

THE PARISH
CHURCH OF
ST CUTHBERT EDINBURGH



Church Magazine



February/March 2026

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Contents: Locum Minister's Letter (p3), From the Tower Room (p4), Reports from St Cuthbert's (p5) including: Working towards Union (p5), Bible Fellowship Group (p8), News from the Ukrainian St Margaret's Saturday School (p9); Oasis Quiz Night (p11), A Thought to Remember (p11); Out and About (p12) including Feature Article: Finding Faith in Unexpected Places (p12); General Notices (p14), including Are You interested in being more involved? (p14), Tuesday and Saturday Coffee Mornings (p15), Fresh Start (p16), Something completely different (p18).

Front cover: Thanks to Oscar Kelly for sharing with us an early morning sunrise over St Cuthbert's.

Locum Minister's Letter

Dear Friends

One of the questions that most of us ask at the start of a new year is "when do we stop wishing others a 'Happy New Year'?" - but even although this is the February edition of the magazine it is the first opportunity I have had to wish those I have not seen in 2026 a 'Good New Year'!

Looking back, briefly, at December, it was lovely to see so many people in the church in the weeks leading up to Christmas as we welcomed Fettes College, Firhill High School, Fresh Start



and those from the local community and Spifox for the various special Christmas services. these were over and above our own special services of Nine Lessons and Carols (a joint service with Greyfriars which saw both choirs come together to lead our praise) and the lovely Christmas Eve Carols round the piano - to see the church full and so well-used and appreciated was lovely. The warmth of the welcome, I know, touched many who passed through our doors. I hope that the words of the scriptures and of the hymns spoke to many people in new ways as they journeyed towards Christmas Day.

It was my privilege to be invited to preach at our joint service with St John's on Christmas Eve - and I reflected then on how the message of Christ's birth was a constant, something that we revisit year on year with, hopefully, renewed awe, wonder and joy. The unchanged and unchanging message of hope and redemption is for all of us and something to which we hold fast in the midst of all the changes that go on around us, daily, weekly, annually.

Change does not come without challenge and we are reminded in the gospels that those first disciples who responded to Christ's invitation to "Come and see", to follow him, were also warned that to do so would, by necessity, involve change and challenge. In that respect little has changed, but while we are able to worship freely and without fear (unlike our brothers and sisters in many other parts of the world) we know the Church of Scotland is in the midst of great changes.

Over the next few months there is much to be done as we continue to discuss our union with Greyfriars and as we look at our outreach and mission opportunities.

Busy days lie ahead and our thoughts and prayers should be with those on the Working Group and our Kirk Sessions as they continue to apply themselves with such diligence to discussing our future.

We have now stepped over the threshold of a New Year, but we do so together, and we do so with God as our strength and stay, as our unchanged and unchanging constant, and for that we give thanks.

Yours,
Suzie

FROM THE TOWER ROOM

As Suzie mentioned in her letter, when do we stop wishing others a good new year? Let me, then, be probably the last to wish readers the compliments of the season.

We have two lengthy articles in the Magazine. The first, on pages 5 to 7, is from Christine McGuinness on the state of the proposed union with Greyfriars Kirk. It is an article that requires careful reading and lists a series of questions we as a congregation must answer as the Working Party looks at the 'nuts and bolts' of the union.

We are grateful to John Kirk, choir member and rugby enthusiast for a fascinating look behind the scenes of professional rugby. In our Feature Article on pages 11 to 13, John relates that in such a brutal and physically demanding environment, one can find deeply religious players.

Martin Pearce updates the news from the Bible Fellowship Group, where the topic under discussion is what some theologians call the Fifth Gospel – the Book of Romans. He also details the achievements of the Ukrainian St Margaret's Saturday School as it enters its third year with a longer school day and a growing school role.

We report on last November's Oasis Quiz, which as well as raising funds for Fresh Start, saw a home winner of the Ben Williams Memorial Trophy. Well done to the team of St Cuthbert's Bellringers for coming out on top.

Finally, something different to get your brains ticking over – a couple of sudokus. Remember, page 18 could be used for your article.

Stewart Cowe

REPORTS FROM ST CUTHBERT'S

Working towards Union



Dear Member

Union Update

I am writing to you today in my capacity as Co-Chair of the Working Group, tasked with working towards a Union with Greyfriars Kirk.

The St Cuthbert's Working Group members are Jim McLean, Scott Turnbull, Graham Maclaghan, John Kirk, Jeanette Barton and me.

Turning to the proposed union of St. Cuthbert's and Greyfriars. the Joint Working Group began its discussions in 2023, and it's fair to say that none of us thought it would all take this long.

In normal circumstances neither St Cuthbert's, nor Greyfriars, would wish to be in the position of having to unite, however normal circumstances no longer prevail in the Church of Scotland, through dwindling minister numbers and strained financial resources. The Presbytery Mission Plan states that the two congregations should unite with one minister. Both buildings are categorised as A, meaning they were suitable for worship to continue there.

The main objective of both Kirk Sessions and the Joint Working Group is that worship continues in both buildings for as long as it is possible, both in terms of:

- having people (volunteers, Elders, members) available to organise and participate
- being able to afford to keep each church open and operational.

We in the Working Group believe that this is the only way we can move forward together, in partnership with the united congregation across two buildings, maintaining and growing a presence for mission in the centre of the city.

We understand that this comes with a requirement for us to improve our financial situation, to continue to give of our talents and time and to encourage new members to join the congregation but we believe that it is well worth trying so that we can achieve the benefits of a union, while largely retaining our choice of location and preferred styles of worship for each congregation.

We can tell you that we hear some good things about Unions which have gone well. Friendships, new ideas, new energy which often comes from a determination to keep the ethos of each of the former congregations working together as the united congregation in building something new.

When we get frustrated, it's important to reflect on everything that has been achieved so far. A great deal of the ground work has been done on the formal documentation around the Basis of Union. This is the document which lays out broad terms for the future path of the united congregations and is what both congregations will vote on when the time comes.

A visible, and audible, manifestation of what working together looks like is our monthly Communion service when the choirs of both congregations unite enabling us to tackle bigger choral challenges together. Relationships are being built on an individual level in the congregations at these services and in the time for fellowship afterwards.

The Presbytery Deployment Committee convened by the Rev Dr. Stewart Weaver, is now actively involved with the two Kirk Sessions and the Joint Working Group. They have facilitated recent meetings including a meeting of Elders of both congregations and our Working Group Meetings.

The Deployment Committee has put together a paper, based on the output from the meeting of Elders in November, which focuses on the key points for resolution before Union. We are currently looking at the first two which are:

- worship patterns and timings of services and
- the composition of the united Kirk Session.

The Working Group met mid-December with the Deployment representatives and we all agreed that we needed to take the mind of the Kirk Sessions and Congregations on the patterns and timings of worship, bearing in mind that we will be allocated only one ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament to the united congregation.

In fact, we are mindful that we must have this in place as soon as the Union is established as we will only have one Locum Minister immediately post union, so we must have a basic understanding of how worship can commence as United Congregations. The Deployment Committee have also suggested that if a basic understanding is in place, it will be a more desirable situation, for a new incoming Minister to come into. The new Minister can, of course, add their own dimensions to

this but the principles of a basic plan allow them to do so with a bit less pain in their early days.

Soon, we will be asking you to participate in a survey seeking your preferences. This is your opportunity to say what you would like. Grab this with both hands and please remember your thoughts count.

What do we need to consider?

- There will be only one minister, so do we want two services on a Sunday, one earlier, and one later with the minister conducting both services. It is the rule - rather than the exception - in the Kirk nowadays that ministers often conduct more than one service on a Sunday, particularly in rural areas.
- Do we keep two services at the same time, one led by the minister and one led by a lay member or Reader? The minister would then conduct worship in each building on alternate Sundays. We would need to augment our team who could lead lay worship.
- What about parking constraints? If there is to be a later service that moves over the parking charges time of 12.30pm would this affect your attendance on a Sunday?
- How many of us come to church by car? This is a practical matter for consideration, for the nature of our gathered congregations in the city centre.
- What about public transport? Particularly for earlier services when buses are less frequent or reliable.

As you can appreciate, we are now looking into the nuts and bolts as we believe that without decisions on timings and patterns of services it will be difficult to move on to other points.

We hope that you will all feel able to help with the survey which can hopefully move us towards an agreed worship pattern based on what your preferences would be.

There will inevitably have to be compromise from both congregations, but with goodwill we hope to be able to achieve a workable solution together.

We understand that for the congregations, progress must seem glacially slow, but we are doing our best to keep things moving. We hope to have another newsletter updating both congregations on what we are doing next, ready for distribution very soon.

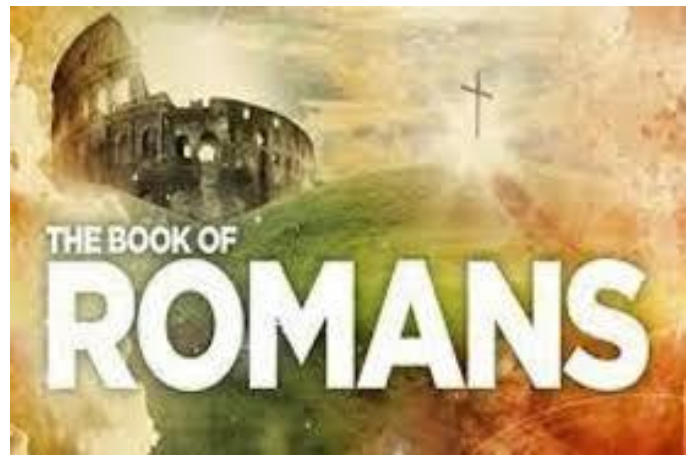
In the meantime, I pray that the Grace of God keeps us strong as we focus on the most important time in the life of our congregation.

Yours

Christine McGuinness

St Cuthbert's Bible Fellowship Group

The letter to the Roman Christians and Jews is one that some people have difficulty digesting and accepting. It is sometimes referred to by theologians as the Fifth Gospel; such is its importance in understanding the Christian Faith.



It was certainly a controversial letter in the First Century because it leaves the reader in no doubt that obeying the Jewish Law perfectly is impossible for humankind

because we all fall short of God's standards. (The "Law" is embodied in the first five books of our Bible, plus some of the scriptures from the prophets).

Moreover, Paul says that acts of serving God and doing good deeds, whether you are a Jew or a gentile, does not earn you a place in heaven. Salvation is a gift from God. People who have faith in God the Father, faith in Jesus our Saviour (i.e. saved from sin, death, and judgment day), and accept the strength and wisdom of the Spirit of God, is the way to be alive in this life and approach the next one.

All are invited to join the Bible Fellowship Group to reflect on scripture, including Romans and to share in fellowship. We meet every Thursday during term time at 7.30pm via Zoom. Details from martin.pearce2109@outlook.com

Below is a summary of some of the key themes of the letter to the Romans.

Background: Paul wrote his letter to the Roman church to gather support for his missionary endeavours to the Western Mediterranean. It was written by the apostle Paul in about 57 AD, while he was staying in Corinth, Greece, before travelling to Jerusalem.

Summary. The central message of the Book of Romans is the revelation of God's righteousness through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, explaining how all people (Jews and Gentiles) are sinners, but can receive salvation and justification (being declared righteous) by faith in Jesus, not by works or law.

This leads to a new life empowered by the Spirit, resulting in transformation of character demonstrating God's saving grace, and fulfilling His promises.

Five Key themes:

Sinfulness: All humanity, both Jews and Gentiles, are under sin and fall short of God's glory, deserving His righteous judgment.

Faith: God offers His righteousness as a gift to those who believe in Jesus. The gift is received through faith alone.

The Power of the Gospel: The good news is God's power for salvation, revealing His righteousness and calling everyone to trust in Jesus as Lord and Messiah.

New Life in Christ: Through the Holy Spirit, believers are freed from sin's power, united with Christ, and empowered to live a life transformed.

God's Plan: Paul explains how God's plan includes both Jews and Gentiles, showing God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promises to all His people.

The later chapters of Romans provide guidance for living out this faith. Enjoy the challenge of reading through Romans! It is a well-argued and a detailed letter, what else would you expect from a lawyer!

Highlights of the Ukrainian St Margaret's Saturday School in 2025.

January to June 2025: We completed the School's Second Year in June 2025 with a prize giving ceremony at St John's Episcopal Church, when prizes were awarded to 30 children for achievement and attendance (see picture, below). The 100 supporters and parents were entertained by the children and teenagers performing singing, poetry, and dancing.



Appreciation: We are very grateful to George Heriot's School who had allowed us to use classrooms free of charge for a second year until June 2025. We were also grateful that St Cuthbert's Parish Church and St John's Episcopal Church allowed us to use their room facilities on occasions.

Major Change: The major change of 2025 came in August, when the teachers decided to run the School for four hours every Saturday during term time, instead of two and a half, and start at the later time of 10.30am instead of 9am. In consequence we used

The Future: The major concern for the Ukrainian teachers and families is whether their UK visas will be extended after the autumn of 2026. Sadly, the war in Ukraine is not over, and some of our families have no homes to go back to. We pray for better days ahead for the Ukrainian nation, and the families in our care who regard St Cuthbert's as their home church. Thank you for your prayers and support.

News Update: We are delighted that John Kirk and Bridget Coulsfield have agreed to become Trustees of the School. John will join the Board in February and Bridget in March. We are most grateful to them for taking on such responsibilities and look forward to them helping to steer the School through the challenges we encounter from time to time.

Oasis Quiz night

On Wednesday 19th November, we held the annual Oasis quiz. Rev Suzie Stark was our very talented quizmaster and we had an incredible team of volunteers manning the soup and tea stations, Soup was kindly donated by the Red Cockerel Café.



It was a closely run contest but our winners were Rough Pantry, a team made up of folks from the St Cuthbert's Bellringers (see picture of the winning

team) and they took home the Ben Williams Memorial Trophy. A total of eleven teams competed and we raised the excellent sum of £430 for Fresh Start.

Many thanks to all involved, including Oscar who set the questions.

A thought to consider

Above all, trust in the slow work of God.

We are quite naturally impatient in everything to reach the end without delay.

We should like to skip the intermediate stages.

We are impatient of being on the way to something unknown, something new.

And yet it is the law of all progress that it is made by passing through some stages of instability – and that that may take a very long time

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

De Chardin (May 1881 – April 1955) was a French Jesuit, Catholic priest, scientist, palaeontologist, philosopher, mystic, and teacher. He investigated the theory of evolution writing multiple scientific and religious works on the subject.

OUT AND ABOUT

Feature Article: Finding faith in unexpected places

The Six Nations rugby tournament is almost upon us, although, of course, the domestic leagues have been running since September last year and the professional matches in the URC (United Rugby Championship featuring clubs from Scotland, Ireland, Wales, Italy and South Africa) and EPCR (the European Rugby Champions Cup featuring the best clubs from across Europe (and South Africa!)) are also ongoing.



You might wonder what connection we at St Cuthbert's have to Murrayfield. Well, our manse was within sight of the stadium and I have it on very good authority that during his interview with our nominating committee, David Denniston was asked if he would be supporting Edinburgh Rugby should he be called to St Cuthbert's. That was of course an off-script question from my late mother!

I have been involved in rugby for many years; playing, refereeing, as a supporter and on the discipline side; sitting on discipline panels for Scottish Rugby, URC (and its predecessors Pro12 and Pro14) and EPCR and acting as a citing commissioner for those competitions. Whenever a player is shown an on-field red card that player is called before the discipline committee who hears the case and decides upon sanction in line with World Rugby's guidelines. In the professional game the player will often have legal representation as well as club representation.

The advent of Zoom has allowed the process to become truly international; as an example I was recently involved in, a case where the Tournament administration was in Dublin, the discipline panel was in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Rome and the player and his representatives were in South Africa. It is interesting to "meet" the players and their club and legal representatives in this way.

I have also acted as a citing commissioner. This is an official unique to rugby union and the role is crucial to player safety in that any incident worthy of an on-field red card that the match officials have not seen or have seen but sanctioned too leniently can be "cited" so the player is brought before a discipline panel as if they had been shown an on-field red card. The role entailed going to the match, arriving a couple of hours

before kick-off, liaising with the broadcaster, medical staff, match officials, team managers and coaching staff and players.

The match is watched and any incidents worthy of review noted (this is now done via “hawkeye” which is on a laptop and is running ten seconds or so behind real time) so that an incident seen live can be captured and the system records the incident and provides all of the camera angles at a selection of viewing speeds.



After the match you meet again with all the folk you met pre match, note complaints, obtain evidence if need be and discuss incidents with the referee. As a result, I know a fair number of the current crop of international referees including Scotland’s Holly Davidson and I have worked with probably the best-known referee Nigel Owens.

Post match, usually the following day, the match is reviewed and incidents noted carefully studied. The clubs may also refer incidents to you. A report of what you have done is then prepared and filed, allowing the tournament organisers to check on what has been looked at and that you are doing your job correctly. If you decide to cite a player, a citing complaint requires to be drafted and submitted to the tournament admin. A taxing job in itself which may take several hours. The player will then be required to appear before a discipline panel as if an on-field red card had been shown. As a result of these roles, I have had the pleasure of meeting very many professional rugby players, some of whom are well known and still play for their countries. Now if you think they look big on TV, trust me some of these players are huge. Rugby is a no nonsense contact sport and there is a lot of aggression and physicality involved which sometimes boils over into quite serious foul play. It is in this cauldron that I was quite surprised to find that especially, though not exclusively, amongst the Fijian, South Sea Islanders and South Africans were a fair number of players who were also Christians.

I suppose I should not have been surprised as, in my playing days at Perthshire, I knew Bob. He and his family hailed from Australia and he was an uncompromising and hard player. I had heard him say a couple of times “he is the reason for the season” but had not understood what he meant. One night at training I injured my right knee to the extent that I was taken to Perth Royal Infirmary and then Bridge of Earn Hospital. Whilst waiting there to my surprise Bob appeared to find out how I was and to give me a lift home. It turned out that Bob is a devout Christian and runs “Teen Ranch” near Dundee which is a Christian activity centre. Jesus Christ was the reason for his season! I do wonder what Bob would say to me now as a Street Pastor and occasional lay Worship leader.

It was, to me anyway, a surprise to find in a fairly brutal and physically demanding environment, players who are deeply religious. When you see them play you would certainly not think that Faith would be an important part of their lives but it is. Off field they are very different, quietly spoken and polite. Who would expect to find in the dark arts of the scrum, ruck and maul of Faith?

Next time you watch a match, look for crosses on some of their arm protectors and look to see who celebrates a score by raising eyes and hands to the Lord and who at the close of play takes time for prayer. Very public displays, though seldom commented on, of very deep Faith in the most unexpected of places.

John Kirk

GENERAL NOTICES

Deaths I am the resurrection and the life

26th November Mr Arthur Revolta

Weddings –

27th November Kirsty Lawrie & James Fraser Elder

20th December Michael Easton & Daioni Tobaldine

Are you interested in being more involved?

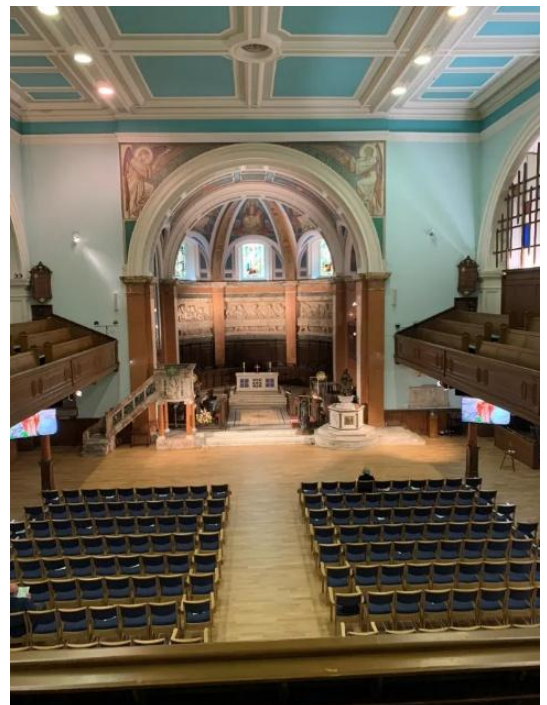
We are looking for people who want to become more involved with our Sunday Worship.

Would you care to join our intercessory prayer team, either writing or reading pre-written intercessions for the Sunday Service, or even both?

Or would you prefer to assist our Duty Elders as a Sunday welcomer?

If any of these roles appeals to you, please contact Christine McGuinness at sessionclerk@stcuthberts-edinburgh.uk

These are roles integral to the welcoming and prayerful atmosphere of St Cuthbert's.



Communication

It would be helpful if members moving house would notify either their elder or the Church office of their new address.

Church Flowers

Anyone wishing to donate flowers on an anniversary or other special occasion or give a financial donation to the Flower Fund is invited to contact the Flower Committee via the Church Office or place a donation in the offering bag clearly marked Flower Fund. We would also like to welcome new members to the Committee and shall be very pleased to hear from any member interested. Help will be provided if required.

Recordings of 10.30am Sunday Services

Recordings of the Church services are available on the Church website (stcuthberts-edinburgh.uk).

Telephone Prayer Circle

Requests for prayer in a crisis situation or in time of trouble should be sent by email to Irene Gill at prayercircle@stcuthberts-edinburgh.uk

Prayer is normally offered for one week. Names of those for whom prayer is required in the longer term should be entered in the Intercession Book (which can be found on the table in the vestibule).

All information will be treated in confidence.

Tuesday and Saturday Coffee Mornings

A reminder that St Cuthbert's have two dates for coffee mornings in the Church.

Every Tuesday, you can come for a coffee and a chat in the Lindisfarne Room between 10.30 am and noon.

The Saturday Coffee mornings on the last Saturday of the month continue, the next few dates being as follows:

31 st January	11am to 2pm
28 th February	11am to 2pm
28 th March	10am to 1pm
25 th April	11am to 2pm



It would be great to welcome more members of the congregation and any offer of help would be gratefully received.

Please contact Derek & Lyn for more details on deans_d@sky.com or 07704 131 276

Best Regards

Derek

Fresh Start

Fresh Start are very grateful for all our donations of household items and non-perishable food. Please continue to place your donations in the "Big White Box" in the vestibule.



If you are unable to deliver them, please contact Jim McLean and leave a message with your name, phone number and that the call is about Fresh Start. Alternatively, email jamesangusmclean@gmail.com

Stamps

Please note that from February, the Church of Scotland will no longer be collecting used stamps.

Other charities though are still accepting used stamps, including RNIB, where you can find more information on RNIBstamps@rnib.org.uk



Future Church Magazines



Are you receiving the magazine the way you would prefer? Are you receiving a printed copy when one sent by email would suffice? Do we have the correct postal address (or email address) for you? If not, please get in touch so that we can sort it out and provide you with the magazine the way you want it.

Please contact the Magazine Editor either by email (to magazine@stcuthberts-edinburgh.uk), by post to Magazine Editor (at St Cuthbert's Parish Church, 5 Lothian Road, Edinburgh, EH1 2EP) or leave notification in the Magazine Editor pigeon hole in the Church Office.

Thanks to those who have already contacted the magazine, but if at any time in the future, you would prefer to receive it in a different format, please do get in touch.

Thank you also for sending in articles for the magazine. Please keep sending them in. If you wish to contribute items to the Church Magazine, please note the following deadlines for the upcoming editions. Material should be sent to the editor by:

April/May 2026 by Tuesday 17th March

June/July 2026 by Wednesday 20th May

either by e-mail to: magazine@stcuthberts-edinburgh.uk or please leave in the 'Magazine Editor' pigeon-hole in the Church Office.

Please note the earlier deadline for the April/May magazine. This is to ensure that the magazine is distributed ahead of the Easter Weekend.

And now for something completely different

To fill the Magazine, we end with something completely different - two sudokus – one easy and one more difficult. No prizes and the solutions will be included in the next Magazine.

I am sure you are aware of this numerical puzzle. You have to complete each row, column and 3 by 3 box so that they all contain the numbers 1 to 9 just once.

Good luck.

Solutions next Magazine.

Easy

	4		2			6		
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7	5		4					
		4		2		5		
					7	8	4	
8	3				9			6
	9					7		
	7				1	9		

More Challenging

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	7					5		8
2			4			3		
	8			9		6		5
		1			5			



STANDARD WORSHIP AT ST CUTHBERT'S

SUNDAY

9.30 am **Holy Communion**, Memorial Chapel, on the first Sunday of the month

10.30 am **Morning Worship**

Communion is included in the service on the last Sunday of each month

We celebrate a more formal Holy Communion service on a quarterly basis: on the last Sunday of January, June and October and on Easter Day

On the second Sunday of each month, Holy Communion is celebrated after the morning service in the Anam Chara Chapel

FIRST TUESDAY IN THE MONTH

12.15 pm Post Coffee Morning Worship, Memorial Chapel

FIRST WEDNESDAY IN THE MONTH (not January, July and August)

12.30 pm-5 pm **soul space** *Come and go!*
Reflection at 1 pm and 4.30 pm,
Soul Space takes place in the Church and is
also available online



THE VISION OF THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST CUTHBERT

To be living out the Gospel of Jesus Christ at the heart of our city as God's people in the West End of Edinburgh; sharing God's love, offering a home to friends and strangers alike, and providing a hub to discern the Vision of God.

St Cuthbert's is a congregation of the Church of Scotland. We also belong to the ecumenical parish grouping Edinburgh City Centre Churches Together. We are also part of the HeartEdge network of churches initiated by St Martin-in-the-Fields, London

St Cuthbert's is an 'eco-congregation'



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