

# St John's



# Annual Report 2024

# St John's Annual General Meeting

will be held on

## Sunday 17th November 2024

in the Church, immediately after the 10:30am Eucharist. The meeting will be an opportunity to hear more about this last year in the Church's life, and plans for the future.

### Agenda

- Welcome and apologies
- Commemoration of the departed
- Approval of the Minutes of last year's AGM
- Associate Rector's Report
- Lay Representative Report
- Church Reports
- Presentation of Annual Accounts 2023/24
- Election of Lay Representative and Alternate Lay Representative
- Election of constituent Vestry member
- Update on vacancy processes and procedures
- Re-appointment of Auditor
- AOCB
- The Lord's Prayer

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## Associate Rector's Introduction

It is my pleasure to present the church's Annual Report, covering the period of our financial year (1st August 2023 to 31st July 2024). This report details the activities, ministries, and finances during this period and indicates something of what might lie before us in the years to come.

This particular annual report is unusual, of course, as it is published during a period of vacancy. We find ourselves at a pause – a sort of breath between two chapters of the great story of this church's life – and at a point at which we have time deliberately to reflect on who we are and where we are going. I wrote in the e-news recently of the invitation for us all to contribute to this work – like gardeners tending their garden – and this report is itself part of that process. These pages detail the myriad ways in which this church has sought to serve God and the community around us over the past year, and it provides us with an opportunity to think and reflect upon who we are now, and who we might be being called to become.

I would like to offer my thanks, on behalf of us all, to all those whose service, talents, time, and dedication this report bears witness to. St John's is blessed with rich and varied congregation, all of whom contribute to the life and identity of St John's in some way or another. We also have an enormously capable staff team, whose work we daily reap the fruits of but rarely see: our office staff Iain Herbert and Helen Syme, our verger David Rowley and cleaner Denise Tweedy, our sacristan Fred Mobek, and our event managers Sam Addis, Mark Taylor, Raimondo Collu, and Oscar Kelley. We are blessed, too, with a wonderful and dedicated clergy team in Clephane Hume, Eileen Thompson, Tim Tunley, Jolyon Mitchell, and Kenneth Boyd, whose ministry continues to inspire and enrich us. Our thanks also go to our musicians, David Goodenough, Peter Horsfall, and all the members of the choir, and in particular to David, who leaves us at the end of this year, and whose musicianship, generous leadership, and warmth of character have nourished our community so greatly over the past few years. Finally, our thanks go to Markus Duenzkofer, whose final year of ministry this report details. As the following pages bear witness, St John's is a growing church with a rich variety of ministries and, I believe, a bright future ahead of it. Markus' leadership runs through this report like words in a stick of rock, and we record formally our thanks to him and our prayers and best wishes for his ministry in the years to come.

The final years of Markus' ministry were governed by a mission statement, agreed by the Vestry, and which still stands on the home page of our website. The 'five St John's Amens' state that it is our mission as a church to

1. Affirm and deepen the faith of the members of the congregation
2. Make new disciples of Jesus Christ
3. Embrace the care of creation and advocacy for eco-justice
4. Nurse the wounds of those who are hurting in body, mind, or soul
5. Speak truth to the powers of the world

As this has been our guiding mission statement, it makes sense to consider the past year in the light of those five principles according to which we have strived to follow God's call.

*Affirm and deepen the faith of the members of the congregation*

The daily rhythm of prayer and worship continues to be the bedrock of our identity and purpose as a church. Alongside our regular Sunday and weekday services, we have added two new eucharistic services – the Ark on Friday mornings and a Thursday morning 8.30am eucharist – both of which have brought in members to the church. We have also returned to holding morning prayer from Tuesday to Friday in the church, which has nurtured a small but faithful congregation of regular worshippers, most of whom work in the city centre. I'm deeply grateful to the large numbers of people who have helped to lead us in worship across our many services this year through reading, leading intercessions, serving, welcoming, gathering the

collection, livestreaming, chalice-bearing, stewarding, and much more besides. We've also been richly blessed throughout, as I mentioned above, by our choir, without whose music our worship would be much the poorer. We've also continued to deepen our faith together by the many small groups that meet throughout the year, the activities of which are detailed in this report. EFM, the St John's Forum, the Book Groups, the Wednesday Young Adults Group, and many more all contribute in their own ways to the diversity and variety of prayer and worship in our common life together.

*Make new disciples of Jesus Christ*

The register of services indicates that our regular congregation numbers are now above pre-pandemic levels, and that we are now witnessing numbers not seen for quite some time. This rise owes itself in part to the number of new young families that have joined us over the past year, and also to the Wednesday Young Adults Group, which continues to grow in number. My thanks go especially to Lynda Anderson and Hazel Reilly, who have organised so much of the children's activities this year, and also to all those who have helped cook and prepare for the Wednesday group. Though fewer in number, we've also welcomed a number of recent retirees to the congregation, as well as some familiar faces from years past. These are promising signs indeed, and are testament to much of the life and energy that has characterised St John's over the past year. Notwithstanding our recent healthy numbers, however, St John's nevertheless finds itself in a broader post-pandemic culture of steep congregational decline, and continuing to welcome new members must remain a high priority for us if we are to fulfil our mission for years to come.

*Embrace the care of creation and advocacy for eco-justice*

As with many churches, the care of creation and advocacy for eco-justice has been something that has continued to challenge us. Our season of Creationtide in September 2023 brought us some profound preaching and moving liturgies of penance, and we've worked hard this year to improve our energy usage as a church. As the report of the Green Ginger Group in these pages indicates, however, there is more work to be done here, and if we are truly to make the care of creation a core facet of our identity and mission going forward, it will need much prayer and perhaps even a renewed sense of purpose among us.

*Nurse the wounds of those who are hurting in body, mind, or soul*

There are many ways – too numerous to detail in their entirety – in which St John's has nursed the wounds of the hurting over the course of this year. From the funerals held in the church, to the many visits to hospitals and care homes, through to each pastoral encounter conducted by a guardian or member of the church during opening hours over the course of this year, St John's has ministered to the wounded and hurting in countless ways. A particular highlight of the year in this respect has been the founding and indeed flourishing of the Welcome Space. Every Monday afternoon, St John's now welcomes around 20-30 people into the church for a bowl of soup and a conversation in the warmth. My thanks to all those who have made this vital new ministry possible. We also continue to support the Bethany Christian Trust in their ministry to the homeless, and St Salvador's have thanked us once again for our donations to their wonderful Foodbank. Beyond these ministries, the church continues to host numerous 12-step groups and charitable organisations throughout the week, and the Cornerstone Centre is used regularly by various NHS groups. There is always more to be done, of course, and together we might begin to think more strategically about what our priorities are and how best we can honour them over the year to come, but in all one of the great joys of working at St John's is witnessing the sheer volume of people that come within our walls looking for help and support. May we always continue to serve them.

*Speak truth to the powers of the world*

As ever, we've continued to host a variety of thought-provoking murals this year, and we remain well-known around the city for that reason. My thanks go to all those who have made the murals a reality over

the past twelve months. Again, however, there is more to be done here and it might be worth our while thinking again about how St John's can make the most of our position of such prominence in the city centre, and thereby (re)capture a sense of being a place of proclamation.

As the financial report in this document indicates, we have been ably led by our treasurer, Kevin Ludwick, over the period of the past financial year and we record formally our thanks to him and the finance committee for all their careful work over the past twelve months. Under Kevin's leadership, and alongside Iain Herbert and the newly revitalised finance committee, St John's' financial health has continued to stabilise in the wake of the pandemic and the recent period of soaring interest rates. There is no room for complacency, however; St John's' 2025 budget still anticipates a significant deficit which has been produced by 'no special circumstances', as Kevin notes, and notwithstanding our growing congregation regular giving has continued to fall over recent years. Kevin and his team have established a roadmap to ensure that 'our 2026 budget might reasonably provide for a surplus', but we will need to think hard as an entire congregation about how we support ourselves financially if we are not only to survive but flourish in the years to come.

It remains only, then, for me to thank you all once again for all you have contributed to St John's over the past year. We do, as I mentioned above, find ourselves in a natural pause in our communal life together, but we remember together that 'the one who calls is faithful' (1 Thess 5.24), and trust that this report's work of self-reflection and discernment might bear the fruit of His kingdom. My prayer for us as we gather for this AGM is that we would give thanks for all the joy and life these pages bear witness to, and continue to trust in God's guidance and goodness for the years to come.

With love in Christ,

David

## Bethany Outreach Work

The commitment from St John's Church to the work of Bethany in providing an evening meal for the homeless continues at the Hub Hotel in Haymarket. The team of volunteers under the leadership of Fiona Mcluckie provided four nights of catering last year and the numbers of clients was about fifty per night. It is very humbling to hear the complexity and tragedies that have affected the clients, but mental health issues, drugs and alcohol, domestic upset, immigration and financial hardship are all common themes.

Food is prepared and cooked at Gorgie Daley Stenhouse Church, close to Tynecastle stadium, usually two choices of main course including a vegetarian dish and puddings. In addition a large amount of milk is provided for their breakfast.

The food is transported in special containers by a nominated driver to the Hub where the servers plate up the food for the clients and clear up afterwards. This is the sole contact with the clients who often take their food back to their hotel rooms.

Our team of volunteers has been very loyal over the years and I am very pleased to report that this year we have recruited some new faces.

Volunteering involves buying and preparing the food, driving or serving and clearing up. New volunteers are very welcome to join us in the work which is one of our critical outreach commitments

Sadly, I cannot update any data from last year, as Bethany have not produced their annual report for 2023, but it is very obvious from recent communications with Bethany, that the need for the service shows no sign of dwindling

*Tony Falconer*

## Church Cleaning (Holy Dusters)

There is a small group (sometimes very small) who clean the church on Wednesdays after the 11 o'clock Eucharist. We polish the brass, vacuum and, when there are enough people, dust. These Holy Dusters desperately need more volunteers. You do not need to commit to every Wednesday, but come when you are free.

*Grace Durham*

## Coffee Time

Coffee and tea are served in the hall after the 1030 Eucharist. We have enough volunteers to have a rota of people organising coffee and tea about every six or seven weeks but more volunteers would be very welcome.

*Grace Durham*

## Cornerstone Bookshop

Dear Members of St John's,

As most of you will already know, after over 30 years trading, it is with great sadness that we have to announce the time has come to close the Cornerstone Bookshop. Trading has been challenging for some years, particularly since the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis, and while our sales have been rising slowly, they are showing no sign of returning to sustainable levels. Unfortunately, we have been operating at a loss since Covid and the charity's reserves are running out. That means, if we continue, we will no longer be able to meet our financial commitments. We have therefore decided to start taking steps to wind up the charity and Cornerstone Bookshop will cease trading by the end of the year.

We are extremely grateful for all the support given to us by St John's from the shop's inception and are delighted to hear that you are planning on opening a smaller bookshop within the church at some point next year.

But most of all, we would like to thank all of you, our St John's customers, for your loyalty over the years. We have loved the conversations and good cheer and will miss you all. In these final weeks, we would really appreciate your continued support which will help to ensure we continue to fulfil all our financial obligations. So please come and visit us – we have some great books and gifts for Christmas. We very much look forward to welcoming you and thanking you in person.

Best wishes

*The Cornerstone team*

## Fabric Committee

One of the Fabric Committee's strategic priorities is to help move our buildings towards net zero, and to this end we commissioned energy surveys of both the Church and the Rectory. Among various recommendations for reducing heat loss at the Rectory, the most cost-effective is to install secondary glazing. Once the future of the Rectory is decided, this will be a high priority. Rather disappointingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the survey of the Church showed there is little we can practically do to reduce heat loss; we are concentrating on making all lighting LEDs (almost complete) and on investigating the possibility of installing solar panels on the roof.

*Alan Martin*

## Finance

### ***Results for the year***

The financial statements for the year are set out within the audited accounts and include both the results of the Church and the consolidated results of the Church and CDEL.

The deficit is set to continue and St John's 2025 budget anticipates an £11,100 loss. This is of concern: there are no "special circumstances" that produce this. The deficit would be even greater were our clergy costs not reduced as a result of our Rector's departure; the inevitable delays in bringing staffing back to normal and other windfall savings. In fact without those factors our deficit might be forecasted to over £30,000

Put simply we need to increase our revenues and exercise caution with our costs (particularly any new financial commitments)



There is however good news in terms of our ability to do that

Our reserves are relatively healthy: at £120,000. Our reserving policy is to maintain cash reserves of some six months of our operational costs. These allow us to absorb the forecasted deficit comfortably. Moreover our congregation is growing, income from hire of church facilities continues to increase and CDEL has real opportunities to boost its revenues from the present estate

Perhaps we should see the new financial year as a period during which we might address various challenges around revenues and costs so that our 2026 budget might reasonably provide for a surplus.

To do this Vestry has established a revitalised Finance Committee whose membership comprises:

Kevin Ludwick (Chair)

Wren Hoskyns

David Clarke

Sandra Frost

David Bagnall

Iain Herbert

The Committee has been empowered to work on our revenue and costs challenges in the following projects (each of which a member is leading and will update Vestry)

Revenue

1. Cornerstone Bookshop relocation - Kevin

We will continue to support the bookshop by forgiving rent and the repayment of monies owed to us until January 1<sup>st</sup> 2025. From that point the space they currently occupy will be freed up to be let on a commercial basis. The bookshop will relocate to the back of the church probably in two phases: a short term reduced operation requiring little investment / building work and then a later bigger operation requiring some capital spend (but not until St Johns is operating sustainably in surplus).

2. Renegotiation of existing commercial tenant rates – Wren

Iain has built strong relationships with CDEL's existing tenants. It should be remembered that while their rents are at a discount to market, those rents were set at a price to attract them to new and unproven business premises. However now the time is ripe to renegotiate rents on a more commercial basis. Wren will support Iain in the conduct of those negotiations during the new financial year

3. Exploring potential commercial revenue opportunities as agreed with Vestry – Sandy

None of these will begin let alone produce revenue in this financial year but they are an important part of our sustainability going forward. There is a number of proposals ranging from enhancing the forecourt by Lothian Road for small commercial vendors to the development of our church tower as a tourist attraction! An important thing to remember is we don't have a lot of cash to invest. Therefore large complex and expensive projects need a development partner who might provide capital and development expertise while simpler ideas need real discipline in terms of cost outlay

These initiatives require a short form plan that can be presented to vestry and communicated with the wider congregation before being commissioned

4. Stewardship program (regular giving) – David

St John's is growing in terms of congregation size and yet congregational giving has declined. Vestry has agreed to initiate a stewardship campaign during the Easter period. The Finance Committee will support this with the provision of clear compelling financial information that shows this and allows the congregation to see the good use to which their generosity is put.

We believe that the financial arguments for giving are strong but they need to be made clearly particularly to those who might be new to the church.

This initiative alone might be sufficient to transform our revenues and put our finances on a sustainable footing.

#### 5. The Organ - David

At the beginning of the financial year it was thought that a speedy refurbishment of the organ – such an integral part of worship in our church – was a critical project that might cost as much as 1.2 million pounds

It now appears that the costs are nowhere near as high and more importantly might be deferred for up to 5 years.

This is incredibly good news: trying to raise funds in the short term for organ refurbishment would seriously hamper our plans to increase revenues from sustainable giving more generally

We need to plan a fund raising and grant seeking campaign that might begin in say 2027 and in that time set aside monies to fund the acquisition of a temporary digital solution (which might be sold on when refurbishment is completed in say 2028/29)

#### ***Going concern***

We are pleased to report that we continue to fully service the CAF loan (capital and interest). The increase in interest rates has meant that we have taken the prudent decision to pay down more of the capital balance to reduce the interest charges. These funds were secured through the sale of the Cornwall Street flat.

We would like to record our thanks to the numerous parties who have helped us financially during the year especially the congregation who continue to provide essential income through donations, regular giving and legacy offers. These funds enable both St John's and CDEL to cover all monthly commitments (staffing, facilities, loan payments, quota) and invest in repairs and maintenance to the building property.

#### ***Reserves policy***

The total unrestricted reserves of the Church held at 31 July 2024 is shown in the audited accounts. Our reserves policy is to hold 6 months of normal running costs in the general fund.

#### ***Investment policy***

The Vestry is authorised by its Constitution to invest unrestricted funds in securities suitable for the investment of Trust Funds, including heritable property and investment in a wider range of securities can be made upon the advice of a qualified financial adviser.

Vestry is currently satisfied that the forward projections provided by CDEL give confidence that the venture will be able to service both the formal loan and any current account inter-entity balance arising due to the Church. Accordingly, Vestry continue to be of the opinion that no provision for impairment is necessary within the Church's financial statements.

#### ***Grant making policy***

The Rector and Associate Rector are both provided with modest discretionary funds with which to make small grants to individuals in need

*Kevin Ludwick*

## Flowers

We try to have a large arrangement of fresh flowers at Easter and Christmas and other big occasions. At other times we use silk flowers. Fresh flowers from private gardens or the grounds of St John's are often in the porch to welcome people to St John's. We welcome volunteers to help on big occasions, especially Christmas and Easter. Contact the office if you are interested. Donations towards fresh flowers at Christmas and Easter are appreciated. These can be sent to the office.

*Grace Durham*

## Garden Group

The garden group sadly does not exist as I am the sole member who attends to the tubs on Terrace and the flower beds. David the Verger looks after the grass areas and helps me when needed.

*Fred Mobek*

## Green and Ginger Group

The Green and Ginger Group started this year by reviewing the church's 'Check Up and Recommended Actions' document produced in 2022 which followed the format recommended by Eco-Congregations Scotland. It was then agreed that our actions should aim to align with the guidance provided by the newly created Scottish Episcopal Church's Net Zero Toolkit which advises a focus on energy efficiency whilst also providing direction on zero waste actions and caring for creation. There was some progress in relation to energy efficiency assessment, however, it was difficult to maintain momentum this year. It was agreed that on an ongoing basis, wherever possible, group members will aim to embed sustainable practices (e.g. reducing paper use, energy efficiency, recycling, and purchasing environmentally friendly products) within their own areas of influence within the church.

*Elinor Blair*

## Just Festival

August 2024 saw the Just Festival put on a reduced program, focusing primarily on the question of what a 'just festival' might look like in years to come. As the Just Festival looks to the future, however, and thinks about how it might best live out its charitable aims, the Board of Trustees has taken the decision not to *close*, but to apply to be reabsorbed back into St John's. As minutes from the Board's September meeting records: 'considering the challenging funding environment over recent years, which has affected our ability to deliver against our charitable mission and aims, the Board of Trustees have unanimously decided that it is in the best interest of Just Festivals to be formally dissolved and reabsorbed back into St. John's Church. This will help to maintain its core mission of social justice, with the potential for more resources'. What this might look like in future years is still yet to be decided in concrete terms, however the Vestry are already

actively exploring options for maintaining the 'DNA' of the Just Festival and reimagining how its mission might be borne out in years to come.

*David Bagnall*

## Lay Representative's Report

As lay representative for St. John's, Princes Street, I had the honour of attending the Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Edinburgh, Scottish Episcopal Church, on Saturday, February 24, 2024. For the second Synod meeting this year, which took place on Thursday evening, October 24, 2024, while I could not be physically present, I was able to follow proceedings through the live broadcast. I am currently away in Canada, attending to family matters and will return to Edinburgh in mid January. Again I found the Diocesan Synod to be an enriching insight into the management of the church and continue to be most impressed by the professional quality of the meetings and the reporting presented by strong Committees. There is a concerted effort to monitor the work of the various churches with an eye to funding projects, to develop a sense of community through improved communication that is up to date with changing technology, and to work towards Net Zero in regards to church buildings to do our work for climate change. There is also a look to the future in a 2025 proposal from the Diocesan Treasurer. The course offered for Lent 2025 looks most interesting. I hope to continue attending Synod and grow in my understanding of the significant role that being Lay Representative provides. Please feel free to contact me for further information.

*Nancy Van Kirk*

## Ministry Team

As the backup team to the stipendiary clergy, we five non-stipendiary ministers are involved in a variety of ways. We participate regularly in leading worship and preaching on Sundays and preside at weekday Eucharists. In addition to visiting and taking funerals, we offer pastoral support, where Clephane takes a leading role, and with her extensive knowledge of the congregation helps us all to keep abreast of pastoral needs. We are also actively employed in the Diocese, ecumenically and with other organisations: Eileen assists a variety of churches in vacancy as interim Pastor, while she and Clephane fill in as and when needed in other churches; Tim works with the Mission to Seafarers, Jolyon and Kenneth in University teaching. We all see our service at St John's as a joy and a privilege.

*Rev'd Prof Kenneth Boyd*

## Morning Book Group

Our group of friends from two congregations very much enjoy our monthly meetings to enjoy coffee and a chat and then to discuss the book of the month. The programme for the session was as usual a good and varied selection, including the novel *The Fair Botanists* set in the Botanic Gardens in 1822, the non-fiction book *Colditz* and the classic *Far From the Madding Crowd*. We do not always agree on the merits of the chosen book, but that makes for a good discussion.

*Muriel Madell*

## Music

Tricky to know precisely where to start with this year's music report: St. John's has embarked on a period of reflection and refreshment in the past few months. The protracted business of appointing a new Rector has been a prominently advertised commentary since the arrival of an Interim Pastor at the end of the summer. Less conspicuous perhaps, but I hope no less noteworthy, has been the efficiently and skilfully manoeuvred business of appointing a new Director of Music for our church, and I would like to begin by thanking everyone who has been involved in that appointment. The music at St. John's has, for so long now, maintained a unique status, long before my arrival but a status which I've enjoyed nourishing over the past nearly four years. Our music is such a key component of the mission of this church – a 'USP' if you like – and that appointment has been key. Now that it's been finalised, I'm confident that you'll all be in good hands. Personally, I feel like I'm handing on our music to a new Director in fine fettle: we have an outstanding, highly capable choir which continues to attract new talent; the music list is wide-ranging, challenging and relevant; and we continue to offer a full and generous music programme. We're not doing too badly, and it goes without saying that my thanks for everything that everyone – singers, organists, librarian (THE most important person!), Mistress of the robes, social sages, advisors, confidantes – is profound! We couldn't have achieved what we have this year without the generous gifts of time and talent which have been given. So, thank you!

Alongside the too-many-to-mention (and most of you heard them anyway!) musical highlights, the 'extra curricular' life of the choir has been hugely influential for us all once again. Life would fairly quickly become pretty dull if all we did was sing together! Our regular trips away are important for us in so many ways, whether it's to consolidate things musically or simply to enjoy time together without the pressure of performing. We've all enjoyed our usual diet of weekends away this year visiting new places, and they have been a valuable opportunity for new singers to tessellate amongst those who've been here longer, away from HQ.

In the interests of completeness, I do need to report on the inauspicious as well as all the good stuff! We do have one musical snag which isn't going to go away any time soon – the condition of our organ. No doubt it sounds splendid down in the church Sunday by Sunday, and that's down to the skill of the craftsmen who built it in the first place; but it's on its last legs! The departure of both Rector and Director of Music within a few months of one another was, I suppose, always going to derail any early progress which we were starting to make towards a solution; but please, St. John's, don't lose sight of just how important it is that you address its condition. It's an asset which sits both physically and metaphorically at the heart of our church and it's a critical component to the future of the music here. But, after the building itself, it's also our most expensive and valuable single asset, and there's no escaping that!

Finally, thank you! I arrived at St. John's at a tricky time, and in a bit of a hurry; right in the middle of Covid and at very short notice. At the time, I said I'd stay three months to help steady the ship, and I suppose the fact that I've stayed nearly twelve times longer than that means I must have enjoyed myself! It's been a privilege to lead the music in this incredible space for the past nearly four years. The memories will be plentiful, and I've enjoyed the challenges and the fulfilment that being the Director of Music of this amazing church has brought. Congregation, please do continue to support the music as you have so generously, and please don't forget that we also sing Choral Matins and Choral Evensong!

*David Goodenough*

## Operations

### Operations

Since the last report we have received confirmation that CAF Bank received the full payment from Cornwall Street flat meaning we are now paying £2,226 per month instead of £6,239 previously and a balance of circa £245,000 on loan remaining (April 2023). The sale of the Cornwall Street went through however there was a request for some remedial work from the purchaser. On inspection a few small tasks following works carried out by the damp proofing company were required and this was done for under £500.

We have now moved to have the church open regularly from 10am till 4pm for visitors which now also include Saturdays. This helps us start to capitalise on the ever increasing levels of tourism in Edinburgh and in particular the growing footfall in the West End. There is no doubt that the addition of the Johnny Walker Experience and the redevelopment of other units locally, including the hotel development at the end of Queensferry Street, all position us for more casual visits and increasing donations.

Bookings and use of the hall/facilities remains strong and is achieved mainly through

recommendation from previous users. The level of positive customer feedback remains at an excellent level with no complaints received during the course of this financial year. During this time we saw numerous event inquiries alongside our regular bookings allowing us scope to review our pricing strategy and implementing a suitable increase and again had no push back on this. Our annual event of the Craft Fair went ahead and proved to be the largest to date with over 60,000 people having passed through our gates. This confidence in both us and the growing market has led to the development of a Winter Fair which will be held this coming December for two weeks.

There is no doubt that the pressure of increasing costs has impacted on us as with every business over the past few years. This was particularly noticeable with the interest rate on the CAF loan which resulted in the significant majority in the increase in expenditure. This fragility in our ability to control costs has been now reduced considerably with the reduction of the CAF loan by two thirds. Overall costs have increased in general within St Johns by 29% however this is compensated by an increase in the income of 55%. While income looks promising a large part of this income was through a one off donation with general giving at best is static. Our staffing costs have increased however this reflects the level of activity and we saw the very welcome addition of Helen Syme in the office.

We are just about to receive the Quinquennial report for the Church and Rectory however in general we are on top of maintenance of all areas although there is general recognition that the Rectory is in need of some renovation work prior to the future appointment of a new Rector.

### CDEL

The annual craft fair is held on the terraces in August. This year, we electronically counted the footfall and we estimate that some 63,000 people visited our grounds in August.

The Cornerstone Centre is operated by the Charity's wholly owned trading subsidiary, Cornerstone Developments (Edinburgh) Limited (CDEL) which acts as landlord for the Terrace properties

including the café unit and managing the lets of the halls and other facilities. Glenfinlas continue to lease the café unit from CDEL and have provided monthly income rental throughout the year. There has been a clear level of growth in their operation throughout the year although they are still to be open 7 days a week during the peak months. Given that the lease arrangement includes provision for a percentage take of revenue over a certain threshold, this arrangement has yet to see fruit. Both the One World Shop and Pulse have report a strong year of trade and continue to pay their rentals on time. This however has not been the case with the Bookshop who after much discussion with their Board and support from St Johns look to cease trading at the end of of this calendar year. The unit will become available for relet in January 2025 and we are in discussions with a number of interested parties.

As a premier staycation city, Edinburgh tourism is certainly increasing and we are ideally placed to take advantage of this. In particular we are seeing the Westend having a renaissance with the addition of the Johnny Walker Experience, a substantial new hotel development opposite and upgrading of the Caledonian Hotel commencing. We are also looking forward to our first Christmas Market this year in conjunction with 2D3D. With the support of the St John's Guardians, the Church was able to open more regularly for visitors which in turn, helped to increase footfall to the units on the lower terrace. The Hall rental inquiries have increased rising by 18% in the first part of 2024 with over 460 inquiries. We ended the year with income generation relatively flat but with active plans in place to expand operations creatively as well as some renegotiation of current leases commenting. Although our vision is long-term, every step forward has to be viable for the short-term and we continue to resist expenditure that is not aimed at generating a greater income.

*Iain Herbert*

## Pastoral Visitors

The Pastoral Visitors continue to be very active in this important ministry within the Congregation and the Clergy really appreciate the valuable support and connections that Pastoral Visitors provide. We are always in need of more volunteers as new members join our church community. We plan to hold the Pastoral Visitor Group Meetings in the Spring – these enable PVs to share their experiences and any concerns they may have, with the additional support of the Group Chaplain where possible.

*Phyll Hoskyns-Abraham*

## Publications

The Cornerstone Magazine is published four times a year and has a four-member editorial team. It includes St John's news, articles about members of the congregation, obituaries and articles that we think might be of interest to readers. If you have an idea for an article, please talk to one of the editorial team. Grace Durham, Catie Gladstone, Robert Philp and Jeanette Rennie The MRU is published online eight times a year in the months when there is no magazine. It contains news about the congregation, forthcoming events and general information about what is going on in the church.

*Jeanette Rennie, assisted by Robert Philp and Grace Durham*

## Sacristan

Some members may not know what the Sacristan does. The Sacristan is in charge of the “vestry”, the room next to the High Altar. Duties are as follows:

- changing pulpit falls and Altar frontals to appropriate colour for the season, e.g. green, red.
- Candles, advents candles and Paschal (Baptismal) candles
- Wafers, wine, cleaning silverware
- Cleaning Altar cloths (changed every month)
- Keeping the vestry clean
- Looking after Vestments worn by the clergy

There are also some other duties which are attended to when they arise.

*Fred Mobeke*

## Safeguarding

The SEC Safeguarding Team continue to support St John's in keeping us abreast of changes to legislation especially for those of us engaged in ministry to vulnerable groups. I attended a training update at OSP earlier this year, it was good with meet other safeguarding reps from churches in the diocese and share good practice. From January 2025 new legislation will be coming into force regarding PVG (Protection of Vulnerable Groups) checks for all of us who undertake regulated work for St Johns. The SEC Safeguarding Team have been carrying out a review of all PVG holders and St John's will be informed of anyone whose certificate needs to be renewed. It is very reassuring that we have such excellent support for these important matters in keeping us on the right side of the law.

*Elaine Ford*

## Second Chapter Book Group

Second Chapter is a lively, friendly book group meeting on the fourth Tuesday of the month ( except Dec) in the Boardroom 2-3pm and is open to all.

This year we have read

*The Woman in White*, Wilkie Collins

*A Gentleman in Moscow*, Amor Towles

*Some Luck*, Jane Smiley

*Apple Never Fall*, Liane Moriarty

*The Island of Missing Trees*, Elif Shafak

*Emma*, Jane Austen

*A Terrible Kindness*, Jo Browning Wroe

*The Maiden*, Kate Foster

*Great Uncle Harry*, Michael Palin

*The Ballad Of Peckham Rye*, Muriel Spark

Contact Susan Spilsbury for more details



*Susan Spilsbury*

## Servers – Sub deacons

Servers play an important part in the Scottish Episcopal Church; they are lay Assistants to Clergy during a Christian Liturgy. Here at St John's the servers and sub deacon duties are combined as they participate in the Liturgy during the Service. Also, they "set up" the Altar for Communion – Eucharist and clear the Altar afterwards. In St John's the server – Sub deacon wears an Alb. At the end of the Eucharist one of the servers washes the silver items and puts them away in the "safe". I am responsible for making up the rota for the year and giving some training to new ones who join.

*Fred Mobek*

## Social Committee

After being dormant since Covid, the Social Committee was reconvened in early 2024. The inaugural event of the new committee was a Pimm's Party following Eucharist on Easter Day. The weather was kind, allowing the use of the Dormitory. This was followed in June by the Tea Party where about 50 members of the Congregation were entertained to afternoon tea and the musical talents of George Harris and Phil Coad. The Social Committee also, with widespread help from members of the congregation, assisted with the musical, catering and general arrangements for Markus's leaving Ceilidh, where about 80 people danced enthusiastically to the strains of da Hooley Ceilidh Band.

Further events are planned in 2025.

*Paul Sweetnam*

## St John's Forum

The Forum has been active during the last year, regularly provoking lively debate. We broke new ground with a meeting on painter Henry Raeburn (buried in the Dormitory) when we were fortunate to be guided by world authority Duncan Thomson, and moved on to sessions on Plato's Symposium, Christmas poems, the ups and downs of Corporate Law and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, with the help of David McNaughton, Nick Grier and Nancy van Kirk.

Our Ministry team was called upon for three sessions, as David gave us a brilliant overview of the issues pre-occupying the Anglican Communion today, Markus shared his enthusiasm for theologian and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and finally Jolyon delighted us with an illustrated presentation on Passion Plays. These plays seem to be steadily growing in popularity. Expect a book on this topic in the not-too-distant future.

We are certainly fortunate in the range of talent that exists within the St John's community, and are grateful to all these for sharing their wisdom with us.

*Robert Philp*

## St John's Sacristy Guild

The Guild has been looking after the Linen (Purificators) for a very long time and plays a very important part in the life of St John's throughout the year. On behalf of the church, I sincerely thank them all for the work they do.

*Fred Mobek*

## The Guardians

The Guardians are in the church in pairs from 12-2pm on Mondays Tuesdays Thursdays & Fridays There are 16 regular guardians and 6 on the reserve list We would much appreciate it if more people wanted to join us, we meet many interesting people from all over the world Numbers of visitors in winter are about 30-80 a day but by May it is often over 100 and increases throughout the summer Visitors come from all over the world and many want to chat as well as have information about Edinburgh, Scotland & the church Information is available in the church in many different languages and we also spend time talking to visitors if they want this. We have a file with information about some of the people who worshiped here in the past.

Guardians are well supported by Fred & Davie in the church and Ian & Helen in the office

*Josephine MacLeod*

## The Vestry

The vestry meet an average of once a month, working through decisions, opportunities and challenges that arise. We are blessed with a varied group, lifelong members who know history of the church through to newer congregants bringing fresh ideas.

Our decisions are informed by the findings and recommendations of our committees, like Fabric, the expertise of our office team and the guidance of our clergy.

Major focuses of this year have been Markus's departure, the Cornerstone bookshop, and the financial requirements of the church post-pandemic.

*Rachael Murphy*

## The Ark

The Ark service has been running for over a year. Pre-school children, their carers and adults enjoy gathering together in the chapel on Friday mornings. We love bells, shakers and waving ribbons in a songful celebration of God with us.

There is a beautiful rhythm in the way children assist and participate in the Eucharist. This is such a great way to introduce that church is fun , a bit chaotic and essentially coming together to make a joyful sound.

*Lynda Anderson*

## Theological Book Group

Our group continues to thrive. We take it in turns to choose books and to lead meetings. As our make-up is ecumenical and our interests are varied, this leads to some interesting titles and lively discussions. Recently we looked at the sounds of worship, from music to speech to silence, and are about to explore Jesus and his challenges to power and authority. Once a year we share poetry. And at last we are hoping to start meeting in person again after months on zoom.

*Eileen Thompson*

## Tuesday Book Group

Over the years this group has developed. Despite having lost our coordinator, Val Lobban, we have been able to continue and offer support to one another as well as very good discussions on the books. Originally purely St John's people, we now draw our membership from a wider circle. Mainly we read novels but usually add a travel or biographical book to the mix and we include a meeting on poetry

*Eileen Thompson*

## Walking Group

We are an open group, and always happy to see anyone who may be interested in walking with 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 and easier alternative.

We put together a programme of walks for the whole year and before each walk I email group members with 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. Our Christmas walk is always followed by lunch where we are often joined by former or occasional walkers. Our Christmas 2023 lunch was held in the Cornerstone and was so successful that we are repeating the venue this year.

If you are interested in coming on a walk or would like more information, please 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

It is now about 25 years since Rt Rev John Armes, then the Rector at St John's, agreed to soup and cheese lunches being started on the first Wednesday of each month as an experiment. They are still continuing. It is a good way to meet other members of the congregation in an informal setting and we would be delighted if more people felt like joining us.

*Josephine MacLeod*

## Wednesday Young Adults' Group

We meet as a group each Wednesday evening for dinner and conversation, or the occasional pub quiz. Cooking for each other and welcoming guests are some of the ways we practice hospitality. One example of this was earlier in the year, when Mark our Primus joined us for dinner at the rectory. We've welcomed a lot of new faces over the year and are always happy for more people to join us.

*Rachel Gwilt*

## Welcome Space

Since the conception of the Welcome Space in October 2023 to now, it has gone from strength to strength. The number of guests coming in started small, between 5-10 people per week. However we are now consistently welcoming more than 20 people each week. Each week volunteers arrive early to set up the tables and chairs and lay out an array of delicacies, always involving soup, tea and coffee and regularly featuring delicious home baking and fruit. Then between 4 and 6pm the doors are opened and guests are welcomed in to eat, drink, chat and enjoy the space. There are regular comments from guests saying that the church is the most beautiful dining room they've ever been in - a profound theological statement if ever there was one. It is especially telling that we were required to change the name of the group midway through the year. The initiative was originally named the "Warm Space", as it was intended to cover just the colder months of the year; however as we reflected we saw the distinct value of what the space offered and decided to continue running it throughout the year, meaning the name needed updating to the "Welcome Space". It is a vital ministry to welcome people, and it is all thanks to the keen efforts of our volunteers that we are able to offer people a safe space within our beautiful church.

*Jess White*