

## What's inside

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Welcome to St Giles' April Newsletter, which begins with a moving and poignant message of hope from Sigrid Marten, our Associate Minister. We also hear the story of hope provided by Streetwork to the homeless of Edinburgh; and have the opportunity to bring hope to the many people supported by Christian Aid, especially in Turkey and Syria.

Our Newsletter is also, on several pages, a riot of colour – as befits an issue dedicated to the matter of Heraldry. We have been fortunate to receive copies of some photographs taken at the service held last December to mark 350 years of the Public Register of all Arms and Bearings in Scotland; and continuing the theme of banners, we are grateful to Elizabeth Roads LVO OStJ for an article describing the considerations new Knights of the Thistle take into account when designing a coat of arms. As we continue to look forward to our 900<sup>th</sup> celebrations next year, Sheana Ashton gives a progress report on the banners being made specially to mark that occasion.

All of this is presented using elements from the Cathedral's new design style and colour palette – a fresh look for the Newsletter.

## Reflection from the Associate Minister



Once again we are in that intense time of the year when Christians focus on the events in Jerusalem: Jesus' arrest, his death on the cross, and Christ's resurrection at Easter. In the following weeks this leads on to recollecting the many resurrection stories in the gospels. They speak to us of the disciples' experience of life after death, of their encounters with the living Christ.

Especially the close friends of Jesus had been through a traumatic time of losing their friend and teacher. They would have struggled with a sense of having abandoned and betrayed him, for none of them had shared his suffering. They had looked on from a distance as Jesus was cross-examined and tortured and condemned to death. They had stood outside the city gates and watched him die the death of a criminal.

The story goes that they were hiding behind locked doors. Many of them went home. Like most of us would have done in their place at a time of bereavement, shock and disillusionment, they just withdrew into their close circles, familiar routines, somewhere that felt safe.

And then, the stories start spreading, first from the women: stories of the empty grave, stories of meeting Christ in the garden. There are stories of those who met him when they were together; stories of those who met him on the road, in the stranger, in the interpretation of scripture and in the breaking of bread; stories of miraculous catches...

All these stories speak to us of the new hope that those first friends of Jesus found when they realised that he was still with them, that he was never going to leave them; that Christ's Spirit would always be there to guide them, to comfort them, to take them on his Way. And they spread the Good News of the risen Christ, they told everyone they met that in Jesus Christ life had overcome death. They went far to spread the Gospel, some to the ends of the world as they knew it.

They endured not just the hardships of travelling to strange places, but also the dangers of persecution, arrest and death. They were able to do this, not because they were super-heroes who felt no fear and no pain, but because they trusted what they had learnt through the sacrificial life of Jesus Christ, that death and the destructive powers of this world will not have the last word.

It is not always easy for us to hold on to this truth in the midst of pain and loss and fear, but it is nevertheless a truth that we can rely on. We believe in life beyond death. We believe that there is more to life than what we can see with our eyes. With our Christian sisters and brothers through the ages and all over the world we will continue to proclaim the Good News: Christ is risen. He is risen indeed!

This Easter, may we all find signs of resurrection in our lives,

Sigrid

# "The Fury of History made Wise and Formal"

(George Mackay Brown)



On 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2022 St Giles' was the setting for an extraordinary celebration, marking 350 years of the Public Register of all Arms and Bearings in Scotland. Prior to the service, a procession of heavily decorated banners representing a wide range of society entered the West Door of the Cathedral, led by an Officer of Arms. The banners, some 65 in total, were then placed in stands in the sanctuary surrounding the Holy Table. As part of the ceremonial the rarely used St Giles' Banner was included in the procession and placed behind the Minister's chair in the Sanctuary.

To a fanfare by the State Trumpeters, the Lord Lyon entered the West Door. He was preceded by the Crown of the Lord Lyon King of Arms and the Officers of Arms, Lyon Macer, the Chairman of the Heraldry Society of Scotland, Edward Mallinson, and Bailies of the City of Edinburgh.

During the service, the Minister offered a Prayer of Dedication of the Ensigns and Banners, and the choir sang William Mathias' setting of Psalm 100, 'Make a joyful noise unto the Lord'. We are grateful to the Court of the Lord Lyon for giving permission to share these photographs of such a significant and stirring event, well worthy of its setting in St Giles' historic surrounds.



## Interview with a Volunteer – Meet Val Wilson

*How long have you been volunteering with us?*

I started volunteering at St Giles' in October 2021.

*What first interested you about St Giles'?*

When I am not volunteering I work as a Genealogist and Historical Researcher. I was lucky that I was able to continue some of my work during the pandemic but, like many others, I was missing the contact with other people. So I looked for a role that combined my interest in history, particularly connected to Edinburgh, with meeting new people and having more social contact. Volunteering at St Giles' was perfect for that.

*What is your favourite visitor anecdote?*

I have a couple of anecdotes that are good examples of the range of visitors we get at St Giles'. I was taking my usual tour round the Thistle Chapel when someone asked about the significance of the pelican boss on the ceiling. I have spent hours in the chapel and had not seen it before so I could not answer their question. I did some research when I got home so I would know next time. I now know that the symbol of a pelican piercing its breast to feed its young with blood was a symbol of the sacrifice of Christ.

A visitor who was reading the signage at the door told me about the guns he could see on the tower. I had just started volunteering at this point but was sure they were not guns. He, however, was adamant they were. I later found that what he thought were guns are actually connected with the drainage system!

*If you could have witnessed any historical event in St Giles', what would it have been?*

Probably the state funeral of the Marquis of Montrose in 1661. I would also love to be transported back to St Giles' in 1560 to see the colour and splendour in the pre-Reformation days.



If you would be interested in volunteering at St Giles', please contact [volunteer@stgilescathedral.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@stgilescathedral.org.uk) to find out more.

## Banners for St Giles'

*Continuing this issue's theme of ceremonial decoration, we are given a peek at the work the Banner Guild is doing to celebrate St Giles' 900<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2024.*

Henry Laing's depiction of the seal given to St Giles' by the Pope in the 15th century was the inspiration for the embroidered logo on the choir's new robes.

The seal presents St Giles and the deer traditionally associated with him, framed by two pillars. Our Associate Minister commented that the seal makes it look as though St Giles had "a wee pet dog", rather than a wild animal, as a friend. Consequently, I have made a more prominent feature of the deer, drawn on a larger scale.

The banners are made of silk, using applique and quilting techniques. They will hang in front of the plain blue side of the St Andrewside banners. As a prototype, a pulpit fall was made. We are now making one banner to see that it 'works.'

The Banner Guild is delighted to be part of the celebration of the 900.

**Sheana Stephen Ashton**





## Supporting those experiencing Homelessness in Edinburgh this Winter

In Edinburgh, Streetwork at Simon Community Scotland works 7 days a week to support those who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness by way of our Outreach and Support Hub teams.

The landscape of homelessness has evolved through Covid-19 in Edinburgh with more people now accommodated, albeit in temporary settings, and fewer people sleeping on our streets than ever before. However, the 24 people we've typically seen sleeping rough each evening this winter is still 24 too many.

We understand that many people who rough sleep or are in temporary accommodation have often experienced trauma and can be reluctant to engage with those who set out to help them. Our teams work tirelessly to build relationships in this space, often over months and years, to offer the support people need to live their lives well.

Whilst our services in the main are commissioned by City of Edinburgh Council, it's thanks to the generosity of supporters such as St Giles' that we're able to go further in supporting people to engage in positive and meaningful ways. One such way is our recently-launched Wellbeing Wednesdays initiative, hosted at our StreetReads Library at Nicolson Square.

Each Wednesday afternoon, throughout the winter months, we're hosting people experiencing homelessness in a warm and welcoming space where they can enjoy warm food and company, as well as accessing a range of support and services.

These heart-shaped steak bakes, made by the Scran Academy, a social enterprise supporting young people, were a huge hit alongside their delicious lentil soup one cold December afternoon.



*Continued overleaf...*

Our partner agencies have also been providing pharmacy and healthcare support, with volunteers offering haircuts and massages, and our teams arranging accommodation for those in need, as well as offering emotional support and connection.

Creating opportunities for those experiencing homelessness to focus on their wellbeing cannot be underestimated, with one person telling us: "There's a big world out there that we should be able to be a part of, there should be more to our lives than homelessness" - Male, Long Term Homelessness

Reducing isolation and increasing social connectedness is vital in supporting mental health, both a cause and effect of homelessness. The interaction we offer in conjunction with warmth and food is ever more important with feedback from some of our attendees including: "Look around at these faces, smiling and laughing, probably for the first time in a long time. Hope and laughter that's what we needed." - Male, Long Term Homelessness

"Thank you for listening. I was in floods of tears when I came in and I feel I have support, two follow up appointments, things look better." - Female, Temporary Accommodation

"It was wonderful. The humanity I felt, you're always looking for it, everywhere you go for care, but today, here, I really felt it." - Female, Long Term Homelessness

The continued support we receive from the congregation of St Giles' is invaluable in enabling us to deliver initiatives such as Wellbeing Wednesdays and we're always grateful to be in your thoughts.

**Lesley Henderson, Strategic Lead for Edinburgh Simon Community Scotland**



# A new coat of arms



*With both the Royal Succession and the appointment of a new Knight and Dame of the Most Ancient and Most Noble Order of the Thistle, there has been an unusual amount of change required to the banners displayed in the Preston Aisle and the stalls in the Thistle Chapel. We asked Elizabeth Roads, Snawdoun Herald and Lyon Clerk until her retirement from that post in 2018, what considerations should be borne in mind when seeking a new coat of arms, with reference to the Order of the Thistle.*

In Scotland it is usual to look at symbols associated with a particular surname to form the basis for a new coat of arms. This idea stems from the clan and family system where there was, and to an extent still is, an assumed link between people of the same surname. A new member of the Order of the Thistle, in consultation with the Lord Lyon or their heraldic adviser, would first look to their surname to provide the principal charges. To make the coat unique other considerations come into play and people may look to symbols associated with their maternal or spousal line or geographical origins. It is not a good idea to choose too many symbols for the shield associated with occupation because the arms will descend to future generations whose members may have followed very different careers. The crest, which appears above the shield, is often the best place to include items relevant to a person's career or interests.

That is not to say that all symbols associated with a person's career or background should be ignored but they should not be paramount. Many symbols can have two meanings which allows for a charge to relate to more than one aspect of a person's life. For instance a portcullis appears in the arms of Sir Fitzroy Maclean and alludes both to his parliamentary career but also to the hereditary position of these Macleans as keepers of Dunconnel Castle. The fleece of Lord Mackay of Clashfern alludes to his descent from shepherds and his tenure of the Woolsack.

Each new member who does not already have a coat of arms should bear in mind that it needs to be suitable for display on an enamelled stall plate, as the crest high above the stall and clear on a banner.



## Kirk Session – Who Does What?

Last summer, we provided a table showing Kirk Session responsibilities, and as the new year has brought some changes to committee membership, we thought it worth providing an update. It is perhaps worth noting that several committees have co-opted some helpful members of the St Giles' community who are not elders – we are very grateful to those individuals for bringing their unique skills to our committees' efforts.

Minister: Reverend Calum I. MacLeod		Associate Minister: Reverend Sigrid Marten	
Session Clerk: Mark T.S. Batho		Treasurer: Niall Lothian ■	
Name and Committee membership ● Member ■ Convenor (The Minister, Session Clerk and Treasurer are members of all committees) Business Communications Finance & Administration General Neighbourhood Group St Giles' 900			
John Andrew	■ ● ● ●	Gail Maxwell	
Victor Ashton	● ● ●	Hugh MacDougall	●
Philip Brodie	●	Sheila Mackay	●
Douglas Burke		Elizabeth McClelland	■ ● ●
Emma Caskie-Potter	●	Wilson Murray	
Alan Convery	■ ●	John P Robertson	● ●
Sue Davie	●	John W Robertson	●
Alan Dewar	●	Lindsay Sawyer	● ●
Roy Durie	●	Mirren Stobie	●
Lesley Elliot	● ● ●	William Taylor	● ● ●
Amanda Forsyth	■ ● ●	Mike Towers	●
Kevin Hall	● ●	Kim Walker	
Christine Hamilton	●	Anne Whiteford	■ ●
Carole Hope	●	Gary Winney	●
Lesley Johnston	● ●	Liz Wright	
Marjory Lobban	● ●		

## Music from Spring to Summer

The first few months of this year have seen plenty of activity for the music team; by the time you read this the Cathedral Choir will have given the first performance of J.S.Bach's St John Passion to be heard in St Giles' for many years – perhaps someone reading this knows if it has been performed here before. The choir has greatly enjoyed the project, immersing themselves in some fascinating and demanding repertoire. We are very grateful to The Friends of the Music for their financial support for this event.

The fruits of the choir's labours are also now available to purchase in the shop, with the new CD, Sing Psalms, mentioned in the last newsletter now available.

*Continued overleaf...*

Some will already have noticed that there has been a redesign of the What's On at St Giles' leaflet; this is all part of our new branding for St Giles' activities. Much work goes into pulling all this information together and presenting it to the wider public, and we are as ever grateful to Hugh Hillyard-Parker, also a member of the Cathedral Choir, for his production of this, in collaboration with Keir Eunson from Heritage and Culture.

There are plenty of concerts to enjoy in the next few months, and our concert activity plays an important role in creating income for St Giles'; we have been delighted to welcome Tringa Kasneci as the new Music and Performance Coordinator; Tringa looks after much of the day to day administration of our concert events as well as dealing with the development of potential new performance collaborations.

As we move through Spring into Summer we have a wide range of organ concerts to offer: our Sounds on Saturday series of popular organ music provided by the home team begin again on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May at 5.30pm, whilst our summer series of Wednesday evening organ concerts commences on 12<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30pm when we welcome the brilliant young German organist Angela Metzger to give the opening concert of the series. Full details of the series will appear on the website in due course and tickets for these concerts and for the Sounds on Saturday series will be available on Eventbrite.

**Michael Harris, Master of the Music**

## Maintenance and improvement Works

*It was with pride and delight that we learned of the award to John Andrew of the Honour of Member of the Royal Victorian Order (MVO) in recognition of all his tremendously hard work in relation to the Lying-at-Rest of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Here, he brings us up to date with the latest of the General Committee's work to maintain and improve the building.*

The operation and maintenance of the Cathedral building is a significant task and requires frequent inspections of the roof, roof space and other inaccessible spaces as scheduled by our Cathedral Architect Graham Tristram. Graham knows the building well, having been responsible for the renewal and improvement over many years. His knowledge is fundamental to the maintenance of this ancient structure and we owe him a great deal of respect for the tireless effort he has given over that time.

Recent inspections have included the use of a large hydraulic platform vehicle to assess the remote areas on the south side of the building and included areas around the Thistle Chapel. We have also had further inspections using rope access equipment where skilled and qualified engineers were able to access areas of the building that would otherwise be only accessible by the use of expensive and complex scaffold systems. As the photograph opposite shows, the roof of the Cathedral is extensively covered in a complex lead system which protects the timber roof structure below. This lead covering was replaced over a number of years in the 1980's and 90's and requires ongoing inspection to protect the internal spaces below. We also have a number of measurement gauges installed on the ancient parts of the masonry to provide readings of any movement which would alert our engineers to potential concerns and longer-term defects in the structure.

*Continued overleaf...*

We are also undertaking our annual inspection and cleaning of the rainwater systems on the roof to ensure the outlets and downpipes are clear of any debris and that the flow of rainwater is maintained. We regularly recover plastic carrier bags and other items that have blown onto the roof which would easily block the outlets and cause damage or a leak. The recent damage to a leaded window in the tower as a result of storms and high winds is being remade and will be replaced in the coming weeks.

Following our continuing commitment to manage and reduce our carbon footprint in the face of climate change, the new boiler, that was installed in late 2022, is performing well and has made a significant improvement. We are investigating further improvements to the heating in the other areas in the Cathedral and to ensure we are heating the building efficiently. Works to develop the upgrade and enhancement of the existing lighting system to energy efficient LED technology has been completed and the physical works will commence after Easter. The initial maintenance programme to the sound and CCTV system was successfully undertaken in January and we are programming further improvements later in the year.

I will continue to report progress on the ongoing and other works required in future editions of the Newsletter.

**John M Andrew - General Committee Convenor**



**The latest in our series of unusual images of St Giles' was taken by Keir Eunson when friendly (if chilly) weather conditions allowed an examination of the roof of the Cathedral.**

## Christian Aid Week 2023

Christian Aid week this year runs from 14th to 20th May. As usual the congregation will have the opportunity to donate using the familiar red envelopes on Sunday 14th and spare envelopes will be available in the cathedral throughout the week. Envelopes should be placed in the collection plates after the services on the Sunday or put into the collection boxes at other times in the week. If you are a UK tax payer, please consider increasing your donation by completing the Gift Aid form on the envelope, to enable Christian Aid to recover the tax element, the equivalent of 25p for every £1 donated.



Christian Aid carries out extensive ongoing work in developing countries across the globe to help people increase or find ways to become self-sufficient for themselves and their families. In addition, this year Christian Aid is also involved with the Disasters Emergency Committee relief work in Turkey and Syria, assisting and supporting people there who have been so badly impacted by the recent earthquakes. All of this costs money and, whilst we appreciate the many calls upon people's finances, particularly at this time, your donations take on, if anything, an even greater sense of urgency in the light of such suffering. Christian Aid has many very loyal supporters for which we are truly thankful, but if you have not yet become one of them, please consider making this year the start of that worthwhile journey. More information about the work of Christian Aid can be found on their website - [www.christianaid.org.uk](http://www.christianaid.org.uk)

Helen Heatlie

## Contact information

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

Calum MacLeod, Minister

Sigrid Marten, Associate Minister

Mark Batho, Session Clerk

Niall Lothian, Treasurer

Michael Harris, Master of the Music

Sarah Phemister, Head of Heritage & Culture

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[sarah.phemister@stgilescathedral.org.uk](mailto:sarah.phemister@stgilescathedral.org.uk)

As Communications Convenor, Amanda Forsyth monitors the [comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk](mailto:comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk) address, and is generally able to forward queries to other members of the Kirk staff and Session. She can also be reached directly on [amanda.forsyth@stgilescathedral.org.uk](mailto:amanda.forsyth@stgilescathedral.org.uk)

Useful contacts:

Cathedral Secretary

0131 225 4363

[corinne.macinnnes@stgilescathedral.org.uk](mailto:corinne.macinnnes@stgilescathedral.org.uk)

Beadles' Office

0131 226 0672

Cathedral Shop

0131 226 0673

[shop@stgilescathedral.org.uk](mailto:shop@stgilescathedral.org.uk)

Finance Office

0131 225 8683

Heritage & Culture

0131 226 0674

## 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.