

What's inside

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Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2023 – only one year to go until the beginning of St Giles' 900th Anniversary year. The 900 Committee have been working hard, and this issue has a big feature describing some of the major projects and events we can look forward to. There's lots of information about the Neighbourhood Group's fundraising activities over the festive season, and a guest article from the charity Empty Kitchens Full Hearts, which was one of the beneficiaries of a distribution from the Poor of the Parish fund. In other charity news, Sandy Finlayson describes a new initiative to help those struggling to cope with the cost of living.

If you've been wondering what an EcoCongregation actually is, Sigrid has stepped in to explain the background, and what it means for us at St Giles'. With the festive season's duties done, the Master of the Music looks forward to the choir's next major work. Visiting Heritage & Culture, we find their newest recruit ready and waiting to talk all things design; and the guest photograph is an eerie image of St Giles' by moonlight.

We hope you enjoy February's news!



Welcome to our first newsletter of 2023 - Missy joins me in wishing a Happy New Year to all who are part of the St. Giles' community.

New Year is often a time when we reflect on where we have been and what our priorities are for the future. It is a good opportunity to think about the journey of faith and our commitment to the church.

Some years ago a group of us from Chicago went on a mission trip to Ghana where we met up with a great friend of mine who is the Presbyterian Church (USA) mission co-worker in that part of Africa.

The experience was rich as we made friendships with different Presbyterian communities, worked on building a new church, visited hospitals and schools and learned something about life and work and worship in West Africa.

Each of us came back with a fount of stories and encounters which informed us in new ways of thinking the faith and living it out.

Here's one example:

On the first Sunday some of us went to the makeshift church in the village where the new church was being built. In this bamboo frame with a thatched roof we had our first taste of Sunday morning worship Ghana-style. After the service as I reflected on the amazing songs and dancing, the choirs and drummers, something struck me. I realized that the amount of time in the service allocated to the receiving of people's offerings was about the same amount of time as the sermon! This was for a couple of reasons: one, the people did not sit and wait for a plate to be passed - two huge plastic bowls were placed at the front of the church and the congregation joyfully and in a stately manner sang and danced their way forward with their gifts; second, there was not one but four offerings! Regular, Thanksgiving, an auction of goods (someone had given a sheep to the church) and finally a fun and semi-competitive offering based on which day of the week you were born - the Sunday-borns won.

So here in Ghana was a lesson, not just about joyful giving or the generosity of the people, most of whom were subsistence farmers. It was a lesson also about our response to God being commensurate with the extravagance of God's gift of grace which we encounter in God's word and God's world.

May 2023 be a year in which you experience God's grace in abundance and experience the joy of sharing that with your neighbour.

Warmly,

Calum



Last summer our Kirk Session decided that the congregation of St. Giles' should join EcoCongregation Scotland as one step towards witnessing to the importance of the care of God's creation.

EcoCongregation Scotland are a Christian environmental charity addressing climate change and conservation. They provide a network for congregations to support each other and resources for congregations to develop their own activities to care for creation and tackle the climate emergency. Around 500 churches in Scotland are presently members of this scheme.

Online resources include material covering subjects under the headings Spiritual Living, Practical Living and Global Living. These range from theological discussions and worship material, via practical issues around church buildings and energy savings, to lifestyle questions and global issues around consumption. All the resources are freely available on their website, www.ecocongregationscotland.org. Please have a look!

It was decided that it would be helpful to make themes around environment and climate change a greater focus of the life and work of the Cathedral. This can connect our congregation with others in Edinburgh who are engaging with these issues. It is hoped that this new commitment will provide opportunities for us as individuals and as a congregation to reflect on our place in God's creation and to make connections between our lifestyle choices and global issues around climate change.

There are some issues around the maintenance of the Cathedral building which we are already addressing, like replacing an inefficient boiler and upgrading our lighting system to more energy-efficient LED technology. We will continue to explore ways to reduce our carbon footprint, even if that is not always straightforward in an ancient building.

But questions around the environment and conservation go beyond changing lightbulbs and reducing single-use plastics. Our relationship with God's creation is not an issue that has only recently become of interest to churches, it is at the centre of our faith. The story of humans with God starts with the story of Creation, and our place in it. Much of the teaching of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament is concerned with a sense of being a part of God's creation, with responsible sharing of resources, with caring for the vulnerable members of society. The theology of the sabbath rest could teach us much today about sustainability and restraint and trusting in God rather than belongings. What is urgently needed is for Christians to remember our calling as children of God to work for the integrity of God's creation, together with all who are committed to reversing climate change. It is vital for us to learn again how to live respectfully as part of God's world, as members of the body of Christ who understand about the inter-connection between people, communities and ecosystems. We believe in God's love for all God's creation. Let us learn how to live that, now.

Information about how to engage with this new endeavour will be announced in the near future through the intimations and e-bulletin. If you have any further questions about this, please feel free to contact me.

Sigrid Marten, Associate Minister



Empty Kitchens Full Hearts is a success story which emerged from the hardships of the Covid pandemic, and now seeks volunteers to help support the momentum it has built.

The charity was formed in March 2020 by chefs and hospitality workers who recognised that they could use their skills and experience to prepare surplus food to feed people in need in Edinburgh, free of charge, and without judgement. Even in the extremely challenging context of the pandemic, an amazing community of volunteers came together to cook, pack, and deliver the meals and make sure vulnerable people across Edinburgh had access to nutritious food.

Since then – and now in its new home in Granton – Empty Kitchens has cooked, packed, and delivered more than 1.6 million meals and currently works with around 650 service users across the city. The core of the service remains the home-delivery of a 'double day pack', which contains soup, bread, main meals, and snacks for one person for two days. As an alternative to home-delivery, service users can also collect their meals from community hubs, which enables people to pick up their meals while also making use of other services available at these locations. There is also a weekly hot food service on-site in Granton, which offers soup, rolls, and snacks.

Empty Kitchens recognises that it can be extremely overwhelming to ask for food support, and has always sought to provide as accessible a service as possible by offering home-delivery, and providing a service without means-testing or other complicated referral mechanisms. Lack of access to food is also rarely the only challenge that people are facing. Of service users who have sought support since June 2022, factors mentioned as reasons for needing food support have included unemployment, low/delayed benefits payments, long-term physical and mental health challenges, and rising energy prices/the cost of living crisis.

In providing an accessible service, Empty Kitchens aims to meet a crucial, basic need for food while supporting access to other relevant support services and initiatives, such as financial/debt advice, advocacy services, and employability support.

The incredible community of volunteers are the backbone of Empty Kitchens' operation. There are volunteer roles across the whole of the organisation, including:

- Delivery drivers and cyclists
- Kitchen Assistants and Kitchen Porters
- Packing
- Cleaning
- Administrative roles including volunteer services and service user engagement



Volunteering roles are very flexible. You can sign up to do as much or as little as you like, whether you volunteer as a one-off, a few times a month, or several times a week! If you would be interested in volunteering, you can email volunteer@emptykitchens.co.uk or visit www.emptykitchens.co.uk/volunteer

Music for Passiontide and a new CD

After all the excitement of the Christmas period it might be thought that the early part of the year would be quieter on the musical front; that is definitely not the case this year as the big project for the Cathedral Choir this spring is going to be a performance of J.S.Bach's St John Passion on Palm Sunday, Sunday 2nd April at 7pm, marking the start of Holy Week.

This is a major undertaking which The Friends of the Music are underwriting, and includes a wonderful group of soloists, all of whom have Edinburgh connections. Sam Jenkins takes the role of Evangelist, and is joined by Jerome Knox (Christus), Rebecca Ramsey (Soprano), Lucilla Graham (Mezzo-Soprano), Joe Doody (Tenor) and Ed Birchinall (Bass).

The St John Passion was first performed on Good Friday in 1724 in the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig; it is shorter, but also more complex in structure than the later St Matthew Passion, and is effectively a series of tableaux rather than a continuous narrative. Musically it is fascinating: whilst a series of chorales - the hymns of the Lutheran tradition - provide reference points, Bach plays with ideas of symmetry in the choruses, so that the listener will hear a number of musical references more than once.

It is marvellous that we are able to put this on – there has not been a Passion performance in St Giles' for many years – but the costs of orchestra and soloists make this a significant project and we need audience support. Tickets (£15, concessions £12, students £8) are already on sale at Eventbrite; we do hope to see you there.

Back at the start of 2020, just before the onset of the pandemic shut everything down, the Cathedral Choir began recording a new CD for St Giles' own Aegidius label, Sing Psalms AGD005. Work on this was not completed in February 2020, but we managed to pick this up again in October last year. This is now complete, and almost ready for production, so look out for this in the Shop around Easter. The disc pairs settings of psalm texts from the Renaissance period with contemporary compositions by Scottish composers and has many exciting, rarely-performed pieces on it.

Michael Harris, Master of the Music

St Giles' Advent Appeal

The Advent Appeal raised a total of £4,093.75, including Gift Aid. This was a wonderful response from the congregation, coming at a time when so many charitable causes – all of them deserving – have been seeking our attention and support.

Our three local charities, The Edinburgh Food Project, The Edinburgh Clothing Store and Streetwork will each receive a very respectable donation to help them in the vital work they do in our community.

Many thanks to everyone who contributed so generously.

St Giles' 900: What do you believe in?

In 2024, St Giles' Cathedral will be 900 years old: nine centuries at the centre of Scotland's worship, at the hub of the nation's widest faith, and host for great national events for kings and queens, lawmakers, patriots, and indeed for wonderful disruptors who radically changed our thinking.

St Giles' intends to seize this historic moment of challenge and opportunity. **St Giles' 900: What do you believe in?** is a deliberately provocative title for our programme, but also one which opens reflection and discussion amongst us all. We are planning a truly ambitious but compact programme which is fearless but also friendly. We'll build lasting collaborations between international artists, Scotland's national companies and the Capital city's widest community.

We plan to celebrate with a programme of spectacular events along with important renewal projects to make even more significant our great, iconic building. Together with the Cathedral's Heritage and Culture team who are working on exciting projects with a number of partners - planning to integrate the 900 celebrations into Edinburgh's annual spectacles: Hogmanay, Burns Night and other annual highlights - we plan a series of major events where international artists will build major new events alongside Scotland's own tremendous talents and superb national arts companies. Involving the widest community is important. Each of our special events will bring all ages and abilities right into the centre of our activity.

Our congregation is at the beating heart of the Cathedral's everyday activity. Our words and music are tremendous. From all over the world, visitors flock into our magnificent spaces to marvel and to be inspired. Now, in 2024 we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to consider our great building and the might of what it represents as a landmark, both from the past but particularly, for the future.

So how will we do that? What *do* we believe in today? – and how do we mark that belief? And just how broad is our definition of belief – from football to faith? Let's examine it all.

We plan our performance programme knowing that 2024 is a critical time for both celebration and reflection. The programme, titled **St Giles' 900: What do you believe in?** will present a great mix of ideas and excitement, offering a mix of events for everyone and wide opportunities for the people of Edinburgh: children, teens, families and elders, to become involved.



Arts and ideas will work together. We are building a provocative series, **The St Giles Sessions'**, which will bring together the best brains from Scotland and beyond to reflect on the issues which underpin our lives. How does music illuminate faith? What leadership do we need in today's world? Can angels play a role in 2024? Literature, poetry, food even – let's discuss them all, and explore how all kinds of creativity collide with our belief.

Continued overleaf ...

The sound artist Zoe Irvine, past artist-in-residence at the Scottish Parliament, will create an extraordinary soundscape for the Cathedral, to remain for the long term. **900 Voices** will explore the questions: *What do you believe in? What gives you a sense of belonging?* The installation will be an interactive, spoken word, sound installation created from recorded conversations exploring ideas of faith and belonging in Edinburgh communities. Our team of local interlocutors of all ages will record thoughts and opinions from all over Edinburgh and will work with members of the St Giles' congregation, schools, care homes, hospitals, sports clubs.... a wide range of all ages to capture conversations about everything they hold dear, from football to family to faith. Zoe will then create a remarkable 'theatre of sound'. Visitors will experience the installation first by asking it to search for a word: it might be 'nature' or 'football' or 'prayer'. The soundscape will begin quietly over speakers placed all around the Cathedral with voices growing and interweaving over several minutes until they all settle on the special word. Each time the soundscape is triggered it will playback differently; highlighting different voices, starting in a different part of the cathedral, weaving around the listener in a different way.

We will present a brilliant Cathedral production of Mozart's last opera **La Clemenza di Tito**. Through astounding music, he shows us that power and compassion can combine to lead nations. Directed by the acclaimed young Greek artist Rodula Gaitanou, and with a superb mainly Scottish cast, we hope the production will then tour to other European cathedrals. Members of St Giles' own singers will underpin an international chorus.

The sculptor Marit Bethe Norheim, known globally for her creation of huge mobile musical sculptures which she builds in collaboration with local communities, will bring her Rolling Angels to Parliament Square along with young dancers for a new project, **The Dictionary of Angels**. We have commissioned a new angel for St Giles', inspired by the Cathedral's own Angel with Bagpipes. Who knows what unique music will emerge from the new Scottish angel!

We also plan a **Festival of Street Musicians**. We will make an open call to all the city's street musicians and groups, asking them to submit a song or piece of music around the theme of belief. A highly experienced panel will then select and commission around 20 works and (weather permitting) have them performed in the High Street, culminating in Parliament Square. In parallel, we will run workshops for teenagers in 3 Edinburgh High Schools. The 5 best singer/songwriter/bands will also perform in the festival. The festival has already also sparked interest overseas from the music theatre festival 'O' in Rotterdam.

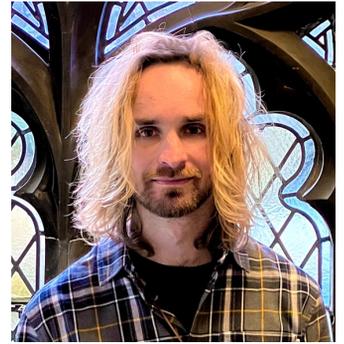
We hope that you the congregation, city visitors, your friends, colleagues and compatriots will join us to greet anew Scotland's great national cathedral, to celebrate its history, be part of its living presence – and help to make its future.

Mary Miller
Artistic Director, St Giles' 900



Meeting Keir

One of the newest members of the St Giles' Heritage & Culture team – and in a brand new role – is Keir Eunson, who now provides our Digital Media and Design work.



Could you tell us a bit about yourself prior to St Giles'?

My background as a designer is quite varied – whilst I trained in Graphic Design and Illustration, I also have an MA in Exhibition Design and my work has at various points included interpretation, GIS, and UI/UX design. Since completing my studies, I have worked in communities across Scotland on numerous heritage, active travel, and arts-based projects. I maintain a freelance design practice and I am currently an associate with Greenspace Scotland's Remembering Together Covid Memorial project.

We hear H&C talk about interpretation. What does that mean and why is it important?

Interpretation, specifically heritage interpretation, refers to the ways in which we communicate (or provoke) the meaning of historical, natural, and cultural assets, be they objects, stories or sites. With interpretation – which takes different forms at St Giles', such as volunteer guides, physical signage, or digital media – we can help deliver an informative and memorable experience for our visitors.

This position is a new one at St Giles', could you tell us a bit about the role?

I am responsible for the delivery and development of all design-based projects within the Cathedral. In addition, the role holds responsibility for maintaining and developing the Cathedral's digital output both in terms of our social media channels and website.

What previous experiences are you aiming to bring to St Giles'?

I aim to take a multidisciplinary approach to the work, drawing upon my experience with Exhibition, Interpretation, and Graphic design, so to support the H&C team in all areas of visitor experience.

We are already starting to see the impact of your work around the Cathedral, including the very smart new logo. What were the main factors influencing your design?

We wanted to create something that looked both modern and representative of St Giles'. I explored numerous ideas and variations before choosing to develop both a primary logo and a secondary logo. In doing so we have afforded ourselves with some flexibility - if there is a design context in which one logo does not appear to sit naturally, the other can be substituted. The primary logo is designed to reflect St Giles' instantly recognisable architecture, as viewed from West Parliament Square. Identifiable features such as the Burns window, the building's crown, and the entrance allow for the surrounding features to take more abstract form, bringing a modern touch to an iconic subject. The image is balanced by the type, sitting cleanly at the foot of the building. The secondary logo combines the Burns window with the building's crown, in more a more decorative fashion. The arches are inspired by the building's ribs.

We can't afford the ticket to the desert island, so we're marooning you on St Kilda. What is your luxury?

A surfboard (and wetsuit) would be good.



Christmas Can Collection

Friday 17th and Saturday 18th December were bright, clear, cold days, so the annual can collections were indeed blessed by good weather. A pouring wet day sounds the death-knell for street collecting: people are reluctant to stop and give money in such weather.

As well as the money collected on the streets, we were privileged to receive some very generous donations, boosting the grand total. Overall, we were able to give £3,875 to The Rock Trust to help its work for homeless and needy young people between 16 and 25. This is the 30th anniversary year since The Rock Trust was first established to help young people who had been sleeping rough in St Cuthbert's Churchyard.

As always, the Cathedral Choir has been a generous and inventive ally. After their Saturday morning rehearsal, an ensemble from the choir turned out on Parliament Square, singing carols to support the two collectors on the High Street, who raised £100 within that time. The singers then went on to the St James' Quarter, for more caroling in support of their two charities – Cash for Kids and Deaf Action. The St James' Quarter team was pleased to report having raised over £300 during the festive season, in part thanks to the choir's support.

Quite a few people stopped to tell our collectors how much they approved of the church going to the market place, being seen to declare itself during the difficult times we live in. One or two who gave us money said, "I know what it's like. I've been homeless myself."

One of our collectors was very impressed – and slightly disconcerted – at being approached by a man who had been begging on Princes Street and who insisted on making a contribution out of the money in his begging tray.

Then there was the Salvation Army lady who had been with the band further along Princes Street. She put money in the box, declaring: "I've been helping the homeless for 40 years. There's more need now than ever." She should have the last word.



GIVE400.SCOT

I would like to begin by thanking the Communications Committee for giving me the opportunity to write a few words about GIVE400.scot. It started as a general discussion amongst a small group of people at the beginning of November and quickly grew into the obvious thing to do.

It was clear to us that we were heading into a very difficult winter with the ongoing impact of the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis, high rates of inflation and the permanent pressure on our health and social care services. Indeed the Economist's 'word of the year' for 2022 was 'permacrisis' and it looks as if this state of affairs is set to continue into 2023.

While the UK energy grant of £400 per household and other interventions are very welcome, they are not sufficient to cover the increase in essential fuel and food costs and many families and individuals will still be left struggling. There is also a major crisis in the numerous small charities such as food banks which exist to support those in need.

GIVE.400.scot is quite simply a 'call to arms'. If you are in the fortunate position of having received a Government energy grant but could manage without it, would you consider donating all or some of it to somebody whose need is greater than yours? GIVE400.scot has been established to provide a means to do just that. It has the pro bono support of a talented digital media agency who designed the artwork and a PR agency who found extensive media coverage for the initiative in December.

While the initiative is supported by Corra Foundation, a leading Scottish donor charity, it is deliberately 'charity agnostic'. People are encouraged to donate to any charity they wish to support or to another good cause. If you are not sure which charity you wish to support, just click on [GIVE400.scot](https://give400.scot) and that will take you seamlessly to Corra where you will be able to make a donation and tick a Gift Aid Box to make your donation go further.

The St. Giles' Neighbourhood Group works tirelessly to support local charities helping those in need and you may have read about their Advent Appeal in the December Newsletter. This year they were supporting Streetwork, The Edinburgh Food Project and The Edinburgh Clothing Store. They are all worthy causes which deserve to be supported all year round, not just at Christmas. I also feel privileged to be a director of the Grassmarket Community Project – Grassmarket.org which does amazing work to support people suffering from 'deep social exclusion'.

We know that, as a result of this initiative, over £30,000 had already been raised through Corra by the middle of December. An unknown further amount has reached other causes, so it has already made a big difference, but we are only too well aware of the cost-of-living crisis which will get worse for many people before the summer.

Thank for reading this and please give if you can.
Sandy Finlayson



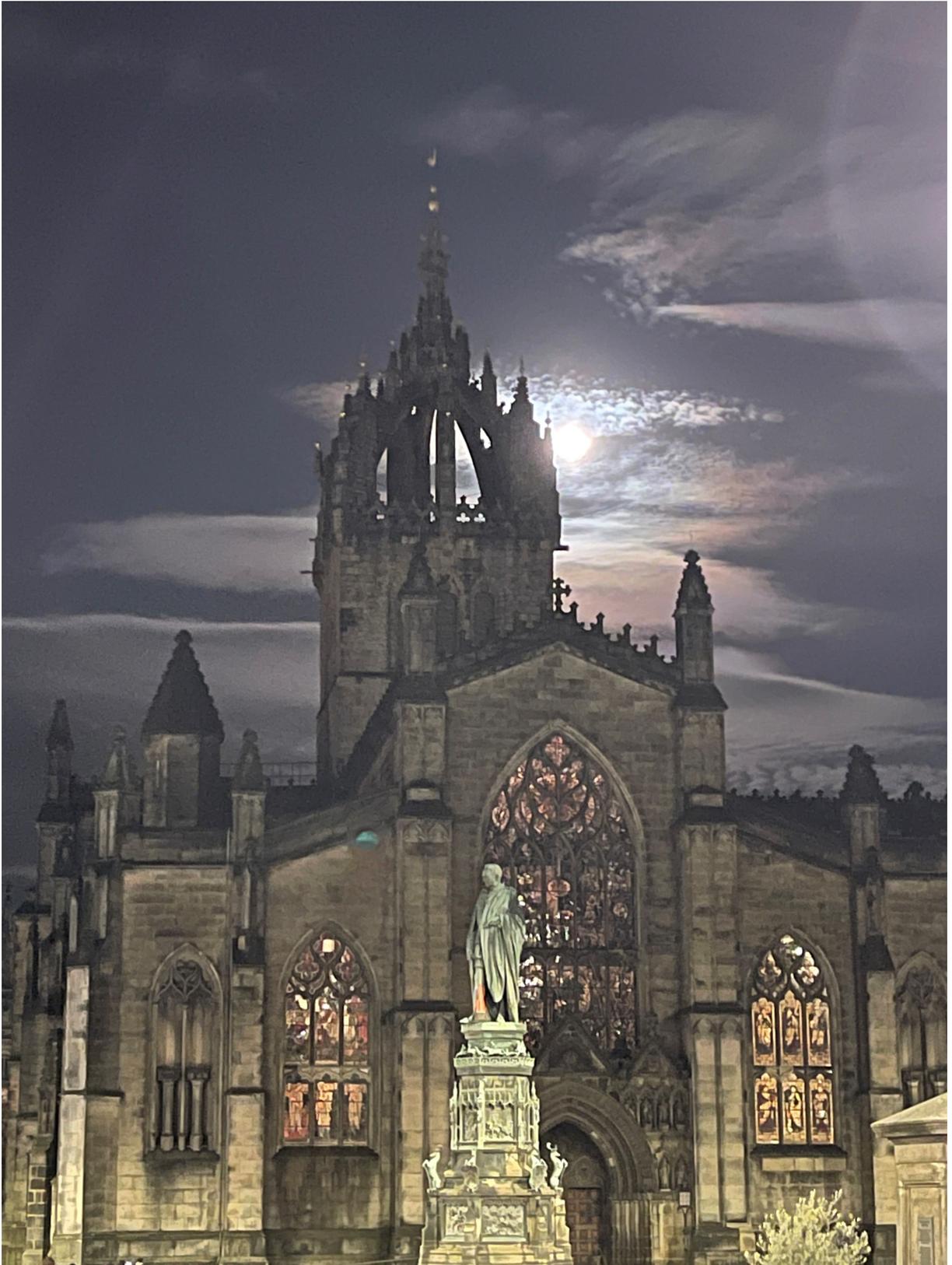
**IF YOU DON'T NEED IT,
GOOD DEED IT.**

If you are able, please support the GIVE400 campaign, which encourages everyone in Scotland who can afford it, to donate their £400 energy bill support to those who need it more.

For more information, visit GIVE400.SCOT

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#GIVE400



As the dark nights gradually start to shorten, this photograph by Andrew Carvel (a St Giles' tenor, and composer of many pieces in the choir's repertoire) captured the moment when the moon eerily lit the Cathedral on a cold November night.

Poor of the Parish Fund allocations 2023

Last February we ran an article in the St Giles' Newsletter on the Poor of the Parish Fund. This restricted fund was used in earlier times to support those in need. Nowadays the income is distributed to support good causes in our local community. On the recommendation of the St Giles' Neighbourhood Group the £10,000 made available by the Kirk Session in November 2022 was distributed as follows:

£1200 each to 6VT, Bethany Christian Trust, Cunningham House, Edinburgh Clothing Store, FreshStart, Grassmarket Community Project, Streetwork and The Welcoming. £400 to Empty Kitchens Full Hearts.

The charities concerned all expressed their appreciation and provided some examples of how this money will be used:

- Supporting the 6VT initiative, Terrace Tots, which provides emotional support for young parents and referrals for children's clothing, food and fuel
- Providing funding for the Grassmarket Community Project to provide warm banks and open door meals where people can feel safe, warm and have access to advice
- Arranging Christmas activities and trips for Cunningham House residents such as light shows, movie nights and board game evenings plus a gift for every resident on Christmas Day
- Helping Bethany Christian Trust to provide a Rapid Re-accommodation Welcome Centre
- Assisting Streetwork to support young people in temporary accommodation or on the streets with their immediate physical needs such as warm clothing and toiletries
- Helping to stock The Welcoming Community Fridge
- Supporting the cooking, packing and delivering of around 400 meals by Empty Kitchens of which you can read further in a separate article at the start of this Newsletter.

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	minister@stgilescathedral.org.uk
Sigrid Marten, Associate Minister	sigrid.marten@stgilescathedral.org.uk
Mark Batho, Session Clerk	sessionclerk@stgilescathedral.org.uk
Niall Lothian, Treasurer	treasurer@stgilescathedral.org.uk
Michael Harris, Master of the Music	michael.harris@stgilescathedral.org.uk
Sarah Phemister, Head of Heritage & Culture	sarah.phemister@stgilescathedral.org.uk

As Communications Convenor, Amanda Forsyth monitors the 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

Useful contacts:

Cathedral Secretary	0131 225 4363	corinne.macinnes@stgilescathedral.org.uk
Beadles' Office	0131 226 0672	
Cathedral Shop	0131 226 0673	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.