a full risk assessment, and our comprehensive method statement was approved by Presbytery and our Kirk Session.

How clean is the building that we are coming to?

We are wiping down seating and surfaces, have hand sanitiser at the entrance, and do our best to ventilate the building thoroughly between services. Fortunately, in a building the size of St Giles', ventilation is less of an issue!

Is everyone wearing masks?

Yes. We ask the congregation to keep face coverings on throughout the service – including while they sing the hymns! – unless they are exempt. The ministers are permitted to remove their masks while actually leading worship, and the choir remove

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their masks to sing, but then replace them immediately. The choir are also being asked, where possible, to take lateral flow tests before attending church, to add a further layer of mitigation.

The numbers of people who can attend services is restricted – why is that?

Could I get in without booking?

We need to be sure that there aren't too many people in the building to allow for safe distances to be maintained, and the seating is laid out at carefully-measured intervals to achieve that. It's a big space, though, and we've yet to turn anyone away on a Sunday morning! We're taking contact details for those who attend, to support Track and Trace efforts, so when people are able to provide that information in advance, it saves delays at the door on Sunday. Email the Minister's Assistant on stgilescomms@gmail.com or telephone 0131 225 4363 between 11am and 1pm on the Wednesday or Friday prior, if you can, to help everything run more smoothly.

Can we take Communion?

The Minister and Convenors are discussing ways in which it is possible for the congregation to take Communion. At present, we are able to share the bread, but have yet to find a way safely to share the wine, so that is being taken solely by the Minister.

Is there an Offertory?

No, we're taking a retiring collection instead. There are also freestanding terminals that can take a donation at the tap of a bank card.

I'd love to come to a service, but woke up on Sunday morning with a bit of a temperature, so I should probably isolate. Is there any way I can join in without leaving home?

Yes, we are livestreaming both the 9.30am and 11am services for those who are unable to attend in person. The website <https://stgilescathedral.org.uk/> has the links, and you can follow along with the order of service there too.

Last, John, thank you from all of the Kirk Session and congregation for everything you continue to do to care for St Giles' – your work is much appreciated.

Thank you – it's a great reward to see people coming back to the building again.

SAFEGUARDING BULLETIN

St Giles' has appointed a member of the Kirk Session to be Safeguarding Coordinator. Lesley Johnston may be contacted via the Minister, Beadles or Communications team, whose contact details are shown on the last page of the Newsletter.



AND FINALLY...

We hope you have enjoyed reading this, our first newsletter for a couple of years. If there is anything you would like to see included in future editions, please get in touch on comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk.

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

This group comprises representatives from each of the other Committees of St Giles' – General, Finance, Neighbourhood Group etc – as well as one or two individuals who have offered to share their specific skills in relation to communication.

The Committee's first job was to restart the publication of a Newsletter, and it is hoped that this will continue to be published every two months. Our experience with the Covid pandemic, however, has led us to realise how many ways we have to reach our wide and varied audiences, and we will be exploring what is possible in future meetings.

We're already planning the second issue of the Newsletter. Sigrid Marten has kindly agreed to an interview; and we will hear about what the Neighbourhood Group has planned for the Christmas season, among other things. If there's anything you'd like included, do let us know!

CONTACT INFORMATION

The @stgilescathedral.org.uk address has been rolled out to certain of the key contacts at St Giles' – some examples are shown below:

The Minister	calum.macleod@stgilescathedral.org.uk
Associate Minister	sigrid.marten@stgilescathedral.org.uk
Master of the Music	michael.harris@stgilescathedral.org.uk

As Communications Convenor, Amanda Forsyth monitors the "comms@" address shown above, and is generally able to forward queries to other members of the Kirk staff and Session.

Useful contacts:

Sunday Service bookings	stgilescomms@gmail.com or telephone
The Minister's Secretary	0131 225 4363
Beadles' Office	0131 226 0672
Cathedral Shop	0131 226 0673
Finance Office	0131 225 8683

PICTURE CREDITS

As ever, we wish to thank Peter Backhouse, who has provided his photographic skills for a number of the images in the Newsletter. We would also like to thank Ivar Struthers, who has kindly allowed us to use his image of St. Giles' at sunset on the front cover.



Those of you have who have returned to St. Giles' since the restrictions have eased will have noticed some of the wonderful work on the interior of the building. There will be a fuller report on these in the next issue of the newsletter, but the above picture hopefully whets the appetite.