

AGM Reports

For
19th November 2023

Bethany Group Work

Bethany Christian Trust is a well known charity to the congregation of St John's and focus their ministry on homelessness prevention, crisis intervention and housing support. Sadly during 2022-3 the challenges that providing crisis intervention and care for homeless people in the city of Edinburgh has continued to be significant despite the efforts of both the City Council, the Scottish Government and the third sector. A dedicated team of volunteers from St John's have continued to be part of a large rota of providers to the Bethany Christian Trust. The venue for care continues to be provided at the Hub Hotel in Haymarket where there was a mixture of clients, some supported by Bethany and others by the city council. The range and circumstances of the clients is wide but includes issues of immigration, isolation, mental health including addiction and domestic upheaval and crisis.

Currently the catering team for the evening perform their catering functions at Gorgie Dalry Stenhouse church near Tynecastle; cooking from 1800-2000 and when cooked the food is transferred to the Hub Hotel at Haymarket in insulated containers. The food is served at 2030 and clients either eat in the hotel lobby or more commonly take it back to their hotel rooms. The servers then wash up the cooking utensils in anticipation of the team active on the next night.

Last season the team of volunteers, under the leadership of Fiona Mcluckie, provided four nights of catering. On each night there was a team of cooks, one driver and two servers, the servers being the only group to interact with clients and the staff employed by Bethany. A two course meal was provided together with some provisions for breakfast, although the breakfast provision will change during this season. Last year in Edinburgh about 70 faith communities provided the food for the eight months of service, providing for a mean of 49 people per night. Bethany has a budget of £7.8 million, of which 32% is from donations and £1.1 million from retail. For every £1 donated, 80p goes directly to services dealing directly with homelessness, 14p goes to develop the charity shop arm and 6p goes to assist raising the next £1. The headlines of Bethany's work are as follows giving some insight into the breadth of their responsibility:

- 1 - 46000 hours of individual support annually, with 76 tenancies achieved across Scotland.
- 2 - 34 community projects with 1850 individuals supported
- 3 - 123 specialised support beds within Scotland and 80,000 meals served annually

The clergy and vestry believe that this is a vital part of the outreach of our church. Sadly, the Covid pandemic had an understandable and profound effect on the size of the teams and new members would be very welcome to boost our ability to provide this vital service.

Tony Falconer & Fiona Mcluckie

The Cornerstone Bookshop

The Cornerstone Bookshop has seen some recovery in sales over the past year, but a return to a sustainable position is still some way off. Our financial year to 31 July 2023 is in the process of being finalised and subject to independent examination. Draft figures show that Bookshop sales increased by about 14% in the year to roughly £104k. This was welcome news and is the first time we have been back into six figures since the year ended 31 July 2019. The rise in sales was welcome, but with rising costs to deal with too, we still reported a deficit of about £14k – an improvement of about 12% on the prior year. We need to see sales rise significantly back to levels that have been achieved in the past (e.g. 31 July 2015 when we achieved sales of about £170k). It is fair to say that the wider economic situation, as well as the hang over from the Pandemic, has taken its toll on the high street, and the Bookshop has not been immune to this. The good news is that we continue to have some reserves in the bank and are extremely grateful for the continued support from St John's, its congregation, and the wider community. But these reserves will not last for ever. The year has seen significant change on the Board. We are now made up of the following: Donna Gilmour (Interim Chair), Mark Hoskyns-Abraham, Rosie Addis, Paul Burrows, Sue Lyons, The Very Reverend Dr Russell Barr & Markus Dunzkofer. This new Board is committed to seeing the Cornerstone Bookshop return to a financially sustainable position and are exploring all options to ensure this is achieved. We continue to be very fortunate in having two fantastic members of staff, Anna Pitt, and Amanda Bruce. The new Board is working closely with them to develop our plans for the future. So, a challenging year, some progress made, but we need to see that accelerate in the coming months. Please do continue to support us. You can do this a number of ways:

- Buy your books from us – all of them – we can order anything for you – just speak to Anna or Amanda
- If buying on-line – use Bookshop.org – and select us as your linked bookshop – we will then get a percentage (a small one – but it all helps)
- Buy your Christmas cards and Advent calendars from us
- Spread the word – encourage others to come and visit – the Cornerstone Centre has a great selection of outlets now – the Bookshop included.
- Follow us on Facebook & Instagram – like – share etc. etc.
- Leave a review for us on Google.
- If you have any thoughts or ideas for us – please get in touch. Many thanks for your continued support. Donna & Mark

Fabric Committee

Another year has passed without any spectacular project but with much necessary maintenance work. Leaks have figured prominently. We have experienced leaks from various parts of the roof, hopefully all now mended, and also from the upper terrace into the retail units below. The latter is a long-standing problem, which various patches have failed to completely resolve. We have come to the conclusion that major works will be needed in the not too distant future to lift the paving over most of the terrace and install suitable damp proofing. Many of you will know that we have in the Churchyard the grave and headstone of

Malvina Wells, who was born a slave in the West Indies, came to and lived in Edinburgh and is the only known former slave to be buried in Edinburgh. The inscription on this headstone had become unreadable, and a distant relation of Malvina's original owner, the Revd Christopher Maclean, very generously offered to pay for its restoration. The stone has now been cleaned and repainted, and is well worth a visit.

Also in the Churchyard, the large memorial below the lower terrace which was in danger of collapse and had to be propped up by scaffolding has now been properly repaired, and various walls repointed. The large tree beside the Ramsay Cross, whose roots were beginning to damage the retaining wall, had to be taken down, but new trees have been planted in more suitable places. We are of course also responsible for the Rectory, and here I can report that the 5-yearly electrical check has been carried out, all necessary upgrades done, and fire and smoke alarms fitted to the new standards.

Looking forward, the next Quinquennial Survey is due in 2024, so the Committee will be investigating whom to recommend to Vestry for appointment as our architect or surveyor. And then we shall wait for their report with some trepidation!

Alan Martin
Convener, Fabric Committee

Finance

We may finally be leaving the struggles of our financial lockdown environment behind us with a steady return of visitors back to the church during the year. Things are starting to feel a little more 'normal'. That said, we are not immune to the financial difficulties that many business and households have experienced this year - we have seen the interest rate on our bank loan rise from 3% to 8% in just one month - things have been challenging. Given the high rate of inflation and a reduction in monthly giving, we took the decision to put the Cornwall Street flat on the market to help reduce our overall loan balance - the Edinburgh market is still relatively buoyant so we're expecting a sale to go ahead over the next few months. As the loan is secured against the property, 100% of the sale proceeds will go towards reducing the balance. The loan will then be restructured to enable us to reduce monthly payments over the term and allow more flexibility with our monthly cash balances. Current balance stands at £712,000.

We continue to take advantage of the Government's Gift Aid scheme which has provided £36,398 in additional giving this year. The way that people give is changing however, and we need to add new ways and reasons to enable both the congregation and visitors to support St John's. Monthly giving is down around £90K over the year.

However, following the completion of this year's audit, I am pleased to report that we are a going concern and continue to receive support from CAF bank via monthly meetings and an in person visit last summer. We ended the year slightly below our ideal reserves balance of £150K at £132,329 but the Trustees are confident that we will be able to bolster those funds to meet or exceed that amount during the coming year. The Trustees have recorded full confidence in the management of the St John's group.

Silent Prayer

For around 8 years now, a small number of people have met on a Tuesday afternoon in the chapel of St John's for the sole purpose of keeping silence. We call this time 'Exploring Silent Prayer' to indicate we are all learners in the journey of meeting the mystery of God in silence.

Tony Bryer

Our numbers in any given week can vary from 3 to 8, seldom more than that. The sessions are every week, other than breaks at Christmas, Easter and Festival time.

Anyone is welcome to join us at 3.30pm for 45 minutes; there's no 'membership'; people come along when they can. Come along and experience something of this journey.

Church gardens

2023 has been a good year in the garden and many of the areas have "looked their best".

The flower bed around the Dean Ramsay was very colourful due to the Dahlias, Heleniums, Roses and many other plants. It did help after we took out the very large London Plane Tree, which was pushing the retaining wall out. However, to everything there is a season and we planted two lovely "Rowan" trees, one with white berries and the other with yellow, so future generations can enjoy them. The Dormitory looks good, and I am making some minor changes in there. The children do like it, as do adults, which is great. The tubs on the Terrace were a great success and lots of good comments have been made, especially regarding the Begonias, they were huge – certainly the best I have seen, of course they were fed every two weeks with liquid seaweed! Hope next year will be as good. Sadly, two trees had to be removed, both Rowans, one in the front area and one in the lower garden, both of them had rot. However, a new one is in place in the front, and we have a pink berried Rowan to go in the lower garden. So, you can see we are doing our bit in "Greening the City". David (the Verger) attends to the grass areas and helps me when needed.

Some more Spring bulbs have also been planted so watch out for them, and the tubs on the Terrace are in the process of being replanted with Spring plants, to enjoy in my favourite time of the year!

Fred Mobeck

Morning Book Group

The group meets on the first Wednesday of the month in the home of one of the members. The programme for the session is decided in a democratic way by voting on the list of books recommended by members and always results in a good mixture of modern novels, non-fiction and classics. Among the books discussed were a light-hearted whodunnit, a serious volume about the American Virginia Hall who worked for the SOE in France during WW2 and was certainly not *A Woman of No Importance* and the classic *Emma*. We may not agree on the merits of the chosen book, but always do agree that it is a pleasure to meet as a group and talk about a book which otherwise we might not have read.

Muriel Madell

Church Guardians

Two Guardians continue to be in the church from 12-2pm on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

We meet many interesting people from all over the world, some are from cruise ships, others may come because they have relatives who worshipped or are buried here or they have noticed that we fly the Ukrainian and may be Ukrainian or feel strongly about the war there. Over the Festival our numbers were almost overwhelming 2,715 in August and also 1,240 in September. A number come in to pray or to sit quietly and appreciate our beautiful building. Helen, Iain, Fred & Davie pop in from time to time to make sure there are no problems.

Josephine MacLeod

Cleaning the church

There is a small team who clean the church after the Wednesday 11 am service for an hour or so. Volunteers are always welcome on an ad hoc basis or a regular commitment. Brass cleaning, vacuuming, dusting are the main duties. We shall need a lot of extra help in the week before Christmas. Please contact the office if you would like to help in any way.

Grace Durham

Cornerstone Bookshop

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and select us as your linked bookshop – we will then get a percentage (a small one – but it all helps) • Buy your Christmas cards and Advent calendars from us • Spread the word – encourage others to come and visit – the Cornerstone Centre has a great selection of outlets now – the Bookshop included. • Follow us on Facebook & Instagram – like – share etc. etc. • Leave a review for us on Google. • If you have any thoughts or ideas for us – please get in touch. Many thanks for your continued support.

Donna & Mark

Cornerstone Magazine

The Cornerstone Magazine is another way of communicating with the congregation. This is in magazine format and includes longer articles than the MRU on a variety of subjects. There are regular features as well as one-off articles which might range from an analysis of a painting to an article on an aspect of philosophy. Readers are welcome to suggest subjects that they think might interest the congregation.

Catie, Grace, Robert & Jeanette

Flowers

There is a small but dedicated team to arrange flowers for special and everyday occasions. If any member of St John's would like to help or donate flowers or have flowers given for any special occasion, please contact the office.

Grace

Green Ginger

At the time of writing the Green Ginger Group is limping along without a Convener. We hope this will be put right soon. However, we managed to cooperate with two of our traditional activities. In the spring packets of wild flower seeds were distributed, using a new system which avoided the waste of giving them to those who did not want them and also allowed visitors during the week to take some.

Then there was Creationtide. The theme "Greening the City" was chosen. An interactive display was set up, and although "low key" it produced some interesting responses from visitors and a thought-provoking article in "Cornerstone". A Fair was organised, and all the stall-holders reported useful conversations. But we do need a Convener.

Gifts Secretary's Report

There are many reasons why it has been so long, too long even, since we ran a Stewardship Programme at St John's – The Cornerstone Development and Covid (during which many members gave generous additional gifts to keep us solvent) to name but two.

It is clear from our accounts that the total raised from regular pledged giving by the congregation is steadily reducing. However, our personal financial giving for the Kingdom of God is not really about St John's need for income, but primarily about our individual,

personal need to give. Living in a dominantly materialist culture our spiritual growth will be stunted if we don't put God and the needs of His Church ahead of our worshipping at the altar of that other god – money. If we were a secular charity, we might want to run a fund-raising campaign, but as a Church we need a different approach: we need to consider starting a Financial Stewardship Programme. As Charles Spurgeon asserted: our cheque books are theological documents; they tell us who and what we worship!

Wren Hoskyns-Abraham

Monthly Roundup

The Monthly Roundup continues to be a separate but integral part of the magazine which appears every month except on the four months when the magazine is published.

It is the vehicle through which people can read about what is happening during the week at St John's. All members of the congregation can discover what is available for them to take part in from the St John's Forum on zoom to the monthly walks on a Saturday and Thursday. The list includes book groups and the more intense reading of Exploring Faith Matters (EFM) and the Young Adult Group where Young Adults enjoy discussion in their own age group which compliments mixing with the 9 months to 90 years on a Sunday.

It aims to involve anyone in the congregation of St John's in opportunities of service for the church including Guardians, cleaning, helping to Live Stream and Video Services and gardening, and out with the church including, Bethany, Street Pastors, contributing to the Foodbank, and the Green Ginger Group.

It flags up future events which people might otherwise miss; sometimes a great number of them. It welcomes people, congratulates them, thanks them and remembers those who have died. In other words, it tries to make people feel part of the set-up that is St John's.

Morning Book Group

The group meets on the first Wednesday of the month in the home of one of the members. The programme for the session is decided in a democratic way by voting on the list of books recommended by members and always results in a good mixture of modern novels, non-fiction and classics. Among the books discussed were a light-hearted whodunnit, a serious volume about the American Virginia Hall who worked for the SOE in France during WW2 and was certainly not *A Woman of No Importance* and the classic *Emma*. We may not agree on the merits of the chosen book, but always do agree that it is a pleasure to meet as a group and talk about a book which otherwise we might not have read.

Muriel Madell

Music

The music of St. John's is thriving, and it's the best in the city!" So said one correspondent to me by email at the end of this year's Festival. That's incredibly gratifying, of course, and that sort of ratification of what we try to do here adds an extra layer of fulfilment to an already very satisfying musical experience. It's very much a team effort, and what we achieve here week after week couldn't be done without the dedication of our singers and organists. Our Choir is a hugely devoted and incredibly capable cohort of people who all offer very considerable generosity of their time and their talent week after week, offering up fantastic

music which enhances the worship here, allowing us to remain faithful to the ethos of the Church established at its foundation. Behind the shop-window music which the congregation hears and sees at each service, there is a very busy machine which keeps things ticking over. Peter Horsfall and Caroline Cradock have again been absolute stalwarts of our music programme, and so much of what we achieve musically is dependent on the parts that they play. They're the people who are giving up extra hours, usually in a darkened building after hours, preparing the accompaniments which they are to play. If you're reading this and you're 'Eucharist only' on a Sunday, please do try to be a 'Matins and Eucharist' or a 'Eucharist and Evensong' attendee! You'll be able to hear Peter and Caroline play and you'll get a far better feel for the contribution which the Choir makes beyond that single 10:30 service. The 10:30 service is actually the *least* musical service which we sing and play each week! Claire Goodenough is our Choir Librarian and it fair to say that, without her, the wheels would fall off pretty quickly! She's always the first to arrive for anything which the Choir is singing for. Isobel Watson is our Mistress of the Robes, and she spends *hours* making sure that we all look as good as we sound. So, behind the success of the music programme at St John's there's a whole team of people – Choir, Organists, Librarian, Wardrobe – it amounts to over thirty individuals, and we simply couldn't do it without them all. So, thank you, one and all!

In other music news, it's been another fruitful year of recruitment into the Choir and we've been delighted to welcome new faces once again. Caroline Cradock has recently been appointed as Organist of Greyfriars Kirk, where she now curates a large and impressive Peter Collins Organ and directs the music in that beautiful space. Our congratulations, very best wishes and grateful thanks go to her, acknowledging everything that she's given to St John's over all these years. Caroline continues at St John's in the evenings so, yes, if you're 'Eucharist only' you can still hear her playing if you become 'Eucharist and Evensong'! The Choir has once again enjoyed two wonderful weekends away this year – to Dunoon after Easter and to Yorkshire at the end of October.

The musical highlights of the past twelve months have been too many and varied to mention individually. If you're interested in statistics, and if we count every psalm, every rendition of the preces and responses, every setting of the canticles and anthems (but not hymns!) that's around 700 different performances each year. In itself, that pays further testament to the commitment of our Choir. But, fresh in the memory is the recent performance, and a Scottish premiere for the composer, of Matthew Coleridge's Requiem for All Souls. We were delighted that Matthew Coleridge made the trip up from Dorset to hear it, and we all enjoyed meeting him and his wife, enjoying their company in a local hostelry afterwards. The music during the Festival was a fabulous month when we marked some significant musical anniversaries.

I'm very pleased to report that the Music at St John's is in very good heart. We have a large team of volunteers, whose devotion and dedication to offering high quality music to the Glory of God is second to none. We are indeed very fortunate!

David Goodenough

Operations

This financial year has seen a continuation of recovery from Covid with an increase in use of the church facilities and hall as the conference sector recovers, demonstrated by strong future bookings with over 290 live bookings at present. This however is set against a backdrop of high inflation particularly noted with the energy costs and large interest rate increases leading to a tough year commercially. Despite this we have seen an increase of £45,000 in trading activities.

We continue to fully maintain the church properties and surroundings with numerous tasks being carried out ranging from the 'Forth Bridge' lime mortar pointing to the installation of new fire alarm systems and other important safety tasks. We are pleased to now have all the units fully let and a sense of vibrancy and fit on the lower terrace highlighted with the over 60,000 visitor who walked along it during the craft fair this summer.

This year has seen us take some significant steps to support the longer-term future in a challenging economic climate however much work is still needed to develop our full potential over the coming few years.

Iain Herbert

One World Shop Report

This has been a positive and uplifting year for sales so far both in the shop and online, although October's wild and wet weather seriously affected our customer numbers and dented our run of good sales.

We were delighted to have the 3D/2D Craft Fair in August on site again this year, attracting many international visitors. As before, we erected a small marquee outside the shop to help people notice and come into the shop which they did enthusiastically. This year marks our 40th Anniversary and perhaps some of you will recall the small, fledgling shop opening in the basement many years ago by George Shand, promoting the concept of "alternative trade" and people before profit in trading relationships.

We will be celebrating with a party on Sat 11th November in the Church Hall and are delighted to be joined by two of our suppliers from Community Crafts in Bangladesh.

Mohammed Ghayasuddin (or Ghayas) and his great nephew Shabbir will be arriving on 9th November and staying for 3 weeks. We have continually purchased jute bags and other products from Ghayas' social enterprise since the 1980's and it will be a joy to see him.

We are getting well prepared for the Christmas season, with lots of new products coming in all the time, especially a great selection of cosy knitted hats, gloves and handwarmers from Nepal, delicious new chocolates and attractive accessories from social enterprises in Guatemala.

The shop is open 7 days a week from Mon – Saturday (10am – 5.30pm) and on Sunday from 12 – 5pm. Our Sunday hours will extend to full days (10 – 5.30pm) from Sunday 5th Nov until Sun 24th Dec.

Rachel Farey

Pastoral Visitors' Report

The Pastoral Visitors' Scheme continues to be a great way to connect members of the congregation in an informal, but meaningful, way. We were able to hold the group meetings earlier this year for the first time since before Covid. Getting together in small groups is much appreciated and the group Chaplain also attends where possible. This year we circulated a short leaflet about Safeguarding Vulnerable People kindly provided by Elaine Ford who is the St John's Co-ordinator for the Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme. I particularly thank all Pastoral Visitors for their continuing contribution to this important ministry and I know our Clergy are most grateful too. We are always pleased to welcome new Pastoral Visitors to this valuable ministry.

Phyll Hoskyns-Abraham
Co-ordinator

Safe Guarding

Good safeguarding practice helps to ensure that everyone is welcome in our church community, and that they feel safe and included in doing so. Our ministry, especially to children, young people and vulnerable adults is where this practice is especially crucial including those who are leading ministry, such as our team of pastoral visitors. I've worked closely with Phyll Hoskins-Abrahams this year in providing the pastoral visiting team with the SEC's safeguarding summary cards so that everyone understands what safeguarding is and what to do if they have a concern.

I look forward to another year working closely with everyone to ensure that we provide a safe and happy environment for us all to learn and grow in our Christian life.

Elaine Ford

St John's Sacristy Guild

I would like to thank you on behalf of the church for being part of the Guild and for your work throughout the year, keeping the linens clean. If anyone would like to join, please speak to me.

Fred Mobeck

Second Chapter - Book Group

Second Chapter is a lively, friendly book group, meeting on the last Tuesday of the month at 2pm in the Boardroom.

Our tastes are wide and varied and this year we've read and discussed Jamaica Inn, Daphne du Maurier; The Fair Botanists, Sara Sheridan; Educated, Tara Westover; The Edinburgh Skating Club, Michelle Sloan; The Marriage Portrait, Maggie O'Farrell; Lessons in Chemistry, Bonnie Garmus; The Driver's Seat, Muriel Spark; A Pebble in the Throat, Aasmah Mir; The Way Of All Flesh, Ambrose Parry. We also had a trip to the Book Festival for an event celebrating Nan Shepherd, In a New Light.

Coming up, Nov 28th we'll be discussing The One Hundred Years of Lenni and Margot, Marianne Cronin, and start off 2024 with The Woman in White, Wilkie Collins on Jan 30th.

So, if you have a love of books and of light hearted conversation, come and join us! New members always welcome.

Susan Spilsbury

Servers

Servers do important work in the Episcopal Church is assisting the clergy at the Holy Altar. It is another way of worshipping God, and as Sacristan having responsibility for doing the rota, would like to pass on from the church our sincere thanks for what you do. If you feel you could be of help in this area, please speak to me.

Fred Mobeck

Synod Report

This is my first report as lay representative to Synod for St. John's, Prince's Street. I attended two meetings in 2023 of the Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Edinburgh, Scottish Episcopal Church - the first on Saturday, February 25, and the second on Thursday, October 26. Both were held at St. Paul's and St. George's Church, Edinburgh. It was a privilege to attend these meetings and I am delighted to share with you some of what took place. I had always hoped to one day go to a Synod so it was an additional honour to be there in an official (lay) capacity.

Two things stood out for me by way of initial reaction. The first was the social nature of the gathering. Synod is a chance to meet with one's colleagues, clergy or lay, which may not happen as often as one would hope. There was a friendly, energetic atmosphere from the beginning. My second observation is that the Episcopal Diocese of Edinburgh has strong, effective leadership, starting with Bishop Armes through to each member on his team, including Diocesan Administrator, Diocesan Secretary, Diocesan Treasurer, and Dean of the Cathedral, many of whom also serve as Convenors of various Committees. Diocesan Synod is essentially a business meeting that deals with all activity undertaken for the proper functioning of the Diocese. The meetings were efficiently organized and presented; they were respectful and collegial as well as prayerful and committed. As a lay representative I am a voting member of the House of Laity, representing our congregation of St. John, the Evangelist. Together with the House of Clergy, our responsibilities are outlined in Canons - essentially rules of law formally laid down by church councils over time. I got the sense that laity has an important role to play, sharing many clergy concerns. Motions are proposed, followed by questions and opinions that seem freely expressed at an open microphone, and these are then addressed by a knowledgeable spokesperson. Finally a vote is taken. Approved motions become Acts of Synod that are confirmed by the Bishop. This process will be familiar to most congregations but it was new to me to see the workings of policy in action. Genuine concerns were freely given. Synod includes reports from individuals and various committees: Bishop's Report, Dean's Report, Standing Committee, Finance and Management Committee, Cathedral Accounts, Safeguarding, and Buildings Committee. There are also elections for committees and for General Synod, the Financial Report and approval of budgets. These are standard and foundational. Perhaps unexpected, however,

are reports on new initiatives and committees that address current, less standard, concerns. Pertinent names in this category are Environmental Committee, Communications, Investing in the Future, and Mission and Ministry Committee. Here, I only have room to mention one of them but each is important on its own. Please ask if you would like more information on any of them. From initiatives that began in 2022 there is now wide interest in environmental integrity across the Diocese and beyond. A Provincial Toolkit was created to measure the energy saving performance of rectories with some funding provided for each vestry to commission an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) for their charge. Resources are ever growing to improve energy efficiency and heating, while each church was encouraged to create positions for an eco-representative or an environmental committee. St John's now has an active group. At the March Synod we received an excellent presentation from Robert Woodford who is a member of The Provincial Environmental Group. The Province has produced a Net-Zero Action Plan with two existing tools to help churches address energy use. Robert outlined ten strategic principles they have established to govern the Plan. The principles are well-balanced goals that provide a conscientious approach to change. It is thought that the plan will provide leadership and a structure of governance that will significantly reduce the impact of climate change on its people and its buildings. This is just one of the important initiatives that the Diocese of Edinburgh is undertaking.

Nancy Van Kirk

Walking Group Annual Report 2022/2023

We have welcomed several new members this year, which is very pleasing, and we are always happy to see anyone else who may be interested in joining us. We have a shorter walk (about 4-6 miles on easy terrain) on the first Thursday of each month and a longer walk (7 to 12+ miles with sometimes more difficult terrain) on the third Saturday. The Saturday walk is often accompanied, because of demand, by a shorter alternative. We put together a programme of walks for the whole year and before each walk I email group members the details of the walk, the leader, joining point and transport arrangements. Some members of the group come along regularly, others just occasionally.

This year we have had walks in Edinburgh, in the Lothians, Perthshire, Stirlingshire and the Borders. We have had excitements with the weather. Our Christmas walk in the Pentlands took place on a bitterly cold icy day. Some walkers braved the snow on the tops, others did a shorter-than-planned walk, while a few decided just to have a coffee in the restaurant. This very month (October) both walks were rained off, although on the Saturday an alternative walk along the Water of Leith was hastily arranged. If you are interested in coming on a walk or would like more information, do get in touch with me or speak to one of the group members. Although we are a church organisation you do not need to be a member of St John's.

Veronica Harris

Wednesday Lunches

The soup and cheese lunches continue at 12noon on the first Wednesday of each month (except August). We are very grateful to those who volunteer to make the soup and would be delighted if there are others who would like to do this. All are welcome and we usually have about 16 people round the large table. It is a good opportunity to meet other members of St John's and enjoy a soup & cheese lunch.

Josephine MacLeod