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Welcome to first St Giles' News of 2025, in which we focus our gaze in two directions: looking back over the last year and forward to the future and a potential new chapter for St Giles'.

In this edition, our Interim Moderator recalls the many special services hosted by St Giles' over the last twelve months; we learn of the charitable support provided to our neighbours in 2024, and reflect on the superb farewell concert held for our departing Master of the Music, Michael Harris MBE. We join volunteer guide Maurice Jordan on a fascinating tour through St Giles' 900 years and we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Burns window. We hear about the refurbishment of the Cathedral's magnificent Rieger organ, as well as the ongoing endeavours of the General Committee, who work hard to safeguard the building for generations to come. We welcome our new Master of the Music, Jack Oades, who provides his first 'musical notes', and are introduced to Rev. Scott Rennie, the prospective new minister of St Giles', who will preach in the Cathedral later this month.

We start with a thoughtful welcome from our Associate Minister, who reflects on the liturgical year and onwards to Lent. For this and more, please read on...

Reflections



The Benedictine nun and theologian Joan Chittister once wrote, “In the liturgical year we live the life of Jesus day after day until finally one day it becomes our own...”.

This time of the Christian year can seem more condensed than the rest because there are several important points in the life of Jesus that are marked during winter and spring: we have just celebrated Christmas, the festival of the Incarnation; and now we are in the middle of the season of Epiphany when we reflect on stories of Jesus as he revealed himself as the Word of God who brings healing and redemption to all.

At the beginning of March we will move into the season of Lent, a time of preparation for Easter. Many people use that time to ‘reset’ their lives by fasting, often giving up things like alcohol, television or car use. Fasting is one way to edge a little closer to the experience of Jesus as he spent 40 days and nights in the wilderness in preparation for what lay ahead. Marking Lent is not just a ritual, or a token gesture, it is time given to think seriously about who Jesus Christ is for us, to renew our faith from the inside out.

There are many different ways to engage with the themes of Lent. Some people choose a special book to guide their reflections during those weeks. Some go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the Holy Land. There are many retreat centres which offer special programmes at that time. Some of our younger members will be embarking on a short pilgrimage on the St. Cuthbert’s Way in the week before Palm Sunday. Hopefully, there will be ways in which they can share their experience and their insights with the rest of us afterwards.

Our worship on Sunday obviously forms an important part of that process as we reflect on Bible texts that will draw us into journeying with Christ. At St. Giles’ we will mark the beginning of Lent with a service of worship on Ash Wednesday, 5 March at 12 noon.

All of this will culminate in our worship during Holy Week, starting with Palm Sunday and leading to Easter. We take time to reflect on those last days before Jesus died on the cross. It is our opportunity to try to understand ever more the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection, the meaning his suffering has for our lives.

To quote Sister Joan’s book on the liturgical year one more time: “Lent is not about pretending to be in first-century Jerusalem; it is not about playing the games of the spirit. It is about becoming a new kind of spirit ourselves...Then, perhaps, we will come, like Jesus, to see the sick and the lame, the outcast and the foreigner in our own world and bend to heal them, stop to listen to them, reach out to raise them from the dead edges of society to new life.” - This time is important. May we use it well.

With many blessings,
Sigrid

Supporting our neighbours

As ever the St Giles' community is finding ways to support the wider community. Gathered here are three recent examples, with thanks as ever to all those involved – including to those who came before us.

Poor of the Parish Fund Distribution 2024

In Victorian Times a 'Poor of the Parish' fund was created to help those in need within our parish to buy coal for heating and cooking purposes. These days the Kirk Session makes an allocation from the fund's income to support local charities. In 2024 that allocation amounted to £12,000.

On the recommendation of the Neighbourhood Group the allocation has been split equally amongst eight charities giving each £1500. The recipients re 6VT, Edinburgh Clothing Store, Streetwork, FreshStart, Rock Trust, Grassmarket Community Project, Bethany Christian Trust and The Welcoming.

The charities have expressed their gratitude to St Giles' for these donations which will be used amongst other things to provide:

- Support and care for homeless people or those at risk of becoming homeless
- Procurement of goods for FreshStart Starter Packs for which there has been a huge increase in demand over the past year
- Support for rough sleepers in Edinburgh including the provision of books, education, employability assistance and safe warm spaces for those who need them most

The St Giles' Advent Appeal

The St Giles' Advent Appeal raised a total of £7,535.42, including Gift Aid.

In the 10 years of the Advent Appeal, this is the largest sum ever raised, speaking volumes for the generosity of our congregation, whose unfailing response to the needs of the hungry and the homeless has again come through clearly and strongly.

The Edinburgh Food Project, in the front line of the fight against poverty and deprivation, will be greatly appreciative. It means that the St Giles' weekly deliveries of food items in short supply can continue, in the knowledge that funding is secure.

Many thanks to everyone who so generously contributed.

The Can Collection

Including a very generous donation from the choir, the two street collections on 20th and 21st December raised a total of £2,500 for Cunningham House, the Church of Scotland's hostel for homeless people.

This was a very welcome Yuletide gift to Cunningham House, enabling the management and staff to enrich their provision for their homeless residents.

Many thanks to those who volunteered during the two days of the collection.

Bethany Welcome Centre



At the end of March 2020 when the country was thrown into lockdown because of Covid, the Winter Care Shelter came to an end and out of this wonderful service the Rapid Re-Accommodation Welcome Centre was born.

The Welcome Centre was designed to support individuals in their moment of crisis into stable housing options, either by diverting them from rough sleeping or into accommodation if they have already been rough sleeping before arriving at our doors. Rooted in Christian love the aim is to provide as much support as possible to all, no matter their circumstances. We offer a person-centered support placing emphasis on quality care, respect, dignity and empathy.

Within the Haymarket Hub Hotel on Clifton Terrace, we occupy 65 ensuite rooms. We share the premises with Edinburgh City Council's temporary accommodation. People from all walks of life, nationalities and age stay at the Welcome Centre. The range and diversity of nationalities seems to reflect the political situations happening around the world. Many are fleeing war, poverty, torture and trafficking. They can arrive with no English, no money and only the clothes on their backs. We see many ages too. The youngest being 16, who may have been asked to leave their family homes, and the oldest being 80 fleeing domestic violence or poverty.



The Welcome Centre aims to move people on to more suitable and permanent accommodation within days of their arrival, however Edinburgh has been experiencing a housing crisis and as a result this is not often possible with the average stay last season being 17 days.



Working alongside the Welcome Centre staff there are over 40 partner organisations providing each person with wrap around care. There are many ways our guests can engage with our partners: fortnightly meetings to bring into sharp focus the needs of specific individuals, on site drop ins and appointments via partner specific routes. They cover English lessons for those who have no English, support into the various ethnic communities around the city, money and employability advice, housing advice, addiction support and medical help for those that need it, mentioning only a few.



Kevin Chalmers, one of the staff from the Bethany Welcome Centre, who also gave an address as part of the St Giles' at Six concert to raise funds for Bethany in January

It is into this world that our wonderful volunteers come. They work alongside our staff, providing much needed hot meals. We would not be able to provide the service without our volunteers. Their commitment to the work of the Centre is tireless and unstinting. The success of the volunteers can be seen each night by the queues that form in our foyer. Every catering team nurtures the body and soul of each guest through delicious food and much needed conversations, we are very much in their debt. Our thanks go out to our catering volunteers.

*Eleanor McLachlan
Senior Team Leader Welcome Centre*

Musical Notes



Well, here we are: my first offering to the St Giles' Cathedral newsletter in my new role. I have already received a wonderful, warm welcome from everyone in the St Giles' community, for which I will be forever thankful, and the choir have been in excellent voice to start the year. It truly is the honour of my lifetime to take up this post and the responsibility that it entails; to work in a building steeped in rich, uniquely Scottish history, alongside such enthusiastic, dedicated colleagues and parishioners is a tremendous privilege – one that I do not take lightly. I hope that my time here will continue to expand on the cathedral's phenomenal legacy of choral and organ music, contributing profoundly to the musical landscape of Edinburgh, Scotland and beyond.

With the commencement of my role comes the end of a stellar musical era, and the departure of my predecessor, Michael Harris. Michael has been a great help to me, ensuring that the handover has been as smooth as possible. On Saturday 25th January, a concert was held in the cathedral in celebration of Michael's achievements and legacy as Master of the Music; a full write-up of the concert is included in this Newsletter. The event was a huge success, and the cathedral is especially grateful to the organising committee, Ian Sutherland, Andrew Carvel, Amanda Forsyth, Susanne Horsburgh, Anne King and Rory Wilson.

It is also worth mentioning that Michael was appointed Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) in the New Year Honours list for his services to music. This is a great testament to his incredible career, and a fitting tribute. While he will be greatly missed by everyone at St Giles', he will not be a stranger, and I look forward to hearing him play our mighty Rieger again soon.

I would also like to draw attention the departure of another regular member of the cathedral choir, Gillian Crosier, who has sung with the choir for over 45 years. She first joined the choir aged 16, singing for Herrick Bunney as part of the chorus in Bach's setting of the St Matthew Passion. After graduating and a brief stint in London, she rejoined the choir as a soprano, and sang for many years as a full member, before becoming a regular deputy once she moved to the Borders. She will continue singing with various choirs nearer to her home, and is currently rehearsing for another performance of Bach's Matthew Passion, coming full circle! Gillian, we are very grateful for lending us your vocal talents and your time, and we wish you all the best for the future.

The next two months bring another exciting development: the refurbishment of the cathedral organ. The work will be the most extensive since the organ was installed in 1992, and will ensure that the instrument stays in good condition for many years to come. The primary focus of the restoration is the re-leathering of the blowers. As the blowers are deep within the organ, accessing them requires dismantling many parts of the instrument, so a decision was made to combine this task with other essential maintenance, including the cleaning of all 4,156 organ pipes! The organ will be 'out of action' from early February until the end of March, and in the meantime, services will be accompanied by an electronic organ.

There are lots of wonderful concerts and events happening in the coming weeks, with a particular highlight being a performance of the Duruflé Requiem on Sunday 13th April by the cathedral choir, accompanied by orchestra. Do keep an eye on the website and the cathedral socials for more information. I look forward to getting to know more members of the St Giles' community; if you're in the cathedral, do say hello!

Jack Oades, Master of the Music



A significant vacancy update

The Nomination Committee has now completed its work and are pleased to introduce our chosen nominee, Rev. Scott Rennie, who will preach in St Giles' on 16th February. It has been a long process that began with the drafting of the parish profile last summer. We met to examine the initial applications in October and then interviewed a shortlist of six candidates in November. After a long discussion, we drew up a final list of three prospective candidates. We visited various churches in December and January to observe each candidate conduct public worship. We then met them for a further hour-long final interview. We convened for a final meeting in late January to select the nominee, a profile of whom is included overleaf.

At each stage, we have been mindful of the need to be rigorous, open-minded and attentive to God's plan for the future of St Giles'. We were honest with the candidates about the scale of the job and we tried to ask probing questions about every aspect of ministry here. It has been a daunting task and a big responsibility. The Nomination Committee are confident we have selected an excellent nominee and hope the congregation agree. We are looking forward to the next stage in the future of St Giles'.

Alan Convery
Convenor, Nomination Committee



Introducing Rev. Scott Rennie

The Rev. Scott Rennie, MA, BD, STM, FRSA, is currently Minister of Crown Court Church, the Kirk's historic congregation, in Covent Garden, Central London. His first charge was as Parish Minister at Brechin Cathedral in Angus, where he served for 10 years, following which he spent 12 years as Minister of Queen's Cross Church in Aberdeen.

Over the past 25 years of ministry, Scott has sought to strengthen congregational and community life; to build partnerships and sustainability; and to faithfully communicate the Gospel. Scott is committed to pastoral care, thoughtful preaching, and to engaging liturgical worship which marries questions of faith with the challenges of living in our times.

Scott read Geography and Divinity at the University of Aberdeen, training for the ministry at King's College. Following a Probationary Assistantship at Queen's Cross Church, he was chosen to be the Scots Fellow at Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, USA, where he attained his Master of Sacred Theology (STM). He has recently completed a Doctor of Ministry Degree (DMin: Reformed Focus) with the University of Edinburgh and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, USA, and is awaiting graduation in May 2025.

Throughout his ministry, Scott has served the Church of Scotland, and the wider Third Sector through a broad range of Boards and Committees. He is currently an Honorary Chaplain for ScotsCare, which helps and support Scots and their families in London; and is also Vice-Chair of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland.

As Scott looks forward to transitioning to leading, and working alongside, the team at St Giles' Cathedral he brings a hopeful outlook and an entrepreneurial spirit, with a firm desire for St Giles' to deepen further its partnerships and central place in the life of the Church of Scotland, Edinburgh, and the nation.

Scott values greatly St Giles' as a place of high-quality worship, of heritage, and the arts - a welcoming space which tells the story of Scotland's faith. He is ambitious that St Giles' should grow its life as a vibrant, open, and inclusive community of faith, where anyone can come and be welcomed into a community committed to joyfully living out the gospel - be that in our private lives, the life of the congregation itself, or in the public square.

Away from his ministerial responsibilities, Scott is a long-suffering, yet still enthusiastic, Aberdeen FC supporter. He is also a keen reader and filmgoer. Time with family and friends is very important to him. When possible, he loves to travel with his husband, Professor David Smith. They have a grown-up daughter.



Out with a (timpani) bang!

On Saturday 25th January, the St Giles' Cathedral Choir bade farewell to former Organist and Master of the Music, Michael Harris MBE, in a suitably festive concert. Over fifty members, deputies and former members of the choir, as well as former students of Michael's from Edinburgh Napier University, joined together with thirty instrumentalists of the St Giles' Camerata, led by Angus Ramsay, and Assistant Organist Jordan English, all under the baton of Ian Sutherland to perform a programme consisting of an eclectic mix of works, all in some way associated with Michael's career at St Giles'.

The programme was in large part prompted by the suggestions of singers; and a message which came through strongly in the planning stages was that the programme must include Bach. Accordingly, the concert opened with Bach's cantata *Gloria in excelsis Deo* BWV 191; unusually in this programme, a work which the choir had not itself performed before. Rehearsing, in the circumstance, had not been easy – Storm Eowyn meant that many singers were unable to attend the sole choir rehearsal on the Friday evening. Sight-reading skills were therefore much in demand on Saturday, and the result was extremely successful; Michael himself congratulated the choir for that performance in particular – high praise indeed!

Having a full orchestra on hand gave some unusual opportunities for the composers on the organising committee. An undoubted high point of the evening was the performance of the *Kyrie* from the *Messe Solennelle* by Louis Vierne. Originally written for the two organs in Saint-Sulpice in Paris, St Giles' performances of this work would see Jordan working hard to produce the key elements of both parts on the Rieger organ. On this occasion, though, Andrew Carvel, a tenor in the choir who has written many works for St Giles', took the opportunity to arrange the choir organ part for the orchestra. The result was highly effective, achieving all the drama that Vierne could possibly have wished for – especially as the timpani provided a steady crescendo through the closing, climactic 'Kyrie eleison' phrases, and punctuating the final bars with a strident heartbeat.



Michael was presented with a painting commissioned by John Gardner. Rather than adding to the world's already extensive collection of exterior paintings of the Cathedral, John found a new angle that rather brilliantly captured Michael in his element!

Two *cappella* motets were included in the programme, both well-loved favourites of the choir. Stanford's *Beati quorum via* from his Three Latin Motets Op. 38 brought a sense of calm after the tensions of the Vienne; while later in the programme, *Locus iste* by Anton Bruckner prompted reminiscence of choir tours to a ruined chapel on a Calvados estate near Caen, and for some a Munich beer garden where the choir joined forces with the Münchner Motettenchor for an impromptu performance.

Two more Mass settings featured in the concert: the warm, rich *Kyrie* from the Mass in E-flat major by Rheinberger, and the *Gloria* from Haydn's *Missa Sancti Nicolai*, in which Lorna Murray, a former student of Michael's at Edinburgh Napier who is now coming to the end of a Master's in Vocal Performance at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, gave a sparkling rendition of the central soprano solo.

The final work on the programme was C.H.H. Parry's *Blest Pair of Sirens*, setting John Milton's ode to the 'sphere-born harmonious sisters, Voice and Verse' – a fitting work to round off a thrilling tribute to Michael Harris' tenure at St Giles'. And yet ... this was not quite the end. Ian Sutherland had arranged an orchestral accompaniment to perhaps the most-performed piece in the choir's repertoire: the Amen written by Orlando Gibbons. Jack Oades, Michael's successor, sang with the choir on Saturday and in his words: "The concert came to a spectacular conclusion, as Michael was invited up to conduct a dazzling orchestral arrangement of Gibbons' 'Amen', which is heard at the end of every choral service in Ordinary Time at St Giles'; there was not a dry eye in the building".

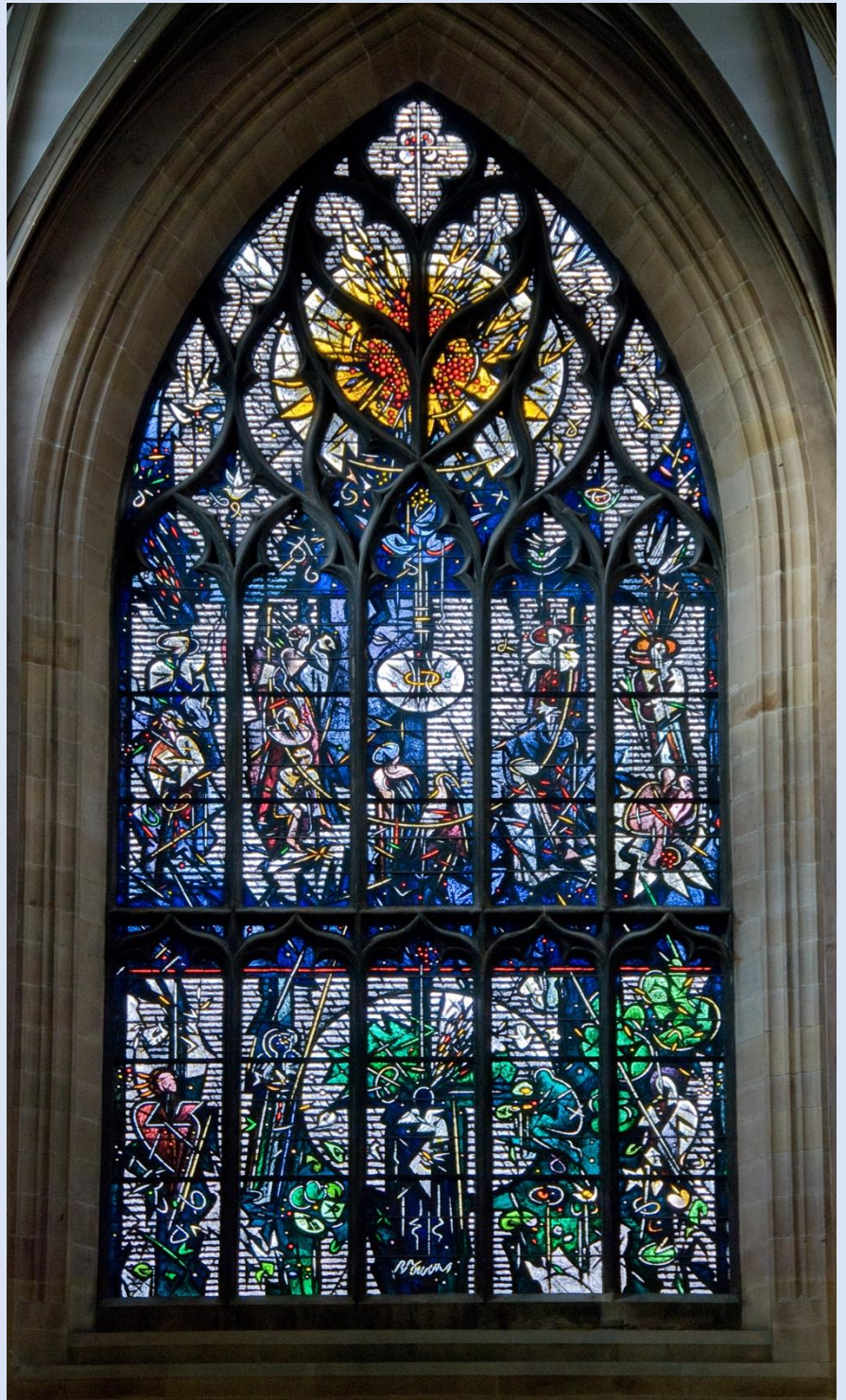
The concert was followed by a reception, pictured below, at which the choir's gift to Michael – a painting of him conducting the choir, by the Rev. John Gardner – was presented. Douglas Burke gave a warm and very entertaining speech, and John led all those present in a hearty Three Cheers for Michael Harris!

Amanda Forsyth, Treasurer and Choir member



The Burns Window

On the back of our momentous 900 anniversary celebrated last year, another milestone approaches as 2025 marks 40 years since the installation of the Burns Window.



This prompts the question: what was there before? Ten points if you knew the previous window was the Prophets Window. Installed in 1886 by the Glasgow-based artist Daniel Cottier, it lasted for 100 years before becoming indecipherable due to aging. For reference, see the window above the John Knox statue, which was never intended to be as yellow as it appears now.

The Burns Federation generously offered to donate a new window, which was dedicated on 30th June 1985 as a tribute to Robert Burns (1759-96). Crafted in West Germany by W Derix of Rottweil and designed by Leifur Breidfjord of Iceland, a former student of Edinburgh College of Art, the window embodies themes central to Burns' poetry and fundamental to Christianity.

The window is divided into three sections. The bottom five panels celebrate the natural world of green and growing things:

*"Again rejoicing nature sees
Her robe assume its vernal hues:
Her leafy locks wave in the breeze,
All freshly steeped in morning dews."*

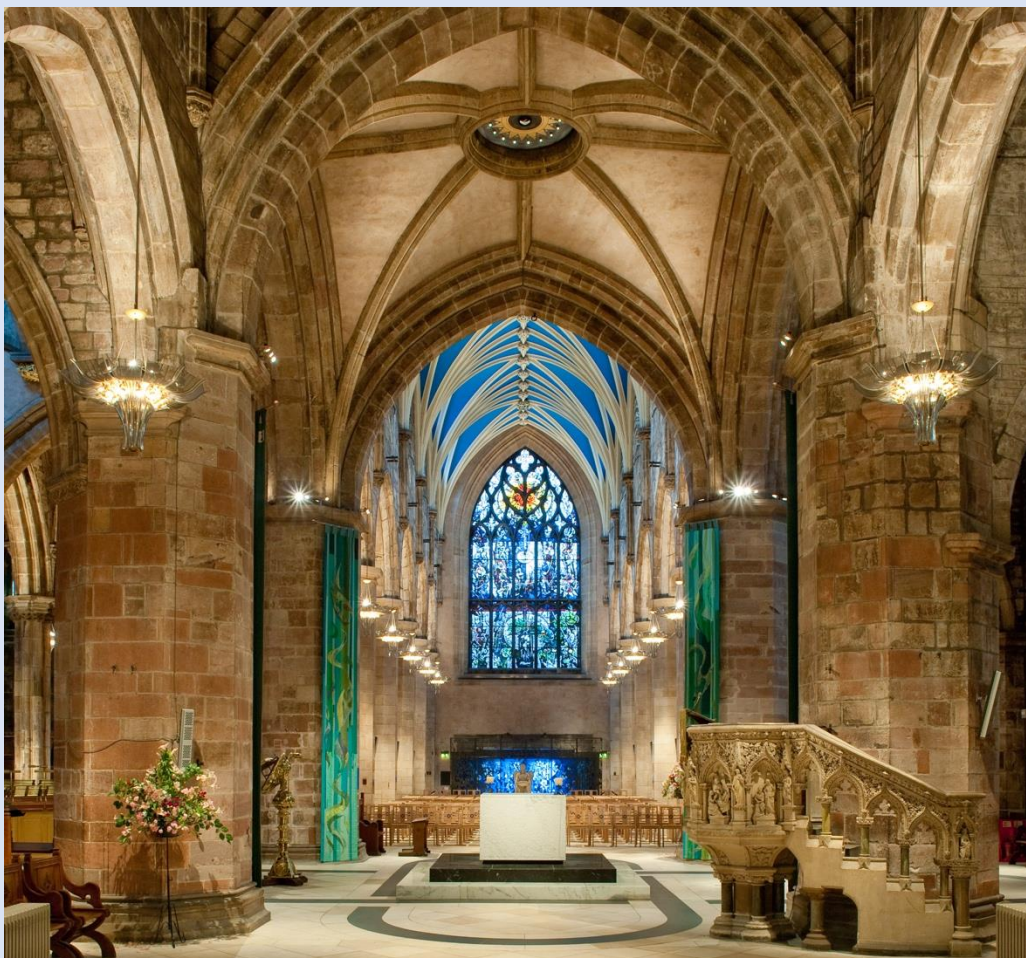
The upper five panels highlight the human community and the brotherhood of man:

*"It's coming yet for a' that,
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brithers be for a' that."*

At the top of the window is a symbol that can be seen both as a burst of creative sunlight and a reminder of Burns' "My love is like a red, red rose." This symbol represents Christian love and creativity.

Our youngest window by nearly 30 years, the next youngest is the window in the Albany Aisle by Francis Spear from 1957. More recently, Breidfjord was commissioned to replace the West Porch. Some of you will remember the previous Gothic wooden structure. In its place now stands Breidfjord's porch, designed to reflect the window above.

As we acknowledge this anniversary, we are reminded of the enduring legacy of Robert Burns and the timeless beauty of his words, forever captured in the light and colour of this magnificent window.



A Guided Tour

I have been a Visitor Guide in St Giles' for 9 years as well as a member of the congregation and a steward. My duties as a visitor guide include the Welcome Desk, the Thistle Chapel and taking people on tours of our Church. I like to take visitors through each century of our history, starting in 1124 when King David 1 of Scotland granted us the land on which our church stands. I then walk through our 900 years, telling stories of the people who have been involved in our great history.



My tour starts under the Saints' window in the north wall telling our visitors that the church was founded in 1124 and that our patron, King David 1st asked that the church be dedicated to St Giles, the Patron Saint of people with Leprosy. Interesting choice until it is remembered that King David's mother, Queen Margaret (later St Margaret) was known for good works around Edinburgh, including helping people with leprosy.

There is nothing left of that early church except the 2 consecration stones. In 1243 David of Bernham, bishop of St Andrews carved the Consecration Cross on a stone that is now on the stair well leading to our toilets (imaged on the left here). With another inside the front door opposite the welcome desk, which is the tree of life in the arc of light (on the right).



Our Church has always been at the centre of Edinburgh Life but sometimes it was seen as a target. In 1320 Pope John XXII accepted the Treaty of Arbroath, establishing Scotland as an independent country, regrettably Edward II of England disagreed and ordered the destruction of Edinburgh and St Giles. Not a particularly good outcome but it did result in the building of our new church in the gothic style. I take our visitors to see the masons' marks on the central pillars and explain that these marks were not only signatures but a primitive invoicing system.

When it comes to the expansion of our church over the next hundred years I tell the stories of a Duke being put on trial for the murder of his nephew with the case against him being found not proven but as penance was forced to pay for the first expansion, the Albany Aisle and a young man who brought home a holy relic, the skeletal arm bone of St Giles leading to the building of the Preston Aisle to house it.

The final expansion being upward when Pope Paul II granted St Giles' collegiate status and in celebration the king and town 'raised the roof' of the east end adding its wonderful flying arches around 1470.

Turning to the reformation, with John Knox becoming our minister in 1559. I explain the changes he made to the way we worship. The installation of seating, the removing of altars, statues and the original stained glass windows. He also invited us to take Holy Communion every Sunday, a tradition that is still with us today.

I knew the story of Jenny Geddes when at school, the woman who in July 1635, threw her stool at the Dean of St Giles' as he tried to bring the Scottish Church in line with the Church of England. This is a relevant story to tell visitors which I then link to the National Covenant and its importance in the British Civil War and the eventual execution of Charles I in 1649.

In 1745 Bonnie Prince Charlie came to Edinburgh with his ill fated Jacobite Rebellion; his arrival was declared by the City Magistrates in St Giles' but as the prince was a Roman Catholic, St Giles and all the other churches in Edinburgh (with the exception of the Tron Kirk) closed their doors for the duration of the occupation.

By the end of the 18th century, due to neglect our Church was in danger of falling down so the architect William Burn was appointed to find a solution. He proposed that an outer wall be built right round the church and 'stick' this wall to the inner using iron rods. It was also decided to make this new building look more like the buildings around it, so St Giles' got a neo-classical look complete with a symmetrical design, which is what we see today. Unfortunately, there was a high price to pay as it was decided to demolish the last wall that had belonged to our original 1124 church. This was also when the roof of the West End was raised to the same height as the East End.

The story of the 19th Century is not complete without telling visitors of the vision of the Lord Provost, William Chambers who funded a complete restoration of the interior to match its neo-classical exterior. This involved the cleaning of all the stonework, the removal of the internal partitions (by now St Giles' Kirk had been divided into at least 3 congregations) and by act of Parliament paved the way for the re-introduction of stained-glass windows previously removed by John Knox.

Every Tour takes in the Thistle Chapel, sometimes looked upon as the jewel within our crown. It is dedicated to the Order of The Thistle, the highest honour the King can give to anyone in Scotland. The chapel was designed by Robert Lorimer and was built between 1908 and 1910 at a cost of £20,000. It was opened by King George V in 1911.

I then bring our visitors right up to date with the installation of the Rieger Organ in 1995 showing them the bow of the ship coming towards us and the two angels in the pipes.

Finally standing at the East End of the Transept, I explain where in 2022 Queen Elizabeth's coffin rested on its journey from Balmoral Castle to Westminster Great Hall and where in 2023 King Charles III received the Honours of Scotland.

That concludes my tour, I hope you enjoyed taking the journey through time with me.

Maurice Jordan

General Committee and Projects Update

As we start a new year, I thought it would be useful to outline the works that have recently taken place and that are being planned to take place during 2025. As with any building and especially one that contains so much historic fabric continual maintenance and improvements are always required, and the logistics planning is regularly prepared well in advance due to the many activities that take place in the building.

Rieger Organ Refurbishment

The most significant project that will take place in the coming months will be the full overhaul and refurbishment of the Cathedral Organ. The wonderful and renowned organ was built and commissioned in 1992 by the Austrian firm of Rieger Orgelbau, in consultation with the then Master of the Music, Herrick Bunney and renowned organist and composer Peter Hurford. The instrument, with its distinctive case of Austrian oak designed by Douglas Laird, stands proudly in the South Transept.

The 1992 organ was a completely new instrument and included some major pipes which were retained from the previous instrument (Willis III 1940), these are the lowest seven pipes and are mounted and visible at the back of the case. Since its completion annual cleaning and tuning have been undertaken with a partial overhaul some 10 years ago.

As with any complex and valuable instrument of its age, a major overhaul is now required and some parts are due for replacement together with cleaning and tuning. This will require a significant dismantling and rebuilding operation before the instrument is retuned and commissioned, works that will take place over the next six weeks.

The initial stage of the works is the construction of complex scaffolding in front of the case to enable the team from Rieger to access and dismantle major parts of the instrument. This work commenced in late January and now dominates the front of the organ.

The organ was silenced following the services on Sunday 2 February and a temporary instrument will be installed to be played at Sunday Services from 9 February until the works are completed.

Additional and renewal of existing lighting onto and around the organ are also planned and the new lighting scheme will be linked into the recently upgraded lighting system in the main Cathedral. The enhanced LED lighting will provide much needed enhancement of the instrument and case and will enable the organ to be highlighted during services and concert performances.

Further updates will be provided on the progress of the works, and the refurbished organ will be back in use before the Easter services.



Other Works

Works have recently been completed to refurbish the finance office to provide an improved working environment for our staff. Additional works are planned in the shop that will take place in the coming weeks.

The sound and audio-visual system, that has been subject to some issues in the past few months, has recently been fully serviced and upgraded to remove the intermittent faults and is now back in full operation. The system not only provides the internal sound for services but also manages the live stream capability for those wishing to join services online and provides CCTV coverage for services and security purposes.

Maintenance works also planned will include improvements to the West Porch doors and the replacement of the entrance matting.

Further to the report in the previous edition of the Newsletter, I am pleased to report that no further issues have been identified with the staining in the vault above the Holy Blood Aisle and the situation is being kept under regular review.

As previously reported the repaired stained-glass window at the West end of the Cathedral has been reinstated with no noticeable evidence to show it has been replaced.

Works to replace the broken or damaged limestone paving and repairs to the floor in the Moray Aisle will be planned to take place in the coming weeks.

Additional works to the fire alarm and security systems are also planned to take place in the coming months.

The General Committee is also undertaking a review and programme of maintenance works in the Manse ahead of the induction of the new Minister of St Giles' later in the Spring.

I continue to be indebted to colleagues on the General Committee, Beadles, Staff, Contractors, Suppliers and to the many others that provide their, support, time and expertise to maintain St Giles' Cathedral and to present it so well for worship and to the many visitors that are welcomed throughout the year.

John M Andrew, General Committee Convenor



Canongate News

Having had no united evening service on the last Sunday of December, normal service, as it were, resumed on Sunday 26th January, when there was something of a Robert Burns theme. As usual a quartet of singers from the Cathedral choir sang from the gallery, but this time for the first time under the direction of the new Master of Music at St Giles', Jack Oades. We were glad to welcome Jack to Canongate Kirk. This month our united evening service will take place at 7pm on Sunday 23rd February, when our guest preacher will be The Rev. Stewart Gillan, Minister of St Andrew's Jerusalem. That church was built as a memorial to Scottish soldiers who lost their lives in the region during the First World War, and has a link with both St Giles' and Canongate. This is an ideal opportunity to hear at first-hand how the last year and more has affected life not just for the Scots Kirk but for all who have been caught up in the terrors and tensions of Israel and Palestine. All welcome.

Rev. Neil Gardner

All at St Giles' would like to congratulate Neil on becoming a Lieutenant of the Royal Victorian Order (LVO). It is a most well-deserved recognition of Neil's service as Domestic Chaplain to the Royal Family in Scotland, as well as his dedication and commitment to the Church and his congregation.

Looking back on 2024

During any year St Giles' hosts many services which mark the life of the city and the nation. These acts of witness are made possible by the congregation's giving, the input of the stewards and the work of our staff and ministry team. It is an interesting exercise to gather a record of these to mark some of what we did together in 2024:-

14th April - Science Festival Service. This year the event marked the close of the Festival and the speaker was Professor Linda Bauld of the University of Edinburgh and known to us all through her expert TV appearances during Covid times.

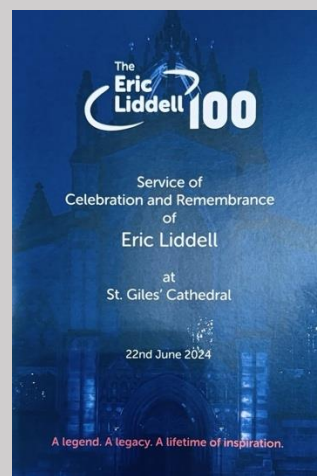
19th May - The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland attended by a wide representation of Scottish society. The Moderator preached the sermon.

2nd June - Kirking of the Council and the new Moderator of the High Constables at the start of the next cycle of the Council's life.



22nd June - Eric Liddell Centenary Service. It was in 1924 that Eric Liddell won a gold medal at the Paris Olympics so the Eric Liddell Community wanted to mark the occasion and highlight the work they do in his name. The Princess Royal read one of the lessons and parts of the service were recorded for the BBC's Olympic Songs of Praise.

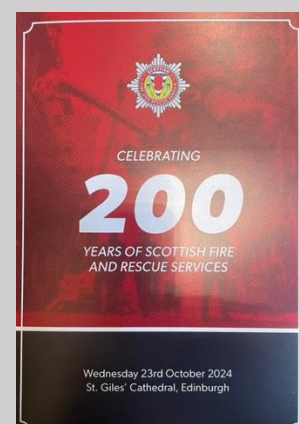
3rd July - Installation of Knights of the Thistle. This was attended by the King, the Queen and the Prince of Wales along with other Knights. The installation took place in the Thistle Chapel with the sound relayed to the invited congregation. There was then a short act of worship in the Cathedral itself.



4th August - Edinburgh International Festival Service marked the start of the Festival and was attended by Festival leaders and the Council, we had as our guest preacher the Rev. Peter Gardner who, along with his wife Heidi, does pioneering work in the visual arts in the Glasgow area.

23rd September - Court of Session Service. This marks the opening of the legal year and I was again privileged to lead the service. The lessons were read by the Sheriff Principal and the Dean of the Faculty of Advocates. Among the congregation were some of the twenty five new KC's who had been sworn in that morning.

23rd October - 200th Anniversary of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. The SFRS chose to have this service to mark two hundred years since the world's first professional fire brigade was set up in Edinburgh. The service was preceded by the rededication of the statue of James Braidwood, the first Master of the Engines, at the corner of the High Street and Parliament Square. The Princess Royal attended as guest of honour along with representatives of the Scottish Government, the City Council and other UK Fire Services.



27th October - Academic Service. This is another annual event which celebrates the contribution of universities, colleges and schools make to our common life. The preacher was Rev. Professor Alison Jack from New College, University of Edinburgh.

10th November - Remembrance Services on the High Street and then in Cathedral. The preacher was the Most Rev. Leo Cushley, Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh.

13th November - Edinburgh Interfaith Uniting for Peace Service with the welcome given by Rev. Sigrid Marten.

15th November - Kirking of Royal Company of Merchants led by Rev. Charlie Robertson

30th November - St Andrew's Day Service attended by around 200 representatives of Scottish life and the Knights of the Thistle. The Dean of the Thistle, Very Rev. Prof David Fergusson preached the sermon.

17th December - George Watson's College Lessons and Carols packed out the Cathedral with pupils, parents and staff. I had the privilege of offering a welcome and leading the prayers.

19th December - St George's School Carol Service again filled the building and was led by Rev. Sigrid Marten.

Rev. Dr George J Whyte, Interim Moderator

Contact information

St Giles' staff and office bearers can generally be reached by email on addresses in the style firstname.lastname@stgilescathedral.org.uk or jobtitle@stgilescathedral.org.uk. Some commonly needed addresses are:

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Several members of the team also monitor the comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk address, which can be a good way to get a general question directed to the right person!

Useful telephone numbers:

The Cathedral Secretary	0131 225 4363
Beadles' Office	0131 226 0672
Cathedral Shop	0131 226 0673
Finance Office	0131 225 8683
Heritage & Culture	0131 226 0674

Picture credits

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