

St John's



Annual Report 2025

St John's Annual General Meeting

will be held on

Wednesday 26th November 2025

in the Daniel Sandford Room of Cornerstone Centre, accompanied by refreshments. The meeting will be an opportunity to hear more about this last year in the Church's life, and the Rector's plans for the future.

Agenda

- Welcome and apologies
- Commemoration of the departed
- Approval of the Minutes of last year's AGM
- Rector's Presentation
- Church Reports
- Presentation of Annual Accounts 2024/25
- Election of Lay Representative and Alternate Lay Representative
- Re-appointment of Auditor
- Any other competent business
- The Lord's Prayer

St John's relies upon the generosity of its congregation to support its expanding life and mission.

As you read about the increasing activity and reach of the church, we hope you will be inspired and encouraged to review your own level of giving.

If you would like to set up a new standing order to give regularly to the church, then please contact Helen Syme on events@stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk or on 0131 229 7565. The office will give you details of the church's bank account which you can use to set up a standing order with your own bank. Or visit our Stewardship page at www.stewardship.org.uk/partners/StJohnsEdinburgh to make a one-off payment or set up a monthly donation.

If you have a current standing order to the church that you would like to increase, please contact your bank or use online banking to amend it.

If you are a UK tax payer (and pay more tax than is claimed back under the Gift Aid scheme in any financial year), please ensure that the church has received a signed Gift Aid declaration. Please contact the Helen Syme for a Gift Aid form. This does not have to be renewed every year. If you have sent us a Gift Aid declaration and cease to pay enough tax, however, you must inform us that Gift Aid on your donations can no longer be claimed.

Please email office@stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk or drop a note into the church office to advise of any changes in your level of giving, so that we can keep track of giving.

Thank you

office@stjohns-edinburgh.org.uk

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Rector's Report

This year has been like no other in the life of our church. When the year began (on the 1st of August 2024), the Rev'd Markus Dünzkofer still had 18 days of his rectorship left to serve, and when it finished (on the 31st of July 2025), I had been appointed rector only 15 days previously. For the intervening 332 days, of course, the church was in a period of vacancy, and it is this period of vacancy that has dominated the life of the church over the period that this report chronicles.

Vacancies can, of course, be difficult times in the life of a church. As we know, congregations can grow tired of the long months of uncertainty, and people may drift away as initiative and direction grind. It's for this reason that I'm so profoundly grateful to all of you for putting your shoulders to the wheel and helping to make our own period of vacancy not only bearable, but even a time of growth and flourishing. As these pages detail, we have much to be thankful for in the year that has been. There are too many good news stories detailed within the pages of this report to highlight here, but a few headlines warrant noting in particular. Attendance at services has continued to grow and communion numbers are up, even on last year's increase, with Christmas and Easter having been particularly busy. Volunteering numbers have also increased dramatically and outreach initiatives such as the Welcome Space and the Ark have continued to attract new members. Our choir, too, has enjoyed a new lease of life following the appointment of Giles Longstaff in January, and more and more young adults and students in particular are finding their way into our community. Alongside all of this, and most importantly, my own sense of this year is that we have grown *spiritually*, and that St John's is increasingly the kind of place that people want to *be in* and *belong to*.

Much of this, of course, owes itself to the smooth running of the vacancy processes themselves, and our especial thanks go to Michael Barlowe, who took on the mantle of leading us through such processes, and whose warmth, wisdom, and good humour helped to make them not only functionally effective, but also spiritually and communally enriching. Michael's report, starting on page 19, details in greater depth how the particular activities and undertakings unfolded, but it's

important to note here that the process of pausing, praying, and thinking deeply together about what sort of church we want to be and how God might be calling us to grow and flourish, has been deeply impactful for us as a church and community.

As we stand on the threshold of a new year, then, and indeed a new season, we can say with confidence that we have a strong foundation upon which to build. The work of congregational discernment has enabled us to think clearly about the direction we want to go in, and we rest upon the firm foundation of a growing, active, and engaged congregation. And yet, there are nevertheless challenges that face us going forward. We exist in the broader context of steep congregational decline, for instance, and if we are to continue to buck the trend, we will need to think hard about how we continue to welcome new members and grow our community. Much of our church fabric, too, is in need to repair and complex decisions await us with regards to items such as the organ. Most importantly, we continue to show a year-on-year deficit once depreciation is taken into account, this year of around £30,000, and although measures have been taken by the CDEL board to address this, there is no room for complacency going forward. As you read about the life and witness of St John's in the pages of this report, then, could I ask that you use this opportunity to review your level of giving?? Details are given on page 3 of how to set up a standing order regularly, donate via the Stewardship platform, or change your current one, or ensure that we are collecting Gift Aid (where applicable) on your donations.

In all, then, St John's stands on the threshold of a new chapter in its life, and I will be saying more about this in a presentation at the Annual General Meeting itself. As you review the following pages, however, which detail the life, activities, and witness of our church over the past twelve months, I encourage you to thank God for all that has been given in the life of St John's this year. On behalf of us all, too, I would like to thank publicly all those to whose service, talents, time, and dedication this report bears witness. 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 staff team Iain Herbert, Helen Syme, David Rowley, Denise Tweedy, and Sylvia

Chalmer, our Sacristan Fred Mobeck, and our event support Mark Taylor, Sam Addis, and Raimondo Collu. We are blessed, too, with a wonderful and dedicated clergy team in Clephane Hume, Eileen Thompson, Tim Tunley, Jolyon Mitchell, Mike Fuller, Michael Barlowe, and Kenneth Boyd, whose ministry continues to inspire and enrich us. Our thanks also go to our musicians, and especially to Giles Longstaff, whose first few months this report details, and who has been a wonderful addition to our community.

And, finally, thank you for taking the time to read this report and for being part of St John's. The future into which God is calling St John's is, I believe, very bright, but it will take the prayers and offerings of us all if we are to get there. Do pray for St John's, then, and be assured of my own for you both now and in the future.

David Bagnall

Church Cleaning (Holy Dusters)

There is a regular cleaning team in the church after the 11am Eucharist on Wednesdays (about 11:30). We polish brass, dust, vacuum and generally try to make the church look a bit better. We welcome new volunteers on a regular basis or just occasionally. We always need more in the period leading up to Christmas and Easter.

Grace Durham

Coffee Time

Coffee and tea are served in the hall after the 1030 Eucharist. We are looking for more volunteers for a rota of people organising coffee and tea about every six or seven weeks. We make coffee for the choir after Matins and members of the congregation are welcome to join the rota.

Grace Durham

Cornerstone Developments Edinburgh Ltd (CDEL)

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.

- In the year mentioned we commenced rent reviews for the tenant units starting with the well-established One World Shop. As part of their contract there is a built-in review period which allowed us to discuss their current rental with a view to increasing in line with inflation and other factors. After a meeting with their representatives a mutually agreeable increase has been applied.
- Glenfinlas, the operators of the Red Cockerel Cafe, have reported their best season to date increasing their takings across the majority of the year. Their contract with us provides for a profit share once the base target is achieved and this will be the first year we will receive a contribution from this. It should also be noted that their contract review will fall in early January 2026 and should allow us to look towards an increased monthly rent.
- Pulse have also reported a strong season of trade with them also receiving very positive reviews of their offer and quality. We have not experienced any issues with them opening the lower terrace after normal operating hours and they continue to be reliable tenants.
- The Cornerstone Bookshop Board sadly decided to finally close the operation on the lower terrace in December 2024. This resulted in them being able to pay any outstanding rent due and indeed they were able to make a donation with a view to opening a new bookshop in the future. They also passed over the residual stock for us to use in the future.
- The vacant unit was successfully let to Armchair Therapies who already operate from units in Giles Street in Leith. They were very much attracted to our site due to its position and green spaces. A number of other interested parties made us offers however they were not as commercially viable as the successful occupant.
- The Craft Fair continues to grow with an increased number of stall holders wishing to attend and 36,000 recorded visitors during the summer. They also held a Christmas Craft Fair for

the first time which proved successful and this is now to be repeated but for a two-week period in December 2025.

- The hall and general booking inquiries remain strong although the realised level has stayed level. This is partly due to conference organisers finding external funding difficult to obtain. We continue to look at ways of boosting the trade and income with some additional work planned starting in the end of November 2025. I am pleased to report the satisfaction levels of customers is high and many reflect on the support received from the Operations team.

Iain Herbert

Fabric Committee

Activities this year have centred around the Quinquennial Report, the renovation and upgrade works at the Rectory and an energy survey of the church. The Quinquennial Report is prepared every 5 years by our architect, in this case David Willis, and gives a comprehensive survey of the state of the church buildings, with recommendations and prioritisation of work needed over the next 5 years. As always, the Report is rather intimidating at first sight, with its long list of needed repairs. However, on closer examination, we find nothing that we need be too concerned about. David Willis says that the results are ‘nothing out of the ordinary’, and we have been able to deal already with the urgent recommendations, such as clearing rubbish from the crypt and patch-repairing the chapel roof. The remaining items will be addressed as part of planned maintenance over the next few years.

At the beginning of the vacancy, we looked carefully at the condition of the Rectory and decided that it needed a major upgrade to be fit for a new Rector. A huge amount of work has been done, including new downstairs kitchen and bathroom, repainting throughout, a full service of the heating system, and removal of worn carpet, replaced by polished wooden flooring or flagstones. Looking to the future, we do not want to find ourselves again in the position of needing to do such major renovations. We will put in place a system of 6-monthly inspections and deal with problems as they arise, and also draw up a multi-year

improvements plan. This will include a rolling programme of double glazing, to improve insulation and reduce energy costs.

In September, Business Energy Scotland came to do an energy survey of the church. The results were unsurprising, if a little disappointing – a building such as ours is simply not suitable for the standard range of insulation and energy saving measures recommended for modern buildings. It does at least give us comfort that we are not missing any obvious improvements. The only measure that seemed practical was to complete our switch to LED lighting, which is now complete.

Other items include the installation of a new alarm system for the church. It can be set and unset remotely, and so far, has given only two false alarms – probably down to church mice. After lengthy negotiations with the telephone company which rents space in the tower for its equipment, we agreed that in return for a small contribution from us they would upgrade the access system to meet current safety standards, so that the tower is now once again accessible.

Alan Martin

Finance

The Church and CDEL accounts show a small surplus (before depreciation) and this is set to continue, though managing costs this year will continue to be a focus. The trading subsidiary CDEL produced a trading surplus this year again but the net position was a loss after charging depreciation on the Cornerstone Centre asset and loan interest on the intercompany loan. However, we are encouraged by the significant turnaround in the financial stability of the subsidiary following the debt restructuring we undertook last year and we are optimistic that CDEL will deliver an operating profit for the first time in the new financial year.

The Finance Committee will be moving forward with in a number of areas listed below however its focus along with Vestry is continuing to build the reserves for the Church to provide a fund of circa £250,000.

This year focussed on the calling of a new Rector - a significant process which involved carrying out an extensive review of all our activities and ministries, along with the production of a 5-year financial plan.

Our recent work in realigning the intercompany loan has also helped significantly and our focus continues to be on the cost challenges while the loan is repaid. Vestry has established a revitalised Finance Committee empowered to work on the revenue and costs challenges in the following projects:

1. Stewardship campaign (regular giving)

With the new Rector in post, Vestry plans to initiate a stewardship campaign. The Finance Committee will support this with the provision of clear compelling financial information that allows the congregation to see the good use to which their generosity is put. The financial arguments for giving are strong but they need to be made clearly particularly to those who might be new to the church.

2. Renegotiation of existing commercial tenant rates

There are now strong relationships with CDEL's tenants, whose original rents were set at a price to attract them to new and unproven business premises. However, our focus this year is to continue to renegotiate these leases on a more commercial basis as they fall due.

3. Cornerstone Bookshop relocation

The bookshop, now closed in its previous form, will be relocated to the back of the church with the first phase planned as a short-term simple operation requiring little investment/building work. The plan in the future is to grow this into a bigger operation, requiring some capital spend but only once St John's is operating sustainably in surplus.

4. The Rectory

As part of the congregational review, we considered the rectory and its future. Due to an urgent need for some renovation and modernisation, a budget of £30k has been ring-fenced to carry out this work. We recognise some additional work may be required thereafter and a structured 5-year plan and related budget has been established.

5. Exploring potential commercial revenue opportunities as agreed with Vestry

These are likely to be an important part of our sustainability going forward. There are several proposals ranging from enhancing the forecourt by Lothian Road for small commercial vendors to the development of our church tower as a tourist attraction. We will focus on those opportunities which do not require a high injection of cash; investing in large, complex or expensive projects would need a development partner who could provide capital and development expertise while simpler ideas would require 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.

We are pleased to report that we continue to fully service the CAF loan (capital and interest). 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 help 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.

Kevin Ludwick / Iain Herbert

Flowers

It would be wonderful to have fresh flowers in St John's every Sunday but the cost would be prohibitive. Also there is no longer a flower market in Edinburgh: we have to have flowers delivered from Glasgow, adding to the cost. Therefore, we limit ourselves to having fresh flowers at Christmas, Easter and special occasions, like David's Institution or the Bishop's visit. At other times smaller arrangements are made up from garden flowers or flowers from the church grounds. We can also use the silk flowers in our store.

We always need volunteers for the big occasions - the more the merrier. Keep an eye on the e-news for details. Also, if you have flowers in your

garden and would like to share them, we would be delighted to use them in the church.

If you would like to donate to a fund for flowers for St John's, please send a cheque or bank transfer to St John's, making it clear that the funds are for flowers.

Grace Durham

Garden Group

The garden group has ceased to exist, so there are no reports as such. The garden is maintained by me and David, the General Assistant, who mainly concentrates on the grass areas, he does assist me if and when needed. We have a new garden shed in an arch nearer to the stairs on Lothian Road, which has more room to store items.

Fred Mobeck

Lay Representative's Report

No report submitted.

Ministry Team

The last year has seen some changes and developments in the ministry team. We were guided through these by our interim pastor Michael Barlowe and we thank him for his support and encouragement. Our fortnightly team meeting has been reinstated and this has led to a greater sense of cohesion. It has enabled us to pool our resources and use our complementary skills. This was particularly noticeable in the planning of the services and other events at Christmas and during Holy Week and Easter.

Although on paper we are strong numerically, we have been stretched during the vacancy. Mike and Jolyon both have demanding work commitments which take them away, though these in their turn bring an enrichment to the overall ministry - and Jolyon has been known to do late night dashes from Durham to Edinburgh to be here for an early Sunday service.

Kenneth continues his academic responsibilities and preaches regularly at both the main Eucharist and at Evensong.

Clephane works closely with David and Phyll Hoskins-Abrahall to ensure the pastoral ministry is maintained. She arranges visits and home communions and, herself, keeps a strong link with members now house-bound or in care homes.

Eileen still continues a peripatetic ministry, helping with other churches in need or in vacancy as indeed does Mike. Along with Michael Barlowe, she prepared a group of adults for baptism and confirmation.

We miss Tim and the contribution he makes. We wish him well during his time of illness and hope that he will be able to rejoin us in the not-too-distant future.

And we are delighted that Jack Holt is working with us more and more, preaching and leading worship.

We are all called on to help with weddings and funerals.

It is a busy and varied ministry, and one we all feel privileged to be called to. We are grateful to David for the opportunities he gives us and to the congregation for their support.

Eileen Thompson on behalf of the clergy team

Morning Book Group

The group enjoyed another good session discussing a variety of books. The programme is decided by members giving recommendations and then voting for nine from the long list produced. This always results in a good mixture of modern novels, non-fiction and classics. Among the books chosen for the session were Kate Atkinson's *Transcription*, *A Spy Among Friends* about Kim Philby by Ben Macintyre, and Daphne du Maurier's *Frenchman's Creek*. The new session has begun with another interesting programme.

Muriel Madell

Music

2025 was an action-packed year for music at St John's. Following my arrival on Christmas Eve last year, the choir immediately set about getting ready for two carol services within a month. Upon arriving, it was very quickly clear how important a role music plays within the mission of St John's as a whole, and it is with this in mind that we undertake to prepare all that we contribute to services.

A couple of highlights from the past year would be the challenging repertoire we undertook throughout August; Vierne's thundering Messe Solennelle, Bach's Lobet dem Herrn, and Harris' Bring Us, O Lord, God, were particular favourites of the choir. The Installation of David as Rector was a joyous occasion at which Mozart's equally joyous Mass in D was performed with much spirit. The choir also undertook a couple of weekends away from St John's, to Legerwood on Low Sunday, and to Troon at the end of October. These are important occasions in the choir's calendar both to consolidate music and to experience new/different places as a choir. I look forward to taking a more active role in the organisation of these in the future.

I would like to echo words of my predecessor (David Goodenough) in his report last year about the state of the organ. It is an instrument that sits at the heart of the Church, both physically and metaphorically, and it is a shame that it is not in a better state than we find it. I can assure it has not improved over the course of the year, and whilst the work that is required is going to be both expensive and not a quick fix, I can assure you that it is both necessary in making the music we perform as good as it can be, and is reflected in the church as a whole, as the organ is at the heart of the church. A thriving organ kindles a thriving choir and church.

Finishing the report, I would like to add a couple of words of thanks. To David and the ministry team, for their warm welcome and effort put in to the many services throughout the week. To the choir, and to Pete Horsfall and Claire Goodenough, for their hard-work and dedication, without which, we would not be able to perform the music we perform at the standard we do. And to the congregation, for their continued

support of music at St John's, at Eucharist, Choral Matins, and Choral Evensong.

Giles Longstaff

Operations

This year, the Operations remit focused on several key areas, building upon previous successes.

Financial Clarity and Management

- A significant effort was made to improve the clarity and accuracy of financial data, encompassing both reporting and budgeting processes.
- The intercompany loan, previously valued at over £3 million—a figure that represented the building costs for the hall and units from previous years—was addressed. Its existence complicated account readability and led to confusion regarding the financial position, particularly for CDEL.
- The matter has been resolved, allowing the intercompany loan to be written off, which provides a more transparent view of the current financial situation.
- Sincere appreciation is extended to Kevin, the Finance Committee, and the accountants and auditors for their dedicated work on this resolution.

Commercial and Retail Operations

- The Cornerstone Bookshop on the lower terrace ceased operations in January 2025 due to an unsustainable financial position for both the shop and St John's.
- The residual stock from the bookshop was transferred, with the intention of opening a new shop within the church later that year.
- A pop-up shop has been operated to gauge demand for a more extensive retail operation, which is planned to launch from Easter next year with a broader range of stock based on feedback from the congregation and visitors.

- The vacated unit was promptly let to Armchair Therapies, a company offering specialist advice and counselling, which presented the most stable offer among three potential operators. This new tenant complements their existing operation in Giles Street, Leith.

Trading Performance

- The Café reported its most successful year on record, exceeding income targets on a near-daily basis. This growth is attributed to an improved focus on customer care, product quality, and the popularity of on-site baked goods.
- Pulse also experienced sustained growth in its customer base, receiving positive reviews and recommendations. The presence of 'famous faces' dining at the venue has further enhanced its profile.
- The One World Shop recorded a good year, with increased trade during the festive period, supported by the introduction of a week-long Christmas Craft Fair.

Events and Lettings

- Event spaces remained busy and steady, though growth compared to the previous year was minimal.
- Inquiry levels have increased, but event planners appear to be facing challenges related to funding cutbacks from external sources.
- Prices for event spaces were largely maintained this year, but adjustments are under consideration for early 2026 reflecting operational costs.

Property Management and Maintenance

- The Quinquennial Report was received, updating the maintenance plan without presenting any unexpected issues.
- The Rectory (Ainslie Place) was a significant area of focus. Following an option appraisal conducted with the Vestry, it was decided to retain and renovate the property within a strict £30,000 budget.

- We did receive an additional donation that allowed us to replace the damaged flooring on the lower floor hallway and kitchen.
- Through considerable hands-on effort by the Operations team, Jean Grier and Bagnall family, the renovation was completed within budget and to a high standard, adopting an approach sympathetic to the building's heritage.
- As well as restoration of the original flooring in the upper hallway the property was completely redecorated, a new family kitchen created, wooden floors sanded, new bathroom installed, shower replaced, additional floor covering and a range of other improvements.

Iain Herbert

Pastoral Visitors

The Pastoral Visitor Scheme continues to be a very valuable way of connecting members of the Congregation in an informal way. The main requirement is for the Visitor to make sure their Visitee/s receive their Cornerstone Magazine. The Clergy also appreciate the supportive role Pastoral Visitors provide through sharing any concerns with a member of the Clergy team. The Pastoral Visitors contribute a greatly valued and important ministry within our church family.

Phyll Hoskyns-Abraham

Publications

The Cornerstone Magazine comes out four times a year: Christmas, Easter, July and late September to provide news about the congregation and articles on various topics. There are three editors, and one desktop publisher, Yuyi, who is in her final year at Edinburgh University. If any of the congregation is interested in becoming involved, please see one of the team at coffee after the 10:30 service or phone to discuss what is involved.

The Monthly Roundup comes out the months the magazine is not published and is online only. It contains a brief editorial, View from the Pew and general news about St John's.

Grace Durham, Yuyi He, Robert Philp, Jeanette Rennie

Rector Search Process

The search for a new Rector at St John the Evangelist, Edinburgh, was a structured process managed by the Vestry in adherence to the diocesan policy detailed in the Scottish Episcopal Church's *Vacancy Procedures for Vestries*. The search was conducted through two appointed committees: the Congregational Study and Profile Committee and the Recruitment Committee.

Chronological Timeline of the Rector Search

The process was divided into three distinct phases and was scheduled to span approximately one year, from September 2024 to the Institution of the new Rector in September 2025.

Phase 1: Preparation and Beginning of Interim Ministry (Late 2024)

Date/Period	Event
2 September 2024	Initial meeting took place with the Bishop, Dean, and Interim Pastor (The Revd Canon Michael Barlowe) to commence the process.
29 September 2024	The Interim Pastor began his ministry at St John's.
October 2024	Vestry met to discuss and organise the structure of the Rector search process.
During October 2024	Communication was sent to the congregation regarding vacancy procedures and soliciting names for the Congregational Study and Profile Committee (CSPC). This formal communication (dated 11 October 2024) initiated the self-study phase.
November/December 2024	The Congregational Study and Profile Committee (CSPC) was appointed. The committee began its work by organising and holding facilitated meetings with the congregation, local leaders, and preparing demographic and financial data. The membership of the CSPC was as follows: <i>Eden Anderson (co-chair), Alistair Dinnie, Grace Durham, Tony Falconer, Catie Gladstone, Rachel Gwilt, Oscar Kelly, Sue Lyons (co-secretary), Robert Philp (co-chair), Austin Reilly (co-secretary)</i> .

Phase 2: Profile Creation and Vestry Approval (Early 2025)

Date/Period	Event
January/February 2025	The CSPC continued its research, reviewed findings, and shared preliminary results and draft with the Vestry.
March 2025	The Congregational Profile was produced for Vestry review and then submitted to the Diocese (Bishop and Dean) for approval. A Rector Profile/Application was then prepared based on the approved Congregational Profile.
April 2025	Finalisation took place of the Rector Advertisement and application pack. The Recruitment Committee (8 members) was established, and applications were prepared to be accepted. In the interests of fairness, an external member was appointed because there was an internal candidate.
Recruitment Committee membership:	<i>Alistair Dinnie, Jean Grier, Nan Kennedy, Austin Reilly, Romy Langeland, Tony Falconer, Dave Morris, Morag Fairhurst.</i>

Phase 3: Selection and Appointment (Mid- 2025)

Date/Period	Event
May 2025	Advertisement for the Rector position was published, and applications began to be accepted.
16 June 2025	Closing date was reached for all applications.
19 July 2025	Interviews and decisions were made by the Recruitment Committee, subject to approval by the Bishop.
August 2025	Necessary negotiations took place with the Rector Elect; preparations for the move, rectory preparations, and a public announcement were made.
16 September 2025	The Institution of the new Rector, the Revd David Bagnell, occurred.

Summary of the Process and Key Committees

The search was conducted in two primary stages: a self-study phase and a selection phase, each managed by a dedicated committee.

1. The Study and Profile Stage: Congregational Study and Profile Committee (CSPC)
 - Purpose: To conduct a congregational self-study, facilitate meetings with the community, and produce the Parish Profile.
 - The Profile: The resulting profile described St John's as an open, prayerful community with a strong commitment to liberal values and inclusion. The mission was focused on the "five Amens" which included affirming faith, making new disciples, caring for creation, nursing the wounds of the hurting, and speaking truth to power.
 - Committee Make-up: The CSPC was designed to be comprised of 10-12 members and was asked to be representative of the wider congregation. Members were required to be team players, dependable, and able to commit 2-4 hours a week during the autumn and winter of 2024/2025.
2. The Selection Stage: Recruitment Committee
 - Purpose: To manage the selection of the new Rector, develop the interview process, and identify a preferred candidate for Vestry consideration.
 - Rector Attributes Sought: Based on the Parish Profile, the Vacancy Committee sought a full-time Rector who was:
 - o A capable and creative Pastor who strongly believed in inclusion.
 - o Experienced in managing complexity, demonstrating a collaborative and consultative style.
 - o Experienced in working with a wide range of people from all age groups.
 - Interview Process: The committee established a detailed interview process for 19 July 2025. The day included a candidate Presentation, tours of the church and rectory, and separate meetings with key stakeholders such as the Bishop, Ministry Team, and Finance representatives.
 - Committee Make-up: The committee was a short-life sub-committee of the Vestry, with a minimum of six and a

maximum of eight voting members. It was chaired by the Vestry Secretary and interim Chair of Vestry, and was required to have an appropriate mix of skills and experience relevant to recruitment.

The Revd Canon Michael Barlowe, D.D.

Sacristan

One of my other “hats” is the job of Sacristan, all Episcopal churches have one. The Sacristan has quite a lot to do in the running of the church, and is in charge of the “Vestry”, the room adjacent to the High Altar.

Altar Frontals and Pulpit Falls come under my remit and have to be changed according to the season. A list of items that the Sacristan deals with are:

- Wine, wafers, silver, linens and candles for the High Altar, Nave Altar and those used at Christmas.
- Garments worn by clergy – Chasables and Stoles
- Ash for Ash Wednesday, Palm crosses and Altar cloths.
- Also keeping the Vestry clean and tidy at all times.

Fred Mobeck

Sacristy Guild

The members do a particularly important job in the church as we do need clean and well-presented linens, which are called “Purificators” for wiping the chalice. I do wash and iron the linens, in the same way as the other members, I also prepare the rota for the year. On behalf of the church, I would like to offer sincere thanks for their time and hard work.

Fred Mobeck

Safeguarding

This year, in order to bring ourselves in line with new legal requirements for working with vulnerable groups, our volunteers involved in ministry classed as ‘regulated work’ had to complete the PVG (Protection of

Vulnerable Groups) process, including those already certified through other organisations. This was not as straightforward as we had hoped, as backlogs at Disclosure Scotland and technical issues meant some of our volunteers had to wait longer than anticipated for their certificates to arrive.

I would like to thank everyone who took the time to complete the process, and for their patience when we encountered frustrating delays. I would also like to record my thanks to our Rector, David, for his unfailing support throughout this year, and to the SEC Safeguarding Team at Grosvenor Crescent who continue to assist us with the processing of new PVG applications.

Elaine Ford

Second Chapter Book Group

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

This year we have read:

Ivanhoe, Sir Walter Scott
Now We Shall Be Entirely Free, Andrew Miller
The Ghost Cat, Alex Howard
The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood
The Coast Road, Alan Murrin
Raising Hare, Chloe Dalton
The Women, Kirstin Hannah
The Lamplighters, Emma Stonex
25 Library Terrace Natalie Fergie
Tender is the Night, F Scott Fitzgerald
There are Rivers in the Sky, Elif Shafak

There was a cinema trip to see Conclave, and also the annual Book Festival jaunt. Come and join us, all are welcome! Contact Susan Spilsbury for more details.

Susan Spilsbury

Servers

Servers play an important part in assisting the clergy at the Altar. They are involved with the preparation of items used during the Eucharist and cleaning after the service, also reading parts of the Liturgy. Our number here at St John's has now increased to five, which is good. I am responsible for making up the rota, and am a member of the Scottish Guild of Servers in the Scottish Episcopal Church.

Fred Mobeck

Social Committee

The first social event of the new year was the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Party on 4th March where about 50 people enjoyed a range of pancakes, together with a range of musical treats both choral and instrumental



from the members of the Choir. This was followed by a Pimm's Party following the Easter Eucharist on 20th April. The weather was kind, allowing the ninety or so who attended to spill out into the sunshine in the Dormitory. The Tea Party on 12th June had about 55 in attendance and enjoyed by all.

The Social Committee played a supporting role in the reception organised by the Vestry after David's Installation as Rector on 16th September. On 10th October, there was a Ceilidh in the Hall to celebrate David's appointment and Installation where the music was supplied by The Forest Road Social Club. Further events are scheduled for 2026.

Paul Sweetnam

St John's contribution to the work of Bethany Christian Trust

During the colder months of 2024/5 a loyal group of cooks, drivers and servers from our church have continued to contribute to the important supportive work of the Bethany Christian Trust, providing an evening meal for up to fifty homeless people on four separate occasions. Sadly, the collateral effects of the Covid pandemic are still apparent, which

means that the team is dislocated between two sites, where the food is cooked and prepared at Gorgie Dalry Stenhouse Church and where it is served to the clients, at the Hub Hotel in Haymarket. A driver transports the food to the Hub Hotel where the clients are provided with accommodation.

The St John's volunteers provide and cook a two-course meal, which is always very gratefully consumed by the clients. Most clients now take their food up to their rooms so the opportunity for dialogue is less than before.

The contribution of the Bethany Christian Trust is well described in the annual report which can be accessed through their website at Bethany Christian Trust (www.bethanychristiantrust.com).

80% of the clients are men and the mean age was 35, the youngest was 16 and the oldest 80. 618 individuals accessed the service and 62 people used the service daily, about 50% were UK based, the rest were of African, European or Middle East origin. The service is provided by about 40 faith-based groups for eight months of the year.

The contributions from Fiona Mcluckie and the volunteers continues to be a very significant uplift for people experiencing very real hardships in their lives and new recruits to our team of volunteers are always welcome.

Tony Falconer

St John's Forum

It has been a varied and full year for the Forum. We started the year by covering *Assisted Dying*, a critical dilemma for our times, still a hot topic in Parliament. The issue is right at the heart of the field of Medical Ethics, of which our own Kenneth Boyd is a highly respected interpreter, Kenneth laid out the pros and cons with impressive detachment, and provoked a vigorous debate.

Another meeting covered *Artificial Intelligence*. We hear much of this, but most of us feel unable fully to grasp the form it will take in the future. It

looms ahead in a rather amorphous way, full of possibilities but somehow slightly threatening. Our guide through its intricacies was Joan Orr, who reduced its complexity to something much clearer. An eye-opener.

We also met to hear about *Icons* (beautifully illustrated by Lana Woolford). and *Who Were the Celts?*, a brilliant analysis from David Hughson. Notable too was David McNaughton's exposition of the remarkable sermon *The Weight of Glory* by C.S. Lewis, and Sandra Holt's presentation on *Ignatian Spirituality*. Sandra's knowledge and her long experience in leading groups made this a most rewarding meeting. The one remaining meeting this year will be on the subject of Grave Robbing, a practice that arose out of the extraordinary worldwide reputation of the Edinburgh Medical School. St John's and St Cuthbert's still today provide material evidence of this, which came to a head in the early years of the 19th century.

Robert Philp

The Ark

The Ark has been up and running for two years and is a special place for the very young and as well as the not-so-young to enjoy the expression of faith through singing, creative storytelling and the sharing of communion, with fellowship and refreshments after the service.



Children enjoy helping in the service and a connection is made for them to become familiar with the church environment on Sundays. They feel they belong and are welcome. We meet mostly in the chapel, a place that feels calm and somewhat contained! This service establishes the very young in an early understanding of why we come to church, a community gathering to worship God.

Lynda Anderson

The Guardians

There are currently 14 regular Guardians greeting visitors to the Church 4 days a week, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, and another 6 on

the reserve list. Guardians are on duty from 12 to 2, usually once every 2 weeks, and work in pairs when possible. The Church is now open regularly from 10 to 4 and a large number of visitors, from all corners of the earth, come through the doors. Obviously fewer in the winter months, but over the summer there are many occasions when over 100 will visit in a 2-hour period . Visitors frequently comment on the beauty of the building - especially when the sun is shining through the stained glass! Guardians also meet, and can chat to, some very interesting people. Information for visitors is available in many different languages, and this is much used and appreciated. Information for Guardians, including history of the Church building, is also available. New Guardians and additions to the reserve list are always welcome

Morag Fairhurst

Theological Book Group

As usual we have read a variety of books during the year, ranging from classics such as CS Lewis's 'Surprised by joy' to Penelope Liveley's novel, 'The blue flower'. They have given us insights into aspects of life and faith and challenged how we look at the workplace as well as the place of worship. We continue to meet online, once a month and are a democratic group, sharing leadership and choosing books by consensus. Over the last few months our numbers have dwindled due to a variety of reasons and we now have space for two to three new members. If anyone is interested in lively discussion and theology in its widest sense, do get in touch with Eileen.

Eileen Thompson

The Vestry

Whilst the Rector vacancy inevitably provided context for its work over the last year, Vestry has played an important role in ensuring the day to day continued whilst we discerned where we were being called as a congregation and who was being called to lead us.

St John's owes an enormous debt of gratitude to all who participated in the vacancy process – members of the Profile Committee, the Selection Committee (both of which were sub-committees of Vestry), the non-

stipendiary ministry team and those who attended our interview day and fed back on the candidate presentations. Everyone who served should know their contribution played a crucial part in the successful conclusion of our vacancy process and it is hugely appreciated. Our thanks go also to all who put themselves forward for consideration for the role of Rector.

Away from the vacancy process, Vestry has continued to oversee the operations of the Church (which are showing increasingly promising results) and the Church's finances. This included the significant restructuring of St John's financial relationship with Cornerstone Developments Limited which we concluded at our EGM in May.

Over this last year, Vestry has been fortunate to benefit from the wise counsel of Michael Barlow our Interim Pastor and the effective chairing of Jean Grier. We also offer particular thanks to:

- Susan Spilsbury whose term on Vestry concludes at this AGM
- Kevin Ludwick who stepped down as Treasurer this year
- the Ministry Team for everything they have done during the vacancy
- to the staff team for everything they do to support the operation of St John's

and we look forward to working with our Rector, David, to develop his vision for St John's future.

Alistair Dinnie

The Welcomers

The Welcomers team plays a crucial role in the mission of St John's by being at the door to greet those attending services. As well as just saying hello and welcome, and handing over a service sheet, we actively try to speak to those who we think are new to St John's or are maybe just visiting. We are on hand to answer questions and direct people on where to go or what to do – an example is a family with young children who we will guide to the children's corner and explain about the activities that are going on. We take up the collection as well.

On Sundays there are frequently curious tourists who look in as people are arriving to see what is going on and we encourage them to come in and stay if they wish. And sometimes they do!

The team mostly operates at the 10.30 Eucharist on Sundays but is also on hand for special services. In the last year there have been more of us to help out at the extra services at Christmas and Easter, the inaugural service at the opening of the Festival of the Sacred Arts and David's installation as our Rector.

We all find this rewarding. We are a relatively small team and would welcome some new recruits to ensure there is always someone there to say hello. If anyone would like to give it a go, please speak to me or any of the welcoming team.

Austin Reilly

Tuesday Evening Book Group

The Tuesday evening book group is still going strong after 22 years, currently with ten members drawn from a variety of Church and non-Church backgrounds, including a core group from St. John's. We meet mostly in homes in North Edinburgh, although members come from as far away from North Berwick and Portobello to share good discussion, tasty snacks and a love of reading. Each year we also enjoy a poetry evening as well as a variety of fiction, biography and non-fiction, and of course a chance to set the world to rights. We are a bit of a cosy coven, but were delighted to welcome a new member this year! We are looking forward to more fellowship and friendship in 2026.

Fiona McLuckie

Walking Group

We put together and publish in March each year a programme of walks for the following 12 months: 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) plus a shorter alternative

walk on the third Saturday. Our programme this year can be seen on the noticeboard in the church porch.

After a successful trial run we plan to make the alternative Saturday walk a very short walk with coffee somewhere in the Edinburgh area.

We have walks in all areas accessible as a day trip from Edinburgh, travelling sometimes by car, sometimes by public transport. Our Christmas walk is always followed by lunch where we are often joined by former or occasional walkers.



We are an open group. Some walkers come regularly, others occasionally. 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

We continue to meet in the Hall at about 12 noon on the first Wednesday of the month for a soup and cheese lunch. The soup is now made by the Red Cockerel Café. There is a small charge of £3 and anyone is welcome to join us. It is a good way to meet other members of the congregation in a relaxed setting.

Josephine MacLeod

Wednesday Young Adults' Group

Every Wednesday evening, a group of young adults meet to share food and conversation. This year has been one of change, as our previous routine of meeting at the rectory was interrupted by the interregnum. This gave members of the group an opportunity to take more ownership of our events and activities - coming together to plan and organise a schedule for our meetings, and opening our homes to each other on

Wednesday nights. It has been a pleasure to both give and receive hospitality in this way.

As well as our Wednesday meetings, we have started a new tradition of going on an annual retreat at the start of Autumn. In October 2024, a group of us stayed at Alnmouth Friary for a weekend. We joined in with the friars' rhythm of worship and spent time enjoying the beautiful surroundings and each other's company.

Since David's institution as Rector, we have started meeting at the rectory again, alternating a week there with a week hosted by other members of the group. This is another new chapter for the group, and we're excited to see where it takes us. Our second autumn retreat happened this October, in Dumfries and Galloway.

We always enjoy welcoming new faces, and look forward to meeting new people in the coming year.

Rachel Gwilt

Welcome Space

Welcome Space has continued to go from strength to strength in the last year. October saw the Welcome Space's 2nd birthday, and the past year has been even more exciting than the first. Each Monday between 4 and 6pm the doors are opened and guests are welcomed in to eat, drink, chat and enjoy the space.

This year we've been lucky to have musicians joining us regularly from Live Music Now, an organisation that seeks to make live music accessible to everyone. Another highlight of this year was a visit from the First Minister, John Swinney, who spent time speaking with many of our guests.



Even since this summer Welcome Space has experienced something of a “relaunch.” Morag Fairhurst and Lynda Anderson have kindly taken on more responsibility and with their leadership we've had a new intake of

volunteers. Most excitingly we've seen numbers of guests continue to grow, with 62 portions of soup being served in a recent week! These growing numbers demonstrate the importance of this ministry, especially as we move into the colder months. Huge thanks to the volunteers who give their time to ensure we can continue to offer warmth and hospitality to all who walk through our doors.

Dave and Jess Morris