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- Vacancy update
- Lighting things up
- 900 growing voices
- Remembering our leader
- Spending £100,000
- 1,473,211
- New staff
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Welcome to the first St Giles' News of 2024, the year in which we celebrate the 900th Anniversary of the founding of St Giles'. In this edition, we have an update on '900 Voices' from artist Zoë Irvine and details of beautiful, bespoke new items for the shop created in conjunction with the Grassmarket Project as part of the celebrations. We also highlight two incredible milestones: the Neighbourhood Group's impressive achievement of raising more than £100,000 for charity since 2012 and the Cathedral welcoming a record-breaking number of visitors in 2023 - almost 1.5 million! We have reports on both, as well as updates from the Neighbourhood Group on the Advent Appeal and the distribution of the Poor of the Parish Funds.

Such high visitor numbers puts pressure on the staff and volunteers, who work hard to provide a warm welcome to visitors and worshippers alike, and also on the fabric of the building. We have an *enlightening* update from the Convenor of the General Committee, who skilfully leads the work in maintaining the Cathedral, ably supported by his Committee, Cathedral staff and professional advisors. We also 'meet' Ruby Harrop, our new Digital Engagement Officer, who is responsible for the livestreaming of the Sunday Services, and we have updates on our musical offerings and the vacancy process.

December 2023 saw the sad passing of the Very Rev. Gilleasbuig McMillan, who served the Cathedral with dedication and grace for 40 years. Our Assistant Minister, Sam, writes movingly on Gilleasbuig's influence and our Interim Moderator on Gilleasbuig's funeral, as we reflect on and give thanks for his time with us.

Welcome



Recently, we honoured the memory of one of St Giles' longest-serving ministers - the Very Rev. Gilleasbuig Iain McMillan. During Rev. Gilleasbuig's tribute, read by the Very Rev. John D Miller, the last word I was expecting to hear was Nigeria. But there it was.

The story was that Rev. Gilleasbuig, in 1991, created a worship space for Muslims to pray in the Cathedral during a solemn Christian service, and that, years later, a Muslim cleric had used this example to preach peace to warring Christian and Muslim communities in Nigeria. This story remains special for me because I was born in the north-central part of Nigeria, where I witnessed several violent outbursts between Christian and Muslim communities and decided to devote my years of post-graduate study to understanding the early history of Christians and Muslims in the Levant.

This tribute illustrates something much bigger. It demonstrates the significant place we, here at St Giles', occupy as a congregation. We are planted in a place where our act of obedience to God's radical message of love has the power to ignite hope in far-reaching corners of the world. We continue to strive for this high purpose and calling, aspiring to be a beacon of hope for all, especially in this new year.

The year 2024 marks our Cathedral's 900th year, highlighting its long-standing purpose as a sanctuary for Christian devotion, but also as a place of civic solemnity and religious diversity. While we commemorate this milestone, we remain acutely aware of the many troubles that beset our world today. During the season of Lent - starting later this month - we have the opportunity to pause and reflect, journeying through the wilderness experience of our Lord and, indeed, of our modern world as well.

Therefore, as I commend our February Issue to you, dear reader, may the following (adapted) words ascribed to St. Francis of Assisi (d. 1226) echo in our hearts:

**Lord make us instruments of your peace
Where there is hatred,
May we sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, Joy. Amen**

VACANCY UPDATE

You will be aware that it is now five months since St Giles' became "vacant" with the departure of Calum Macleod and many people must be asking what is happening.

There has been no "vacancy procedure" (e.g. the election of a Nominating Committee) because Presbytery has not yet given the congregation permission to call a new minister. This is not such a simple process as last time because there is a Presbytery Mission Plan in place which sees a shared future for St Giles' and Canongate. The Plan says, in formal terms, that there should be a Parish Grouping leading to a Deferred Union. It also provides for two ministers paid from the central Parish Ministry Fund and the retention of both church buildings. How and when we get from "here" to "there" has not yet been agreed. Representatives of the Kirk Session will be meeting with Presbytery office bearers on the 7th of February to continue the process of finding the best way of implementing the Plan. There will be a report to the Kirk Session meeting set for the evening of 6th March.

Presbyterian church government has many good points but speed is not one of them so please be patient – no one is deliberately attempting to drag out the process. Indeed, we are all attempting to be as careful and far-sighted as we need to be in challenging days for the Kirk as a whole.

The Kirk Session will also be meeting in conference in February to look in depth at the life and witness of St Giles' in the years ahead – this will generate really useful material when the time comes to search for the next Parish Minister.

In the meantime, I like to think that we are trying to make good use of the present time by:-

- ensuring that worship continues and develops
- making good use of the 900th anniversary year to enhance and rethink the Cathedral's life and witness
- working on the growing programme of concerts and events
- continuing to enhance the visitor welcome programme (almost 1.5 million of them in 2023!) while also exploring the possibilities and challenges of charging some for admission
- putting in place good practice coordinating and managing the work of the staff teams
- continuing to work on our finances while maintaining and enhancing the Cathedral building and its infrastructure
- planning ahead for special occasions and services as well as changes in personnel
- building the relationship with the Canongate through the shared evening services, discussions on the Parish Grouping and informal conversations
- networking with other churches, heritage and culture groups, statutory agencies, the City Council and so on.


As we make progress with our friends and colleagues in the Presbytery we will continue to provide as much information as possible.

George J Whyte

Interim Moderator and Locum

Let there be light

Following the numerous updates in recent editions we begin by reporting the completion of the glorious lighting project, before looking at other recent activities and plans for maintaining the fabric of the building.



The most visible recent enhancement in the building has been the completion of the of the internal lighting upgrade and the conversion of the existing lighting sources to Light-Emitting Diode (LED) operation. This has been a complex task and has made a significant improvement to the lighting within the Cathedral, resulting in a more energy efficient and flexible installation that will reduce the building electricity costs by around 75% and will make a major contribution to our Eco-Congregation commitment. Along with the improvements to the chandeliers and window ledge lighting the works also replaced the lighting of the Sanctuary, Choir and North Porch Screen. This also included the lighting above the Sanctuary, which was time expired and a potential fire risk.

The new lighting system has an improved control interface that will in time provide a full range of settings for the increasing number of events, ceremonial and worship, in the Cathedral. The upgraded installation involved a number of specialists and consultants to design, upgrade and install the equipment required and I am grateful for their expertise in realising the vision of our donor and to undertake the improvement works with consideration of the fabric of our ancient building. Further enhancements to the lighting of the organ, side aisles, Thistle Chapel and ante-chapel will hopefully follow once funding arrangements have been confirmed.

Maintenance Works

In recent weeks a programme of works has been established to undertake some necessary maintenance activities which have been identified during inspections of the building fabric. As previously reported the area of potential dampness at high level in the Holy Blood Aisle has been further investigated to establish the reasons for the problem and to ensure that the no further deterioration occurs. The lead roof and drainage has been inspected by a specialist lead work plumber and further works have been instructed which will involve the use of an access platform and a stonework mason; this work will take place once a suitable weather window has been identified. Further internal examination of the timbers in the roof space above the plaster vaulting has also been instructed and will be undertaken by specialist rope access technicians to ensure that no further water penetration has taken place. This delicate inspection work will establish any works required and provide confidence in the solutions to resolve this for the future.

Further work is also underway to refurbish the toilet in the vestry following the discovery of dampness and damage to the wooden floor. Works to undertake the necessary conservation repair and improvements required is progressing and it is hoped this will be completed in the next week or so.

It is important to not only look after the main fabric but also to ensure that all areas of the building are regularly inspected to ensure that small defects do not become expensive or significant repairs in the future.

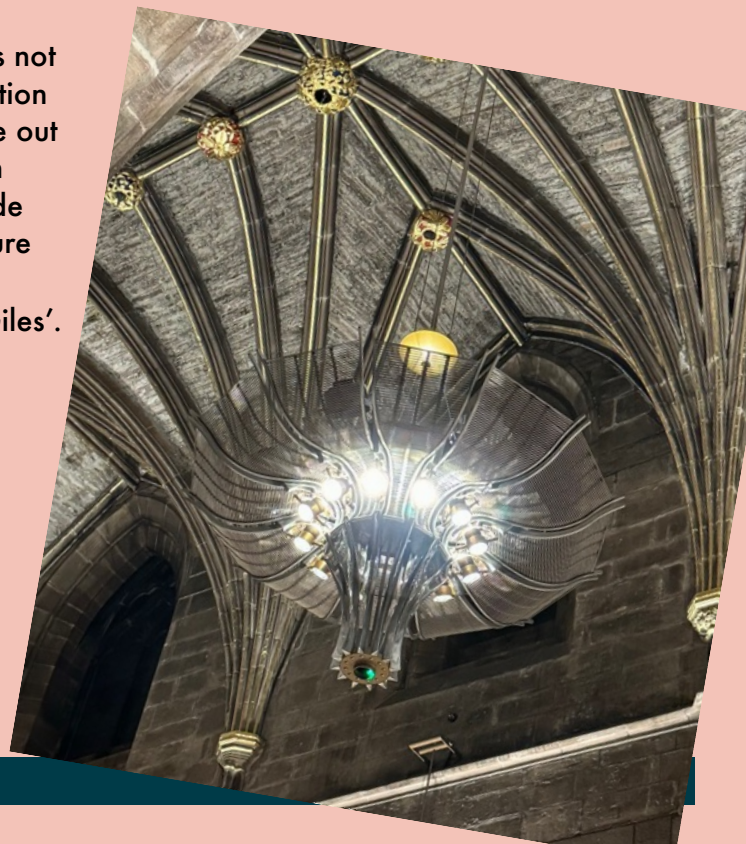
Future Projects

Future works that will be planned to take place in the coming weeks include further maintenance and improvements to the sound and audio-visual system to further support our livestream operation of Sunday services and to enhance our music, concerts and events programme. Early investigations on the operation and potential overhaul of the West porch and doors are in progress together with works to upgrade and repair the principal elements of the external flood lighting - further details will be provided in future editions of St Giles' News.

With such a complex building to maintain it is not always the visible elements that require attention and much of the activities required take place out of sight of the congregation and visitors. I am grateful to the committee, staff and our outside advisors for the continuing dedication to ensure that our ancient building is presented in such good condition for all that spend time in St Giles'.

John M Andrew

General Committee Convenor





900 Voices update 1: The beginning

Here at the start of St Giles' 900th year we are delighted to be getting underway with 900 Voices and enjoyed starting to get to know people, in particular at the information sessions that we held a few weeks ago. There will be more. The project has evolved since my first proposal a long time ago, and the team has grown. Lindsay Perth, Public Artist and Designer, is currently working on the public-facing design and the start of the social engagement aspect of the project, and Jules Rawlinson, sound designer and composer, will be co-composing the work with me. We are really looking forward to creating the sound work in response to the recordings and the amazing acoustics of the Cathedral. We will share more on that in a later newsletter.

What actually is 900 Voices?

We are working towards a large-scale sound art installation made entirely of spoken word which will launch in August. This artwork will be made from recorded conversations and that is what we are getting underway with right now.

We are seeking people from the St Giles' community and beyond who are interested in having a recorded conversation with one of us or recording conversations with community members, family, or friends.

What kind of conversations?

Conversations that share thoughts and ideas about what gives us a feeling of connection, community and a sense of belonging.

Where can connection and belonging be found?

Well, perhaps it is an element of why you are part of St Giles' community, but of course that sense of connection can be found anywhere – sport, friends, shared meals, music, art, spiritual practice, family, chess clubs, book clubs, allotments, choir, gaming, your work and so on. Is it being needed? Is it being understood? Is it sharing a language, a culture, a sense of humour? Is it finding some solitude in a noisy world? We'd love to know what gives you those experiences, those moments of feeling connected... connected to others, to yourself, or a sense of humanness, kinship, commonality...?

You tell us!

What will happen to the recorded Conversations?

These recordings will become part of the sound installation, an ever-evolving collection of conversations to be listened to in the magnificent interior and extraordinary acoustics of St Giles'. There will also be a 900 Voices Oral History archive, where all these conversations will live and be accessible more fully.

But what if I want to change something I said or edit something out?

No problem, everyone who takes part will have the chance to review the recording and ask for elements not to be included or to be removed completely. Only edited sections will be used in the installation. Also, if you think of things you would like to add we will try to facilitate further recording.

Your voice will join hundreds of others to create a unique sonic portrait of lived experience. And please note that no recording experience is needed. We will guide you through it!

Would you like to get involved? Do get in touch - hello@900voices.org

Or find out more at our website: www.900voices.org

Zoë Irvine

Talk time – next week!

www.costumesocietyscotland.co.uk

Costume Society Scotland

Banners, Embroideries & Sewing for St Giles Cathedral

Designing, making, repairing and restoration of textiles
Sheana Stephen Ashton DA
Artist Jeweller & Designer

Monday
5 February 2024

Augustine United Church
41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EL

7pm (Tea & coffee available from 6.30pm)
Non-members welcome : £8 payable at the door

In 1989, the minister Gilleasbuig Macmillan asked me to design angels for Christmas. They were to be designed to hang in front of the red felt banners of the four central pillars.

I went to measure the pillars, to discover they were only 29 inches wide but the banner drop was 22 feet - a design challenge if ever there were one.

Over the years I have designed and made the St Giles' standard, banners for the seasons of the church, replaced stolen embroidered thistles, made communion table covers, etc, etc: the needle is never idle.

In the Victorian era, there were two rival camps of embroidery ladies within St Giles': each group chose to present the church with sets of 40+ embroidered alms bags. To keep the peace, the Kirk Session had to intervene and rule that each set would be used on alternate Sundays. How staid life is nowadays, with contactless offerings.

My talk shall cover and illustrate the wide variety of textiles within the Cathedral.

Sheana Stephen Ashton



REMEMBERING THE VERY REV DR GILLEASBUIG IAIN MACMILLAN

Gilleasbuig's funeral took place in St Giles' on Thursday 4th January. The Cathedral was well filled with family, friends, colleagues and members of the congregation past and present.

The Very Rev Professor David Fergusson, Dean of the Thistle, represented their majesties the King and Queen. His Grace the Duke of Buccleuch represented Her Highness the Princess Royal. Lord Steel of Aikwood represented the Knights of the Thistle. The Rt Hon Robert Aldridge was there as the Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh.

Others brought to the gathering the respect of various learned, cultural and civic institutions with whom Gilleasbuig was bound up in his extensive practice of ministry.

The tribute and the prayers of thanksgiving and commendation were given by the Very Rev. John Miller who had studied with Gilleasbuig at New College and who had remained a friend ever since. What follows draws on what he said.

Gilleasbuig was a son of the Manse in Bunessan and then Appin. He was a distinguished pupil at Oban High School. Then it was onto the University of Edinburgh to study for an Arts degree thinking of a career in Law but then his father's example turned his mind to Parish Ministry and he enrolled in New College. It was during this time that Gilleasbuig met and married Maureen.

After serving his Probation with Very Rev. David Steel at Linlithgow: St Michael's, his first charge would be Portree on the Isle of Skye but in 1973, at the age of 30, he was called to be the Minister of St Giles'. John noted, "Within this young man, however, was an as-yet undisclosed vision.

Over the next forty years that vision would transform and re-order the ancient Cathedral and would make worship there an unforgettable experience for countless members and visitors. In a short space of time Gilleasbuig established a distinctive pattern of Sunday worship... he drew the Sanctuary westwards, until the communion table was in the Crossing..... Gilleasbuig wanted each service to have an atmosphere of worship."

On a more personal level John told us that Gilleasbuig's family life centred on Maureen and on their daughter Mary Jane – "Family life sustained Gilleasbuig. And he took pride in the work which Maureen, and in due course Mary Jane, fulfilled as nurses."

Gilleasbuig also had a ministry which extended beyond the parish. He was a Chaplain to the Queen from 1978, and Dean of the Thistle from 1989. He was also involved with other institutions such as the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the Royal College of Surgeons, Royal Scottish Academy, and the Society of High Constables of Edinburgh.

He presided at many ceremonial occasions in the life of the city and nation.

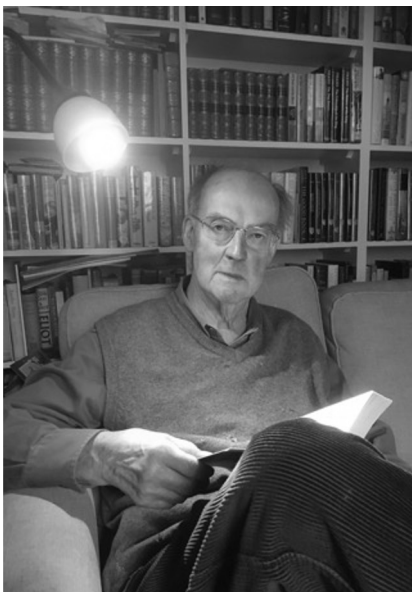
Many groups welcomed him as a preacher and speaker both at home and in the United States. "He was renowned for his wit, his familiarity with literature and poetry, and for his mischievous humour."

Even at the price of public controversy, he took brave steps to forge new relationships with the Catholic Church and the Muslim community.

An eminent colleague, on hearing of Gilleasbuig's passing, wrote to Maureen, 'With Gilleasbuig's death we have lost a man of supreme eloquence, knowledge and intellect. He had no equal in the Church of Scotland.'

After the public funeral there was a private burial service in the Dean Cemetery. This was followed by a well-attended "purvey" in Parliament Hall when many reminiscences were shared.

George J Whyte, Interim Moderator





Having had a very successful Christmas, culminating in an acclaimed performance of the first three parts of J.S.Bach's Christmas Oratorio at Hogmanay, the Cathedral Choir has returned to a more normal routine. The Christmas musical events were more popular than ever and it is good to see that audiences really have now recovered after the pandemic; carols are certainly as popular as ever.

The great beauty of providing music for worship in St Giles' is of course that there is always something new on the horizon and the choral repertoire continues to evolve. 2024 will be no different; in particular we will come to the end of the 900 Choirbook project this summer, and there will be more to say on that in due course.

More immediately, especially as Easter is very early this year, the choir is beginning to focus on its annual Music for Passiontide programme which takes place on Palm Sunday, 24th March at 6pm; this year this will be a performance of Brahms *Ein Deutsches Requiem* in the version accompanied by piano duet. We have two soloists from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Lorna Murray, soprano, who is also a member of the Cathedral Choir, and Seamus Brady, baritone. We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible on Palm Sunday evening.

Michael Harris

Advent Appeal 2023

Heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed so very generously to the ninth Advent Appeal. It was by far the most successful, hitherto.

The Neighbourhood Group has tried to support the Gateway Project, an initiative administered by Bethany Christian Trust and Fresh Start, helping formerly homeless people who have been given Council tenancies. The success of the Advent Appeal enables St Giles' to participate in the Gateway Project for the second time this year: having already funded the purchase of a microwave cooker for each of 100 households, we are now able to fund the purchase of a complete set of new bedding, together with a further change for laundering, to be provided to each of 100 households.

On an admittedly limited scale, these measures are helping formerly homeless folk begin and develop new lives for themselves.

On a somewhat wider scale, the money raised by the Appeal will also fund for a year the St Giles' weekly or bi-weekly deliveries of food to the Edinburgh Food Project. Being able to bulk-buy particular food items which have been identified as being in shortage at a given time can mean that the EFP food stock is kept functional in supplying their 7 food banks in the city.

Over the course of a year, around 5 tonnes of food are thus delivered, week by week, on behalf of St Giles'. With, on average, 12 kilos of food being allocated to each person, hundreds of people are being helped by the proceeds from our Advent Appeal.

Sincere thanks to all who made this possible.

Poor of the Parish Fund Allocations 2023

In February 2022 we ran an article in the St Giles' Newsletter about 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 £10000 made available in December 2023 by the Treasurer of St Giles' Cathedral was distributed as follows:

£1250 to each of 6T, Bethany Christian Trust, Cunningham House, Edinburgh Clothing Store, FreshStart, Grassmarket Community Project, Rock Trust and The Welcoming.

This money will go towards helping with activities such as providing daily two course meals to members of the Grassmarket Community Project as well as supporting their weekly open access meals for people who are struggling. Fresh Start intend to use the funds for making starter packs and providing food services such as their community pantry, cooking classes and community meals. Meanwhile the Edinburgh Clothing Store told us they intend to purchase much-needed items such as basic underwear and warm winter clothing.

If you wish to read a little more concerning the Poor of the Parish Fund then the original article can be viewed in the St Giles' News archive, found on the Cathedral website under Get Involved followed by Community.



As part of the 900th anniversary celebrations we have linked up with the Grassmarket project so that our broken chairs can be upcycled to create new, bespoke items with a unique link to the heritage and culture of the Cathedral. This initiative also supports our desire to reduce our impact on the environment which supports our status as an EcoCongregation.
<https://www.ecocongregationscotland.org>

So what happens to the broken chairs?

The increased activity in the Cathedral and moving the chairs for special events and services has had a toll on some of them, which are now broken and cannot be used. The chairs are made of oak and would eventually decompose but we are working in partnership with the Grassmarket Community project and their social enterprise 'The Wood Workshop' to make quality products from the broken chairs.
<https://grassmarket.org/furniture/>

The Grassmarket Community Project (GCP), based at the Grassmarket Centre, is a community of over 500 people, working together to support positive changes in one another's lives. The Wood Workshop started in 2006 and was one of the first social enterprises at the GCP. The workshop has eight to ten individuals volunteering as part of the team every day and turns unwanted pews and chairs into bespoke items. They have designed keyrings, ballpoint and fountain pens, and a variety of small boxes which could be used for jewellery or as a desk tidy.

The chairs are dismantled, and the useful component parts saved. The legs are cut into thinner pieces and then shaped, sanded and printed. Keyrings depicting our angel playing bagpipes have already been commissioned and are now available in the Cathedral Shop.

A range of lovely boxes have been designed and we plan to line these with the fabric used in for the Thistle Chapel cushions to make these even more special.

All the work is undertaken in an environmentally sustainable manner, limiting our impact on the environment and supporting a very important local social enterprise.

As we move through 2024 and you are looking for special gifts for friends and family, do pop into the Cathedral shop.

How to spend £100,000



Carrubbers
CHRISTIAN CENTRE

Edinburgh Clothing Store
Charity number: SC039999

The St Giles' Neighbourhood Group was formed in May 2006. Since that time an enthusiastic group of members of the congregation and adherents have taken part in a wide range of fundraising activities in support of members of the local community less fortunate than ourselves. The group normally comprises around 10-12 individuals at any one time. We raise funds for homeless charities through activities such as concerts, can collections, coffee mornings and social events. We also donate goods in kind and volunteer our individual time towards the work of some of these charities. Since detailed records began in 2012 St Giles' have supported 6VT, Bethany Christian Trust, Carrubbers Christian Centre, Cranston Street Hostel, Cunningham House, Edinburgh Clothing Store, Edinburgh Rape Crisis, Empty Kitchens, FreshStart, Grassmarket Community Project, Holy Trinity Foodbank, Rock Trust, Streetwork, Crossreach Counselling, The Welcoming, Edinburgh Food Project and the Sudanese Community. Specific examples of how these funds have been used include sound-proof heavy curtaining for the residents' rooms in Cunningham House in the Cowgate, a heated serving trolley for Bethany which is used every night by volunteer teams including those from the Neighbourhood Group and 100 microwaves for new tenants as part of the Gateway project. Articles by the majority of these charities can be found in backcopies of the St Giles' News.

The Neighbourhood Group are delighted to be able to report that from 2012-2023 they raised in excess of £100,000 for homeless charities through their fundraising activities. The total includes funds raised for the Edinburgh Food Project to which St Giles' acts as a major donor of food.

We would like to thank all past and current members of the Neighbourhood Group for their dedication and service. We would also like to acknowledge and thank the congregation, adherents, friends, the St Giles' Choir and the staff of St Giles' Cathedral for their very generous support for homeless charities in Edinburgh. We hope that all our efforts have helped, and will continue to improve, the lives of homeless people in our community.

CROSSREACH
Care you can put your faith in

grassmarket
community project

FreshStart
helping people make a home for themselves

rock
trust

EMPTY
KITCHENS
FULL
HEARTS

EDINBURGH
FOOD PROJECT



edinburgh rape crisis centre
supporting survivors of sexual violence

The Welcoming

Beth
Chris



HOLY
TRINITY

1,473,211

Hawaii Visits St Giles'!

Well... not quite, but with 1,473,211 visitors welcomed in 2023, St Giles' population slightly exceeded that of Hawaii (pop. 1.43 million). 2022 set the previous record of 1,370,000 (2018 wasn't far behind with 1,330,000).

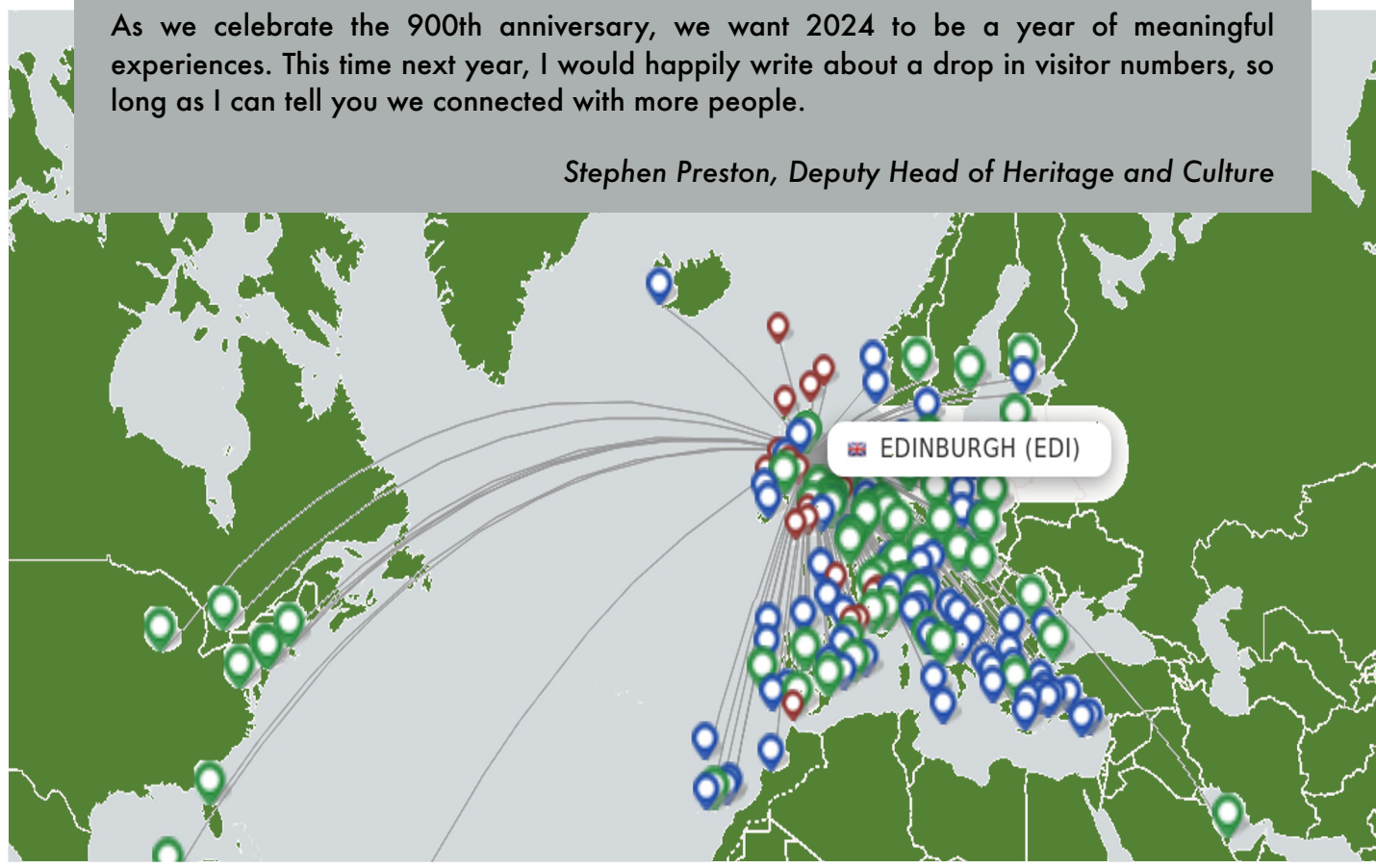
2023 was an expectedly unexpected year in St Giles' for us who keep an eye on visitors. The expected was an increased number of visitors. This increase is largely owing to the confluence of increased travel and our involvement in royal events. The unexpected, though, was exactly when those visitors might come.

A strong start to the year was expected but followed by an unexpected boom in Spring. The Summer was much as usual (still, the huge numbers come as a shock every year). Following this, numbers in September remained higher than predicted, but moving into Autumn, October and November were lower than anticipated - October 2023 even dropped below October 2022, the only month to do so. In part, this is explained by those two months in 2022 experiencing the immediate impact of St Giles' raised profile following the death of the late Queen.

All these visitors present a challenge. How do we engage with everyone who comes through our doors? Our volunteer guides do a wonderful job of providing information and interaction, but some visitors still rush through the building without appreciating its significance. In 2024, we want to encourage the visitors to slow down and reflect on the history and architecture of the building.

As we celebrate the 900th anniversary, we want 2024 to be a year of meaningful experiences. This time next year, I would happily write about a drop in visitor numbers, so long as I can tell you we connected with more people.

Stephen Preston, Deputy Head of Heritage and Culture



Meeting Ruby Harrop

We sit down for a chat with the new live-streaming guru who'll be bringing our services to the wider world.

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

I finished my masters in fine art at the Glasgow School of Art in September 2023 and before that I worked in community projects, including a year volunteering with refugee communities in Northern France. Originally, I'm from Cornwall but I also lived in London for a few years, coming to Scotland to study in 2022. I'm fond of all kinds of art, but particularly printmaking, and also enjoy hill-walking, cycling, going to the cinema and making elaborate pasta dishes for friends.



What is your favourite aspect of the St Giles' building?

My 'home' at St Giles' is the former organ tower that faces the choir stalls and organ, as that's where I run the livestream every Sunday morning. It's quite a surreal spot to have as your place of work, with the spiral staircase and beautiful stained-glass windows behind me. It's enchanting when sunlight peers through the windows and the building is lit with different colours.

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

I would have liked to be a fly on the wall at St Giles' during the Scottish Reformation. I can't imagine what it would have been like to witness such seismic changes in Scotland, and the physical removal of all of the building's catholic decoration.

The '900 Voices' project will explore the concepts of belief and belonging. What gives you a sense of belonging to St Giles'?

I think it is magical to be part of an institution that has such a long and fluctuating history, and this comes with a tangible sense of the past when you are in the building. Being part of the congregation in its contemporary manifestation as St Giles' looks toward the next 900 years feels like a tremendous honour and gives me a sense of belonging to the Cathedral in its past, present and future.

We're in a place of change and challenge, as a church, a faith, and a country. What is the issue that – for you – presents the most difficult questions?

There are so many divisions in our society that are being fuelled by fears around existential threats such as climate change, mass displacement and war. I sometimes worry that there is a crisis of empathy when I see or hear about the responses people have to these issues, particularly having worked with refugees in the past. Nevertheless, I feel that places of togetherness and community such as churches can be essential for building connections across difference and finding ways of making sense of the world, together.

When you escape from the crowds and the noise of the city to the peace of a book and a beverage, what's in the book, and what's in the glass?

Recently I have been reading 'The Lefthand of Darkness' by Ursula K Le Guin, it's a fantastic read about friendship and far away worlds, and I'm quite partial to a pint of Guinness in a cosy pub.

Service times for Lent, Holy Week and Easter

We will be marking these seasons with the following services:-

Ash Wednesday 14 February - 12noon

Palm Sunday 24 March - 9.30am Holy Communion and 11am Morning Service

Holy Week – Monday 25 March to Friday 29 March - 7pm each evening and on Good Friday there will also be a service at 12noon

Easter - 31 March - 9.30am Holy Communion and 11am Morning Service

Membership

Baptisms

"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name, you are mine." (Isaiah 43:1b)

- Brody Kirkwood

- Dale Gibson

Deaths

"If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord;

so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:8)

- Norman Irons - 26/11/23 (Memorial to take place in St Giles on 22nd February 2024 at 11am)

- The Very Rev Dr Gilleasbuig MacMillan - 13/12/23

Contact information

St Giles' staff and office bearers can be reached by email on addresses in the style firstname.lastname@stgilescathedral.org.uk or jobtitle@stgilescathedral.org.uk – as examples:

Sigrid Marten, Associate Minister

sigrid.marten@stgilescathedral.org.uk

Michael Harris, Master of the Music

michael.harris@stgilescathedral.org.uk

Mark Batho, Session Clerk

sessionclerk@stgilescathedral.org.uk

Sarah Phemister, Head of Heritage & Culture

sarah.phemister@stgilescathedral.org.uk

Beadles

beadle@stgilescathedral.org.uk

Several members of the team also monitor the comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk address, which can be a good way to get a general question directed to the right person!

Useful telephone numbers:

The Cathedral Secretary

0131 225 4363

Beadles' Office

0131 226 0672

Cathedral Shop

0131 226 0673

Finance Office

0131 225 8683

Heritage & Culture

0131 226 0674

Picture credits

We wish to thank Peter Backhouse, John Andrew and Keir Eunson, who have provided their photographic skills for several 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.