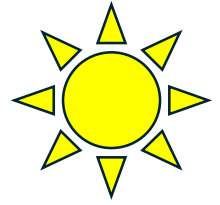


Greyfriars Kirk & St Cuthbert's Parish Church
Working Towards Union Newsletter: Issue 4, July 2024

Welcome to the “summer” Newsletter, here's hoping for a bit more sunshine soon! The Working Group considers it important to keep the congregations informed on activities as well as progress towards the Union and these newsletters are a key part of that. The group aims to keep communication channels open, even when progress is slower than anticipated. The group is working on a number of areas while awaiting word from the Presbytery Deployment Committee.



Basis of Union and Basis of Reviewable Charge:

In the April newsletter, we outlined the initial areas identified for discussion and research:

- **Governance, finance and sustainability** – Jo Elliot, Greyfriars Session Clerk and Scott Turnbull, St Cuthberts Treasurer
- **Places of worship** – Christine McGuinness and Gillian Couper, working group co-chairs, 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 and Gillian Couper, with John Kirk, Catherine Alexander and Jamie Sutherland.
- **Ministry appointment** – further meetings with Presbytery expected.

Information has been shared and some progress made in the various areas. Many other churches have completed or are working toward union, under the Mission Plan of Edinburgh and West Lothian Presbytery, and churches in various denominations have needed to adjust and work through changes similar to those faced by the Church of Scotland, including the allocation of ministry resource and one congregation becoming responsible for maintaining multiple buildings. So, many examples are available for consideration. The working group will be meeting in July to discuss that and then take updates and recommendations (where appropriate) to the Kirk Sessions of each church. We will also plan the next opportunities for joint worship and social time. If you have any ideas for joint activities, examples of worship practises and working together from other church unions you would like to share, or you would like to get involved in the activities of the working group, please do get in touch with a member of the working group.

As well as the “Basis of Union” document mentioned in the April newsletter, the two churches will need to agree a “Basis of Reviewable Charge” too. Templates are available for both these documents as a starting point, which you can see online here (or please ask Gillian or Christine if you would like a copy emailed, posted or printed out to collect): <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/presbytery-planning>.

Neither document goes into excessive detail about individual points, and through working group discussions to date it has emerged that both churches are keen to ensure the joint Kirk Session of the United Charge, and the minister called to the united charge are able to take the vision forward and shape church life together with the united congregation. The idea, as ever, being the hope that 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.

In due course drafts of the two documents will be put before the two churches' Kirk Sessions and congregations, to vote upon whether the union can progress on the basis of the proposed drafts, setting the right direction. While the exact timetable is to be confirmed, following further discussion with Presbytery Assessors, it is hoped that drafts of these documents will be published in autumn, perhaps a little earlier than previously expected (i.e. early next year was suggested in the April Newsletter).

Special Services at St Cuthbert's and Greyfriars

As part of getting to know each other, the working group has exchange information on the annual worship programmes at each church. Both churches have an early communion service on the first Sunday of the month, and have communion during the main service on the last Sunday of the month. Both churches have special services during Advent, Lent and Easter and mark other occasions including Harvest and Remembrance. Regular services include:

- English speaking services – weekly at both churches each Sunday, 10:30am
- Gaelic Congregation Services – weekly at Greyfriars Kirk, Sunday 12:30pm
- Soul Space – monthly space to explore, reflect and pray at St Cuthbert's
- Refugio – monthly evening eucharist, gathering in silence and prayer at Greyfriars
- Ecumenical services – both congregations hold joint services with ecumenical partners throughout the year. St Cuthbert's ecumenical partners are St John's (Episcopalian) and New Town Church (Church of Scotland). Greyfriars' ecumenical partners are St Columba's by the Castle (Episcopalian) and Augustine United Church (United Reformed).
- Assembly Sunday – Gaelic congregation welcome the new Moderator at its 12:30pm service.
- Festival service – celebrating the Edinburgh festivals at St Cuthbert's on 18th August.
- Friends of St Cuthbert's service – on 29th September.
- Riding of the Marches service – at Greyfriars in September
- Annual Pet "Blessing" – at Greyfriars on World Animal Day (Oct)

Many other special services take place at both churches through the year, hosted by the congregations, partners and visiting groups.

Around the community

A primary focus of both churches is outreach in the community and working in partnership to support those in need. Here are two key initiatives supported by our churches:



Steps to Hope continue to meet weekly at St Cuthbert's church, providing hot meals and support for up to 100 people on Sundays and Mondays. Steps to Hope is a charity based in Edinburgh and West Lothian that aids and supports the homeless and those suffering from addictions. See: www.stepstohope.co.uk.

Grassmarket Community Project is a community of over 500 people, based in the Greyfriars Grassmarket Centre, which provides sanctuary and support to people dealing with multiple complex issues through a range of opportunities for volunteering, training, activities & education. www.grassmarket.org.



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 or telephone 0131 229 1142; contact@greyfriarskirk.com or telephone 0131 225 1900. All thoughts welcome.

Working group representatives are:

St Cuthberts – Christine McGuinness (Co- Chair), 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.