

# St John's

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## Annual Report 2021

- Looking back on the year at St John's -

Prepared for the Annual General Meeting to be held on  
Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 7.30pm



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WELCOME TO THE ST JOHN'S  
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021

THIS BOOKLET PROVIDES A LOT OF INFORMATION  
ABOUT THE MANY AND VARIED ACTIVITIES WITHIN  
OUR CHURCH DURING 2021

NONE OF THE REPORTS IN THIS BOOKLET TO BE  
DISCUSSED AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING.  
THEREFORE, PLEASE READ THE REPORTS AND, IF YOU  
HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR QUERIES, PLEASE CONTACT  
THE PERSON CONCERNED. ALTERNATIVELY, IF YOU DO  
NOT HAVE CONTACT DETAILS FOR THAT INDIVIDUAL,  
PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE WHO WILL PASS IT ON.

A SEPARATE BOOKLET WILL BE PROVIDED WITH THE  
AGM AGENDA AND SUPPORTING PAPERS

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## **Baptisms**

Nov 2016 – Oct 2017	6
Nov 2017 – Oct 2018	8
Nov 2018 – Oct 2019	
Nov 2019 – Oct 2020	8
Nov 2020 – Oct 2021	3

## **Weddings**

Nov 2016 – Oct 2017	8
Nov 2017 – Oct 2018	5
Nov 2018 – Oct 2019	3
Nov 2019 – Oct 2020	1
Nov 2020 – Oct 2021	6

## **Funerals**

Nov 2016 – Oct 2017	7
Nov 2017 – Oct 2018	9
Nov 2018 – Oct 2019	
Nov 2019 – Oct 2020	4
Nov 2020 – Oct 2021	11

## Introduction from the Rector

### Markus Dünzkofer

Dear friends,

At the beginning of the global COVID pandemic, I compared what we were experiencing to the Babylonian captivity of the Hebrew people in the 6th century BCE.

After the temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, large parts of the populations of Israel and Judah were deported to a new land. They no longer had access to one another. They no longer had access to their religious rituals. They no longer had access to their established laws and freedoms.

Similarly, during lockdown, we were separated from one another, were stripped of some of our civil liberties, and could no longer worship within the beauty of St John's in the beautiful ways we are used to.

But: eventually the return to the Promised Land commenced.

And it was not straight-forward.

It was a creeping return: Both for us, as restrictions were eased over time (and we are still not there). And also for the people of God two millennia and a half ago. The exile didn't just end and all captives returned home en masse. There were at least three, if not four return-movements, starting in 538 BCE and lasting for just shy of one hundred years.

Yes, our experience is unique and different. I am not suggesting that the COVID-pandemic will last "for just shy of one hundred years." God forbid! But there are similarities. And there are things we can learn from our religious ancestors. The Hebrews never gave up hope. They continued to trust God. And in return God bound them together even stronger and appointed prophets to remind them that God would not abandon them. Remember the song I shared? "We are not alone – God is always with us!"

And this was not the only thing God's prophets revealed. They also called God's people to repentance from their destructive and rebellious ways. And they led God's people back home; a home that as not as they had left it behind. Things had changed. Things had needed to change.

Over the past year, I have been struck once again by the faithfulness of the people of St John's. And I want to say thank you. Thank you to volunteers, ordained and lay, thank you to staff and clergy, and thank you to the people of St John's. You kept the faith, both in God's self-revelation and also in our community of faith.

This is why we find ourselves in a much better, much more sustainable, and much more "alive" situation compared to last year. Not just our finances are in a better place, but we have reopened much of St John's and the Cornerstone Centre, and we have reinvigorated the programme and worship life of our charge.

I am particularly thankful to the choir, who had a difficult year. The change of leadership was indeed not easy and left question marks and worries. But in addition to the countless volunteer hours particularly by our two assistant organists Caroline Cradock and Peter Horsfall, which continued to support our worship, the choir also proved once again to be incredibly resilient. With the arrival of David Goodenough, new energy and stability has been injected. The All Souls' service with the *Fauré Requiem* once again showed the amazing talent and skills that come together in our music ministry and that shape our identity as a community of faith in so many ways. I fully believe that David is the right appointment at this time and I am excited and pleased to announce that David has offered to stay as our Director of Music. We can now drop the "interim" from his title and this is indeed a very good thing.

Special thanks are due also for the members of what we have now called our "Finance and Administration" meeting every Tuesday morning: the secretary, the treasurer, the associate rector, the operations manager, and I get together to talk about the general operations of the charity that is St John's. I do believe we would not be in the positive place we are in, if wasn't for the particular skills and inputs (not just on Tuesday morning) of Nicky, Austin, Rosie, and Iain. They have worked hard to bring back our finances, attract new renters, make our building safe, do jobs that are definitely not part of their job descriptions, and reinvigorate our worship and formation – and they have accomplished more than could be expected in this post-lockdown reality. When Austin stepped down, he left some big shoes to fill. But I hope we will find the right person, without needing rush an appointment.

At this point I also want to thank vestry and especially the outgoing members for all their work and leadership. Vestry is the central steering and decision-making body for all aspects of the life of our community – and despite the challenges of the past year, they have continued to lead us in calm, collected, prayerful, and faithful ways. Thank you!

Also every Tuesday mornings, our ministry gets together online for morning prayer and a catch up. I think this weekly gathering is one of the positive fruits of the pandemic and in addition to Rosie, I am thankful to Clephane, Eileen, and Kenneth for all their contributions, which often go on unseen. Thank you indeed.

It is difficult to single out volunteers without overlooking somebody. But I do want to thank Fred Mobeck, who has been such a star in looking after our grounds. And I like to thank those who welcomed people to church, cleaned our church on Wednesday, and arranged flowers so that St John's shines even more beautifully. Thank you indeed! You have deeply enriched our community.

Yes, we are in a better place compared to last year.

We have come a long way.

But just like the Hebrews, we might have to ask ourselves how in the past we might not have fully lived into the beauty that God intends for us. How have we failed God and God's mission for us? And in this honest questioning, I do believe new avenues into God and new avenues into our identity will become visible. As resurrection people, we know that things sometimes have to die before new life emerges. The pandemic might provide us with an opportunity to focus on what is essential and laugh, rather than obsess, about the things that are indeed marginal. A former bishop of mine once share a story: He attended a vestry meeting where choosing the colour of the new carpet in the church took up 45 minutes and was hotly debated. We all have our carpet stories. But what really does matter when our planet is burning up, when refugees are drowning outside our locked doors, and when large parts of our neighbours are searching for meaning, yearning for healing, and seeking spiritual guidance and reconciliation?

Yes, we are now on our way back home. But let's not rush back without repentance.

And let us not rush home thinking it is the place we left at the beginning of the pandemic. Our home has changed. We have changed. And it all will require of us a different way of being, albeit one that is very much connected to our past.

Over the last eight years I have tried to deepen the spiritual grounding of St John's. It was not easy considering that we were pre-occupied with a massive building project and a global pandemic. But I do believe we have changed. And we are seeing some of the fruits of the spiritual underpinning: Alpha continues. EFM has attracted over a dozen folk. And there are a number of newcomers, who value our rich and prayerful tradition, enhanced by relevant preaching and beautiful music. I don't think I have received as many requests for baptisms/confirmations/reaffirmations before as I did the last year... Our Sunday attendance is almost back to pre-COVID times, even though there is a significant number of members of St John's, who we haven't seen inside the church in the past year and a half...

We also have reclaimed some of our more edgy and hands-on ministries, such as the mural and the Bethany Shelter dinners. Our connection with St Salvador's foodbank has grown, but it is still a bit vague and tentative... And there is more...

Considering these, there are some areas that I would like to concentrate on in the next year – and I do believe these areas align with the St John's five AMEN-S (Affirming & nurturing the faith of our members; Making new disciples of Jesus Christ; Embracing eco-justice for ourselves and the world; Nursing the wounds of those who are hurting; Speaking truth to power) perfectly:

- We are not out of the woods financially. But we have a plan in place to continue to build a firmer foundation on which to build. Stewardship in all its aspects will remain a major focus of ministry and mission.
- Our ecumenical neighbours are in the midst of a major restructuring. I have no idea what will come out of this or if the Edinburgh City Centre Churches Together will shrink or continue in its current format. However, the things that are happening “on the ground” (homeless outreach, Christian Aid, workplace chaplain, environmental stewardship and advocacy) are flourishing, not just because there are good people from the three congregations providing leadership and input, but because these are ministries needed by the world around. Particularly the question of battling the climate crisis will remain on our agenda – regardless of any possible decisions at COP26.
- I do hope we will review our worship schedule and consider adding times and types of worship that we currently are not offering. This will all depend on the availability of leadership. But in addition to our current schedule, there is, I think, a need for something else: something informal and something contemplative and something creative, accessible for all ages, and “loud.” We shall see what will come of it.
- Similarly, we will have to consider expanding on our formation programmes. There are requests for Bible studies which engage our tradition not just with intellectual critique, but in more holistic and age-diverse ways.
- In all of this we must not forget those who cannot or do not want to join crowds in church right now. How do we reach out to those who are self-isolating or need to be more careful about mixing with many people?
- The beauty of our building and our location are one of our biggest assets. We are striving to open it more, but cannot do so because of lack of volunteers and staff. We also would like to rent out the hall to a wider audience, which requires staff for set up, administration, and marketing. All this is considered as we continue to discuss staffing levels that on the one hand grow our ministry and mission and on the other hand do not bankrupt us. Our operations manager is tasked with finding the right balance and we trust that he will map out to vestry a way forward.

- I believe that CDEL needs to finally stand on its own legs. There is still some work to be done to complete a changeover of leadership, but it is progressing. Thank to Helen Foord, Jill Stavert, Iain Herbert, Mark Hoskyns-Abrahall, and Wren Hoskyns-Abrahall for the time and energy spent to make sure things are processing in a good way.
- For more years than I have been your rector, St John's has been struggling to find a way of operating that fits its size and programming. Some of you might remember that John Armes already talked about these challenges. I would like to tackle this now that we are moving out of the pandemic and there is new life within our congregation. But this will mean rethinking pastoral care (and who is involved in it), decision making structures, communication, and the place and remit of ordained and lay leadership. Some of the required changes will come as a surprise, while others will be quite obvious. In all we must remember that any of these changes will be pursued for the good of God's mission for our congregation. As somebody recently said: The problem with following a God, who makes everything new, is that it is a God who makes everything new indeed!
- With the appointment of a David Goodenough, we now can start evaluating the state and necessary repairs to the organ. And we must consider how to grow our choir and deepen the spirituality of its members.

All this will keep me (and others) quite busy. Please continue to pray for us – as we continue to pray for you. And let me (or others) know what is going on with you, if you have any questions or concerns, or if you would like to celebrate something.

Yours as ever,

Markus

## BETHANY SUPPORT GROUP

**Tony Falconer and Fiona McLuckie**

A team of 12 St. John's volunteers (supplemented by various of our young adult offspring) continued to cook and serve food at the Bethany Care Shelter throughout last Winter. It was still impossible to use the facilities at Diadem Church due to Covid restrictions, so the shelter (now appropriately retitled the Welcome Centre) operated from the Haymarket Hub hotel where each service user had their own room and washing facilities. Cooking took place in the Cornerstone Kitchen and food was then driven to the hotel for serving. The age restriction imposed by Bethany during the first lockdown was lifted, allowing the over 70s to help with the cooking again and this provided a much needed boost to the team.

Numbers were lower than in previous years due to the Council's commitment to offer accommodation to all those needing it during the course of the pandemic. This meant that apart from a few service users who were unwilling or unable to take up accommodation, the Welcome Centre guests were a shifting population – each new group of homeless visitors replacing the last. Sadly this is a reflection of the instability and precarious nature of 'home' for many people in Edinburgh in 2021.

As we go into Winter 2021/22, the Welcome Centre remains at the Haymarket Hub (Diadem still unusable due to Covid risks) and we will be catering in Gorgie Stenhouse Church and transporting food to Haymarket to serve. Our pool of volunteers this season is slightly diminished, so if you are over 21 and under 100 and would like to help, please contact Tony Falconer or Fiona McLuckie.

An enormous thank you is due to all the volunteers who gave time, food and welcome to one of the most vulnerable groups in our society during this stressful time.

## BOOK GROUPS

### **Tuesday Evening Valerie Lobban**

The Book Group has continued to meet over the last year via Zoom on the first Tuesday of the month and there has been a full attendance. We have a complement of 12 including 2 members who are now living in Orkney and hope to start a group there. We hope we might be able to meet in person from October but this cannot be taken for granted. The group has been a very good way of keeping in touch as well as discussion of a wide range of books.

### **Morning Book Group Muriel Madell**

Unfortunately, the group was unable to meet for the last year because of Covid and we are not Zoomers, but we have kept in touch regularly by email. This has enabled us to share news, see pictures of one member's lockdown handiwork, enjoy some jokes, puzzle over a quiz, and of course learn about what we have been reading. Members have sent in recommendations and voted for the books to be discussed in the coming session and we are looking forward to meeting again from October.

### **Theological Book Group Eileen Thompson**

Another year of lockdown has meant that the Theological Book Group has continued to meet online. When going out was difficult and other activities were curtailed, we got together fortnightly but now have resumed our monthly pattern. We are an ecumenical and democratic group with books recommended by members and the leadership is shared. This makes for a varied and challenging programme. The most popular title this past year has been 'Borders and belonging' and we are about to start 'Blue Sky God' looking at science and Christianity.

## CHARITY COMMITTEE

### **Anne Pankhurst**

Our usual system of collecting for charities by putting cash donations into paper envelopes was not possible during the pandemic restrictions. The wonderful generosity of St. John's members has been channelled via personal digital means to a number of appeals, but it is not possible to report on the sums achieved.

## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

### **Rosie Addis**

Although we are slowly coming out of lockdown, it is fair to say that many families have borne the brunt of last minute self-isolation, working online, and dealing with COVID illnesses, since children

are not yet vaccinated. Monthly events such as Messy Church, once stopped, have been slow to re-open. However, during the past year we have continued to go around giving out activity bags for Pentecost, All Saints, and Advent, and we were able to celebrate on Easter Saturday with a half day, all-age meet up, organised in conjunction with the Old St Pauls (OSP) Children and Families' Worker. We have already booked another such meet up on Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> December, to think about the Advent season, and already have five families booked in. The Children's Corner remains an attractive space, with activity bags put out during services, and materials which relate to the liturgical year. However, there is much more that could be done with some extra help, and we would invite anyone interested to contact [rosie@stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk](mailto:rosie@stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk).

## CHURCH CLEANING

### **Grace Durham**

A small group meets on Wednesdays after the Wednesday 11 am Eucharist to clean the church. This involves polishing the brass, vacuuming, damp mopping and dusting. More volunteers are desperately needed! Just turn up to the service or at 1130.

## CORNERSTONE BOOKSHOP

### **Susie Stevenson**

This second year of the pandemic has been extremely challenging and the knock-on effects are making the next few months uncertain. Sales are still at only 50% of 2019 figures.

Anna and Amanda have done a heroic job of responding to the difficult conditions and working alone on alternate weeks during the pandemic, while continuing to provide expert advice and a welcoming atmosphere. On 1<sup>st</sup> October we entered a new, even tougher world, with the end of Furlough support. Also from that date, Amanda asked to reduce her days to 3 days a week so that she can pursue other interests. This has the advantages for the Bookshop of reducing salary costs and allowing the staff a couple of days a week working together, a joy and a great plus after working separately for so long.

Our financial results for our year ended 31 July 2021 have yet to be finalised - but due to the Government Furlough money, support from City of Edinburgh, the rent grant from St John's and effective mothballing of the shop and cost control, it is likely to show a reasonable surplus. This is on total sales of roughly £50,000 compared to £150,000 in the year ended 31 July 2019. However, we fully expect to need that surplus, plus our reserves built up over years, to weather what is likely to be a very challenging period. We need to build up our sales to pre-pandemic levels in order to cover our costs and become a sustainable business again - which is likely to be challenging while the public remain cautious about returning to Princes Street in numbers. We are developing a detailed business plan at present to help us plan for this period.

Some more pieces of good news: Anna relaunched the Bookshop website in August to offer online sales; the Festival helped sales, also the opening of the Red Cockerel Café.

So please do come and visit the Bookshop. Anna and Amanda would be delighted to help with Christmas presents - we can supply ANY book. You can browse the great selection in the shop, order on the telephone or online. We need your support!

# CORNERSTONE MAGAZINE AND MONTHLY ROUNDUP

**Grace Durham, Robert Philp & Jeanette Rennie**

The magazine comes out quarterly, and we try to include a variety of articles from serious to light, reflective to good humoured. Getting the balance right is not always easy! Church finances mean that the magazine is sent out digitally to most members twice a year, and hard copies are sent to those without access to the internet. We plan to send hard copies of the Easter and Christmas editions to everyone and include details of special services.

The Monthly Round up augments the quarterly Cornerstone Magazine with information about the regular activities that take place at and through St John's and one-off events that are of special interest for members. It is the more 'chatty' part of the magazine. During the restrictions around Covid 19 two-way conversations took place. People have passed on information on what they had been doing; from the severely restricted time of walking round the garden to the opening up period of visiting family and friends in London, and further afield and requests have been made for voluntary help in and around the church. Thank you to the many people who have responded in to both these requests. Now that the restrictions have lessened the 'What have you been doing' section is no longer necessary but requests for volunteers will never stop because without them St John's mission to the congregation, the city centre community and the wider world cannot be achieved. This is circulated with the e-news on the last Saturday of the month and, like the magazine, posted to those without access to the internet.

## FABRIC COMMITTEE

**Alan Martin**

This year has seen no major works to the fabric, but rather a host of minor repairs and a vast amount of routine maintenance. You will be relieved to hear that I shall not list these, vital though they are, but rather concentrate on a few significant items.

All the high priority urgent repairs listed in the quinquennial report of December 2019 have now been attended to. There remains a large number of necessary and desirable repairs, which will have to be scheduled as finance permits.

We inspected the rectory in June, and agreed that, while no major issues were to be found, the décor was beginning to look tired, particularly in the kitchen and downstairs bathroom. We are drawing up a rolling program of redecoration.

The electrical wiring in the church has not been inspected or tested for many years. We have now accepted a quotation from an electrical engineer to test all internal and external wiring in the near future. We fully expect this will reveal significant problems, which will probably need to be addressed through a phased repair schedule.

The central heating boiler was also overdue for service, having been last done in 2016. It has now been serviced and put on an annual servicing schedule. The heating controls have also been inspected, reset and recalibrated. As a result it is now much easier to control the level of heating in different parts of the building, and heat only to the temperature that is really necessary.

However, we have a long term challenge as regards our heating. It is currently a gas-burning system, and as we all know the price of gas is rising very substantially. But it is in any case our obligation to reduce, and if possible eliminate, our carbon footprint, and this we can only do if we switch from gas. The Scottish Episcopal Church has set all congregations a target of being carbon neutral by 2030; to say the least, this will be challenging to meet. The fabric committee has begun investigating the various possible alternatives to gas heating, and we hope to be able to propose a strategy within the next year.

I cannot finish without recording our thanks to Iain Herbert our Operations Manager, whose efforts in dealing with routine maintenance and repairs, with outside contractors and indeed with everything to do with the building have been invaluable.

## FINANCE (including CDEL)

*To be presented separately*

## FLOWERS

**Grace Durham**

Just now flowers are done on an ad hoc basis, but we would like to have more flowers in the church, especially at times of the year when people have flowers in their gardens. We like to have some in the porch to welcome people and on the altar and platform. Volunteers are very welcome to join the small group who provide flowers: please contact Markus or Rosie if you can help. If you have a garden and would be able to contribute flowers, the collection can easily be arranged. Leave a message before Friday with Markus or Rosie and it will be passed on.

## GARDEN GROUP

**Fred Molbeck**

It has been a strange year and the Garden Group has not really got going. Jeremy did some work earlier before he sadly became unwell and we thank him for the good job he did.

I have been working away and assisted by David our Verger when it came to larger jobs. David has been keeping the Grass Areas tidy and I will say to a high standard.

The Church Garden has been looking good, the Dahlia Plot was admired by many visitors to the Craft Fair, as were other areas of the Garden. The Tubs on the Terrace received good comments too and also the Display around the Dean Ramsay Cross.

The Dormitory remains a favourite Space by many including myself and improvements are being made all the time, for all to enjoy.

An interesting piece of news. We are planting four new trees in late Autumn, two Amelanchiers, one Prunus sargentii, which is one of the finest of all Trees for Autumn colour and Malus, an Ornamental Crab Apple. So we are thinking ahead so that future generations can enjoy their beauty.

Now we must also look ahead and prepare for Spring, which is my favourite time of year, by planting Bulbs, Polyanthus and Myosotis – Forget me not.

## GIFT AID

### **Wren Hoskyns-Abrahall**

Although I have been gradually stepping back from involvement with St John's finances, I remain the Gifts Secretary for the time being.

The past year has seen the weekly and monthly envelope scheme collapse with many who gave by that route now sending periodic cheques or setting up standing orders – always the favourite for Treasurers, as it gives more certainty of future income!

However, this is not necessarily the best means of giving from a spiritual perspective. It is generally helpful when trying to connect our faith and our finance to see at least a token of our giving (in all its forms) being blessed at the altar each week. To that end people may like to have a set of envelopes to use each Sunday, whether or not it is for a pledged amount or just what is appropriate that day.

An alternative, I have seen used elsewhere, is for those who give by standing order to pick up a small card at the start of the service with words printed on it to the effect that the card represents their giving to the church. This allows them both to know that their regular standing order offering is being blessed and avoids any embarrassment at 'passing-the-plate'. I wonder whether this might appeal to members of our regular congregation.

In the meantime, we have sufficient unused envelopes from previous years which we will label with new dates for anyone wishing to continue using envelopes from January 2022.

Finally, wearing my wider finance hats, I am really appreciative of the generosity of everyone which has enabled us to keep our financial heads above water when our other income streams dried up. We are on the road to recovery, but it will be many months before we can feel any sense of financial security.

## GREEN GINGER GROUP

### **Andrew Wright**

The Green 'Ginger' Group is tasked with motivating members and leaders alike here at St John's to make environmental concerns a priority in the ways we manage our resources and, indeed, live our lives. This is a summary of what we've done over the last year:

We have

1. Met monthly online
2. Renewed our membership of eco-congregations
3. Reviewed different areas of our church life to produce a document recommending ways in which we can begin the process of working towards achieving 'Net Zero' carbon emissions. This is being done under the headings of Spiritual Living, Practical Living and Global Living.
4. Worked with the other Together churches to organise an art exhibition in response to COP26 being held in Glasgow this year
5. Revived the Earth be Glad Facebook page and blog ([facebook.com/earthbeglad](https://facebook.com/earthbeglad) and [earthbeglad.blogspot.com](https://earthbeglad.blogspot.com))

6. Met with the Young Christian Climate Network to help arrange and support an event at St John's prior to COP26
7. Preached at 3 of the services during Creationtide (sermons were given by George Harris, Eleanor Harris and Andrew Wright and copies are available on the Earth be Glad blog)
8. Written articles for 'Cornerstone' magazine

If you'd like to know more about the work of the group then please do speak with any of our current membership – we are Andrew Wright (Convener), Rosie Addis, Grace Durham, Eleanor Harris, George Harris, Alan Martin, Ann Pankhurst, Eileen Thompson & Nancy Van Kirk.

## GUARDIANS

### **Colin McEachran**

Visitors to the church much appreciate their welcome by a guardian and for the chance to speak to someone about the church and its history. Equally Guardians enjoy the opportunity to meet and talk with the visitors from many different countries and backgrounds. We have 20-30 guardians on our books. Not all are presently active and we would welcome more. It is very interesting and rewarding work for a couple of hours every 2 weeks. Please let me know if you are interested (contact [colinneilmce@gmail.com](mailto:colinneilmce@gmail.com)).

In the years leading up to Covid and the lockdown, Guardians were seeing 20,000 or more visitors to the church per year. But it must be remembered that the original plan for the Guardians was to help and support the vergers. There were 2 or 3 shifts of 2 hours duration (a total of 4/6 hours per day) every day from April to the end of September (6 months) and not all the shifts were covered. In those days the church was open for longer (because of vergers) and for the 12 months of the year. So there is likely to have been much larger visitor numbers

This year we have only managed one 2 hour shift from 1.00 to 3.00 on weekdays and visitor numbers have been very low - 12-20. Recently the guardians have helped with staffing the outstanding Peace and Justice Cranes exhibition and this had brought in somewhat bigger numbers. I am very grateful to those who volunteered

The Future of the Guardians is up for discussion and decision. We need more and younger volunteers

## HOME COMMUNION

### **Phyll Hoskyns-Abrahall**

During lockdown we were unfortunately unable to continue the ministry of Home Communion. However once restrictions were lifted we were able to visit people in their homes and so continue this much valued ministry which is particularly appreciated by members of the congregation unable to attend St John's in person. I personally find it is such a privilege to share the Sacrament of Holy Communion in this deeply personal way.

# JUST FESTIVAL

**Janet Rennie**

This year's Festival was a great success in the odd circumstances of the immediate post-lockdown period. We operated for the full three weeks of the Festival; had a programme of 16 online Conversations; 3 exhibitions within St John's Church or in the graveyard, and a truly memorable Requiem concert to mark the end of the Festival.

The highlight was undoubtedly the concert, No Alleluias: A Requiem for 2020, which was inspired by the raw and moving personal experiences of loss and illness endured by so many these last 18 months, and the need to find a way to talk about death and move from despair towards hope for the future. It was based on poetry written by Rev Dr Karen Georgia Thompson; written and structured by Robert Rae, and the haunting and inspiring music was composed by Dr Anthony Hammond. There was a choir of 18 and an online NHS choir of 20, plus a soprano soloist. The requiem will shortly be available through the festival's website.

The exhibitions attracted 7062 visitors during the 3 weeks of the Festival. The Peace Cranes installation within the Church was delivered in conjunction with Peace & Justice Scotland. It marks the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and educates people on the threats of nuclear weaponry. The photographic exhibition by Mahmoud Al Khurd illustrated in a highly creative, effective and disturbing way the limitations and restrictions placed on daily life in the Gaza Strip. A third, called Hidden Letters, was a trail of colourful letters set within the graveyard.

We were able to capitalise on the work done last year when we redesigned our website and created a new delivery platform, bookings system and YouTube channel.

Most of the Conversations were well-attended, but one had to be cancelled due to the lack of bookings. This year, when locals and visitors were far less restricted in their choice of entertainment, it was harder to make an online programme attractive. Delivering the programme online gave us again the very valuable possibility of engaging speakers from outside Edinburgh, without cost.

A few highlights:

- The discussion between the writer and Children's Laureate Michael Rosen and the political commentator Joyce McMillan, in which he reflected on his journey through Covid and his debt to the dedicated staff of the NHS.
- There were striking performances by the Ragamala Dance Theatre Company and by the Northern Irish Peace Activist, Tommy Sands.
- The Conversation between Bishop John Armes and Rev. Jarel Robinson-Brown on the subject of racism and white supremacy and their legacy in current institutions.
- A discussion on homelessness was strikingly illustrated with anecdotes and experiences, by Rev. Richard Carter of St Martin-in-the Fields, in conversation with Iain Macfarlane, CEO of the Blue Triangle Housing Association based in Glasgow.

All the events in the Festival were free except for the Requiem, and like last year we invited donations. Staging this festival cost approximately £30,000, including the commissioning of the Requiem. Thanks to our sponsors and very effective fundraising by the Treasurer and Director, we have covered these costs. (A precise outcome cannot be given yet, as not all invoices have been received and we have not quite reached our year-end).

The Just Festival Board records its grateful thanks to St John's for enabling the festival to take place in the church and for its valuable gifts-in-kind of the use of space; to the Diocese and Together Churches for their contributions to Just's costs, and to other funders such as the Culture & Business Scotland Fund; EventScotland, and Elephants in Action.

Our Board membership has been significantly reduced over the last two years, and I am sorry to report a further resignation, of Helen Foord, from 1 September 2021. In addition our Director is standing down for 2 years to take a further degree. This leaves us with only the Rector, the Convener and the Treasurer, plus two associate/trainee Board members. We are still reviewing Just Festival's unique role, and deciding what future we can sustain, and how we might engage more actively with the two key sponsors, SEC and Together Churches. If we are to continue, at the very least we would need to strengthen the Board significantly.

The Just Festival Board is deeply indebted to its Director, Helen Trew, for her tireless and skilful work in creating and drawing together this stimulating programme for August, and especially for her work on the Peace Cranes exhibition and the Requiem. Similarly, it is grateful to the Volunteer Coordinator Mark Taylor, who recruited, trained and oversaw a team of cheerful volunteers for the exhibition. The technical geni at Luminaria were exceptionally valuable, especially for the slick joining-together of the live and online vocal contributions in the Requiem. Pete Searle's work on the mounting and lighting of the Peace Cranes is much appreciated. I am also most grateful to my fellow Board members for their unfailing support and their willing contributions to Zoom meetings.

## Lay Representative's Report

**Anne Martin**

All synod meetings during the last year have been held by Zoom. **The Edinburgh Diocesan Synod** met in March. The first part of the meeting was devoted to the Bishop's address and administration. In his address, Bishop John covered four specific areas, these being the responsibilities of every congregation during the Covid Pandemic, Safeguarding, COP 26 and financial planning for the future.

In relation to the Covid Pandemic, he reminded Synod that every congregation needed a simple, workable plan of action so that no-one is forgotten and we remember our love for our neighbours. He reported that training for safeguarding had been well-supported. All clergy, lay readers and those in ministerial leadership would be required to attend a safe-guarding course every 2 – 3 years. A provincial group had been set up to prepare for COP 26 and he hoped that every congregation would get involved. Bishop John pointed out the importance of financial planning for the future. Two congregations had closed and one had opened. Bishop John, the Dean and the Diocesan Secretary were always available to discuss concerns of individual congregations.

Administration dealt with minutes and committee reports from the Standing Committee, Finance and Management, Cathedral Accounts, Safeguarding and announcement of election results. A substantial part of the meeting was devoted to feedback from Area Councils concerning the proposed revisions to Canon 4 relating to the election of Bishops. Councils were split between those in favour of change and those who felt strongly that the principle of a diocese choosing its bishop should be maintained. The problem of confidentiality was highlighted.

The rest of the meeting covered Mission and Ministry, the Financial Report and the Dean's report. A short video was shown about different and imaginative activities that had happened around the

diocese during the last year and a report was made on activities with children and young people. Regarding finance, the Diocesan Treasurer reported that over the last year there have been both losses and gains. Losses included income from the clergy conference; financial gains included reduced staff costs. Office costs has been reduced by £15k, which balanced with the same amount for supporting the Newcraighall development. The Diocese anticipated a 10% reduction in quota for 2021. The Treasurer also reported on recovery funds. Provincial Funds will be available to support quota over three years. £52,000 received in 2021 allowed quota to be reduced by 10% across the board. Diocesan grants would be available for struggling charges utilising the 2018 Quota Support Fund (£12,000), 2020 and 2021 Dunderdale grants (£13,000), 2021 'Covid Support Fund' (£11,000 pledged by 16 charges) and the Provincial Recovery and Renewal Fund. Loans to cover immediate cash-flow difficulties would also be available.

For the second year running, **General Synod** was held by Zoom in June, a sadness for those of us elected in the last 18 months, unable to start getting to know fellow members. There were, however, four breakout group sessions, the members of which remained consistent for the whole period, which helped us to feel we were talking with familiar faces. The Synod consists of 62 clergy members, 62 lay, the seven Bishops and a small number of other members, including members of the Anglican Consultative Council. From St John's, Markus, Alistair Dinnie (ACC) and myself (an Edinburgh Diocese Representative) are members.

Synod business included regular items, such as the budget and confirming appointments, and a number of significant discussions and votes. These included relations with the Church of Scotland (the St Andrew's Declaration), a steer on Canon 4 (the canon dealing with the appointment of bishops), climate change and ethical investment. Establishing a complaints procedure and policy for bullying involved significant discussion and the passing of a number of amendments. Regarding climate change, Ten Points of Guidance and a programme of action were set before Synod members. Concerning the appointment of bishops, a majority supported the maintaining the tradition of Dioceses choosing their own bishops but there was strong support for improving the system, which would be looked at further.

## MINISTRY TEAM

### **Kenneth Boyd**

The Non-Stipendiary team of Kenneth Boyd, Clephane Hume and Eileen Thompson are featuring in an article in the Autumn 2021 Magazine and it would be best to look at that to hear of their activities.

## MUSIC

### **David Goodenough**

In opening the Music report, I would like to thank our Assistant Organists, Caroline Cradock and Peter Horsfall, for their invaluable support and friendship during what has doubtless been an unsettling period in the musical life of St John's. Not only did live music fall off a cliff-edge in March last year, but my arrival as Interim Director of Music back in April also came with great haste; and their comradeship and support, alongside the amazing camaraderie of our Choir, has not only touched me personally, but has collectively helped our music ministry navigate successfully through what might otherwise have been even choppy seas. At the time of writing, in early October, the

full Choir has now been back in harness for around eight weeks; they've quickly recovered some fantastic musical momentum after their eighteen-month hiatus; they're once again singing three services each Sunday and working with real gusto on Thursday evenings. Since our return, we've happily welcomed some new singers and reconnected with others who live at a distance; and we have introduced some new repertoire. Having been rehearsing over Zoom for months (a far from fulfilling musical experience!) our in-person Thursday rehearsals are wonderfully buoyant as we prepare the music for the coming weeks, and no-one on this incredible team - whether chorister or organist, soloist, quartet or octet singer - has been afraid of striving for high standards. St. John's boasts a choir which achieves 'cathedral' standard choral music every week and, since our return, it has been excellent to have that ratified through growing congregations, as well as receiving 'thank you's' in person or by email after services, in acknowledgement of what we do. And I doubt that any of us will forget how we felt when the church erupted into applause for us all on our first tutti Sunday back! Alongside the music-making, and sharing its importance, is the Choir's continuing enjoyment of incredibly strong bonds of friendship and fellowship after rehearsals and services. Their vocal stamina and their social stamina are equally abundant! As this is being read, the Choir will have recently returned from a weekend away, singing the services in Ripon Cathedral, when both flavours of that stamina will certainly have been tested!

Sadly, during this year, time and tide have continued to take their toll on our wonderful organ. At its heart sits the original pipework work of Henry Willis I ('Father' Willis - basically, the Rolls-Royce of the organ building scene at the time) and it is one of the final organs he built before his death in 1901. Although occasional piecemeal work has been carried out since then to keep it playing, we are now rapidly heading towards the time when St John's must consider a major restoration, to rebuild it and to restore its original Father Willis tonal scheme; we need to secure its reliability for us and, perhaps most importantly, it is incumbent on us to preserve it for those who will be playing it in another 120 years' time. Whilst it continues to sound excellent from the pews, those of us who play it are increasingly fighting fires at the console to fix problems on the fly as they emerge. But, every time I play it, I thank God for the vision of whoever it was, back in 1900, who engaged Father Willis to build an organ for St John's. For a church with a musical heritage as strong as ours, a reliable organ is a basic necessity to enhance and support that tradition, so that we don't need that 'emergency unaccompanied Evensong' up our sleeves for when the organ goes wrong again! Vestry has had an initial discussion and will commission an expert report that will give us all a clearer picture of the tonal scheme and the concomitant costs involved. Markus is very clear that those costs must come from outwith St John's, and I'm very happy to answer any questions which might help to amplify why such a significant undertaking is the most appropriate way forward for us.

The overriding musical message this year is that, despite all the hurdles that the past twenty months has placed before us, 'We're back!', and we're delighted that we are! Those of us in the Chancel Sunday by Sunday will continue to enjoy the privilege that we have in being such a key instrument in the ministry in a place like St John's and, personally, I'm delighted to be so closely involved in its delivery.

## ONE WORLD SHOP

**Rachel Farey**

**[www.oneworldshop.co.uk](http://www.oneworldshop.co.uk)**

Since the lifting of lockdown in April, the shop has seen a steady rise in customer numbers and in sales. Although we are still not up to 2019 figures, we are optimistic that things will steadily

improve over the coming months. We have fortunately been able to retain all our staff over the year and in October we all returned to full time hours.

During lockdown we worked hard to improve our website to make it more customer-friendly and we were pleased to see a marked increase in online orders from all over the UK. For local deliveries, customers could choose the option of a bicycle delivery or a courier and many took up the eco-friendly option.

We became increasingly concerned with the plight of our producer partners abroad and how their communities were faring with Covid. Our Indian partners in particular were suffering badly and sent us regular reports of the very difficult situation in Delhi and in other large cities, many had family members who died. We started a fundraising campaign in the summer and managed to raise £500 for them.

We were delighted to see the return of the 3D/2D Craft Fair in August, although there were very few tourists from abroad, we met lots of visitors from all over the UK, some of them enjoying a holiday in Scotland for the very first time.

Sadly, the problem of water leakage into the shop has not gone away and we are not looking forward to another wet winter, but the research continues into how and where it is getting in and hopefully it won't be too long before it gets fixed.

The shop is open 7 days a week from Mon - Sunday and is getting well prepared for the Christmas season, we look forward to welcoming you.

## OPERATIONS

### **Iain Herbert**

During the accounting period we continued with our recovery plans which had a number of areas of focus with a constant review of the operation, overall profitability, property maintenance, quality of presentation, service levels, business development, communications and use of assets to maximum commercial opportunities while remaining true to the ethics of St Johns. Having taken difficult decisions, particularly around staffing levels, we continued to look at ways to de-risk the operation to secure income stability as well as renegotiating some of our fixed cost such as electricity adding to steps to financial recovery (resulting in profit up 74% from the previous year).

This was against a backdrop of high uncertainty with the Covid virus continuing to impact heavily against any elements of tourism activity effectively closing Edinburgh Festivals and the normally expected summer boost. We did however continue to offer an outside social café space during the summer months as well as supporting a small program of activity with Just Festival however the much-reduced church opening saw visitor donations tail off alongside planned weddings activity which ceased. I would like to fully recognise the additional support offered from the congregation during this time through increased giving, one off donations, sponsorship of much needed items (lawnmower etc) and the physical/moral support as we adapted to the changed environment as well as new business model with minimal staffing.

As the vaccine arrived, we started to see some activities resuming with self-help groups requesting to hire facilities, inquiries for other room rentals and the signs of recovery including new rentals including the new café operation which opened fully in July. We were also delighted to have the Craft Fair return and although at around only 60% of its usual size it proved a very successful event all round. With this increased activity we were able to take on some casual based staff with David

joining in September 2020 working in the grounds and general duties and latterly Denise taking on the cleaning.

The general upkeep & repair standards during this time have been raised meeting our legal requirements as well as making the spaces welcoming and professional while still reducing costs. Monitoring the risks of Covid and providing an effective sanitising procedure proved successful during this period coupled with the rigours requirements for risk assessments helped us create a safe environment for all – a thank you to everyone who has helped us with this along the way.

We have continued to effect change pushing ahead with the strategic changes needed to reposition ourselves for a stable and profitable future; despite the odds of this year we have started to turn the corner and position for a sustainable long term future.

## PASTORAL VISITORS

**Phyll Hoskyns-Abrahall**

The Pastoral Visitors have been very active during recent months, once restrictions were lifted enabling people to meet up, either in each other's homes or gardens, or out and about. The phone continues to be an excellent way to stay in touch, particularly for those who live alone. There are several new members attending St John's and the coffee hour in the north aisle has given people the chance to chat. We are delighted to have welcomed one or two new Pastoral Visitors, particularly as several members of the congregation have moved away or 'retired' from their PV role. If anyone would be interested in knowing more about the Pastoral Visitors' Scheme please speak to me or one of the clergy.

Unfortunately, we haven't been able to hold the usual group meetings of PVs this year but hopefully it will be possible in the not too distant future.

Meanwhile I do thank all the Pastoral Visitors for keeping our congregation connected during these rather challenging months and I know the Clergy really value the care and support that continues within our church family.

## ST. JOHN'S FORUM

**Robert Philp**

This group, started online during lockdown, has had a lively year, and being on Zoom we are able to include members from outside Edinburgh, viz. Dunfermline and Orkney. We have continued to cover a wide variety of topics during our one-hour meetings on the last Monday of each month.

From real-world issues like Women's Healthcare in UK and Africa and the effects of Trafficking and abuse on adolescents we have ranged to literary topics like the poetry of R.S. Thomas, George Herbert and Les Murray, and novels by Dostoevsky and Dickens. At other meetings we considered Edinburgh's geology and scenery and the Edinburgh Enlightenment.

Thanks to all those who have been prepared to lead our discussions, and everyone who helps to make our meetings so lively.

## SOCIAL COMMITTEE

**Valerie Lobban**

In view of Covid restrictions there have been no social activities over the last year and it is very uncertain when activities will be able to start again.

## STREAMING OF SERVICES

**Peter Horsfall**

Activities to facilitate live-streaming of services in church have developed significantly over the course of the year. This has been assisted by the provision of wired (and wireless) internet access in the church since early 2021. The Sunday Eucharist has been the mainstay of the streamed services; Sunday afternoon Eucharist/Evensong service was also broadcast as choral singing made a gradual return during the course of 2021. Weekday prayer podcasts are also prepared by numerous contributors, and the Wednesday Eucharist service is also made available online. The recordings can be viewed on Facebook or on YouTube.

Following the easing of covid restrictions, the Sunday schedule has now returned to the familiar pattern including Matins at 9.30am and Evensong at 6.00pm. The current plan is to continue streaming 10.30am Eucharist on a weekly basis, and to stream Evensong to whatever extent is practical (at time of writing, a predictable pattern has yet to be established). The mid-week streaming seems set to continue also.

The Sunday streaming is supported by a team comprising Andrew Wright, Alan Martin, Florian Englberger, and Christian Clarkson. If anyone else is interested in getting involved, they would be most welcome to get in touch – either in person, or by emailing us at [streaming@stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk](mailto:streaming@stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk).

## TOGETHER TRUST

**Anne Pankhurst**

Together Trust is the new name for Edinburgh City Centre Churches Together - St. John's, St. Cuthbert's and St. Andrew's and St. Georges' West.

The meetings of the Together Trust Board of Trustees continued on Zoom throughout the pandemic restrictions, as did several worship services. The board has been able to provide a grant to Just Festival to support the online programme which was successfully developed for use during the pandemic restrictions.. The City Centre Workplace Chaplaincy has continued with a new chaplain. Support for work with the homeless in the city has been maintained. A new joint project, an exhibition of artwork themed on the issues of climate change, has attracted interest from all three congregations. The work of the Trust is supported by all three churches.

# VESTRY REPORT

**Austin Reilly**

Vestry had another busy year dealing with all the usual matters that fall under its remit. Meetings continued to be held on Zoom and with increased experience this became an efficient and helpful way to handle the St John's affairs. The critical financial position remained the principal focus and details will be covered in the financial report by the Treasurer at the AGM. As we came out of lockdown, Vestry's attention was also taken up with the practical implications and we are indebted to Iain Herbert for all the hard, detailed work that he put in to get everything up and running again.

In June Vestry held an "away day", also on Zoom, and a major topic was consideration of whether the structure of St John's should be changed to allow for the election/appointment of Wardens to bring others into the "executive" leadership team. The Rector opened this out to the congregation for consultation which produced a lot of very helpful and useful feedback and will be discussed again at the AGM.

After 6 very eventful years as Vestry Secretary, I stepped down from the role at the end of June. I thoroughly enjoyed doing this job and I would like to thank all members of Vestry, past and present, for all their hard work and the help and support they provided to the clergy and myself. As a group a great deal was achieved during this period which would not have happened without a huge team effort.

# WALKING GROUP

**Veronica Harris**

The walking group has been comparatively lucky over Covid. Since this time last year we have only had to cancel three Thursday walks and two Saturday walks, although many walks originally planned had to be changed. A government official deemed us to be an 'official' walking group and therefore able to continue to our activities, in the guise of a 'sport' when other things had to stop. We were of course limited in geographical area – for some months just to the Edinburgh local authority, and in access to transport, and we had to recruit extra leaders for each walk to keep groups small, and we were very careful to fit in with the various regulations, but nevertheless it was wonderful for us all to be able to get out together in small groups when so many other activities were curtailed.

We have been planning walks this year from month to month as circumstances changed, and I very much hope next year to get back to putting together a programme for the whole year. Both the longer Saturday walks and the shorter Thursday walks are proving popular, but as always, we are very pleased to see new members. If you would like to come along, or would like more information, please contact me at [veronicaharris@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:veronicaharris@tiscali.co.uk)

# WEDNESDAY LUNCHES

**Josephine MacLeod**

These have not been taking place during lockdown but as of Wednesday 6th October they started again.

Please join us at 12.30 in the Hall on the first Wednesday of each month.