



## What's inside

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Welcome to the December Newsletter, which marks the beginning of the season of giving. We have no shortage in this issue of ways in which readers can give; it wasn't a conscious editorial decision, but simply a reflection of the most pressing matters affecting the Kirk and its community.

As the cost of food rises, foodbanks are being hit by a perfect storm: an increase in the number of service users, coupled with a reduction in the number of people able to afford to make donations. We have a guest article from the Edinburgh Food Project – one of three beneficiaries of the Advent Appeal – explaining just how crucial the difference is that they are making to those choosing between heating and eating this winter.

The cost of the flowers that lift our hearts on Sunday mornings is also rising sharply, and funds are dwindling to supply them; and we are even hinting that donations in response to the service this Newsletter supplies would be welcome.

Our profile interview is with one of the Stewarding team, which has also seen numbers of volunteers reduced in recent years. If you would like to be a welcoming face at the door of St Giles' on a Sunday, please have a look at the description of what's involved and then have a chat with the Minister.

On a lighter note, the Master of the Music has outlined the festive music the choir will be providing in the coming weeks; and our guest picture takes us back to the time of the St Giles' Luckenbooths, with an image of the Kirk dating from the early 1800s, when shopping for the festive season was a rather different experience – apparently surrounded by some fascinating personalities!



Friends.

Welcome to our December edition and thanks to all involved in the production, setting and writing of articles. This will reach you during the season of Advent.

One of the things I look forward to with the onset of Advent is a little gem of a book on my shelf called "Watch for the Light." It is a simple collection of readings from an eclectic variety of writers on Christian spirituality, one for each day of the seasons of Advent and Christmas. It has become something of an Advent discipline for me to engage in a daily reading from the book and each Advent I find new insights about what it means to mark this season of watching and waiting, of expectation and hope.

In the book is a line from the 20<sup>th</sup> century mystic, Simone Weil which might frame our approach to Advent. "Waiting patiently in expectation is the foundation of the spiritual life." The prophet Isaiah would understand that. In the soaring poetry of chapter 40 lies the hope and promise that God will not abandon God's people, "Comfort, O comfort my people," but will come to them like a loving shepherd, "he will carry the lambs in his arms."

It is that love, fully present in the baby of Bethlehem, the Word made flesh, that our patient expectation looks toward in this season. May the blessings of patient waiting be known to us this Advent until we gladly carol the newborn as "Love comes down at Christmas."

Calum





## Musical festivities

### Master of the Music, Michael Harris looks ahead

People often say as Christmas approaches that “this must be your busy time then?”. In reality the music team is always busy and this year of course has seen a particularly full autumn. Now, however, we have cleared the decks and have begun preparations for the Christmas period, a time when we do of course see many people at events and services whom we might not see for the rest of the year.

For many years one of the special highlights of the musical year has been the Service of Lessons and Carols for Advent and Christmas, which this year falls on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> December at 6pm. The service combines bible and poetry readings with Advent hymns and choir items which move the story through Advent to the Nativity.

A few years ago we initiated an additional event which has enabled the choir to engage with a slightly different audience; our Sounds on Saturday Christmas Favourites and Carols for All proved to be extremely popular before the pandemic, and we are delighted that this concert, with its variety of sacred and secular Christmas items, can return this year, on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December at 5.30pm. This is a ticketed event, and tickets are available from Eventbrite or at the door, £10, students £5, with accompanied children free. Tickets are already selling well; do support us if you can – proceeds

from this concert help the choir to be able to make a substantial donation to the work of the Neighbourhood Group.

St Giles’ musicians will of course be fully involved in all the services over the Christmas period, with the Watchnight Service on Christmas Eve at 11.30pm returning this year, always a special occasion.

The festive season concludes with the Candlelit Concert in St Giles’ at 6pm on Hogmanay. This year it has a slightly different flavour, as we team up with Carnyx Brass, with whom we worked earlier in the year in London and Edinburgh. This exciting young brass ensemble, almost all of whom are former pupils of St Mary’s Music School, join us for a programme which features John Rutter’s *Gloria*, always popular with audiences, and *A Winter’s Night*, a sequence of carols for choir, organ and brass by Cecilia McDowall, together with other popular items. Tickets for this event must be booked via [www.edinburghshogmanay.com](http://www.edinburghshogmanay.com) and it is advisable to book early as the concert usually sells out.

Christmas seems to have arrived in Edinburgh already – in St Giles’ there is however Advent, the season of waiting and preparation, to enjoy, and the musicians look forward to being part of telling the story to all who come.







## EDINBURGH FOOD PROJECT

### Who are Edinburgh Food Project?

Established in 2012, Edinburgh Food Project (EFP) was set up with the charitable objectives of:

- the prevention or relief of poverty in Edinburgh and surrounding areas through the provision of emergency food supplies and other aligned activities; and
- the advancement of citizenship and community development through volunteering.

We initially focused our efforts on the *relief of poverty* through *emergency food supplies* as a member of the Trussell Trust Network operating in seven communities across the North West, Central and East of Edinburgh. In 2017, we expanded our work to include *the prevention of poverty* through our More Than Food (MTF) programme, which seeks to break the cycle of food poverty through the provision of appropriate advice and signposting support by partner agencies at our centres. We currently partner with 7 specialist support agencies who provide a total of 24 drop-in advice and support sessions at our centres each month, at no cost to EFP.

In 2020, we developed our successful, FCA regulated, Money Advice Service (MAS) offering welfare rights, benefits and debt advice. Our service is focused on supporting the service users on their journey out of poverty and hardship by maximising their income.

Over the last ten years, we have become an integral part of the communities we serve. Over 1,500 people from local organisations refer users to our services and we have provided 8,478 food parcels (2021/22), supported 826 MAS enquiries and secured over £160,000 in financial gains for our service users. 250 Edinburgh residents volunteer with us and we have developed a strong network of local Edinburgh partner organisations who have similar values to EFP.



Continued overleaf...



## St Giles' and Edinburgh Food Project

St Giles' have supported Edinburgh Food Project since 2015, and have donated over 20,000kg of food – the equivalent of over 1,400 emergency food parcels. Most weeks we receive a visit from Victor Ashton, a dedicated volunteer, and two members of St Giles'. With him he brings desperately needed food items, which have been purchased with generous donations from the St Giles' Neighbourhood Group. Each week he asks what the current shortages are, and this directs the purchase of food for the forthcoming week. There have been many weeks when we have run out of specific items - the generous donations play a crucial part in allowing us to continue to provide emergency food parcels. Thank you to everyone who has donated, or may donate in the future. The support you provide is invaluable and allows us to provide support to people who may otherwise go hungry.

**Bethany Biggar, Director, Edinburgh Food Project**



## St Giles' Advent Appeal

We live in straitened times. This winter promises - threatens - to be a very hard one for those in want, for whom day to day survival is a constant struggle near the edge. We see them in the streets near to where we worship, even if sometimes we disregard them.

The Edinburgh Food Project, the Edinburgh Clothing Store and Streetwork choose, rather, to organise their efforts, drawing on limited resources, to go out to offer help which in some cases might make the difference between life and death.

You can read above about the work of the Edinburgh Food Project. The statistics speak for themselves. More immediate is a picture of two men who had been referred to a Friday afternoon session of the Grassmarket food bank, just before closing time, and had received their allocations of tinned and cartoned food. Some ten minutes afterwards, when the food bank had closed and volunteers were on their way home, the two men were out on the pavement nearby, having already broached their bags of food, one hungrily eating from a tin of sweetcorn, the other drinking from a ring-pull tin of mushroom soup. "Near the edge" indeed.

*Continued overleaf...*



On behalf of these and the likes of them, the eighth annual Advent Appeal addresses itself to try to do something, however small, to help those who live among us but whose lives seem far removed from ours.

We are aiming to support three charities which confront deprivation, to make a difference in a kindly, humane way, whose staff and volunteers provide food, clothing and shelter, doing so with compassion and without condescension. Another image: a couple of Streetwork volunteers kneel beside a young woman in a sleeping bag on the pavement of South Bridge; after a few minutes' conversation, all three pack up her few belongings and move off to the Holyrood Hub. We would caption it "Making a Difference".

All three charities keep going on limited resources. The Edinburgh Clothing store, for example, receives no financial support from the Scottish Government or from Edinburgh Council. Its overheads, especially the rent of its premises on Granton Road and the ever-increasing utility bills, threaten its very existence. Yet, as they have done for decades, its volunteers continue to supply donated clothing, footwear, bedding and towels to needy folk – as many as 1,800 of them annually – referred by a whole range of caring agencies.

For many years, these charities have helped. Please let us support them by contributing to the Advent Appeal which runs over the four Sundays before Christmas. Last year's appeal made over £4000, including Gift Aid. Can we repeat that?

Yellow overprinted Neighbourhood Group envelopes are available each Sunday for contributions, whether in cash or by cheque. These envelopes can be left on the collecting plate, to go to Suzanne Whitehead in the Finance Office. Cheques should be made out to St Giles' Cathedral. Bank Transfers can be made to: St Giles' Cathedral Reference: Advent Appeal 80-02-24 a/c 01976128

## Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian Mission Plan

At its November 15 meeting the Presbytery Mission Plan was approved and now goes to the national Church administration for review. The aim of the plan is to ensure the provision of ministerial coverage within the geographic boundaries of the Presbytery in a time of reduced resource availability across the whole Church of Scotland.

An important part of the plan is to identify which church buildings are best suited to the church's mission in the future in Edinburgh and West Lothian.

In the plan St. Giles' and Canongate Kirk are being asked to develop a "parish grouping" in which we explore areas of cooperation and mutual support for the many and varied areas of ministry and mission which present themselves on the Royal Mile. New initiatives such as occasional joint worship services are being explored along with potential synergies in areas like concert promotion and tourism ministry. Both churches will keep their buildings and ministerial positions.

**Elizabeth McClelland, Presbytery Elder**





## Luminescence

Luminescence took place on 18<sup>th</sup> November and saw St Giles' transformed by the creative collaboration of Artist, Maria Rudd and Saxophonist, Tommy Smith. The duo had previously worked together on a pandemic project with the Scottish National Jazz Orchestra titled 'Where Rivers Meet', but this performance had taken place during the Covid lockdowns and was performed without an audience. Maria and Tommy were therefore delighted to be able to come together to create a new experience, this time in front of live audience.

Lasting just over an hour, Smith improvised throughout on the saxophone whilst Maria transformed the interior of the cathedral with her paintings. An illusion made possible through projection technology which allows the cathedral to become both the frame and, on occasion, the subject of Rudd's work. It was a fascinating experience to watch the creative process unfold in front of an audience, both artists being responsive to one another and their surroundings, with Smith at one point even incorporating the chimes of the Cathedral's eight o'clock bells into his improvisation.

The evening was exceptionally well attended, especially given the weather. We were delighted to be able to host Maria and Tommy again and would love to do so in the future.



## Meeting the stewards

**An essential task in our Sunday services is allocated to the stewards – the teams who ensure that welcome and worship are managed discreetly and efficiently. We asked Emma Caskie-Potter what the job entails.**



*Does one have to be a member of the St Giles' congregation for years to become a steward?*

I joined the congregation in 2011 and was invited to become a steward towards the end of that year. I recall my then team leader, the late, much missed Harold Mills, explaining the duties to me – and giving me invaluable advice: 'walk slowly and purposefully – even if you don't know what you are doing, you will look like you do'. Advice for life, as well as stewarding!

*What's involved on a Sunday morning?*

As stewards, our main duty is to welcome worshippers to St Giles', whether it be 'at the door' or in the Cathedral. We provide orders of service and direct people to their seats, and at the communion services, process the elements and invite people forward. My husband refers to stewarding, mainly jokingly, as 'crowd control' – if it is, the 'crowd' at St Giles' require only a very light hand.

*Is it always just a Sunday duty, or are stewards needed at other times?*

Sundays are the mainstay of stewarding but there are other services at which we assist – for example Christmas, or large ceremonial or liturgical events, such as the forthcoming 350th Anniversary of Heraldry, or the service earlier this year of thanksgiving for her Majesty the Queen. It is an honour to be involved in every stewarding duty at St Giles' but I particularly value the simplicity and community of the regular Sunday services.

*Is it very different from your weekday life?*

I am an Advocates' Clerk, which involves a lot of organising and ensuring people are where they should be, when they should be, so in that way there are similarities! My day job also brings me into contact with a wide range of people, which may be why I so enjoy welcoming people at St Giles' – both regular attendees and visitors from far and wide. To me St Giles' is an oasis of calm and order, which is something I try to project in my working life, even if I don't always manage to!

*Which part of stewarding duty do you most enjoy?*

I love seeing the stewarding team come together, each playing their part, and joining them in providing a warm and sincere welcome to the congregation and visitors. There is a quiet satisfaction when a services goes smoothly (thankfully I have yet to experience one which hasn't!) and knowing that we have helped, in our small way, to showcase the magnificence of St Giles'.

*And talking of enjoyment – if you're settling by the fire with a book and a glass of something on a cold winter's evening, what's in the book and what's in the glass?*

I am currently reading Burgess Boys by Elizabeth Strout. I love her writing, and that of James Robertson, Graham Greene, William Boyd, Marilynne Robinson... I could go on. An evening by the fire with a book and a glass (ideally a Kiwi Sauvignon Blanc, but virtually anything white and heavily chilled would do) sounds more or less perfect.

**If you are interested in knowing more about the opportunities for stewarding at St Giles', the Minister would be very pleased to hear from you.**





## Blooming St Giles'



Services at St Giles' uplift the spirits in many ways. One of the most visible elements of the experience is the beautiful flowers that provide soft contrast to the stone pillars against which they stand. We are grateful to the team which, with such artistry, creates arrangements that please the eye and remind us so eloquently of the wonders of nature; to Elizabeth Shaw, who devoted so much of her time to this part of the service of St Giles' until she recently stepped down, and to Christine Beadle who has now taken over the leadership responsibility.

"Many visitors comment and appreciate them", said Christine, and expressed her thanks to Thomas Maxwell, who takes care to supply us with suitable blooms. "We will happily try to accommodate any anniversaries or colour scheme requests," Christine added, describing the work of the team of volunteers who renew the flowers weekly.

The Flower Fund, however, is starting to run low, and it is hoped that someone – or more than one! – in the congregation may be able to help replenish it. Like so much else, the cost of fresh flowers is rising sharply, and a new injection of funds will be needed to help keep this part of our worship experience as fresh and as beautiful as we all would wish. If you can help, an envelope marked "Flower Fund" can be handed to any of the Stewards; if you would like to know more, Christine would be delighted to chat, and her number is 07747 494 532.





## Guess who?



Our guest photograph for December is a photograph of a print of a painting of an etching of a composite of a scene depicting life around St Giles' in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, called "The Parliament Close and Public Characters of Edinburgh". While it is customary at this time of year to print a puzzle over which the family can while away the lazy hours, in this case we have – courtesy of the Secretary of the New Club, who kindly allowed us to photograph the Club's artworks – been able to provide the key. This is shown on the next page so that the sharp-eyed, or those with a magnifying glass, can see just who was lingering around the Luckenbooths. The image now has its own website at <https://parliamentsquareedinburgh.net/>, where there is also an interactive version of the painting. We hope you enjoy exploring this unique snapshot of St Giles' history!

Original painting: City Art Centre, City of Edinburgh Museums and Galleries





1. DR WILLIAM ROBERTSON, D.D., H. M. Historiographer.
2. SIR ISLAY CAMPBELL, Bart., Lord President.
3. A. COLQUHOUN, Esq. of Killermont, Lord Advocate.
4. ALEX. MACDONALD, Esq., Solicitor General.
5. DONALD KENNEDY, Chairman.
6. DONALD BLACK, Chairman.
7. ANDREW NYCO, alias The Middleton.
8. MARY WALKER.
9. JOHN SKENE, named the Heckler.
10. MISS CRAWFURD of Jordanhall.
11. MISS HAY of Mont Blair.
12. MR FRANCIS ANDERSON, W.S.
13. MR JAMES HUNTER, Hardware Merchant, afterwards Charles X. of France.
14. MR ALEX. WOOD, Surgeon.
15. DR GLEN.
16. LAIRD ROBERTSON.
17. Right Hon. LORD ADAM GORDON.
18. CHARLES PHILIP, Count D'Artois, afterwards Charles X. of France.
19. A Highland Shepherd.
20. MR JOHN DOWIE, Vintner.
- 21, 22, 23. The Three Beaux of Edinburgh.
24. HUGO ARNOT, Esq.
25. JOHN DUNCAN, alias Gingerbread Jack.
26. ERENEZER WILSON, Brassfounder.
27. REV. DR JOHN ESKRINE.
28. REV. JOSEPH ROBERTSON MACGREGOR.
29. MR JAMES MARSHALL, W.S.
30. THOMAS ELDER, Esq. of Forreath, Lord Provost.
31. DR ALEXANDER MONRO, Secundus.
32. REV. DR ALEX. TORNBULL of Dalhousie.



33. A Newhaven Fishwife.
  34. A City Porter.
  35. MR ANDREW BELL, Engraver.
  36. MR WILLIAM SMELLIE, Printer.
  37. DR GREGORY GRANT.
  38. DR JAMES GREGORY, Professor of Medicine.
  39. DR ANDREW HUNTER, Professor of Divinity.
  40. GEORGE BROWN, Esq. of the Excise.
  41. A Chimney Sweep Boy.
  42. JOHN DUFF, a City Guardsmen.
  43. JAMIE DUFF, alias Bailie Duff.
  44. DR JAMES HAMILTON, Senior.
  45. MR GEORGE WILLIAMSON, King's Messenger.
  46. BOWEN GEORGE CHANSTOUN.
  47. SAMUEL MACDONALD, of Big Sand.
  48. MR MAXWELL.
  49. A Vendor of Water.
  50. DAVID GILCHRIST, a City Trooper.
  51. LACHLAN M'BAIN, alias Roasting Jack.
  52. The Town Officer, reading a Proclamation.
  53. MR JAMES LAING, Writer.
  54. CAPT. JAMES BURNET, City Guard.
  55. SIR JOHN MORRISON, Baccie.
  56. MARGARET STEWART, a Hawker of Salt.
  57. The Town Drummers.
- A. THE OLD PARLIAMENT HOUSE.  
 B. Part of the Old Jail, or Heart of Mid Lothian.  
 C. ST GILES' CATHEDRAL and SPIRE.  
 D. STATUE of KING CHARLES II.  
 E. ST JOHN'S BUILDINGS & COFFEE HOUSE.

## Renewal Works

As reported in the June 2022 Newsletter we have continued to undertake minor maintenance works to the fabric of the Cathedral to ensure the building is well prepared for the weather that can be anticipated over the winter period. Recent inspections to the roof and rainwater systems have been carried out and any cleaning works instructed. Recent minor damage to a leaded window in the tower as a result of storms and high winds is an example of the need to undertake regular inspections and to ensure that any repairs are undertaken to remedy the damage. We will be undertaking further inspections to remote areas with the use of a hydraulic platform shortly and to identify any further defects and the works required.

As part of our commitment to the reduce our carbon footprint and the part St Giles' will play in the EcoCongregation movement within the Church of Scotland, I am pleased to report that we have successfully replaced the aging boiler that served the southern part of the Cathedral. The existing boiler was 30 years old and not only very inefficient but was becoming unreliable. The new and highly efficient boiler will not only reduce our carbon emissions but reduce the cost of our gas supply. We have also installed a new hot water cylinder to serve the Lower Aisle and toilets where the hot water supply had become an issue. The much-needed installation of new radiator panels to the old café area is a first step to the renewal proposals for this as a flexible space for use by our staff, choir, performers and as a space for meetings.

Works to upgrade and enhance the existing lighting system to energy efficient LED technology will commence early in the New Year and I will report progress in future Newsletters. We will also be undertaking a maintenance programme to the sound and CCTV system again in the New Year.

**John M Andrew, General Committee Convenor**





## Still free – unless you would like to help?

There is a sound like an irregular heartbeat that those who are in St Giles' during visitor hours know and love. It is the beat of a heavy coin landing in one of the donation boxes, when a grateful visitor responds to the nudges from signs, volunteer guides and the building itself, to help keep the doors open.

When we launched this version of the Newsletter a year ago, one or two readers asked how they should pay for copies, and were reassured that the Newsletter is free.

It is still free – the relatively small number of copies that are printed are paid for by a private donor, and that won't change. However, if you have enjoyed reading this month's edition, or past ones – or if you like the news we bring you in the coming year – could you perhaps make the Kirk's heart beat a little faster?

Please consider dropping a pound into one of the boxes in the Cathedral. The sound as it lands will resonate far more widely than the walls nearby. If you read online, the 'Donate' button is never hard to find.

From St Giles', your living church, thank you.

## Contact information

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

Calum MacLeod, Minister	<a href="mailto:minister@stgilescathedral.org.uk">minister@stgilescathedral.org.uk</a>
Sigrid Marten, Associate Minister	<a href="mailto:sigrid.marten@stgilescathedral.org.uk">sigrid.marten@stgilescathedral.org.uk</a>
Mark Batho, Session Clerk	<a href="mailto:sessionclerk@stgilescathedral.org.uk">sessionclerk@stgilescathedral.org.uk</a>
Niall Lothian, Treasurer	<a href="mailto:treasurer@stgilescathedral.org.uk">treasurer@stgilescathedral.org.uk</a>
Michael Harris, Master of the Music	<a href="mailto:michael.harris@stgilescathedral.org.uk">michael.harris@stgilescathedral.org.uk</a>
Sarah Phemister, Head of Heritage & Culture	<a href="mailto:sarah.phemister@stgilescathedral.org.uk">sarah.phemister@stgilescathedral.org.uk</a>

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

### Useful contacts:

Cathedral Secretary	0131 225 4363	<a href="mailto:corinne.macinnes@stgilescathedral.org.uk">corinne.macinnes@stgilescathedral.org.uk</a>
Beadles' Office	0131 226 0672	
Cathedral Shop	0131 226 0673	<a href="mailto:shop@stgilescathedral.org.uk">shop@stgilescathedral.org.uk</a>
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.