**St Giles’ Cathedral: The High Kirk of Edinburgh**

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**St Giles’ News**

**January 2019**

**An Invitation from the Minister**

Happy New Year to you and yours and welcome to the January edition of St. Giles’ News.

A few months ago I was approached by an old Friend, Al Thomson, of Unique Events, an Edinburgh based events production firm. We at St. Giles’ had partnered with Unique a number of times in the past in producing inspired and thoughtful public events in the cathedral.

Al was proposing to stage a truly unique artistic experience in St. Giles’ and was looking for our agreement – he was proposing to hang a replica of the moon above the holy table in the crossing!

The Museum of the Moon is a touring artwork by UK artist Luke Jerram. Measuring seven metres in diameter, the moon features detailed NASA imagery of the lunar surface. At an approximate scale of 1:500,000, each centimetre of the internally lit spherical sculpture represents 5km of the moon’s surface.

We were certainly intrigued and when it became clear it was technically possible, our staff partnered with Unique to develop programming for the time the moon would be in St. Giles’, including a lecture and musical events.

You will find details of these events in the newsletter and I am delighted to invite you to come into St. Giles’ to experience this extraordinary art installation.

With best wishes for the New Year,

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## Dates for the Diary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, 22 to Saturday, 26 January</td>
<td>St Giles’ Museum of the Moon—various events—see Page 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, 27 January</td>
<td>St Giles’ - 6.00pm Homeless Sunday—Concert by Kevock Choir. Retiral collection for Cunningham House.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday, 3 February</td>
<td>St Giles’ - 8.00pm Service—Preston Aisle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedication of the new Communion Table donated in memory of the late Dorothy Miller. See Page 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ash Wednesday, 6 March</td>
<td>St Giles’ - 8.00pm Service—Preston Aisle</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wednesday morning Communion Services will resume. Extended Noon Service to mark the start of Lent.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunday, 10 March</td>
<td>St Giles’ - 11.30am Service—Preston Aisle</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dedication of the new Lenten Banners.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, 27 March</td>
<td>Lower Aisle - 7.30pm Poetry Group meeting—see page 4.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palm Sunday, 14 April</td>
<td>St Giles’ - 7.30pm Poetry Group meeting—see page 4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distribution of Palms and Palm Procession at 11.30am Service.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Week—15 to 20 April 2019</td>
<td>St Giles’ Holy Communion at 8.00am on Wednesday and Friday. Extended Noon Service on Good Friday. Monday to Friday—Evening Services at 8.00pm with Choir and Sermon.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easter Sunday, 21 April</td>
<td>St Giles’ Services at 8.00am, 10.00am, 11.30am &amp; 8.00pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday, 27 April</td>
<td>St Giles’ - 5.30pm A Conversation between Janet Morley, Freelance Writer &amp; Speaker, and Helen Alexander. See Page 4.</td>
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**To keep up-to-date**

Please visit [www.stgilescathedral.org.uk](http://www.stgilescathedral.org.uk)
At the end of this month, the Cathedral will host a week-long festival celebrating Scottish culture from Burns to today. If you haven’t already seen or read about it, ‘Burns and Beyond’ (a new festival hosted by Unique Events) will be on from 22nd-26th January across the city. From a giant Burns supper and free family Ceilidh on Rose Street to comedy at Gilded Balloon, the festival culminates here at St Giles’ with ‘Museum of the Moon’. For the entire week, a giant 7-metre wide moon replica by the artist Luke Jerram will be suspended above the Sanctuary, around which moon-inspired events will take place. The Cathedral is still open to the public in the day as normal, but from 7.15-10pm each night, tickets will be sold to view the installation in its intended form: internally illuminated to an immersive soundscape by the multi-award-winning composer Dan Jones. Each evening of that week will see a different event, the schedule of which is as follows:

- **Tuesday 22 – Moon Talk** – Outside of his position as a tenor in the St Giles’ Choir, Dr William Taylor works as an astronomer, and will be bringing his colleagues from the Edinburgh Royal Observatory to talk all things moon. 6-7pm. Tickets £10.

- **Wednesday 23 – Rachel Sermanni Concert** – Folk-noir singer/songwriter Rachel Sermanni will be performing haunting original works under the illumination of the moon. 6-7pm. Tickets £15.

- **Thursday 24 – St Giles’ Choir Concert** – The raison d’être for so many artistic works, St Giles’ Choir couldn’t miss the chance to perform lunar-inspired choral works under an awe-inspiring replica of the moon itself. Not to be missed! 9-10pm. Tickets £10.

- **Friday 25 – Roddy Woomble Concert** – On Burns Night itself, Roddy Woomble, whom you may know as the lead singer of Idlewild, comes to St Giles’ to perform a one-off Burns-inspired set.

- **Saturday, 26, a ‘Culture Trail’ will bring visitors to the Cathedral from other locations, and will see spontaneous artistic activity in the Cathedral throughout the day.**

All tickets can be purchased online from www.burnsandbeyond.com and include a booking fee. If you’ve got any questions, don’t hesitate to get in touch with Heritage & Culture—Contact details on Page 20—and we can try and illuminate any moon mysteries you might have.

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**New Communion Table for the Preston Aisle in memory of Dorothy Miller**

Our Assistant Minister, Helen Alexander reports—

“We are most appreciative of the gift of a Communion Table from the family of Dorothy Miller, who died on 10th September 2015. The Celtic Knot and floral designs were created by Sheana Ashton and the Table was made at Grassmarket Furniture, part of The Grassmarket Community Project.

Dorothy Miller was a devoted member of the Congregation and ordained an Elder in St Giles’ on 4th February 1979. The Table will be dedicated at the Evening Service at 8pm on Sunday 3rd February 2019 to which all are warmly invited.”.

**Wednesday morning Communion Service**

The Wednesday morning Communion Service will recommence at 8am on Wednesday, 6 March (Ash Wednesday).

**Dedication of the new Lenten Banners**

The new Lenten Banners, designed by Sheana Ashton and sewn by Georgina Chapman and the Thistle Quilters, will be dedicated on Sunday, 10 March at the 11.30 Service.
THE SEASON OF LENT—By Rev Helen Alexander

Lent is a significantly important part of the Christian calendar. Yet, many of us do not know or indeed fully appreciate the history and background to this forty-day period, between Christmas and Easter, that has such an impact upon our spiritual lives and how we choose to conduct ourselves. As a result, our Assistant Minister, Helen very kindly agreed to write a short article to provide us with a historical perspective as to why Lent is so important and why it is observed so seriously as part of our worship in St Giles’.

I am writing this on the eve of Epiphany with the Christmas decorations still up, and so it seems strange at this stage to fast-forward to Lent, the season in the Christian Year traditionally devoted to fasting, and characterised by the practice of penitence, solemn reflection and devotional discipline.

There is indeed a solemnity to the forty days preceding Easter, beginning with Ash Wednesday, the seventh Wednesday before Easter Day. If you don’t count Sundays when the church celebrates the Resurrection, you get the total of 40 days to Easter Day: Quadragesima in Latin.

Our English word Lent doesn’t have quite the same ring. It’s derived from the Germanic root for long, referring to the lengthening of the days. It really means Spring. Despite this non-ecclesiastical root, I think we might find in the lengthening of days a theologically important reminder of grace even, and possibly especially at the time when the liturgy focusses on human sinfulness and the suffering and death of Christ. That’s why I like the Eastern Orthodox term for Lent: the Season of “Bright Sadness.” It seems to convey something of the paradox of Christian believing in this Season.

Back to Quadragesima: the number 40 is associated with fasting, historically the most significant feature of Lent and is associated with famous Biblical accounts of 40-day fasts including Moses’ on Mount Sinai when he received the Ten Commandments and most significantly, Christ’s in the wilderness before he began his ministry.

In the first three centuries of the life of the church fasting in preparation for Easter probably lasted only two or three days. The custom of extending to 40 days took time to evolve with local variations in the churches of both East and West, but the common origin is almost certainly the prescribed fast of candidates in preparation for their baptism at Easter. A total of 40 pre-Easter fast days were first known in Jerusalem in the 4th Century though it was not until the 7th Century that a 40-day Lenten fast became the norm in the Roman Church, spreading throughout the West. In the early centuries the fast was very strict with abstinence from flesh-meat, fish, eggs, dairy products and alcohol, and only one meal a day allowed, usually in the evening.

The growth of the preference for infant baptism from the 6th Century onwards led to the decline of the importance of Lent as the season of baptismal preparation, while it continued as a period of general penitential practice and fasting.

The observance of Lent continued in the Church of England after the Reformation. Calvin, whose theology shaped the reformed Church of Scotland, was unsurprisingly hardly a devotee, branding Lent a “superstitious observance” which in his view encouraged the notion that you could work your way into God’s favour by fasting and that you could imitate Christ’s 40-day fast when on the contrary his was a unique and once and for all event. Despite this, Lenten abstinence to some degree continued to be observed for some time in Scotland though less for religious and more for economic reasons: support of the fishing industry and the conservation of cattle stocks. While the ‘catholic revival’ in worship in the second half of the 19th Century led to the recovery of the Christian Year in the Church of Scotland, it seems that it was not until the 1930s that the observance of Lent became widely established with the first edition of Prayers for the Christian Year in 1935 which contained prayers for Lent and special services for Palm Sunday and each day of Holy Week.

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In St Giles’ we keep faith with Lent in common with most churches within the Church of Scotland today, seeking in this season as in any other to promote a broad Christian perspective within an atmosphere of ecumenism.

And so through Lent we move towards, and finally enter into Holy Week, the most sacred week in the Christian Year during which we remember the suffering and death of Jesus. We begin with Ash Wednesday's reminder of our mortality. The liturgical colour changes from the green of Ordinary Time to the purple of mourning. In common with many churches, in St Giles’ we dispense with the beauty of flowers for our services. Through the great penitential hymns of the church, we acknowledge our human frailty, while being continually mindful of the grace of mercy and forgiveness. In this context we might ask if there is anything in our lives we might usefully do without and/or something we might beneficially add. That’s why almsgiving was associated with Lent in the old days and why many today take the opportunity to focus on helping other people in the varied ways we can.

And, again in line with ancient tradition, we seek to provide an opportunity for reflecting on the faith. Below are details of what will be available this year, and on Page 1 there are details of particular services during Lent which we hope will engender interest and support, not to mention possibly some enjoyment!

With all good wishes for the Season of “Bright Sadness” when it arrives,

Helen Alexander

LENSEN STUDY: THE COLLAGE OF GOD

An invitation to a series of meetings focussing on faith and life on—

Sundays 17, 24, 31 March and 7 April 2019 4.00–5.30pm

The St Giles’ Room, Marchmont St Giles’ Church 3 Kilgraston Road Edinburgh EH9 2DW.

We shall base our discussions on The Collage of God (ISBN 978-1-84825-238-7) by Mark Oakley, formerly Canon Chancellor of St Paul’s Cathedral London, now Dean of Chapel St John’s College Cambridge. This book has attracted highly favourable reviews from a wide variety of sources, including Theology in Scotland which has recommended it as one that “captures the intellect and the imagination.”

Please let Helen Alexander know ASAP if you are interested, even if you are unable to commit at this stage.

Phone 0131 346 0685; halexander@churchofscotland.org.uk

POETRY FOR LENT

Join the Poetry Group on Wednesday 27 March 7.30—9pm in The Lower Aisle, St Giles’ Cathedral when we will study a poem or poems applicable to Lent.

POETRY GROUP MEETINGS

The next meetings of the Poetry Group will be on—

Wednesdays, 30 January, 27 February and 27 March 7.30—9.00pm in The Lower Aisle, St Giles’ Cathedral.

In January and February, we will reflect on poems in The Splash of Words: Believing in Poetry by Mark Oakley.

If you are newly interested, please contact Helen Alexander—

0131 346 0685 halexander@churchofscotland.org.uk

VISIT BY JANET MORLEY

We shall be delighted to welcome Janet Morley to St Giles’ in the Spring. Janet Morley is a freelance writer and speaker. She has worked for Christian Aid and for the Methodist Church and is author of books of her own prayers: All Desires Known and Bread of Tomorrow and poetry anthologies: The Heart’s Time, Haphazard by Starlight and Our Last Awakening.

She will be in conversation with Helen Alexander in St Giles’ on Saturday 27th April at 5.30pm and will preach at the 11.30am Service on Sunday 28th April.
An article submitted by William Briant—Herrick Bunney Organ Scholar

I was delighted when I was approached to write a short article for this newsletter about myself and my role at St Giles’. For those who perhaps do not recognise my face, I hope you might have been able to recognise my playing from the organ loft during the last few years!

I was lucky enough to be successful in my audition for the Herrick Bunney Organ Scholarship in November 2015, and ever since then I have really enjoyed working at St Giles’ and being part of the community. As the organ scholar, I play for parts of the Sunday morning services, and regularly for the Sunday evening services. I really enjoy playing in these services as the music is of such a high quality at St Giles’, and it is therefore a really inspiring place to play. It is a wonderful feeling when a piece that you have worked hard at goes well during a service! The scholarship has also allowed me to study the organ with Michael Harris, and previously Peter Backhouse. This has been a real privilege to study with such respected organists and it has helped my playing hugely!

Away from the services, I have given a number of solo recitals at St Giles’. These are always a real highlight of the year for me, as I really enjoy thinking carefully about the programme to make it appropriate for the time of year. Thank you to anyone who has come to one of them in the past few years! More widely in music I have musically directed musicals with university musical societies, played a lot of jazz piano, and compose and arrange as much as time allows! I am the organ scholar at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral as well, and the combination of the two scholarships leads to a very happy and varied musical life.

Even further away from the organ loft, I am in my final year of studying French and Russian Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Last year I lived in Toulouse, France and Riga, Latvia to develop fluency in both of these languages. In Toulouse, I studied the organ and harpsichord at the Conservatoire of Music, which was very inspiring. Toulouse is famous for its historical organs, including the barely-altered Cavaillé-Coll organ in St Sernin. It was also nice to live somewhere a bit warmer than Edinburgh! In Latvia, I combined a job at the Museum of Interior Design with organ playing and Russian studies. Next year I am continuing my language studies by doing a Masters in Translation.

Before my university studies I used to be a chef. Whilst I regrettably do not have quite enough time to work in a restaurant now, I still try to maintain a food podcast. When I can find time, I enjoy supporting Leeds United football team and running; I am currently training for the Seven Hills of Edinburgh race in June!

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...............and now an article from
Will Tamblyn, Musical Administrator, Heritage & Culture Department

Hello!

It’s been a couple of months since I started here at St Giles’, so some of you may know me well. For those of you that don’t you might recognise me from the Cathedral choir, where I sang bass from 2014-16. In any case, I’m very pleased to introduce myself as the Cathedral’s new Music Administrator. Situated within the Heritage and Culture Department, this is a new role designed to promote and expand the Cathedral’s commercial musical activity alongside Michael Harris’ existing musical programming. In short, this means streamlining and updating the Cathedral’s professional output (including marketing, and social and print media), curating the concert series’, and overseeing music-based activities within the H&C department as a whole. In the long-term, I’ll be looking at how we can improve the Cathedral to offer a more commercially competitive space for all performances here, not just music.

About me: during my time in the choir, I was studying towards a Master’s in Musicology at the University of Edinburgh. Whilst in Edinburgh, I was also president of the Edinburgh University Chamber Orchestra (I’m a flautist), and worked with multiple musical organisations across the city, including the Scottish Chamber Orchestra Choir, Edinburgh University Big Band, the Meadows Chamber Orchestra, and Edinburgh Studio Opera.
Continued from previous page

You might have also heard some of my work performed by the Cathedral choir as, prior to my master’s degree, I received a first in composition from Leeds College of Music, and my ambitions in composition are still very much ongoing. Recently I made a career move to psychology and received a distinction in the MSc Psychology from the University of St Andrews, and this is something I will continue to pursue alongside my musical engagements.

It’s been a real joy to start working here professionally, particularly at a place so personal to me. No other performance space in Edinburgh offers such a stunning acoustic as our Cathedral, and I’m excited to utilise this unique asset to the benefit of our great Kirk as my time here continues. Any time you want to come and have a chat, I’ll be in the H&C office!

Happy New Year!

Will Tamblyn

Family matters (continued)

Continued next page

Rev Dr Laurence A B Whittle

An article written by the Editor

Shortly after the launch of the St Giles’ News, I received several suggestions that the newsletter should contain obituaries in memory of those from our community who had sadly passed away.

However, in consultation with others, it was generally agreed that this was a difficult practice to undertake because inevitably there could be inadvertent omissions that might well cause offence. And that should be avoided.

Nevertheless, in spite of this informal agreement, there are occasions, involving matters of wider and historical interest, that do deserve mention within these columns and the recent death of Laurence Whitley, in my view, falls into that category.

Laurence Whitley was the son of the late Dr Harry Whitley who was the Minister of St Giles’ having first arrived in 1953 and later retiring in 1971. He was then succeeded by the Very Reverend Dr Gilleasbuig Macmillan.

In 1949, Laurence Whitley was born in Port Glasgow, when his father was minister of Newark Parish Church before moving to St Giles’.

Laurence was brought up as a member of our congregation and is particularly remembered as having attended confirmation classes conducted by his father in the company of some of the current members of the congregation, including Roy Durie, Niall Lothian, Margaret Lowe, Alastair Dempster and I am sure there may be others about whom I am not aware.

He attended The Edinburgh Academy from the age of five and at the same time as the Very Rev Professor Sir Iain Torrance – also a member of our congregation.

After graduating in arts from the University of Edinburgh, Laurence moved to St Andrews to study divinity. Before then however Laurence Whitley stood as a SNP Candidate in the two General Elections in 1974, as his mother had done against Sir Alec Douglas Home in what was then the constituency of Kinross and West Perthshire. In neither was he successful.

Licensed to the ministry in the Presbytery of St Andrews, he then served his probationary year in St Andrew’s Church Dundee before being inducted to the linked charges of Busby West and Busby East. In 1985 Laurence Whitley moved to the parish of Montrose Old (now Old and St Andrew’s) when the previous minister the late Dr James Weatherhead (also a former member of our congregation), as had been widely expected, became Principal Clerk of the General Assembly.

It is reported that Montrose was undoubtedly where Laurence Whitley was at his happiest as a minister, and certainly at his most relaxed, and he was greatly loved. The surrounding countryside provided sufficient space for him to practise his bagpipe playing without disturbing the neighbours of the Manse.

Dr Laurence Whitley was called to be minister of Glasgow Cathedral in 2007 and was also appointed as a police chaplain.

At the time of the tragedy at the Clutha Vaults and the bin-lorry tragedy in George Square, Laurence was quickly on the scene supporting those directly affected and also the emergency services. Later he took services in the Cathedral to bring people together and to give a voice to shared experience. At the service Dr Whitley stated “We do not end this day in pain and loss. We stand defiant and in our great, vibrant and irrepressible city, we stand hand in hand to go forward into the light”.

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Continued from previous page

In 2014 the City of Glasgow recognised Dr Whitley’s outstanding service by presenting him with one of the city’s highest accolades – the Loving Cup. In 2015, Glasgow Caledonian University also honoured him by the award of an Honorary Degree.

Dr Whitley retired in 2017 and sadly died 4 November 2018 at the age of 69. His funeral was held in Glasgow Cathedral on 12 November at which Iain Torrance took a leading role.

Laurence is survived by his wife Catherine, children Edward and Hilary together with his brother and two sisters.

To those within our congregation who knew Laurence, he will be sadly missed and to the rest of us we can only admire and thank God that St Giles’ and the Church of Scotland have been so well served by a father and son who together achieved so much and were held by so many in high regard.

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The National Covenant of Scotland—our copy

An article submitted by Stephen Preston, Deputy Head of Heritage & Culture

The National Covenant of Scotland. It was a document designed as a nationwide petition; a petition to King Charles I of England and Scotland. It requested that Charles cease in his attempts to impose Anglicanism on Scotland and leave it to be Presbyterian. This, at a time when the reformations of both England and Scotland were less than 100 years old and Anglicanism was still a little too close to Catholicism for some.

In this context, the authors of the Covenant attacked Anglicanism with some pretty damning language. Phrases such as ‘...blasphemous opinion of transubstantiation...' and ‘...seeing that many are stirred up by Satan and that Roman Antichrist...' perhaps hinted to the feeling against Anglicanism in Scotland. One particular passage begins ‘But in special we detest and refuse the usurped authority of that Roman Antichrist upon the Scriptures of God...' and goes on to outline the perceived pitfalls of Catholicism. In essence, the Covenant was clear in its desires.

It should be noted that, whilst the Covenant clearly attacked the King's policy, it did not question the King himself. In fact, it affirmed Scotland’s loyalty to the King. At one point it states that the Scottish lords '...stand to the defence of our dread Sovereign the King's Majesty ...'. This is not a unique extract, and illustrates a lack of appetite for Charles’ downfall.

Despite the acknowledgement of his authority, Charles ignored this olive branch from the Covenanters and the Covenant did not have the desired effect. Charles pressed ahead with the imposition of bishops and the Anglican liturgy. The importance of the Covenant, however, does not necessarily lie in what it did or did not achieve. As an historical document, it sheds light on the tricky dichotomy of policy dissent and royalist loyalty. Most importantly, it illuminates the complex religious tension shown between two countries that shared the same monarch; a tension that would continue for many more years.

Our copy came to us in 1926 after it was purchased by an elder of St Giles’ from the descendants of original recipients, the Dundas family from Linlithgow. It is one of a good few original copies that have survived; others in Edinburgh can be found at the National Museum, Greyfriars Kirk, and the Museum of Edinburgh. Each covenant would be signed by those important to that area, so ours is signed by prominent nobles of the era, including Montrose and Rothes. Another copy, from a town called Maybole, is the only known copy signed by women, which demonstrates their importance in this area. The Covenants, then, represent a nationwide petition asking for a self-determining Scottish religion, free from the influence of the monarch and ours is a key piece of that petition.
A NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE SESSION CLERK

My first task in this January edition of the St Giles’ News is, of course, to wish everyone a Happy New Year. 2018 was, as ever, an eventful period in the Cathedral’s long history. Daily and weekly services marked our regular duty of worship, always reflecting that mix of formality and informality, dignity, devotion and beauty that means so much to our own congregation and to the many visitors we welcome throughout the year. Mixed with these regular acts of worship were the ‘special’ services which punctuate our year – Kirking the Council, the Academic Service, Remembrance (particularly poignant last year as it fell exactly on the centenary of the armistice), the St Andrew’s-tide service and many more besides – all of which allow us to make a unique and important contribution to the life of Edinburgh, Scotland and indeed the church worldwide. And then the year culminated with the wonderful celebrations of Christmas which, as the full Cathedral showed, still matter to people striving to see beyond the season’s commercial glitz.

Throughout the year, too, the work of our Cathedral staff and volunteers – our Beadles, the Minister’s secretary, Finance Office staff, the Heritage and Culture team, shop staff, the café, those who clean the Cathedral, those who arrange the flowers, all those who organise and provide music in the Cathedral, and others too numerous to mention – continued to support the work of the Cathedral and to present it to the record number of visitors that we continued to welcome. All deserve our heartfelt thanks.

And as we move into 2019, we’ll be doing more of the same and trying new and different things. We have, for example, never before had a massive (7 meter diameter) model of the moon suspended above the communion table – but we will later this month as St Giles’ becomes the latest venue for the ‘Museum of the Moon’ touring event. It promises to be quite something, with associated talks, concerts and other events. In other developments, we have engaged a company to help us look at how we present the Cathedral to visitors. It’s all too easy for us to take for granted the wealth of history, art and architecture for which we are the guardians and so the company we have engaged – Edinburgh-based and called Studio MB – have been working very closely with our Heritage and Culture team to look with a new eye at how we give all our visitors – and indeed ourselves - the very best experience of St Giles’. We hope that the Kirk Session will receive a report on all this activity in the next month or two and we will then have major decisions to take on what we do next. We will, of course, keep members of the congregation fully in the picture.

And one final thought: in 5 years’ time, in 2024, we will be celebrating the Cathedral’s 900th anniversary. Our minds are already beginning to turn to how this might be marked (and I would be happy to receive any initial thoughts that you may have). Impossible though it is to do so, if one could capture 900 years of worship and history in a single phrase, my personal suggestion would include the words continuity and change – the two always in tension with one another, but creating a dynamic that has delivered extraordinary longevity. And as we enter 2019, continuity and change will, with God’s blessing, be watchwords that will help guide how we respond to whatever the year may throw at us.

Mark

St Giles’ supporting Bethany

On 8 November, Holyrood Evangelical Church, Leith acted as the venue for that evening’s Bethany Care Shelter. On this occasion, it was the turn of St Giles’ to provide the catering. As a result a team from the Neighbourhood Group was in attendance and supplied a freshly prepared two-course evening meal for 51 homeless persons plus 4 members of the supervisory staff from Bethany. After the meal, the homeless guests are provided with safe overnight accommodation followed by a light breakfast in the morning, following which they depart.

Victor and Sheana Ashton act as our catering managers and the Neighbourhood Group are very grateful to them and equally impressed with their administrative and culinary skills. Providing hot meals for 55 people in completely unfamiliar surroundings, and within a very limited timescale, is not an easy task.

The St Giles’ team is next on duty on 7 February at which time the venue will be the “Diadem” which was formerly St Aidan’s Church in Chesser Avenue.

At the end of these evenings, when we pack up and leave, there is an enormous sense as to how lucky most of us are to be returning to our warm homes with the love and companionship of our friends and families.

An appeal from Bethany for some support is outlined on Page 17.
An update from the Convener of the General Committee

The Care, Maintenance and Development of St Giles’ in 2019 and in the future

The General Committee is continuing to progress a programme of maintenance activities that will be required to the Cathedral together with proposals for the future development and renewal of St Giles’ to improve the fabric of the Cathedral for all that join in worship and for the many visitors that are welcomed throughout the year.

As part of this process a full survey and condition report has been prepared by the Cathedral Architect, Graham Tristram, that covers all aspects of the internal and external fabric and this will now be used to plan the programme of proposed works to be undertaken during the next few months.

The development of a future renewal works programme is progressing and will include the regular maintenance and improvements of the heating systems, the repair and cleaning of the interior, including the Preston Aisle and Side Aisles, the restoration of the stone floors and the continuing inspection of the external stonework and repair required.

The Committee has instructed a specialist consultant to prepare a report for improvements to the existing internal lighting system. The current chandeliers and windowsill lighting units presently use halogen lamps that are now no longer available. The report will outline the works required to convert the lighting system to use LED lamps, this will also reduce the Cathedral energy usage and will also reduce ongoing replacement.

As reported in previous Newsletters the Committee has received a report following the inspection of the bells in the crown tower and plans will now be prepared to undertake maintenance and necessary improvement works in the next few years.

The improvements to the IT network and the new telephone system was successfully completed as planned in November 2018.

The much-awaited approval on the proposals to remove the graffiti on the east elevation opposite the Mercat Cross will enable this long-awaited work to proceed in the next few weeks.

I will continue to provide further updates in future editions of the St Giles’ Newsletter and will be pleased to discuss the work of the committee in person should further information be required.

John M Andrew FICE

News from the Session (Continued)

The Treasurer

As you can see our Treasurer is now hard at work, together with the Finance Office and the Auditors, to prepare the accounts following the Cathedral’s financial year end on 31 December. John will report further to the Session and the congregation once the 2018 accounts have been finalised. John has very understandably reported that there is nothing meaningful to report at this stage. Nonetheless he hopes you like his new hairstyle.

.....and a message from the Convener of the Neighbourhood Group

The Christmas Rush

The carols are sung, the Christmas tree has left the building and we set forward into a new year; as we do so, it is a good opportunity to reflect on the host of charitable activities that have been undertaken by the St. Giles’ congregation in recent weeks. And with this reflection, comes a huge amount of gratitude to all who have been involved in such a variety of different ways.

We are all too aware that this season brings with it a diverse and often distressing set of challenges for people across our city. As ever, the Neighbourhood Group has supported a range of charities, each of which attempts to tackle different problem areas. We hope that this multi-tiered approach allows us to have the greatest impact but also makes best use of the congregation’s efforts.

Numerous enthusiastic folk volunteered to go out onto the street and help as part of the annual can collections. This year we were raising money for the RockTrust, an Edinburgh-based charity that helps young people affected by homelessness.

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It is not always the easiest task to stand with a collection bucket on the street - especially when the threat of rain was occasionally being enacted - but we fielded an excellent team across both days. In all £3,162.26 was raised by the appeal, which is a tremendous sum – so many thanks to all involved, including the Choir who made a significant contribution from their last concert.

The Advent Appeal for goods yielded copious quantities of food donations and indeed kept the Beadles very busy – thanks to them. Victor Ashton was coordinating activities and he estimates that well over a tonne of food was donated to the Foodbank. As ever the scale of this challenge is huge with more and more people relying on Foodbanks; a number of financial donations were also gratefully received by the appeal which gave us the very useful ability to provide the Foodbank with specific items when shortages arise.

In a similar vein the kist—the glorious old chest that lies at the bottom of the stairs heading down to the café, for those who aren’t familiar—was literally filled to the brim with collecting donations. Many of these were destined for Cunningham House and for the Clothing Store. A comparable scale of kindness was evident in FreshStart’s advent cooker appeal, although it should be gratefully noted that this was more of a financial response rather than a direct response - too many cookers would certainly be tricky to manage.

So a heartfelt thanks to all who contributed in so many ways. Many people face such a wide range of problems across this fair city of ours, and while it is sad that it is even necessary to do so, it is heartening indeed to see such a positive response from our congregation and many friends.

William Taylor

**Poor of the Parish Fund**

The Poor of the Parish Fund, managed by the Treasurer on behalf of the Session and Congregation, provides an annual income of approximately £5,000 per annum.

In recent years the Neighbourhood Group has been invited to make recommendations to the Session as to how this income might be distributed to worthy causes within the Parish and our more local community.

As a result, the Session accepted the Group’s recommendation that the funds be distributed to the following organisations.

- FreshStart £1,000
- Bethany Christian Trust £1,000
- Edinburgh Clothing Store £1,000
- Grassmarket Community Project £1,000
- 6VT Edinburgh Youth Café £1,000

Cheques were issued prior to Christmas and to date some very appreciative letters of thanks have been received.

**ADVENT APPEAL**

A report from Victor Ashton

Sincere thanks to all who have so generously contributed to the Advent Appeal in support of the foodbanks.

Well over one tonne of food has so far been delivered to the Edinburgh Food Project warehouse for distribution to local foodbanks. All of this has come from bags of food brought into the church during four successive Sundays and from financial donations which have been used to purchase particular food items which the Edinburgh Food Project has indicated are in short supply at particular times.

This has been the fourth Advent Appeal and by far the most successful. As well as the great quantity of food supplied to the warehouse, kind people’s generous financial donations will enable the Neighbourhood Group to help the foodbanks throughout the forthcoming year.

With a huge increase in foodbank use during the past year, we can confidently - and regretfully - predict that there will be need of any help we can give during 2019.

**Christmas Gifts for Cunningham House**

Thanks to the amazing generosity of so many associated with St Giles’, a very considerable number of presents for the residents of Cunningham House were handed into the Cathedral in the days before Christmas.

Most of these gifts were anonymously passed to the Beadles with the Neighbourhood Group then ensuring that they were delivered in time for Christmas.

The inserted picture taken in the entrance hall to Cunningham House, because of its restricted space, only shows a selection of the presents.

It was very obvious from the reaction at Cunningham House just how much these gifts were appreciated. Indeed a lot of people had put a considerable amount of thought into what they chose to give.
In recent years, Scotland has welcomed refugees to communities across the country through the UK Government’s Syrian Resettlement Programme and Vulnerable Children’s Relocation Scheme. These programmes are led by local authorities, working together with local statutory and third sector partners.

The Welcoming has been proud to be a part of the Syrian Resettlement Programme in Edinburgh since November 2015. Since then, alongside our partners, The City of Edinburgh Council, Saheliya, Edinburgh College and a host of others, we have been committed to helping all of the Syrian community settle in to their new lives here.

We, at the Welcoming, recognise the fact that language is crucial to all elements of integration. There were consistent appeals from refugees and asylum seekers for help to improve these skills. For many, this is to enable them to find employment or pursue further education. It also enables people to understand essential information about housing, healthcare and other services. Being able to communicate confidently with people, including neighbours, shop workers or members of a local community group, helps people to feel settled, build social connections and be involved in their local area.

David Carpenter, ESOL Co-ordinator at the Welcoming pointed out: “At first we had a good number of Syrian people coming to our English classes where, essentially, we were the first point of regular contact for about a dozen of our first arrivals. Over time some of them moved to more formal English lessons run by Edinburgh College and the City of Edinburgh Council, but some have stayed with us, preferring our more informal style of teaching. Many use us to supplement their formal classes.”

Throughout these years The Welcoming have remained fully engaged with the Syrian Community through many projects, such as The Climate Change Awareness Project, the Befriending service and various health and wellbeing projects.

For more information about refugees in Scotland, please see the New Scots refugee integration strategy 2018-2022. The strategy sets out a vision for a welcoming Scotland where refugees and asylum seekers are able to rebuild their lives from the day they arrive. The strategy commits to better access to essential services such as education, housing, health and employment. It recognises the skills, knowledge and resilience which refugees bring and aims to help people to settle, become part of the community, and pursue their ambitions.
In the October issue of St Giles’ News Fiona Graham gave an interesting update on the important work that is being undertaken by the Refugee Welcoming Project. For this issue we invited the Acting Coordinator of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees, Steve Aisthorpe, to set out how such support is being undertaken in a wider context. Steve now reports as follows.

We live in unsettled times.
The UN has stated that we are witnessing ‘the most significant humanitarian catastrophe since World War II’. Millions of people are fleeing violence, persecution and famine. Nearly 70 million people have been forced from their homes.

By far the majority of displaced people are living in situations where the host population are already grappling with poverty. The picture on the right shows Ersal in Lebanon. Until recently it was a town of about 35,000 people. It is now host to 90,000 Syrian refugees. In two years it has gone from being purely Lebanese to being predominantly Syrian.

Let us not grow weary of doing good (Galatians 6:9)
It is unlikely that anyone reading this has not seen disturbing images of dangerously overcrowded boats in the Mediterranean – and, more recently, in the English Channel. We have heard so many shocking statistics that we easily become oblivious to their significance and desensitised to the fact that behind every statistic is a person: a unique, precious, loved and loving person. We need to guard our hearts and minds against being paralysed by the overwhelming scale of the refugee challenge. We need to be aware of the ways in which labels (‘refugee’, ‘asylum seeker’ etc.) can, in our minds and conversations, reduce people to numbers or define them only in terms of their difficulties.

The love of strangers
One of the things I found most compelling about Jesus when I first gave him serious consideration was the love, attention and hope he offered to people on the edge of society. The word often translated ‘hospitality’ or ‘welcome’ in the New Testament means literally ‘the love of strangers’. Followers of Christ are to ‘be eager to practice the love of strangers’ (Romans 12:13).

The resettlement of refugees is not new to Scotland. However, whereas previous resettlement projects were restricted to Glasgow, in recent years refugees have been resettled in every Local Council area in Scotland. From the Northern Isles to the Borders, from Aberdeen to Stornoway, rural and urban communities have stepped up to welcome families fleeing violence in their own countries.

Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme +
In September 2015, the Prime Minister committed to resettling 20,000 Syrian refugees in the UK. The First Minister said that Scotland would take a minimum of 10% of the total number coming to the UK as a whole. Within weeks of these announcements, all of Scotland’s 32 councils had committed to supporting the resettlement efforts in one way or another and, by Christmas 2015, half had received a total of 400 Syrian refugees. Since then refugees have continued to arrive and settle in Scotland, and by the end of 2017 there were over 2000 Syrian refugees in 31 of Scotland’s local authority areas. In 2017 the SVPRS was expanded to include people of other nationalities who have been displaced by the Syrian conflict but do not have Syrian nationality. Scotland’s local authorities also support the Vulnerable Children’s Resettlement Scheme to resettle children who are at risk, and their families, in the Middle East and North Africa. Although the UK and Scotland’s commitments represent the tip of the iceberg of the world’s refugees, it is transformative for those involved – both for the people being resettled and the many who reach out in welcome and support from within host communities.

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR)
In 2015 the Church of Scotland established a refugee coordination project. The Church approached other faith groups and a network of Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Interfaith groups - Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR) - emerged. Imagine the positive impact on people coming from situations where hostility between religious groups has been part of the toxic mix forcing them from their home, to find people of different faiths committed to working together for their benefit.

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SFAR advises and supports local groups wishing to welcome and assist people to deal with the traumas they have experienced and help them integrate into their new community. Another vital aspect of SFAR’s role is shaping policy and attitudes: speaking out when there is rhetoric in politics or the media which demeans refugees and asylum seekers or which seeks to exploit their vulnerability - and advocating for systems and procedures which are humane, just and efficient. As Christians we are called to ‘Speak out for those who cannot speak’ (Proverbs 31:8-9)

**New Scots in the Hostile Environment**

During the months I was privileged to coordinate the SFAR project this year I became more and more proud to be part of Scotland’s role in welcoming and integrating refugees and asylum seekers – and increasingly ashamed to be part of the UK! I am not making a party-political point here. However, the fact is that Scotland has a positive and generous attitude to those seeking safety. The national strategy is titled ‘New Scots’ and sees integration as a long-term, two-way process. Refugees and asylum seekers are supported from day one of arrival.

In contrast, the UK government has developed the so called ‘hostile environment’ - a web of policies designed to make life as difficult as possible for people seeking asylum. Instead of allowing them to work and contribute an estimated £42m to the economy, the hostile environment inflicts destitution, encourages discrimination and fosters distrust. And then there are the detention centres, where between 2,500 and 3,500 people, often including children, are held at any particular time. Did you know that there is no time limit on immigration detention in the UK?

**So what?**

You may wonder ‘what can I do?’ The Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees (SFAR) website (www.sfar.org.uk) and Facebook page are packed with opportunities to befriend refugees in Scotland, to speak out for a more compassionate asylum system and to support efforts in other parts of the world. In Edinburgh The Welcoming does a fantastic job, as explained by Fiona Graham in our October issue. Also, SFAR runs a Weekend Club in Edinburgh, an initiative that seeks to respond to the social isolation experienced by many refugees, asylum seekers and new migrants arriving in Scotland. Its aim is to enable New Scots to become active members of society by fostering social relationships, providing a relaxed and fun family environment at a series of social events. Churches willing to host an event and individuals willing to volunteer on a regular basis are always welcome.

**About Steve Aisthorpe**

Steve Aisthorpe is the Church of Scotland's Mission Development Worker for the Highlands and Islands. Last year he was Acting Coordinator of Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees for six months. He is the author of The Invisible Church (SAP, 2016), a book based on his doctoral studies on 'churchless faith' in Scotland, and was previously the Executive Director of the International Nepal Fellowship.

**Concert on behalf of refugee support**

An appreciation by Fiona Graham, Convener, Refugee Welcoming Project

In November Michael Harris, Master of the Music volunteered to give a concert with the Cathedral choir and Jordan English, Assistant Organist, in support of the work undertaken by the Refugee Welcoming Project.

It is with sincere thanks and gratitude that I now write to express our appreciation. The concert was brilliantly performed with a powerful programme which included Gabriel Faure’s *Requiem*, Michael Tippett’s *Five Spirituals* from *A Child of Our Time*, Gabriel Jackson’s, *Oculi omnium*, and Ola Gjeilo’s *Ubi caritas et amor*.

During the interval a gifted young Syrian, Qusay Ryad, played beautifully on the electronic keyboard gifted to him by St Giles’ as part of our refugee welcoming project.

The concert was free but with a retiring collection and, as a result of the beautiful music and brilliant performance, the audience – which included many visitors – were so entranced that they gave generously and commented very positively and warmly about the performance. As a result just over £1300 including Gift Aid was collected which was immediately passed to The Welcoming to purchase much needed goods for the recently arrived refugees.
St Giles’ Banners

An article submitted by Mrs Georgina Chapman on behalf of the Thistle Quilters

In 2007, the Thistle Quilters were asked if they could make four banners for St Giles’ Cathedral to hang from the main pillars surrounding the Communion Table. These were to be gold/yellow festival banners celebrating Easter. They were to be called ‘Christ is Risen’. The Sun motif is seen to be higher up on each of the banners to represent Jesus rising from the tomb on Easter Day. This set of banners took us two years to complete and represented a huge learning curve. They had been designed by Sheana Stephen Ashton and somehow I ended up coordinating the construction of the hangings. They were to be approximately 20 feet long and 29 inches wide. We did discover that the four pillars are all of different heights! The banners are basically huge quilts - very heavy to handle because of all the piecing. They were embellished with mirrors and crystals to catch the light when hung. We entered them in for the Saltire Award for Art and Architecture in public spaces in 2009 and to our amazement and delight we were the winning entry.

The second set was made to celebrate St Andrew’s Day and are made in blue silk with half a saltire on each one. When hung as a set the illusion created was of a complete St Andrew’s Cross as two banners hang side by side. The reverse of the banners is in plain blue and these have been used for Advent.

Following on from the Easter and St Andrewstide banners, Sheana has designed a new set for Lent. We are now almost at the stage of finishing this third set. These are in various shades of purple for Lent and the sombre shades reflect the nature of that season. They have been constructed using a technique called paper piecing. Large cartoons were drawn by Sheana. These were taken to a specialist photocopier where they were enlarged to give us a pattern of the correct size. The patterns were carefully annotated so that we knew exactly where each piece belonged and to which banner. We kept a master copy and the others were cut up into manageable sized pieces and distributed around the group for stitching. When the pieces were complete they were all put back together again until the full length of the banner was complete. Each banner is stabilized, wadded and finally quilted in gold thread. This set of banners is called ‘The Road to the Cross’. There are three crosses on each of the banners, viewed through the design of hard edges to represent a broken world in need of redemption. The crosses were outlined in a heavy gold braid. The reverse of this set is in red silk to be used for Christmas. The red silk was gifted by Mrs Lilian Cameron in memory of her late husband Ian.

The original group of ladies who started on this whole project has remained more or less constant over the years although a couple of members have dropped out due to advancing years!

Georgina Chapman
HMS HOWE

It is just so easy to walk around St Giles’, undertaking whatever it is that takes you there, without recognising the extent of the historical memorabilia that surrounds you. We simply take for granted.

One such item is the large brass bell from HMS Howe that was presented to the Cathedral by the Royal Navy for safekeeping in November 1959.

The bell sits in a magnificent bell carriage, surmounted by the ship’s coat of arms, with her Colours displayed behind.

The bell carriage is to be seen in the North Aisle adjacent to the gate leading into the Chambers Aisle.

HMS Howe was the last of the five British King George V class battleships, indeed one of the last battleships ever built for the Royal Navy. Built by Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Company on the Clyde, she was laid down on 1 June 1937 and launched 9 April 1940. She was originally to have been named Beatty but this was changed to Howe, after Admiral Richard Howe. HMS Howe was completed on 29 August 1942 after her building time was extended, as much needed war supplies were diverted to work on higher priority tasks such as the construction and repair of both merchant ships and escort ships. With her sister-ship HMS Anson, Howe spent most of her career in the Arctic providing cover for Russian convoys.

In 1943, after being relocated to Gibraltar, HMS Howe took part in Operation Husky and bombarded Trapani naval base and Favignana in support of the allied invasions of Sicily and then, along with HMS King George V, she escorted two surrendered Italian battleships to Alexandria.

On 8 August 1944, Howe arrived at Trincomalee in Ceylon to join the Eastern Fleet. She was the first modern British battleship to be deployed in eastern waters since the loss of HMS Prince of Wales in December 1941. Howe was quickly put into action, providing cover for carrier-based air operations against targets in Sumatra. In December, she moved to Sydney, where she sailed to Auckland, New Zealand, for a flag-waving visit. In February 1945, HMS Howe and King George V sailed from Sydney to begin operations in earnest in the Pacific theatre; together with four carriers, five cruisers and fifteen destroyers, they made up Task Force 113.

The first major undertaking for Task Force 113, which got underway on 1 April 1945, was Operation Iceberg which provided offshore support for the US landings at Okinawa. The force was subjected to sporadic Japanese kamikaze attacks, but the two ships emerged unscathed from these actions. HMS Howe’s anti-aircraft batteries also succeeded in shooting down an attacking kamikaze plane. The two ships’ principal roles were air defence and land bombardment, the latter being carried out very accurately, particularly by Howe, against anti-aircraft installations on the island of Miyako, half way between Okinawa and Formosa.

By the first week of June 1945, HMS Howe was back in Sydney, and almost immediately it was decided to send her for a refit in Durban. It was here that she saw out the remainder of the war. By January 1946 she was relocated back to Portsmouth where she spent four years as flagship of the Training Squadron at Portland. In 1951 she was placed into reserve and towed to Devonport.

In 1957 she was ordered to be scrapped and on 27 May 1958, she was towed to her final resting place at Inverkeithing to be broken up by Thomas W Ward – a task that was not to be completed until 1961.

Throughout her relatively short life HMS Howe had a very close relationship with Edinburgh and, in recognition of this supportive friendship, the Royal Navy presented the ship’s bell to St Giles’ in November 1959. Apart from the ship’s bell, it was reported in 2012 that parts from one of the gun turrets may still be in existence and being used as a turntable at Dounreay - otherwise all other traces of this great ship have disappeared into history.

Footnote—The ship’s motto of ‘UTCUNQUE PLACERIT DEO’ translates to “God’s Will Be done”.

Footnote
O little town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
the silent stars go by;
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
the everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
are met in thee tonight.

Phillips Brooks’ charming carol either keeps Bethlehem alive in our wonder at Christmas, or else the images of its opening verse lull us into mere nostalgic Yuletide escapism.

Inspired by a first sight of Bethlehem on Christmas Eve 1865, during a peaceful period in Ottoman rule, the 30 year-old New England Episcopalian preacher’s poem written a couple of Christmases later almost always calls to mind a Christmas card picture of “baby Jesus” in a sleepy village. But it can give an edge to our thoughts about following Jesus, both in Palestine, and here today. The reality is that Bethlehem does not “lie still” now, or during much of its past.

Just as for Mary and Joseph, Bethlehem today is over-crowded and stressed out by an occupying and threatening military occupation. Then it was because of Roman Emperor Augustus with his compulsory census, and “King Herod” the collaborator; more recently there was the “Great War”, followed by the troubled British occupation and Mandate from 1917 to 1948; the Israeli Wars of Independence and the Palestinian “Disaster” followed by Jordanian rule, and from 1967 onwards, its military occupation and economic colonisation by the State of Israel, as part of the West Bank, which is now carved up by a 24 feet high, concrete Separation Wall, military exclusion areas, checkpoints, illegal Israeli settlement expansion and “settler-only” roads.

“The hopes and fears of all the years” are certainly focussed there today, and they should disturb our Christmas glow. Fears are better identified and dealt with than kept vague and hidden. Having visited Bethlehem before, last year I was shocked by the extent of Israel’s oppression. The city itself still has three refugee settlements from 1948. Though its old city has had the coveted UNESCO World Heritage status since 2012, its Christian and Muslim inhabitants have only three permit-controlled exits, and are forced to queue from 5am daily to get to work in Jerusalem a few miles north (nearer than Penicuik to Edinburgh). Almost 90% of the Bethlehem area is now under Israeli army control. Fear of a violent reaction to mounting oppression and possible consequences is widespread.

Many in our churches will have heard of the “Tent of Nations” close to Bethlehem, with Daoud Nassar’s peaceful resistance to unjust encroachment by illegal and often violent Israeli settlers. The widespread theft of land, destruction of olive groves and denial of water, or even the right to build for growing families, contrasts with the expansion of illegal, luxurious Jewish settlements, separating many Palestinian farmers from their own land. There are many other cases less well known in the West, about which our politicians mostly remain silent. Christian leaders like Naim Ateek and Mitri Raheb, have written and spoken for years about the largely non-violent response of Palestinian Christians, by their Muslim neighbours, and also a significant number of courageous Jewish Israeli groups, such as “Rabbis for Human Rights”.

It’s hardly surprising that people have parodied Brooks’ verse:

O little town of Bethlehem
Imprisoned now you lie.
Above your deep and silent grief,
Surveillance drones now fly.
And through your old streets windeth,
A huge illegal Wall.
The hopes and dreams of peaceful schemes
Are yearning for its fall.

Unnoticed in our Christmas festivities, or even by many of the pilgrims bussed in and out to visit the Church of the Nativity, is the daily ongoing denial of all that Jesus was born, lived and died for: the equal need of all people for forgiveness, mutual reconciliation, and for justice, with a fair share of land and water. Yet there are glimmers of hope and light in Bethlehem. The picture shows a children’s peace park set up, right at the Wall, by a Conflict Transformation Centre called “Wi’am”, meaning “cordial relationships” (partnered by the Church of Scotland’s World Mission). Its logo is a Star and members teach forms of non-violence, while hoping that the world’s leaders, including those of Israel, will either be shamed or pressured into ending the occupation, so that in the end the Wall will come down, an essential step towards the birth of God’s community of love.
Those who sing carols about Bethlehem must never be antisemitic but they do have to challenge Zionist exclusivism and expansionism, just as people opposed South African Apartheid, which also tried in vain to claim biblical support. Today Bethlehem depends on tourism. We are invited to “come and see”. If you can afford to, do go and stay there – there’s plenty to appreciate. In any case, we all need to think more about what we spend our money on, or invest in – and what we sing, think, and do about the “little town of Bethlehem”.

Further sources of good information:
“The Biggest Prison on Earth” Ilan Pappe, One World, London 2017
In Edinburgh: - “Hadeel” 123, George Street, Palestinian shop, also online.
John McCulloch, minister of St Andrews’ Scots Memorial Church Jerusalem sends interesting newsletters. See www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worldmission.

Chris Wigglesworth
Chris is a member of St Giles’; a former Vice-Convener of Church and Society Council, Secretary of World Mission, Lecturer in Practical Theology at University of Aberdeen, missionary hydrogeologist and CNI minister at the Scots’ Kirk in Mumbai, India.
This article first appeared in a slightly different form in the December 2018 issue of “Life and Work”.

An invitation to help from Bethany

Hi - I’m writing to let you know that we have launched our Buy a Bed campaign again this winter to raise funds for the Care Shelter. It costs £21 for one person to stay one night at the Care Shelter. We sell vouchers whereby people can pay £21 and fund a place at the Care Shelter for a night. (It’s a virtual voucher and not something that needs passed to someone who is homeless,) Last winter people bought them instead of Christmas presents for friends or relatives and it raised over £8,000 for the Care Shelter!

Perhaps you could spread the word? The link where people can buy the vouchers is—
http://fundraising.bethanychristiantrust.com/event/bab18

The Care Shelter is going really well this winter – a big thank you to all of you who have catered, prayed or donated so far this winter! Numbers are really high with an average of 58 people turning up per night. Sadly this means that sometimes the Care Shelter is full and people are having to be turned away. The good news is that the capacity will increase when we move to Diadem in Stenhouse later this month. The staff team are always amazed by the acts of kindness that our guests show to one another. One particularly busy night, an older man arrived to discover that there were not currently any beds available. He was advised to wait to see if anyone left by the time the lights go out and he enjoyed a good, hot meal in the meantime. Another guest spotted him waiting and asked the staff, “Is that man not getting in?” The staff explained that currently the Care Shelter was full but the man was waiting to see if a bed would become available. On hearing this, he gathered up his belongings and announced that he would leave. “I’m not having an old man sleeping on the streets,” he said, “He can have my bed!” He was given a sleeping bag and thanked profusely for his generosity and kindness. The older man was very grateful to have somewhere safe and warm for the night and was soon gently snoring in his bed. It’s amazing that someone who has so little would give up all that they do have – their bed for the night – for a complete stranger.

Thank you for all that you are doing to support the Care Shelter. I hope that you may know the peace of Christ this Christmas and have a wonderful 2019 when it comes.

Best wishes

Ruth Longmuir

Telephone 0131 561 8930 or email info@bethanychristiantrust.com

Bethany Christian Trust, 65 Bonnington Road, Edinburgh, EH6 5JQ
In September 2008, St Giles' Cathedral transferred the management of its well-established café/restaurant, known then as The Lower Aisle, to a local café concession operator, Glenfinlas Ltd, with a view to modernising the environment, kitchen, and servery, and generating more customers and concession income from the café for the Cathedral. Two of the existing staff, Linda Auld (Cook), and David McNeill (Café Manager), were transferred to their new employers under TUPE Regulations, and a short period of refurbishment began. Following an investment by Glenfinlas of around £50,000 for the refit, the newly-branded Saint Giles’ Cathedral Café opened in mid-October.

The operators, Glenfinlas, had been established ten years previously, initially as the UK distributor for Vermont-based and multi-award-winning Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, and then as a café operator specialising in pop-ups at the National Galleries of Scotland, The Edinburgh International Book Festival, the Edinburgh International Science Festival, Lyon & Turnbull (Auctioneers), and Dancebase. It then operated permanent cafés at the Fruitmarket Gallery (from 2004 until 2015), the City Art Centre (from 2010 until 2016), and the Scottish Storytelling Centre (from 2009 until 2016). The company currently operates Fenton Barns Farm Shop & Café near Drem in East Lothian and recently opened Carlyle House Cafe in Haddington’s High Street.

Glenfinlas’ directors, husband-and-wife team Roy Campbell and Mhairi MacKenzie-Robinson, had come from diverse backgrounds but shared a passion for gourmet food. A Psychology graduate from Durham University, Mhairi was Director of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe from 1986 to 1994, and then worked for BBC Scotland. Following her time at the BBC, Mhairi became the first Marketing Director for the National Galleries of Scotland under Sir Timothy Clifford. After leaving the Galleries, she worked as New Projects Director at The List Magazine, before becoming Commercial Director at Glenfinlas in 2000, a post she continues to hold and which combines her cultural management skills with her well-honed culinary instincts.

After graduating with a law degree from Clare College Cambridge, Roy joined the private UK multinational company John Swire & Sons as a Management Trainee in Papua New Guinea and Hong Kong, before pursuing a ten-year career as a marine insurance underwriter in London and Sydney. On completing a postgraduate Masters degree in Business Administration at Heriot-Watt University in 1997, he founded Glenfinlas. The company currently employs 12 permanent and 8 casual staff.

As many readers will know, St Giles’ Cathedral Café prides itself on cooking fresh and tasty food from scratch. Linda Auld has been a consistent and talented Cook, particularly good at baking traditional cakes and slices, but also a dab-hand at making delicious soups, stovies, salads, quiches, and daily-baked soda-bread rolls. Linda’s scones regularly receive the highest accolades from customers. David McNeill is well-known to the café’s regular visitors for his excellent customer service skills and his friendly manner. During the busier times of year, the café tends to draw its additional staff from the student population in Edinburgh, giving it a stream of bright and hard-working team members from all over the world. We enjoy training and developing the potential of these many young and enthusiastic people.

Aside from helping to contribute to the experience of one-off and regular visitors to the Cathedral, we are delighted to have been able to almost double the sales levels in the café since it was refurbished in 2008, and to have generated in excess of £250,000 of unencumbered concession income for the Cathedral over the past 10 years, often in very challenging economic circumstances. We are always pleased to welcome members of the Congregation and volunteers to the oasis of calm beneath the building, and we hope that the many positive reviews from tourists, particularly on TripAdvisor, about the quality of the food and the friendly welcome that the café offers, will continue to fly the flag for Saint Giles’ Cathedral and its many supporters around the globe.
Irina Vettraino

A technical problem

A Beadle’s Lot

An article submitted by Ian Moffat—one of our retired Beadles

Two of my favourite books may not appear in the Booker Prize list for literature but to me they are classics.

THE KIRK BEADLE a book written by Nicholas Dickson in Glasgow in 1891, traces the evolution of the Scottish Beadle.


The word Beadle comes from the Medieval Latin Bedel, Pedellus or Bedellus.

Beadles can be traced back to the early 13th Century, their role has changed considerably over the centuries. In fact Beadles have now become a bit of a rarity. However, the Scottish Beadle still exists in a small number of Churches and serves his or her Minister and Congregation with hard work, long hours, patience, understanding and loyalty—indeed, the driving force that runs the engine room of any Church.

In Pre-reformation times, the Beadle would be officially recognised as a member of the Ecclesiastical staff. They had to be in regular attendance at Church in order to open the doors on time to admit the faithful and to close them tightly against the unfaithful. Additionally, all heretics had to be expelled and all excommunicated persons banned from being anywhere near the church.

The Beadles were also responsible for stopping any buying or selling, excluding all beggars, driving out dogs, wakening sleepers and generally maintaining order. They also had powers to identify culprits and report them to the Session for cursing, swearing, lying, fighting, drinking and slandering. As a result of these many duties, a beadle was always at risk of retaliation whilst walking the streets. Guilty parties were handed over to the Beadle for the administration of the prescribed punishment. He also collected fines.

Thankfully nowadays the duties of the hard working Beadles have changed, although keeping order and waking sleepers are still in their remit.

The Beadles today serve their Minister, staff and the Congregation. They will assist in preparing and planning services including weddings, baptisms and funerals. They will maintain the upkeep of the Church which includes repairs, cleaning, stocking votive stands, trimming candles, preparing wine and bread for communion, heating, security, cleaning silver, emptying donation boxes and the ordering of any materials needed by the church. The list goes on and on. In fact the Beadles, apart from conducting the services, are on call to do just about anything.

The Beadle has Ceremonial duties too. Many of these will involve the use of their Mace. For example, they will mace-in the Minister, or dignitaries into the church and lead the Minister or speakers to the pulpit or lectern. Timing is crucial and they will wear the Beadles’ robes and cassock when required.

I now digress slightly. On 30th August 1975 I was married in St Giles. The service was conducted by The Very Rev Gilleasbuig and the organist was Herrick Bunney. As I looked around the magnificent surroundings of the Cathedral and stood before the Minister, little did I know that in 38 years time I would be facing the Minister of St Giles’ again as a serving Beadle.

I had the honour of serving four amazing years as a Beadle under the guidance of the now retired Head Beadle, Tom Foggo, who was not only a colleague but more importantly a dear friend.

I was lucky enough to serve numerous Ministers over the period and met so many amazing people in the congregation. The St Giles’ staff were second to none and I made so many friends whom I now very much miss.

It was hard work involving long hours but the pinnacle of my working life, before I retired to spend more time with my wonderful wife Linda, was my wedding day in St Giles’ in 1975.

Lastly, having served the Rev Calum MacLeod, I know the Cathedral will continue to go from strength to strength.

Thank you for an unforgettable experience. God Bless You All.
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