



What's inside

- A Fond Farewell
- Midsummer festivities
- Listening up
- Meeting the Session
- Welcoming the Welcoming
- Financial updates
- Here comes the Sun
- Concerts Galore

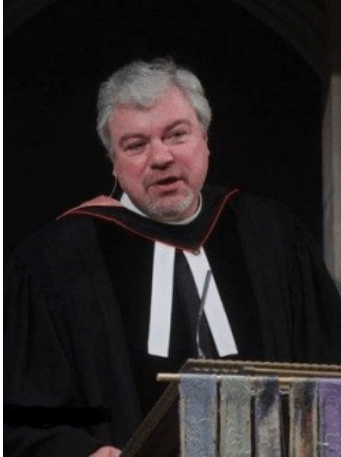


Welcome to the June edition of the St Giles' Newsletter. So much has been going on that we have done our best to pin down some dates, facts and figures all in one place. We have often been asked for an update on the Membership of the Kirk Session, so there's a colourful table showing who's who and doing what. Continuing that theme, we have persuaded one of the latest intake of Elders to tell us a little more about themselves – see inside for an interview with (probably!) the “Youngest Elder”. There are reports of past events, and details of those yet to come; and our guest photograph, kindly provided by John Pow, stunningly portrays St Giles' at dawn.

The Communications Committee is now taking a very well-earned break, and the next issue to look forward to will be out in October. We wish you an enjoyable and relaxing summer – perhaps even putting into practice some of the ideas contained herein!



Reflection from the Minister



Dear Friends,

The poet Coleridge once wrote that the theology which had sustained him most in his life was the theology he learnt from the hymns of his childhood. Now I am not a particularly musical person but I would concur with Coleridge about the important role that hymns and songs play in the reflection on, and practise of, our faith.

I admit to being one of those who dislikes the idea of having our churches and places of worship full of multi-media video screens on which the words of the latest song or praise chorus scrolls down for people to read off. This is not because I am against innovation in worship and certainly not because I am against new songs and hymns being learnt by a congregation (because I love new hymns.)

Rather it reflects something a friend of mine said to me in a conversation about hymnody. He described how the hymn book he was brought up with was more than just a list of numbered songs which was handy to have to take to church with you. His own copy was like a prayer book, he said, in which the central tenets of the faith and the hopes and prayers of God's people over generations were stored in an accessible and readable form.

I agree with him – whenever I read the parable of the lost sheep now I go over the last lines of a hymn I learned when I went to the US. It is a paraphrase of Psalm 23 by Isaac Watts, sung to the tune Resignation:

The sure provisions of my God attend me all my days,
O may your house be my abode and all my work be praise.
There would I find a settled rest, while others go and come;
No more a stranger or a guest, but like a child at home.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find Craig Meek reflecting on his time as Assistant Minister at St. Giles'. I want to take this opportunity to register my thanks to Craig who has been a stalwart colleague in ministry and great friend during his time in Edinburgh. He and his wife, Jill, also made excellent dog-sitters for our dog, Meeka! In wishing them all the best for the future on their return to the US, Craig knows that he goes with the congregation's sincere gratitude.

With warm regards,

Calum



A midsummer night supper

After more than two years of Covid restrictions, lock-down and isolation, the Neighbourhood group hopes members of the congregation might be ready for at least a little modest socialising over a meal.

As a venue, the Edinburgh Sports Club has the pleasant surroundings of the Water of Leith, with the trees in full foliage at Belford Bridge, near the Museum of Modern Art. On the evening of Midsummer Day, Tuesday 21st June, the Neighbourhood Group will hold a fundraising event in support of Bethany Christian Trust, which does so much to help those in need, especially homeless people, in Edinburgh and other Scottish cities.

There will be a two-course supper of Coronation Chicken - as befits the Jubilee celebrations - a vegetarian option and our famous St Giles' Trifle. A speaker from Bethany will talk about the charitable work it has done for many years. There will be some musical entertainment performed by talented members of our congregation. There will be a tombola. The Edinburgh Sports Club has a pay-bar, open to

those attending the event: wine and other drinks will be on sale there.

It should be a pleasant occasion and, hopefully, it will raise money for Bethany, a worthy charity which depends heavily on voluntary donations. Gift Aid envelopes will be available at each place setting so that members of our congregation can be generous as they always have been.

The cost per person is £12: **phone booking 0131 667 6754. Please book by 14th June 2022.**

While there is parking available, please be aware that the dining room is on the first floor and would not be accessible to anyone unable to manage stairs.

Tuesday 21st June 6.30pm.-9:30 pm
Edinburgh Sports Club, 7 Belford Place, EH4 3DH



**Bethany
Christian
Trust**

Retailers Required

The Cathedral Shop is now fully-staffed at weekends and Irina is grateful, on behalf of us all, to those who have stepped forward to offer their help.

The weekdays, though, are still proving hard to staff, and as visitor numbers continue to grow steadily it would be frustrating to have to close the shop because of a lack of volunteers. Are you able to spare a few hours during the week to help out? If so, Irina would love to hear from you on 0131 225 7448 or shop@stgilescathedral.org.uk.



Farewell For Now...

My Dear Friends,

I'm very sorry to share with you that my final Sunday at St. Giles' Cathedral will be the 12th of June. In a somewhat surprising turn of events, Jill and I are heading back to Washington, D.C., where she will take up a new job and I will work to complete my Ph.D. It's difficult to put into words how grateful I am for St. Giles' and for your welcoming me into your lives and life together over the past five years.



St. Giles' is an incredible place. Its architecture and windows are stunning; its pulpit, holy table, organ, and choir are magnificent. There's a sense of holiness and majesty about the space that's difficult to ignore anytime you walk through its doors. But even more remarkable than the Cathedral itself is its people – the way you care for one another and about what's going on in our world. To borrow a term from the New Testament, you're a real 'fellowship' – a 'gift' to one another – a community of faith bound together by the love and grace of our Lord.

I'll be forever grateful for having had the opportunity to experience that fellowship first-hand. For you have shown me nothing but kindness, support, and encouragement over the past five years, and my only regret is that my schoolwork prevented me from giving more of myself to you during my time here.

And so, it's with tremendous admiration and love that I say thank you. You're a unique and wonderful people. Don't ever give up hope on your life-together and future. Continue to love and encourage one another in the same manner that the Living God loves and encourages each of us. Be gracious with one another and don't forget to be gracious with oneself as well. From the very depths of my heart and being – Thank you.

With every good wish,

Craig

Concerts Galore

The music team has been delighted to be getting back to normality and has some exciting projects in the spring and summer. June has begun with a collaboration with Carnyx Brass, a young professional group made up of former St Mary's Music School students, and Eclectic Voices, a London-based chamber choir. After a concert in St Paul's Covent Garden at the end of May, the same concert is being repeated on the Jubilee weekend, Saturday 4th June at 5.30pm in St Giles', with an exciting programme concluding with John Rutter's ever-popular Gloria. The following weekend sees the Cathedral Choir give the premiere of Tom Harrold's setting of George Herbert's Prayer (1) at the 11am service on Sunday 12th June in the presence of the composer.

It is also very good to report that we are once again able to hold our summer series of Celebrity Organ Recitals; the Rieger Organ is 30 years old this spring and we have an extended series beginning on Wednesday 13th July with Jordan English, followed by James Lancelot on 20th July.

Continued overleaf



There is a special concert as part of the IAO Organ Festival on Tuesday 26th July when the renowned French virtuoso Naji Hakim returns to St Giles' after a gap of some years. The Wednesday series continues on 3rd August with Kumi Choi, Winner of the 2019 St Albans Interpretation Competition, and Michael Harris on 10th August. The final concert on 17th August is given by Matthew Owens, formerly of St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral Edinburgh, with the Scottish Premiere of Howard Skempton's Fifty Preludes and Fugues for Organ, Book 1.

Tickets for the Wednesday concerts are £10 (Concessions £8, Students £5) from Eventbrite and at the door and those for the Naji Hakim concert are available from ticketsoxford.com and at the door.

We very much hope to welcome you and our visitors to this exciting series of concerts.

St Giles' – the Audio Tour

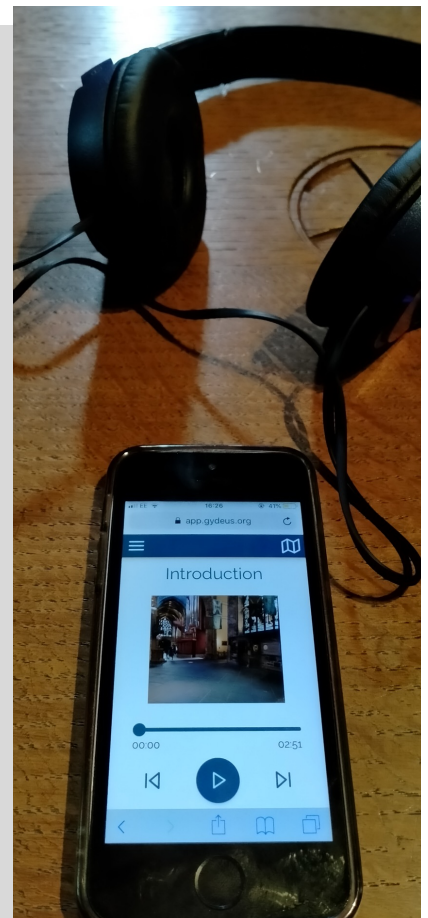
As the city gets busier, so too does St Giles', and it has been exciting for the Heritage & Culture teams to see numbers begin a return to pre-pandemic levels. That said, when there are over three thousand people through the doors in one day, it can be difficult to ensure all of them have a fulfilling visit here. That is why we have been working on new ways to connect to visitors, to teach them about our story and help them understand the history of St Giles'. For the last few months, I have been working on an audio tour that visitors can access via their own phone, and it has been a fantastic – if occasionally nerve wracking – experience! We were approached by a company who work specifically with cathedrals to help them create simple and effective audio tours. We are only the second cathedral in the UK to launch this tour, so it is a great opportunity to offer something new in the heritage sector.

The main challenge was writing a script of around seven thousand words that somehow manages to encapsulate the entire 900-year history of St Giles', as well as showing visitors interesting areas and aspects of the building. This has certainly been the hardest part of the process as everyone has their own bias about what should stay in! My thanks to Robin McCaig for all his help and expertise in this area. Thank you also to Peter Backhouse, who provided photos for the tour which will help visitors orientate themselves in the building.

Then after script editing, it was time to record. Calum got in touch with Lord Lyon Jo Morrow, who agreed to be the voice of our tour. This was a huge honour and felt very fitting, given the Lyon Court's close association with St Giles' and particularly the Thistle Chapel. I am very grateful to the Lord Lyon for taking the time to work with us and it was a lot of fun!

Now it is just a case of getting staff and volunteers used to selling the tour. As it is in partnership with an external company, we will be charging visitors for it, creating a new revenue stream that should benefit us in the busy summer months and during the Fringe. I am so excited to bring new historical interpretation to St Giles', allowing even more people to share in our story.

Ciara Chapman, Historical Communications Officer





The Least Eldest

We sit down for a chance to meet St Giles' youngest Elder, Dr Alan Convery.

Have you always lived in Edinburgh?

I grew up in Bothwell and lived in Glasgow until 2015. I moved here to take up a job as a lecturer in the Politics Department at Edinburgh University. The two cities are only 50 minutes away but they are very different. I still go back and forth quite a lot to see family and friends in the west.

What brought you to St Giles'?

I was a member at Glasgow Cathedral (which still proudly uses CH3!), so I was looking for somewhere fairly traditional. I tried a few different churches when I moved here. I suppose I was attracted to a combination of the liturgy, the building and the music. I think St Giles' draws on different worship traditions, so sometimes it feels very presbyterian but at other times a Byrd Mass setting does not sound out of place. I've been coming for years but sometimes I still notice different parts of the building that I hadn't spotted before.

Travel is becoming a bit easier as Covid measures recede. What was the most unusual place you visited before the pandemic?

My brother has just returned from three weeks of diving in Belize but I am afraid I am not at all an adventurous traveller! In 2019, my family and I travelled to Texas for a cousin's wedding and then drove to Florida via New Orleans. It was a fantastic road trip. I have lots of friends in London, so I tend to be on the LNER train to King's Cross a lot. I'm a huge opera fan. During the summer, I love to go to Glyndebourne and the Grange Festival. This year, I'm going to see Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* and Handel's *Alcina*. It's hard to beat an English summer evening by the lake at Glyndebourne having a picnic with friends.

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

I think the organ looks spectacular and fits in very well with the building. I also like that you can see the remnants of different designs and times in the stonework and imagery around the church. It's also a privilege to look every Sunday at the stained glass window at the east end. The Great East Window captures a central message very succinctly. It's also another part of the building that sometimes reveals something new.

And the traditional final question – if you're relaxing over a book and a glass of something in the evening, what's in the book and what's in the glass?

I tend to read lots of political history and biographies, but my favourite recent fiction book has been *The Secret History* by Donna Tartt. I spent a memorable year in France as a student, so a glass of claret would definitely be my choice.





Who sits where?

As advertised, here is a table to detail who is on the Kirk Session, and which committee or committees each member currently sits on.

The Kirk Session of St Giles' Cathedral			
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	■ ● ● ●	Marjory Lobban	● ● ●
Victor Ashton	■ ● ●	Gail Maxwell	
Philip Brodie	●	Hugh MacDougall	●
Douglas Burke		Sheila Mackay	●
Emma Caskie-Potter	●	Elizabeth McClelland	■
Alan Convery	●	Wilson Murray	
Sue Davie	●	John P Robertson	●
Alan Dewar		John W Robertson	●
Roy Durie	●	Lindsay Sawyer	●
Lesley Elliot	■ ● ●	Mirren Stobie	●
Amanda Forsyth	■ ● ●	William Taylor	● ● ●
Kevin Hall	● ●	Mike Towers	●
Christine Hamilton		Kim Walker	
Carole Hope		Anne Whiteford	■ ● ●
Lesley Johnston	●	Gary Winney	●
Meg Laing	● ●	Liz Wright	

Garden Generosity

On Saturday 30th April, Tony and Maureen Toft opened their jewel-like garden under Scotland's Garden Scheme. As ever, the garden looked magnificent with the tulips, azaleas and rare Alpines in full bloom. Defying the rainy afternoon, there was a wonderful turn-out: no fewer than 230 people visited, including many members of the congregation.

Four members of the Neighbourhood Group helped serve afternoon tea in the beautifully decorated double garage. One of the youngest members of our congregation, obviously enjoying the whole experience, referred to "the garden with the cafe". The Tofts had kindly nominated the St Giles' Neighbourhood Group as the charitable beneficiary. The visitors donated generously, resulting in £1,133 being added to the Group's charitable fund.

Many thanks to the Tofts for everything.



To continue the sequence of articles about the charities St Giles' is trying to support, this month we introduce...



Hi, my name is Ahmad. I was born in Syria in 1972. I am married with four children. My family and I fled Syria to Lebanon in 2015 because of the civil war. We stayed in Lebanon for four years. As soon as we got there, we registered with the UNHCR with the aim of getting resettled in the UK. Our application was successful and we arrived in Edinburgh in 2019.

Before the war in my home country Syria, I had a stable life and enjoyed being surrounded by family and friends. When I was in Syria, amongst many other things, I was a very keen gardener with lots of food growing experience. I was also interested in making garden decoration (such as water fountains) out of recycled materials. I was extremely sad to leave behind my house and garden. It was also extremely hard to be going somewhere without knowing what to expect.

When I first arrived in Edinburgh, I faced many barriers to integrate in the community. These barriers included lack of English language skills, low confidence and a sense of social isolation. I was also extremely anxious and concerned about the safety of the relatives that I left behind in Syria and Lebanon. However, I was keen to start a new life in Scotland.

I immediately joined English language classes at The Welcoming to improve my language. I strongly believe language is very important to be able to volunteer or get a job. It is also important to make friends, meet new people and settle in the new community. Thanks to The Welcoming, I have been able to continue my food-growing activities and learn new food-growing skills.

The Welcoming helped me to get in touch with St. Giles' who provided me with practical support

to feel comfortable and settle well in Edinburgh. Small things such as donations of kitchenware and beddings made a huge difference to me and my family. My experience with St Giles' made me feel that there is someone who cares about you and happy to support you while you are struggling. I am grateful for this support.

To pay back to the community, I have offered to volunteer at The Welcoming as a mentor to fellow Syrian families helping them set up their gardens and start to grow food here. I am also keen to explore ways to develop a business making garden decoration out of recycled materials.

I strongly believe that my experiences with The Welcoming and St Giles' have helped me and my family to build trust and strengthen our bond with the wider community. Personally, I feel very happy and more importantly, my family and I feel much settled in Scotland.

THANK YOU





General Committee Report

Covid Update

Since the last edition of the Newsletter the Scottish Government and Church authorities have relaxed all the restrictions that were put in place to protect against the Covid-19 virus.

The Covid-19 virus is still with us and many are still being infected with the milder Omicron variant in recent weeks. It is so important that we continue to be vigilant and manage how we undertake our everyday activities. The wearing of face coverings is no longer mandated or a legislative requirement, but we should respect those who wish to continue to wear a mask or maintain safe physical distancing whilst in the Cathedral. We should continue to apply hand sanitiser, and we are ensuring that surfaces and touch points are cleaned to minimise the transmission of the virus.

We are continuing to operate safe practices, so we provide a safe environment for all that wish to worship, attend concerts and events, or visit the Cathedral. With visitors returning in increased numbers and the summer with us the Cathedral will be busier and returning to a more normal pattern. Please remain vigilant and safe as we return to a more normal environment.

Renewal Works

As we move into the summer and the weather improves we are now into the peak tourism season when we welcome an increased number of visitors into the Cathedral. We continue to undertake minor maintenance works to ensure that the building is presented well for worship and our visitors. Much of this work is not obvious but it is essential the building is clean and safely maintained at all times.

Recent work undertaken has been the annual inspection of the roof and the crown tower, the oldest part of our ancient building. This includes the regular inspection and cleaning of gutters and downpipes that takes rainwater from the roof. The inspection of the tower, roof and stonework involves the checking of movement gauges by our engineers and experienced rope access technicians are required to access remote areas. Much of this is out of sight but important to ensure the integrity of the building.

We are also investigating further renewal options and how we can reduce our carbon footprint. As you will be aware the cost of electricity and gas has spiralled, and we must consider our running costs. Current investigations include the replacement of the internal lighting with LED technology, the review of the central heating system to provide more energy-efficient boilers and the use of other technology to make the Cathedral more energy efficient. I will update progress on a regular basis and explain how St Giles' can participate in the Eco-congregational movement within the Church of Scotland.

John M Andrew, General Committee Convenor



Cathedral Finances - an update

Friends, it is now several months since I last gave you an update on the state of our coffers, and with a steady stream of tourists returning to the building, together with a resumption of many of the events that we used to enjoy prior to the pandemic, I thought I should let you know how things stand. The St Giles' Covid Recovery Fund has been, quite simply, a life-saving mechanism without which we would have been facing some truly awful decisions. It is now much diminished, however, and the outflows continue; although visitors are starting to return to more normal numbers and the Heritage and Culture team, tasked with increasing the amount of money given by those visitors, have worked hard to build and sustain donations. So, if you are able to help us replenish the fund at all, that is much appreciated; and always remember that Gift Aid can provide us with a 25% uplift on your donation if you are a taxpayer.

So much for raising income; at the other end of the scale, we are constantly exploring ways to reduce costs. Our distinctive chandeliers give a unique quality to the lighting within the building; they are, however, expensive to run. We have been most fortunate to secure a substantial donation which will allow us to replace the existing bulbs with LED alternatives, which will provide both an improved environmental footprint and a sustainable reduction to our electricity bills. This is just a flavour of the ongoing, Herculean effort by the whole team of bringing the Cathedral finances back from the very dark place in which the pandemic landed us; and I hope it is also abundantly clear that there is much still to do. We continue to welcome every penny that can be added to the Covid Recovery Fund, and if you are able to assist in that way, I will be delighted to hear from you.

Niall Lothian, Treasurer

St Giles' 900: What do you believe in?

St Giles's 900th anniversary in 2024 offers a tremendous opportunity to present the Cathedral and its community as a fearless, dynamic 21st century centre of:

- Scotland, faith, and communities
- European heritage and great architecture
- Collaboration and inter-faith communities
- International music, performance and collaborative cultural events
- Education, community, major schools' involvement and important debate
- International tourism

We plan to present the centenary as an exciting and inclusive multi-genre programme of events in and around the city: in the Cathedral, in Edinburgh's churches, at Edinburgh's many festivals and in collaboration with a wide range of cultural, educational and community

partners. The Cathedral presently has a strong musical tradition, a long-held reputation for inspirational spiritual leadership and an engaged congregation. With this as a basis for a powerful programme of events, 2024 can drive an extraordinary surge of renewal, placing the Cathedral and its community into a wider, contemporary context and inspiring national and international cathedrals to be 'living' buildings housing both history and energetic change.

We will seize this moment and plan a truly ambitious but compact programme which is fearless, but also friendly. Partnerships - international, national and local - are currently under energetic discussion!

Mary Miller
Artistic Consultant, St Giles 900



Here Comes The Sun

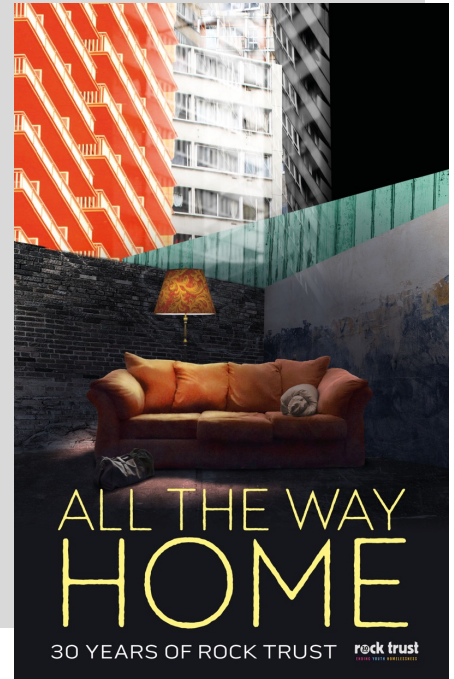
Our guest photographer this month is John S Pow, who has kindly allowed us to use this amazing image, captured on one of the few days in the year when the sunrise is directly aligned with the Royal Mile. John's work as a landscape photographer can be found at www.johnspowphotography.com so do have a look there for more of his superb images.



Rock Trust anthology: "All the way home"

To mark their 30th anniversary our good friends and 2021 Can Collection partners, the Rock Trust, have recently published a book in association with Taproot Press entitled 'All the Way Home'. The anthology of poetry and prose on the subjects of 'home' and 'homelessness' comprises stories by well known Scottish authors such as Val McDermid, Kirstin Innes and James Robertson together with works by emerging writers including those who have been directly helped by the Rock Trust. 50% of the proceeds from the sale of the book goes to their work with youth homelessness across Scotland. If you are interested the book can be ordered online through Taproot Press or alternatively it is available at Waterstones or Golden Hare Books in Edinburgh. Further details can be found at <https://www.rocktrust.org/allthewayhome/>

You may also be interested in the Rock Trust's sofa stories. These can be found on the Rock Trust website (<https://www.rocktrust.org/>)



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:

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.