

Welcome to the first autumn 2024 newsletter. We hope you had a good summer and enjoyed some festival events. Edinburgh was certainly busy! It is a time of year that brings out the best in what we have to offer and our churches welcomed many artists displaying a great array of talents. Below are just a few images showcasing what the Festival has brought us this year.



It is hard to believe we are now in October. The year has flown by, and the Working Group remains busy with preparatory research, information-sharing and working together toward union.

### **Personnel Updates**

We have some personnel updates which, we are sure you will now know about within your own church's context but perhaps not so much about what's happening at each sister church.

At Greyfriars, Steve Lister, Operations Manager, is retiring this month and we wish Steve well and thank him for his help in assisting future union discussions. Steve's replacement is Mark Harrison and we look forward to welcoming Mark in due course.

At St Cuthbert's, Alex Bewick, Church Manager, has now taken up a new position in the social care sector but he has agreed to work regular shifts with us, as and when required. Oscar Kelly has been appointed as Church Administrator and has now commenced in that role.

The Rev Peter Sutton has received a Call from First (Scots) Presbyterian Church, Charleston, South Carolina in the Charleston Atlantic Presbytery of the PC(USA). He will demit his charge as Minister of St Cuthbert's Parish Church on 28th February 2025. We wish Peter well as he looks forward to his new role in another part of the world.

### **Union Process**

From March 2025 both churches will become "vacant charges". As part of the progression toward union, the two Kirk Sessions are required to draft a "Basis of Reviewable Charge", which, if approved by Presbytery, will give the united charge permission to call a minister, and sets out criteria for Presbytery's review of the charge in due course (usually every five years). It is proposed that the united charge be named "Greyfriars St Cuthbert's", which has been approved by the Kirk Session of the two present churches. The name of the charge will be included in the "Basis of Union" document which, along with the Basis of Reviewable Charge, will be put before the congregations for a vote as to whether the union should go ahead. The Basis of Union sets out various other aspects relevant to union, including the bounds of the united parish, constitution of the Kirk Session and intended places of worship. Draft templates of these two documents can be found here: <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/presbytery-planning>.

In the next newsletter we will provide more information on these documents, as shaped for Greyfriars St Cuthbert's, and the key events involved in the process of voting upon the union.

### **Working Group Activities**

The sub groups, as detailed in the last Newsletter, have been busy researching how others have worked through the union process, what options are available for the various points to be agreed, and a paper will be presented to both Kirk Sessions to facilitate discussion and decision-making. There are some challenging decisions ahead, but we hope that this paper will provide a good foundation, with transparent, well-considered, measured thoughts and a clear list of the actions and decisions that need to be undertaken. It is our aim to have this paper circulated to the Sessions in October, with a combined meeting following in due course. We hope to follow this with a joint congregational lunch when the wider congregations can delve into the detail, ask questions, contribute ideas, discuss union matters with others and understand more about what the future vision of the united charge looks like. We know that uncertainty is unsettling, however, it is our hope that by sharing information and our thought process with you, and all the time we are spending getting to know each other over the past year and over the coming months, we are well placed to meet the inevitable challenges ahead.

### **Sharing Worship**

We are aware that an important part of this journey is to become more at home and comfortable, not just with each other but also with our church sanctuaries. Therefore, supported by our Ministerial teams, Session Clerks and Music Directors we are delighted to offer an Advent programme of worship that will involve both Sanctuaries, Choirs and Organs. This will allow us to enjoy both buildings, shared liturgy and worshipping together, embracing diversities and recognising similarities in the spirituality of each place and the congregations that gather there. There will be more details in the next letter when dates and venues have been confirmed. In the following months *Belfry Sunday at St Cuthberts on the 17th of November* will be an opportunity to join together and to learn more about the musical art of bell and hand bell ringing.

### **Working Group**

We are aware that you may not know who each member of the working group is. It is really important that you know us and feel at ease asking us questions and offering any suggestions, comments and feedback - this is a unique opportunity to shape the future so we must encourage everyone to get involved! We will try to get a photo of the group for the next newsletter too, but meantime please do ask the welcomer on the door on Sundays, or over tea and coffee after services, if you would like to be introduced to one of the group.

**St Cuthbert's representatives** – Christine McGuinness (Co- Chair), and Graham Maclagan, John Kirk, James McLean, Jeannette Barton, Margaret Pollock, Scott Turnbull.

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

**Some Happy News** - We are delighted to congratulate The Rev Sue MacGregor, following her Ordination Ceremony at Greyfriars Kirk earlier this month. We know that you all look forward to welcoming Sue into our midst, although she is already a well known face to many and we are excited about working with her in her capacity as Associate Minister at Greyfriars.

**Get in touch!** As ever, if you would like to ask any questions about the forthcoming union, input to the working group or volunteer your time to help us work toward union, or share any news with both congregations, 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.