

# Greyfriars Kirk & St Cuthbert's Parish Church

## Working Towards Union Newsletter: Issue 3, April 2024

Welcome to the April edition of our Newsletter or maybe we should call it Spring now we are enjoying lighter evenings, flowers blooming and some lovely long-awaited sunshine.



### Update on Progress to date:

There was a bit of a pause in the activities contributing to working towards union during March, partly with the many special services and need for reflection around Easter, and partly due to meetings with Presbytery Assessors. Previously, Karen Campbell (minister at Marchmont St Giles), was appointed by Presbytery as interim moderator to Greyfriars Kirk following Rev Frazer's retirement. In 2017 the Minister of St Cuthbert's was appointed on the basis of a five year renewable charge which expired in June 2022. However because of the introduction of the Mission Plan all reviews were put on hold until 2024. This review took place last month and we await further information. Christine and Gillian, co-chairs of the union working group, also met with one of the Presbytery Assessors who is monitoring and supporting the two congregations' journey toward union, to update them on activities so far. Further meetings will be held to help us progress in the coming months. As a result of these meetings, and building upon much of the "get to know" each other activities and opportunities to attend events at both churches which we have had so far, it is now necessary to start addressing some of the main areas that need to be worked through as we seek to harmonise aspects of church-life in the united congregation.

The two churches Kirk Sessions are required to agree a draft "Basis of Union" document for submission to Edinburgh and West Lothian Presbytery. This document will be voted upon by Kirk Sessions and separately by members of the congregation too. If you are not a formal member of either congregation, or you are not sure, and would like to find out more please contact Christine or Gillian who will be able to help you find out and contact the appropriate minister to discuss. It will take some time to work through the substance of the points in the draft document, and so there is plenty of time. We do not expect Kirk Sessions or congregations to vote before the end of the year at the earliest, but we will keep you updated on progress in these monthly newsletters and please do speak to one of the working group representatives (see next page) if you would like to discuss.

The keys points on which detailed discussion is required, along with those leading on each aspect, include:-

- **Governance, finance and sustainability** – Jo Elliot, Greyfriars Session Clerk and Scott Turnbull, St Cuthberts Treasurer
- **Places of worship** – Christine McGuinness, St Cuthberts Deputy Session Clerk and Gillian Couper, Greyfriars Parish Associate, with John Kirk, Catherine Alexander and Jamie Sutherland.
- **Constitution of the United Kirk Session** – Margaret Pollock, St Cuthberts Session Clerk and Jo Elliot, Greyfriars Session Clerk
- **Future combined vision of outreach, mission and community participation** – Christine McGuinness, St Cuthberts Deputy Session Clerk and Gillian Couper, Greyfriars Parish Associate, with John Kirk, Catherine Alexander and Jamie Sutherland.

The process for the appointment of a minister to the united charge will also be addressed, for which further meetings with Presbytery Assessors are expected. We are exploring options for each of these points that will take into account what each congregation currently does, the approach taken by other churches that have recently united or are uniting as part of the Presbytery Plan, and wider examples from other denominations and further afield than Scotland. Papers summarising the findings and recommendations or questions to enable progress will be presented to the two Kirk Sessions in forthcoming meetings.

We anticipate progress on these areas being the main task of representatives of the working group, along with others from both congregations who will be asked for input to ensure we benefit from the particular skills and experience of individuals, and involve an appropriate range of voices. If you are interested in getting involved, please let one of the working group representatives know. Ultimately, the objective over the coming months is to take us from being two independent congregations to the single new congregation created by the Greyfriars St Cuthberts Union. We hope the union will truly make the "best of both worlds", and build upon the excellent resources and wonderful initiatives that both churches currently have in place.

## March Fellowship Lunch

Although there was a pause on some of the union activities, we still found time to keep getting to know each other during March. On Sunday 3 March the Greyfriars congregation enjoyed the short walk (fortunately it was not raining!) across the Grassmarket to St Cuthberts. An enjoyable time was had over a light “fellowship lunch”, at which we hope everyone met someone new and enjoyed discussing the similarities and differences between our congregations. Some folk have told us afterwards that there is much that we can share and ways we can help each other in future. We ate in the sanctuary and this allowed Greyfriars visitors an opportunity to see around the church. Staff and congregational volunteers were on hand to show people around a bit more, including the Memorial chapel, which was much enjoyed. It was a great example of team working too, as members of both congregations all got ‘mucked in’ to serve teas, set-up lunch and clear-up afterwards. A great time was had by all! Thanks to everyone who came and made it such a good event. We hope many of you will be able to attend such events in future too.



**Here are some of the things we are working on as we continue to get to know each other:**

Sharing of special services and annual services information to allow both congregations to participate in each other's events	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sharing of readers / prayer leaders each month	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Arranging further fellowship events including another lunch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**Get in touch!** If you would like to:

- raise any points, ask questions or have a chat about progress toward union
- contribute ideas or input to the work on the key areas outlined on the previous page
- tell both congregations about an event or activity that you are involved in through the various news channels (order of service notes, social media and other newsletters)
- volunteer your time in some way to helping us work toward union

Please get in touch with Christine or Gillian through the church offices: [office@stcuthberts-edinburgh.uk](mailto:office@stcuthberts-edinburgh.uk) or telephone 0131 229 1142; [contact@greyfriarskirk.com](mailto:contact@greyfriarskirk.com) or telephone 0131 225 1900. All thoughts welcome.

The working group representatives are:

St Cuthberts – Christine McGuinness (Co- Chair), Alexander Bewick, Jeannette Barton, John Kirk, Graham Maclagan, James McLean, Margaret Pollock and Scott Turnbull.

Greyfriars – Gillian Couper (Co-Chair), Catherine Alexander, Anne Bradbury, Maggie Cormack, Jo Elliot, Jamie Sutherland.