

Greyfriars Kirk & St Cuthbert's Parish Church Working Towards Union Newsletter: Issue 2, Feb 2024

Welcome to the second issue of the Newsletter from the St. Cuthbert's and Greyfriars Working Group. The Working Group has been in operation since June 2023 and would like to share with both congregations what actions have been undertaken to date, some upcoming events and some of the activities being undertaken to help us get to know each other's church, look to the future and prepare for union.

Working group aims and achievements:

- Since the working group formed, we have tried to meet monthly to ensure regular ongoing communications and to allow progress of actions agreed.
- The group agreed a parish grouping document, which has been submitted to Presbytery and you can see this here: <https://greyfriarskirk.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Parish-Grouping-Document.pdf>. <https://www.stcuthberts-edinburgh.uk/news/greyfriars-st-cuthberts-union-update>



Opportunities for Engagement (working group actions and updates so far): Various events have been held, open to members of both churches and great feedback has been received from those who were able to come.

- Firstly, members of St Cuthbert's and Greyfriars attended a community ceilidh at the Charteris Centre in October.
- Members of Greyfriars joined St Cuthbert's and their community friends at the Oasis Quiz in November. Both of these are annual events, so if you couldn't come last year it would be great to see you at the next events!
- Members of both churches combined to sing, read and participate in a joint 9 Lessons and Carols at St Cuthbert's in December, and elders from both churches have attended "the other" during services to lead prayers and read Scripture.
- The Kirk Sessions and staff team have engaged and progressed too. A joint Kirk Session away day helped provide the working group with guidance and direction for the coming year.

Indeed, many of us have attended each other's churches to enjoy the service and meet folk over tea and coffee afterwards. If you have not yet done that, do think about it. You will receive a warm welcome and hopefully enjoy some of the things we noted that we share in common in the last newsletter, including musical liturgy and sanctuaries with rich histories

Updates

At Greyfriars, Rev Richard Frazer demitted his charge in November. Rev Karen Campbell, minister at Marchmont St Giles has been appointed Interim Moderator, and, on completion of her remaining training requirements, probationer minister Sue MacGregor will begin a three year appointment as Associate Minister.

St Cuthbert's appointed Dr Anne Robertson as Pastoral Assistant in September for a period of one year. As well as undertaking pastoral activities herself, Anne has been developing proposals for sustaining these activities in the future too, and will be meeting with Sue so both churches can think about this together.

There have been others visits and meetings with folk from both churches, involving Steps to Hope and Grassmarket Community Project too.

Upcoming Events and Activities

The Presbytery's review of charge at St Cuthbert's is due to commence on 19 March. While much of the formalities relating to union are on pause, given the efforts this will involve for people at St Cuthbert's and while we await the outcome of that review, some activities will continue, for the benefit of both churches.

Joint Fellowship Lunch, 3 March at noon, at St Cuthbert's: Please come along to this joint social event at St. Cuthbert's from 12 noon to 2.00 pm on Sunday 3 March. It is an event for members of the congregation, regular attenders, visitors, and any others involved in the congregational and community life at Greyfriars Kirk and St Cuthbert's Parish Church. After the services at Greyfriars and St Cuthbert's (both churches holding their usual services at 10:30am), we will congregate together at St Cuthbert's church to enjoy a buffet lunch of sandwiches, savoury snacks, fruit, and sweet treats. It will be a great chance to get to know each other, for Greyfriars folk to explore St Cuthbert's church and kirkyard, and to enjoy fellowship within our parish grouping. If you would like to come along, please add your name to the sign-up sheet circulating during coffee after a Sunday service or contact one of the churches' offices. Please do sign up as soon as you're able, so we have a good idea of numbers. Please come!

The working group and ministry teams will be planning other joint social events and worship services at both locations in the coming weeks, for folk from both congregations and representatives of our communities and partnerships.

Other Activities Under Way

In the January newsletter, we promised to provide a flavour of some of the questions and concerns raised in the survey completed by members of both Kirk Sessions ahead of the away day in November.

- The overwhelming consensus from the survey was that it was the sincere wish of members of both Kirk Sessions to retain regular weekly worship in both buildings.
- The survey responses demonstrated strong support for continuity of worship and mission in both of our locations, provided, of course, that this can be done sustainably.
- Our valued staff teams will be integral to the delivery of plans for the future of both buildings, particularly the outreach and commercial activities needed to ensure viability to facilitate the continuity of worship and mission.

It is a bonus that both congregations are members of Heart Edge. This movement, inspired by St. Martin in the Fields, London, with its ethos of Congregation, Compassion, Culture and Commerce helps churches to find ways to drive sustainable operations in church buildings for outreach and mission as well as cultural and commercial activity to generate income to cover operating costs. Management staff in our locations are meeting to review current operations and share knowledge and experience to inform future plans.

Gillian and Christine are also working on a Parish Profile of each church in terms of its current circumstances and context, which will help us all get to know each other. From this, the working group will have a sound foundation on which to think about developing a future joint vision, and working toward a joint parish profile in preparation for union. This will involve opportunities for the Kirk Sessions, members of congregation and community representatives to get involved too, with an "away day" open to everyone at an appropriate point.

Of course, your feedback, questions, suggestions and concerns are very welcome at any point. It is good to know what people are thinking or wondering, and the working group members will all be very happy to speak to you. A reminder as to who we are:

St Cuthbert's – 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.

Please reach out to Gillian or Christine, or any working group members you feel comfortable chatting to, through the church offices: office@stcuthberts-edinburgh.uk or telephone [0131 229 1142](tel:01312291142); contact@greyfriarskirk.com or telephone [0131 225 1900](tel:01312251900). All thoughts welcome.