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Welcome to the June edition of the St Giles' News. We have been delighted to secure an interview with Rev Dr Stewart Gillan, minister of St Andrew's Scots Memorial Church, Jerusalem, and St Giles' Mission Partner. Stewart met with the Minister and Associate Minister when he was in Edinburgh for the General Assembly, and in our interview, suggests some ways in which we can offer support to his work.

Our series of guest articles from the charities supported by the work of the Neighbourhood Group continues with a feature on the Grassmarket Community Project, which has recently seen a change in senior management. Other news includes an update from the Business Committee on the District System, and from the General Committee on the never-ending task of maintaining the fabric of the Cathedral.

Keir Eunson, whose digital and design work is continuing to make a great impression on St Giles' image, has designed a new logo for the St Giles' 900 project – you can see it beside an article from Anne Whiteford, Convenor, who has some interesting requests. Keir also took the opportunity of the recent fine weather to venture up to the roof, capturing an unusual close-up of the Crown Spire.

For all of this, and a Reflection from our Assistant Minister Sam Nwokoro, please read on!

Reflection from the Assistant Minister



It gives me great pleasure to recommend our June 2023 Newsletter to you! While the month of June marks the start of summer in the UK, it also reminds us that we are halfway through the year. This gives us a chance to take a look at how far we have come and to keep hopes alive for the future.

I got the opportunity to spend a week on the Isle of Mull with a group of students last summer. We lodged at Camas, Iona Community's outdoor activity centre. One day, we sailed out to surrounding landmarks like the island of Staffa and its mesmerising basalt columns and caves. Our sailor, who was also a highland fisherman, was most impressive in naming the birds we spotted: Shag, Manx Shearwater, Fulmar, Guillemot, and of course the unmistakable colony of Puffins. While we were sailing, someone noticed a diving splash at a distance. Our wise sailor would not have us assume anything and so he stilled the boat. We stayed still for a moment with binoculars in hand and eyes peeled, longing for evidence. Soon enough everyone in the boat spotted some diving fins we believed were dolphins. Looking back now, when I think about it, all we saw that day were sets of fast-moving fins that disappeared within seconds, but this did not dim the excitement that we had sighted what our fisherman-sailor confirmed to be 'dolphins'! This story illustrates something about vision and hope. Sometimes, our delight in little things is not actually about those little things but the bigger things that they represent. We like to hold onto a signified token as a promise or proof of the complete picture.

The start of 2023 was in some ways a token of hope for the world, for the church, and for us as a congregation. So far, the first half of this year has been a crucial period. The month of May, particularly, saw the gathering of our General Assembly where the Assembly Trustees encouraged the church of Scotland to be bold and envisage an exciting future. Similarly, world leaders met at the G7 Summit in Hiroshima to strengthen their alliance on key issues of global security and the climate crisis. For us at St Giles', as we sail into the second half of 2023, many visions and aspirations may still seem far-fetched and fleeting. Yet, we continue to work hard to remain a place of prayer that is open to all people, even as we fulfil our civic roles in Scotland. Our Newsletters testify to the resilience and hope we stand for as a congregation, even as we put out stories and events through the tireless efforts of our Communications Committee.

As you hold, read, and share this edition of our Newsletter, you bear witness to our shared sense of hope in God's great and undying vision for the church and the world!

Sam

When the Kirk Session met in December 2022, it was agreed that St Giles' would enter into a partnership with St Andrews Scots Memorial Church Jerusalem. That meant that we would be creating (or, for those who already know him, strengthening) a bond with Stewart Gillan, the Church of Scotland's Mission Partner in Jerusalem.

Stewart travelled to Edinburgh for the General Assembly, and has answered some of our most pressing questions!



Jerusalem Calling

What made you decide to go to Jerusalem, and how long have you been there?

The Mission Partner post of Minister of St Andrew's Scots Memorial Church, Jerusalem, is one towards which I have felt a call since my visits in 2007 through 2011 with the Middle East Committee of the then World Mission Council. Each time it has come vacant I have taken a close look, helped on by a twinning between St Michael's Linlithgow and Holy Family Episcopal Church in Reineh, Galilee, which we entered into in 2009. Again, it has been a return to the kind of ministry I fulfilled, God being my helper, in South Africa from 1986 to 1998, in which pastoral care informed the Church's prophetic work under apartheid, through the years of transition, and during the birth of a new nation.

I arrived mid-December last year, in time for Christmas (there are three), and so have been here but half a year so far.

What is the Church of Scotland's role in that multicultural, multi-faith city?

St Paul calls us to 'rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep' (Romans 12.15). Were I to meet him in Jerusalem or Bethlehem I would ask him how we do both with integrity. He might reply they are the same people, at different times in their lives, acquainted with Good Friday, catching glimpses of Easter morning. True, we might reply, and yet wish to ask: what of those who relate more readily to Good Friday than to Easter, having fewer references for it in their lives? Easter is a season, not a day, he might reply, asking us what we learn from the Jesus we encounter in the gospels. A wee wonder. You tell me.

Continued overleaf...

Our congregations in Jerusalem and Tiberias seek a true worship of the living God, made known in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, and to strengthen the care and support we offer the Christian each other in Jesus' name. Together with our ecumenical partners – principally the Episcopalian Diocese of Jerusalem, led by Archbishop Hosam Naoum, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, led by Bishop Ibrahim Azar – we seek to bear a resilient and compelling witness to the truth, justice and healing of God in Jesus Christ. Differently put, we seek, with our presence and resources, to embody with others the compassion, wisdom and courage to act of Christ.

We serve pilgrims and local folk, ministers on study leave and visiting scholars, and link with human rights and development partners in Israel and the occupied territories.

Your calling has unique challenges. How do you face them?

In prayer, and not just the ones one writes for Sunday service. Some prayer is soundless because the words are too well known and do not serve. But there are times of stillness in prayer as well, for which I give thanks. It helps greatly to be in ministry with the Rev Muriel Pearson, based in Tiberias, and with Kenny Roger, Secretary for Presence and Resourcing in the Faith Action Programme, who has the joy and privilege of line managing our ministers in the united charge of St Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias.

There is too the matter of making friends in this work. I find one or two good and trusted friends make all the difference on a long haul, and often lie at the heart of getting things done. Ongoing comms with home – Sarah and our children Imogen and Alexander – and with old family friends helps beyond measure.

What parts of Scotland have you regretted leaving behind – and what has gone with you?

My family! Though not entirely left behind! I also miss many of my books, but know there will be a new bibliography to get into here. Not to mention the rich oral tradition of storytelling and reflection.

I have taken with me my love of a good blether, and my kilt! My mother's people came to Cape Breton, Nova Scotia in 1828 from North Uist; my kilt is the MacAulay ancient and muted. Where will I wear it, you ask? Our Andrew's Day Service and reception is the biggest event we host, much enjoyed by ecumenical partners, diplomatic missions, and lead staff at the Hotel, Guesthouse and Tabeetha. I'm sure to don it for that.

A choice of single malts awaits visitors to the flat in Beit Jala (Bethlehem) who wish a taste of Scotland. Otherwise, a choice of herbal teas.



Good Friday, last Station of the Cross

How can we – the congregation of St Giles' – meaningfully support your work?

By sharing in prayer. Perhaps we could share one or two things each week for inclusion in the Sunday prayers of thanksgiving and intercession.

By helping us get the word – stories and photos from our life and work and that of our partners – as we get it to you. Social media will be a major asset in this. Connecting as friends on Facebook, for example, for short accounts of visits and events.

By invitations back and forth to lead worship, preach and celebrate the sacrament in our Churches.

By being part of your 900 years celebrations (!), perhaps by way of a pilgrimage.

By exploring together ways to seek peace in churches that have, each of them, many memorials to those who have fallen in war. I am readying a proposal that we host a study of Psalm 34 ('Seek peace and pursue it') in St Andrew's, built as it was as a memorial church to those who fell in the Palestinian Campaign of the First World War, inviting ecumenical partners and Rabbis for Human Rights to be part of it. The participation of St Giles', and of chaplains in the forces who gather annually for an Act of Remembrance in St Giles' during General Assembly, would be of great benefit.

These are just a few ideas. We would find our way as we go.

Many thanks,

Stewart

Easter morning, Mount of Olives





grassmarket *community project*

After some eight years as Chief Executive Officer, Jonny Kinross said goodbye to the Grassmarket Community Project (GCP) on 12 March. During his tenure, Jonny grew GCP from work carried out in the Grassmarket area of Edinburgh over many years by Greyfriars Kirk, the Grassmarket Mission and others.

We are delighted to welcome the appointment of Helene van der Ploeg as our new CEO.

GCP takes an innovative approach to providing sanctuary and support to participants, many of whom are amongst the most vulnerable in society. The Centre provides a meeting point for our members to come together and begin to engage in different activities within the project. Our aim is to provide an environment in which people feel welcome and develop confidence and skills for employment, by discovering their inner strength. It is, simply, a nice place to be.

Through mentoring, social enterprise and education in a nurturing environment, GCP helps members to realise their potential and reconnect with others and the wider community. We provide a range of activities for the members: IT classes; gardening; art; sewing; outdoor swimming; walking; choir and music, textiles; carpentry; kitchen and café work and opportunities to support our events and other social enterprises.

Following the challenges of the Pandemic, we are slowly building back our social enterprise income: operating from 5 spaces – our main Centre, a small tartan shop on Candlemaker Row, Rainy Hall (in University of Edinburgh's New College), Coffee Saints Café, part of St Mary's Catholic Cathedral, and the Lighthouse (our warehouse at Granton).

Our main building has been recently extended to include a Pavilion – "Coffee Saints Café 2" – and includes a community hub space, two dedicated classrooms, a kitchen, a counselling room, a hall for events and a purpose-built woodwork shop, hosting our Grassmarket Furniture social enterprise. These flexible spaces enable us to generate income for the project while providing space to undertake our support work.





It is important to us that people from all walks of life make use of our facilities and we see huge benefits from the mixing of people from very different backgrounds and experience coming to our centre for various activities. The development of the social enterprises is key to the delivery of our social and commercial outcomes, generating purposeful activities and training opportunities for our members and income for the project.

Our current social enterprises fall into three categories: woodwork/furniture making from upcycled wood (mostly Church pews), events & catering as above and externally together with tartan retail and textiles making small gifts and accessories. We are also the sole manufacturer of Greyfriars Tartan products sold direct to the public via our shops, our online shop and from the Edinburgh Castle, Mercat Tours and Coffee Saint's Gift Shops.

Key to making the above life changing work happen is the support received from the congregation of St Giles'. Together with those from Greyfriars Kirk and The Grassmarket Mission, your contributions of £1700 specifically fund our "Open Doors" meals:

1648 nutritious, two-course meals were provided last year to homeless people or those with no access to public funds, of the total 10,000 meals we provided. In turn, this enabled GCP to support 474 vulnerable adults; have 152 volunteers engaged, over 100 of whom attended training courses with 32 of them gaining qualifications which equip them for work. In total, some 5,500 hours of paid work and training were provided by GCP last year.

Everyone at GCP is immensely grateful for your kindness and generosity; on behalf of our members, staff and Board of Trustees, thank you.

Calum D. Murray, Interim CEO, Grassmarket Community Project





St Giles' 900 – have your say!

Recent editions of St Giles' News provided information on the plans for the 900th anniversary activities. These plans continue to progress and further updates will be provided later in the year. In this edition of St Giles' News, we would like to hear your views in relation to a few aspects of the programme – a congregational gathering, the time-capsule and commemorative items for the shop.

Congregational Gathering

Birthdays and anniversaries are opportunities to gather with members of our family, those close by and further afield, to celebrate where we are now, share stories of our past and look to the future. The 900th anniversary celebrations provide these opportunities too – meeting with members of the congregation present and past, including former ministers and members of our new 'linked charge' in Canongate, sharing time with members of Presbytery and other faith communities with whom we have journeyed in recent years. How can we best celebrate this in 2024?

- What sort of event/s will bring this diverse group of people together?
- When and where should it be held?
- How will we make sure it is a fitting celebration for us all and help us to look forward into the future with optimism and renewed faith?

Time-capsule

Towards the end of 2024 there will be a Service to give thanks for 900 years of St Giles' Cathedral, the building, the congregation, the welcome and outreach we provide to the city, nation and world. This will help us to create a path forward towards the millennium celebrations in 2024. There is an idea to have a 'time-capsule' which will incorporate aspects of the life of the Cathedral today.

We would like to hear your views on...

- What are the key elements of the life of the Cathedral that we want to share with people in 100 years?
- What should be put in the time-capsule?

Continued overleaf...

Commemorative items

We are working with Irina Vettrano, St Giles' Retail Manager, to identify new merchandise that is bespoke to St Giles' and can be sold during our anniversary year. We are grateful to Sheana Stephen Ashton for creating new jewellery with our updated designs of the Cathedral. We'll keep you updated on the new lines that are available.

We are also interested to hear what you would be interested in buying, or giving to others as a present, to commemorate our 900th anniversary celebrations. It could be something in glass, silver, silk, wool, wood. You may have bought something similar in another location.

Please share your ideas and provide pictures as appropriate. It would be lovely to have some items that are designed for the congregation which maybe don't need to fit into hand luggage!

Your views can be sent to stgiles900@stgilescathedral.org.uk

Anne Whiteford, Convenor, St Giles' 900 Committee

Maintenance and improvement works

Following the report in the previous edition of the Newsletter we continue to undertake a programme of maintenance and improvement works to ensure that the Cathedral is well presented and that we operate a suitable and safe environment for all that worship, attend events or concerts and for the many thousands of visitors that we welcome on a daily basis. During the spring and as we enter the summer season, we are experiencing a significant increase in visitor numbers and those attending services and events in the Cathedral which bring with it additional pressure on the infrastructure in our ancient building. To ensure that we are undertaking our maintenance obligations, both visible and not so visible, we undertake regular inspections of the internal and external fabric making the necessary interventions required.

Recent work has included maintenance pointing-works to the external masonry to the Crown Tower which is the oldest part of the Cathedral. Due to its age and importance our Cathedral Architect and Structural Engineer carry out regular inspections including a number of movement gauges that are placed on the stonework to monitor any increased movement in the structure. I am pleased to report that during the most recent inspection there were no exceptional results to report and that everything was as expected. The minor pointing-works required, as a result of an earlier inspection, were to ensure that the natural weathering of the exposed surfaces is secured for years to come. To undertake this activity on the highest parts of the building in the past would have required the erection of expensive and unsightly scaffolding to provide safe and appropriate access to the areas required. This work is now successfully carried out by experienced and qualified rope access technicians which provides both a cost-effective and less disruptive solution, something that the workmen and masons that constructed elements of the building nearly 900 years ago could only have wished for.

Continued overleaf...



We have also successfully replaced the window in the tower that was blown out in a storm last autumn; the result matches perfectly the previous window and again was undertaken using similar lead glazing techniques that were used when the window was originally installed.

The proposed works to upgrade the existing internal lighting including replacing all the redundant and expired lamps with LED replacements has not commenced as originally planned. We are now planning to commence this important project in September following the busy festival period. We have taken time to review the scope and also the implications of the increasing costs for the equipment and labour required due to the current financial climate that we are all experiencing. I will provide a more positive report in the next edition of the Newsletter.



John M Andrew - General Committee Convenor

Music for Summertime



The summer months are always an exciting time for music in St Giles'. As usual we kicked off the summer with the *Sounds on Saturday* series throughout May which saw highlights such as Master of the Music Michael Harris performing Bach's *Fantasia and Fugue in G minor* and Jordan English playing *Venus and Jupiter* from Holst's *The Planets*.

These will be followed by the *Celebrity Organ Recitals* starting in July. This year will see performances from Angela Metzger, Friedhelm Flamme, David Goode and Matthew Owens, and the series is rounded off by Michael and Jordan.

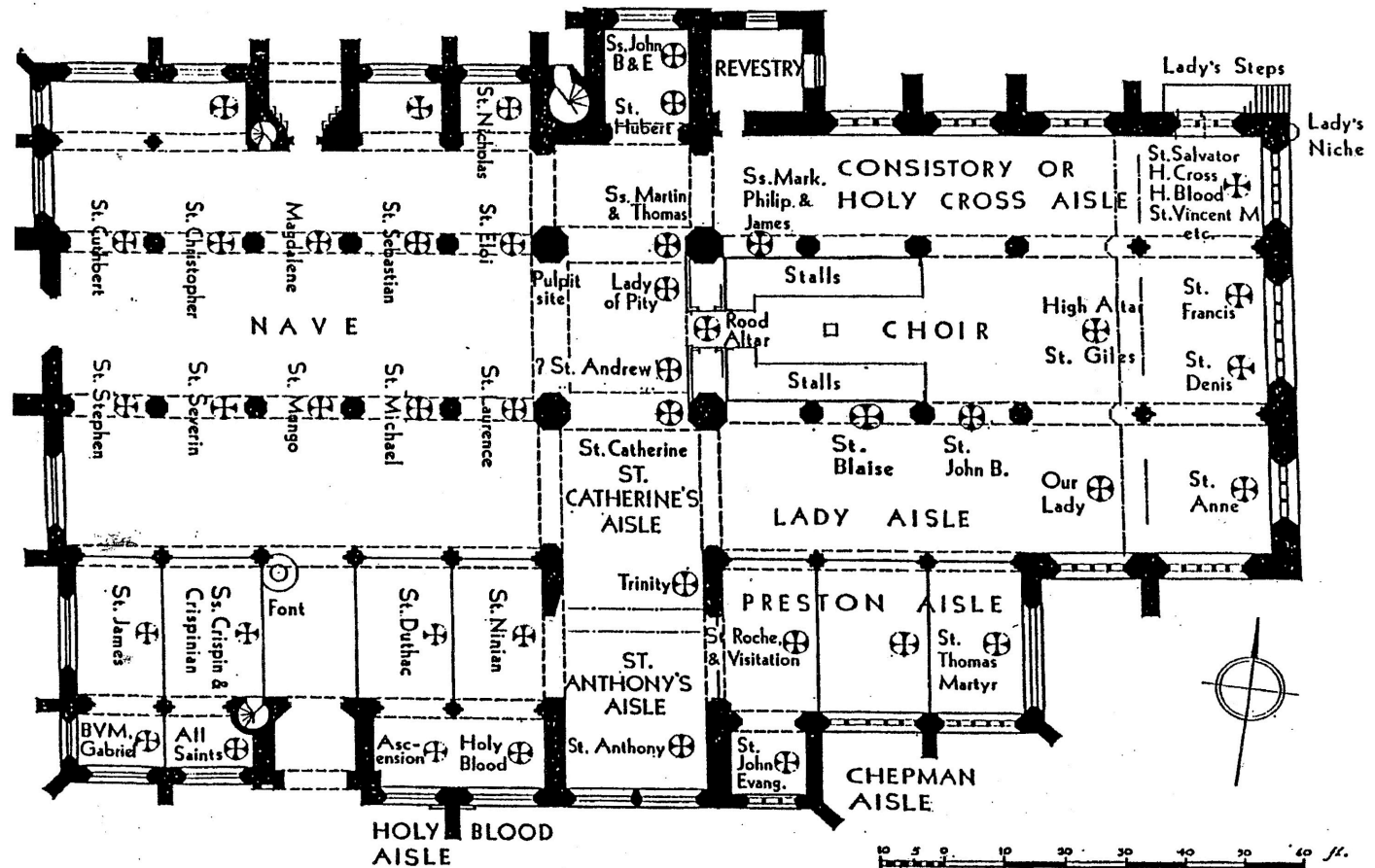
In August, we see the return of Tommy Smith and Maria Rud for the fantastic *Luminescence* with saxophone improvisation from Tommy and live projection onto the east window of Maria's improvised art, allowing the audience a unique and inspiring perspective of St Giles'. An image of their last visit forms the backdrop to this page. *Luminescence* will run for three nights on 17th, 18th and 19th August.

In amongst all these summer extras is our usual programme of afternoon concerts, Friday night classical concerts from London Concertante and Piccadilly Sinfonietta and of course St Giles' at Six which sees Paul Chamberlain playing the accordion on Sunday 11th June.

To check what we have coming up, see the website

<https://www.stgilescathedral.org.uk/events-cal> and to book St Giles' events you can check our Eventbrite <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/o/st-giles-cathedral-34177097647>

Altared perceptions



In medieval times, before John Knox and the Reformation, St Giles' resembled a sacred mall. Instead of stalls selling food, fabrics, potions and perfumes, there were highly decorated altars situated between the pillars, offering Masses and saintly intervention. If you are embarking on a long journey, ask St Christopher for protection. Young women and students should approach St Catherine. For someone with limited life expectancy or needing medication there is no-one better than St James. St Laurence deals with cooks and comedians. For vintners, or those drinking too much *vino*, St Martin is your man. St Michael serves the military. And St Nicholas is good for anything nautical. There were thirty-eight altars in total, served by thirty-four saints and two archangels, covering just about every circumstance of life.

The intercession of sympathetic saints was taken for granted. They walked the corridors of spiritual power and when they could not personally help, they knew someone who could. They had earned the right. Ten may have met Jesus. Eighteen had suffered martyrdom. And longevity lent authority, twenty-three living more than twelve hundred years before Knox.

Continued overleaf...

Three saints' altars are among my favourites. St Antony was a hermit and a founder of monasticism whose greatest desire was to embrace solitude and silence. His altar stood in the St Antony Aisle. It is now called the South Transept and houses an organ of more than four thousand pipes, thirty-six hand bells and goodness knows how many decibels. Poor Antony!

The altars to St Francis and St Denis were at the east end of the Choir, from where the High Kirk's minister probably preached from an elevated pulpit. He had a choice of two exemplars. Francis preached God's love and care to all His creation with a deep sense of Christ's humanity. Denis suffered martyrdom by beheading but is said to have picked up his head and walked several miles, preaching all the way. I wonder how many times he said, 'and finally ...'?

Martin Hill, St Giles' Guide

Update on District System from the Business Committee

The Minister, Associate Minister and the Business Committee are very pleased to be able to report that work on refreshing the District System is well under way. The system had lapsed for several years because of Government constraints imposed on social gatherings which arose from the pandemic.

In a scattered congregation such as ours, with the numerous services at different times available for worshippers to attend and the frequent transport difficulties that arise in accessing the Cathedral on a Sunday, such meetings are particularly important for welcoming new members, caring for each other and fostering a sense of community among the Congregation, many of whom would otherwise have little opportunity of getting to know each other for friendship and mutual support.

Once the membership of each District has been finalised and District Elders assigned, the plan is to hold a gathering in the Cathedral in the early Autumn when we can all meet together again socially as a community.



Interview with Tringa Kasneci

St Giles' has a new Music and Performance Coordinator, we sat down to get to meet her...



What brought you to St Giles'?

When I was finishing up my master's degree, I used to walk up the Royal Mile and pass St Giles' almost every day on my way to the library. Its architectural beauty always fascinated me. However, at that time, I never imagined that I would someday work here. Fast forward almost three years later, I decided to focus on the events industry and came across the advertisement for the Music and Performance Coordinator role at St Giles'. I immediately applied because I truly wanted to be part of St Giles' and contribute to the development of its program and venue hire opportunities for performers and artists.

You work hard to make St Giles' a great performance venue – are there any features of the building that performers have to accept, and work with?

St Giles' Cathedral is not your usual concert venue, and performers do face certain challenges that may differ from other venues. Some common challenges in historic buildings like St Giles' include limited stage space, restricted backstage facilities, and sometimes limited modern technical capabilities. However, performers happily adapt and make the most of the unique character and ambiance that this venue offers during their performances.

On the other side of the coin – what is the best aspect of the building for performers?

Many artists appreciate the opportunity to perform in a place with such rich heritage and a strong sense of tradition. The building attracts a diverse range of visitors from all around the world, who often attend evening and afternoon concerts. Performers value this diverse audience, adding to the unique atmosphere of their concerts. Additionally, during rehearsals, artists often praise the architectural beauty and impeccable acoustics of the venue, which significantly enhance their overall performance experience.

What's been the most memorable event so far?

I would have to say the first event I worked on here at St Giles'. I was very nervous and excited at the same time. A wonderful high-school choir from the United States was performing a beautiful, curated programme with contemporary American Composers. To my luck everything went smoothly - although that was one of the biggest groups we have had here which included about 70 performers.

If you could see any musician – of any era – performing at St Giles', who would it be?

If I could imagine any musician from any era performing at St Giles', one notable choice would be Ludwig van Beethoven. Beethoven's music is renowned for its depth, emotion, and grandeur. His compositions would resonate beautifully in a historic and acoustically rich venue like St Giles'. Experiencing the power of his music in such a setting would be a captivating and unforgettable experience.



Close to the heavens

It was a beautiful sunny day, so Keir Eunson, our Digital Media and Design officer, took his camera to the highest point of the building and captured this unusual perspective of the Crown Spire, silhouetted against nothing but blue sky; the sun glistens on the gilding, uplifting the spirits.

And finally...

We hope you have enjoyed our latest Newsletter; our hard-working Communications Committee will now take a short summer break before preparing the next Newsletter for publication in October.

We welcome any feedback from readers – do, please, speak to a member of the Committee, or send an email to comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk to let us know what you liked, and anything that didn't quite hit the right note. We also welcome suggestions for future articles; there is a great deal going on at St Giles' and we want to capture as much as possible of the life of our very busy building and its people.

With best wishes for a splendid summer,

Amanda Forsyth, Communications Convenor

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 – some examples are shown below:

The Minister	minister@stgilescathedral.org.uk
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 Minister's 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 and Keir Eunson, who have provided their 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.