

New Year 2026

BRIDGE

Stockbridge
Church

STOCKBRIDGE CHURCH NEWSLETTER

www.stockbridgechurch.org.uk
admin@stockbridgechurch.org.uk



Our Mission Statement

Being aware of the love of God in our lives, we, the congregation of Stockbridge Parish Church, as part of the world church seek to meet together in worship; to demonstrate faith in God in our everyday lives; to reach out to others, showing God's love and compassion; and to raise awareness of matters of justice locally and globally.

Contact Us:

- **Joint Session Clerk - Ben Bond**
sessionclerk@stockbridgechurch.org.uk
- **Treasurer - Kerr McLaren**
treasurer@stockbridgechurch.org.uk
- **Church Administrator & Bridge Editor - Amber Snary**
admin@stockbridgechurch.org.uk
- **Church Officer - Colin Clark**
churchofficer@stockbridgechurch.org.uk
- **Church Organist - Ben Shanks**
churchorganist@stockbridgechurch.org.uk

The church office is open Monday – Friday, 10am - 3:30pm

This edition's cover comes from a drawing donated by the Manson family – let us know if you have any pictures or drawings you'd like to see on the front of The Bridge!

Building Connections & Looking Ahead

A letter from joint Session Clerk, Ben Bond

Over the past year and a half, the Kirk Session has continued to explore how Stockbridge Church might work more closely with neighbouring congregations. As many of you will remember from the update at our Stated Annual Meeting last November, we have been in ongoing conversations with Broughton St Mary's about the possibility of a future union. These discussions remain warm and constructive, but there is nothing new or formal to report at this stage.

What has not changed is our commitment to growing Stockbridge Church. We are encouraged that Sunday attendance has remained steady over the past year, and we would love to see that continue and grow. One of the simplest and most effective ways to support the life of the congregation is to invite friends, family, and neighbours along. The best defence we have is to demonstrate that we are a viable, vital, and visible church at the heart of our community.

Alongside our conversations with Broughton St Mary's, we are also strengthening links with other local Church of Scotland congregations. A meeting with New Town Church (formerly St Andrew's and St George's West) is already in the diary, and we plan to meet with Gorgie Palmerston Place and other local churches in the coming months. These discussions are not about any imminent union; rather, they are opportunities to explore how we might collaborate, support one another, and

share resources in the future. Presbytery is clear that all congregations are expected to work in partnership with others, and we want to approach that positively and proactively.

We also remain committed to working ecumenically with our neighbours through Stockbridge and Comely Bank Churches Together. These relationships continue to be an important part of our shared Christian witness in the local area, and we value the opportunities they could bring for joint worship, community engagement, and mutual support. A recent example of this was the joint Carol Singing in Raeburn Place before Christmas where funds were raised from passers-by in support of Bethany Christian Trust.

What we do not envisage is closure. As long as we remain financially viable and supported by a committed congregation — which we are — that is not on the table. We will also be meeting again with the Presbytery Deployment Group next month as part of the ongoing planning process.

As many of you will know, the Rev John Munro stood down at the end of November as our Locum Minister. We are extremely grateful to him for his service, and equally grateful to the ministers who have stepped in to lead worship in the meantime. All our services are continuing as normal. The Rev Peter Bluett remains our Interim Moderator and is fully supportive of our continuing approach to worship and outreach planning.

Looking ahead, we are also establishing our own Worship Group, with the aim of developing and leading services from

within our own congregation. This is an exciting and positive step. You do not need to have previous experience of leading worship — if you would like to be involved, or simply have ideas to contribute, please speak to anyone on the Kirk Session. We would love to hear from you!

In short, while there are no dramatic developments to report, there is a great deal of steady, hopeful work happening behind the scenes. We remain committed to discerning the right path for Stockbridge Church — one that honours our heritage, strengthens our present, and prepares us for a flourishing future.

Charity Donations

Treasurer, Kerr McLaren

We are delighted to report that for 2024/2025 we raised £3,792 for the Mulanje Mission Hospital (MMH) and Mulanje Prison Nutrition Project (MPNP) for which the Treasurer has received a lovely letter of thanks from the new MMH Medical Director, Dr. Andrea Van Acker.

Donations to MMH in 2025 were boosted by a £460 retiring collection raised at the recent Memorial Service for Dr. Irene Wilkie.

The Prison Nutrition Project is aimed at improving nutrition at the local prison and carrying out health screening. Three of our members continue to specifically support the Prison Nutrition Project by donating £10/month and if others would like to join them please donate to the Stockbridge Church General Account* online or by envelope marked MPNP in the Sunday plate.

Bank of Scotland

Stockbridge Church General Account

Sort Code: 80-11-05

Account Number: 00622045

We also raised over £2,300 to distribute to a range of other charities including Poppy Scotland, Bethany Christian Trust, Fresh Start, Edinburgh Women's Aid, Mary's Meals, The Yard, Edinburgh Direct Aid, Royal Botanic Gardens Appeal, Afghan

Aid, and the Wezesha (Kenya) charity, the latter through the sale of Christmas Tree ornaments.

These charities are always extremely grateful for the help we give them, so many thanks to you all for your generosity.

Fellowship Groups

Our fellowship groups are up and running again and new members/participants are always very welcome:



- Malawi Coffee Morning: 1st Friday of the month; 10.30 a.m.; Number 7.
- Celebrating Age Project: 1st Wednesday of the month; 2 p.m.; Session Room.
- Craft Group: Last Tuesday of the month; 3 p.m.; Number 7
- Fellowship/Bible Study Group; Tuesday of each week; 7 p.m.; online via Zoom

More details of these fellowship groups and other community groups can be found on the Church website.

Small but mighty – our harmonium restored!



If you have a keen eye, you may have noticed that we have a new instrument gracing our stage – the harmonium. This 160-year-old instrument recently underwent over 20 hours of much-needed TLC: it was completely dismantled, cleaned of decades of dust, lubricated, de-rusted, fitted with replacement reeds and leather, and carefully reassembled and squared up to ensure it is now

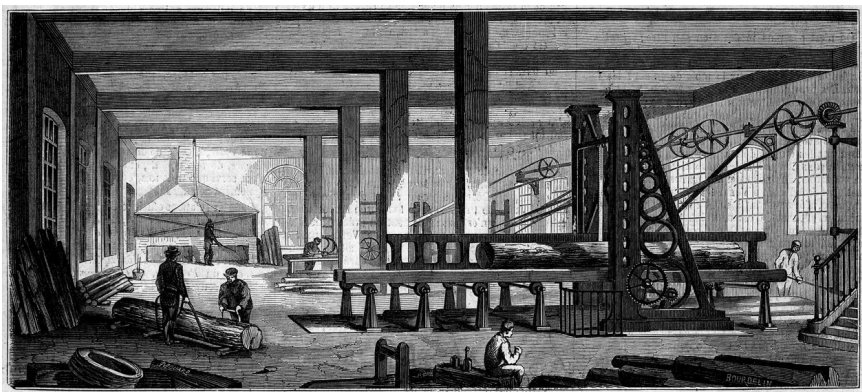
in good working order.

Harmoniums were once widespread, both in churches where a pipe organ was unavailable and in private homes, where they were used to entertain family and friends. Like the accordion, they generate sound using free reeds: air is pushed past metal tongues, which vibrate to produce pitch. Longer reeds vibrate more slowly and therefore sound lower notes, while the width and voicing of the reed affect the tone colour.

Where the accordion relies on arm-driven bellows, the harmonium typically uses foot-operated pumps, as on our fine Alexandre et Fils instrument (though some examples were

later fitted with electric blowers). Unlike the accordion, however, harmoniums were deliberately voiced to imitate the sounds of the church organ, with varying degrees of success. In practice, the harmonium sits somewhere between the two: closer in sound to the organ, while retaining a distinctive reed-based character.

One of the great advantages of reed instruments is their expressive flexibility. Whereas each pipe in an organ requires a fixed wind pressure to speak correctly, a reed will continue to sound at the same pitch across a range of pressures. This allows the player to shape volume and phrasing directly through the bellows, offering a degree of expression that pipe organs can only approximate through registration changes or swell shutters. It was this expressive potential, combined with the instrument's unique timbre, that attracted the interest of composers.



Workshop of Alexandre Père et Fils, undated.

The harmonium was made by Alexandre Père et Fils (Alexandre, Father & Sons), as evidenced by a maker's mark within the instrument. The company traces its origins to 1829,

when Jacob Alexandre founded a business manufacturing accordions and harmonicas; however, it was not until 1843 that harmoniums entered their production. The instrument itself had been invented just a year earlier by Alexandre Debain, who had registered the name “harmonium”, meaning that Jacob Alexandre was obliged to market his instruments instead as “mélodium organs”.



Alexandre Père et Fils were awarded numerous prizes for their instruments, most notably the Medal of Honour at the 1855 Exposition Universelle. Despite this success, the firm faced financial difficulties and declared bankruptcy in both 1868 and 1877. The company eventually passed out of

family hands, being taken over by the Fortin brothers in 1907, and ceased harmonium production in 1955.

Aside from our own instrument, Alexandre harmoniums have brought pleasure to many households and institutions. Notably, one made in 1844 for Prince Albert now resides in the Prince Consort’s Dressing and Writing Room at Osborne House.

We look forward to hearing all the wonderful music this small but mighty instrument can make and will keep you updated on any further restoration and musical developments. There are plans in motion for a 160th anniversary concert so keep an ear out!

- Amber S & Ben S

Presbytery News

The Church of Scotland Assembly Business Committee is seeking new volunteers to assist with the stewarding at the forthcoming General Assembly. This will be taking place at the Assembly Hall from Friday 15th May to Monday 18th May 2026. If you are interested, please contact assemblystewards@churchofscotland.org.uk

Church Notices

If anyone has any old spectacles they no longer need, please consider passing them to Fiona McNeilage. She is collecting glasses to take via McGraths the Opticians to The Lions Club recycling scheme to be sent to people in need in developing countries.

Church Community News

Updates and news from our congregation



A memorial service for Mitchell Manson (pictured above) was held at the church on Friday 16th January. The service included words from people from all different stages of Mitchell's life – including daughters, nieces and nephews, in laws, and those from his university days.

The family also set up a Just Giving page in aid of Dr Graham's homes in Kalimpong – a charity very dear to Mitchell, for which he participated in a sponsored bike ride from Kolkata to Kalimpong in 2011. The charity is a modern boarding and day school that provides a quality education to over 1,400 students, and the goal of raising £1,500 will sponsor the education of a child for a year.

You can donate via [justgiving.com/team/mitchellmanson](https://www.justgiving.com/team/mitchellmanson)



Thanking Rev. John Munro and Lilian

On 30 November 2025, we marked Rev. John Munro's final day as our Locum Minister and expressed our deep gratitude for his service over the past four years. John has guided our congregation through a time of significant change and uncertainty, offering us support and encouragement when it was most needed.

Although his period as Locum has come to an end, John has not left us. He remains a valued member of our congregation and will continue to lead services and offer pastoral support in the months ahead. We were delighted to present John and his wife, Lilian, with tokens of appreciation as a sign of our thanks.

We are grateful for all they have given, and glad they remain part of our church community.

“It’s amazing to see God working in the lives of so many”

Our previous Church Administrator, Hannah, has returned from her mission trip to Kenya, and has the following to share:

My recent mission trip to Kenya was incredible. I worked alongside Wezesha based in Kasarani, which is a slum near Naivasha, in desperate need of support. Wezesha is a Christian, education, and empowerment charity that funds school scholarships for 116 kids, has additional tutoring every day, a daily meal, weekly one-on-one therapy sessions for the kids and their families, emergency medical trips, opportunities to learn soft skills, camping trips, and extracurricular clubs (chess, dance, singing, LEGO, cleaning the community and origami). Wezesha holds such a special place in my heart, and it's amazing to see God working in the lives of so many in the community. The Wezesha kids all have their own stories of trauma and abuse, but through love, consistency, and faith, they are finding healing, confidence, and hope for a future they once thought was impossible. I taught a few classes and Bible studies with the kids, aided grassroots programs within Wezesha, ran activities around the community, managed the product development team, led mentor groups and organised a sports day.

I then headed to Nakuru to spend time with Grey 2 Green and YASHA Ministry International. I have been in communication with Irene (leader of Grey 2 Green) for a long time, and it was an honour to meet her in person. She's a strong-willed, intelligent woman with a heart for her community.

Grey 2 Green, whilst still in its grassroots, has already doubled in size; they've moved to a bigger building and are seeking an even bigger one in the coming year. Irene is meeting the desperate needs of so many individuals with disabilities and mental health issues in her community, by sharing the Gospel, group counselling, and giving individuals the autonomy and independence to provide for their families - altogether an invaluable gift that is life-changing, to people who often have very little hope. I'm assisting their board of directors with future advancements and programme management, and with the help of some friends at my church, was able to make a sizeable donation towards the funds for a new building and the creation of a website. YASHA have been working for over 30 years with a Kalenjin tribe in Lomolo, which has limited access to water and very little arable land. They have been supporting Lomolo with supplies, medical trips, and counselling.

I am also writing a book about the elders of the tribe, with the intention of preserving their history and their stories, as very few people in Lomolo can read or write. I'll be working with a translator, guiding conversations and interviews, with the structure of the book being one page in English, one page in Swahili. It was wonderful getting the chance to meet Maki (who is the director of YASHA), as we've been in contact for over a year. She has three very sweet sons, who thoroughly enjoyed the aeroplane gliders I brought for them, and the tablet was a huge hit!

Mulanje Mission Hospital

Mulanje Mission Hospital has published their end-of-year newsletter, and physical copies have been printed which you can find by the pigeonholes near the office.

Highlights of the newsletter include:

- The hospital has been moved from 2 to **3 stars** for their quality of care and are looking to achieve **4 stars by the end of 2026**.
- On World Sight Day event, 300 people were tested for cataracts, and **34 cases were diagnosed** – most of which have now received surgery.
- Dozens of HPV vaccines and VIA screenings were conducted for Cervical Cancer Elimination Day at Khaya Health Post
- **7,292** books were donated to local schools for core subjects of English, Chichewa, Maths & Science. This moved their student to book ratio from **1:20 to 1:6**.



A Stockbridge Carol



In the run-up to Christmas this year, Stockbridge Church embarked on a simple but joyful experiment: could a new Christmas carol be created by the community itself not by one composer or poet, but by many voices together? What emerged from just **two** creative sessions - four hours in total - was a carol rooted in faith, place, and shared imagination: a true **Stockbridge Christmas Carol**.

Our first session on **12th December** focused on crafting the lyrics. Local poets **Diana Hendry** and **Hamish Whyte** kindly guided participants, helping ideas flow across the room. Together we explored what Christmas looks and feels like through the eyes of Stockbridge.

Imagery soon emerged that felt familiar and meaningful: the steady presence of the Water of Leith, the warm generosity of local charity shops, and even the swans of Inverleith Park. There were reflections on the saints woven into our streets — namely St Vincent, St Bernard, and St Stephen. By the end of the session, a set of lyric ideas had formed, and Diana and Hamish took them away to refine.

The following week, on **19th December**, we gathered again — this time to bring the words to life with music. Composer **Nigel Osborne** joined us, bringing extraordinary energy, generosity, and humour despite just hopping off a flight from Paris, where he had been leading trauma-informed workshops for refugees. Around the piano, melodies began to take shape.

Nigel encouraged us to listen closely: to the rhythms of everyday speech and to the rhythms of Scottish musical tradition. The tune that emerged makes use of the Dorian mode, familiar from Scottish folk music, giving the carol a sense of warmth and place.

What feels most remarkable is not just that a full carol was created in just four hours — but that it belongs to the community that made it. Our thanks go to everyone who came along with open hearts and curious minds.

Lyrics to 'A Stockbridge Carol'

When Stockbridge people come together
They've love to give and love to share
From Shelter shop to Bento box
The spirit of Christmas is everywhere

*Sing of hope newborn this week
May we find the peace we seek
O wonder, O wonder and praise
Wonder and praise, wonder and praise,
Wonder and praise, wonder and praise*

We come to the bridge we all must cross
The river is flowing fast beneath
And then the darkness is turned to light
By a star on the water, the Water of Leith

Chorus

The swans on the pond are nursing their young
The children are feeding some fluffy wee things

The heron is watching but he's being watched
And on the holly path a robin sings

Chorus

Lets sing of the saints who named our streets
Sing how we learned them with our feet
Sing Vincent, Bernard, Stephen too
Perhaps they're up there singing for you

Chorus

They tell of the birth in the stable
The shepherds and what the angels told
The three wise men who came from the east
With gifts of myrrh, frankincense and gold

*Sing of hope newborn this week
May we find the peace we seek
O wonder, O wonder and praise
Wonder and praise, wonder and praise
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!*

Stockbridge Music Hub

Our Stockbridge Music Hub continues to thrive, and the twice monthly concert programme has become a regular arts feature for many local attendees and receives accolades from both the audiences and musicians taking part.

Much of this has been achieved through the collaborative support of Amati Global Investors, whose sponsorship over the last five years has been most welcome. If you have not attended one of the Thank Music It's Friday (TMIF) concerts on the first Friday of the month at 1.00 p.m., or the monthly Culture Club programme, you should make it a 2026 New Year Resolution to do so – details of the programmes can be found on the Stockbridge Music Hub website at <https://www.musichub.uk>

An important feature of the Hub outreach activity is the Spectrum Project which provides individual and group music sessions for autistic children and young people aged 6-18. This is jointly supported in collaboration with the charity Hear My Music and we are pleased that in addition to the weekly term-time Monday afternoon Sessions, a second Friday afternoon Session has recently started. Feedback from children and parents has been amazing and much credit goes to Melissa from Hear My Music and our own Community Art Director, Clea, who runs the Stockbridge Music Hub on our and Amati's joint behalf.

Scripture Union

Our Scripture Union sessions have also restarted with the new school term and seven children from Stockbridge Primary School have been attending.

Stockbridge Music Hub Events

The next couple of months brings a whole host of wonderful events via the Music Hub – including a Scottish folk reimagining of Vivaldi's Four Seasons, a quirky Valentine's trio, and fantastic duos throughout.

Stockbridge Music Hub
in collaboration with Stockbridge Church

The Scottish Four Seasons
A Scottish trad reinterpretation of Vivaldi



Isla Ratcliff
with Natalie Haas
and Iona Reid

**Saturday 24th January
6pm**

Stockbridge Church, 7b Saxe Coburg St, EH3 5BN

Tickets via
www.musichub.uk

Amati

Stockbridge Music Hub
in collaboration with Stockbridge Church

TMI Friday
presents

Sini Simonen
- violin

Robin Green
- piano

music by
Beethoven
and Fauré

**6/2/26
1pm**

Voluntary donations welcomed

Stockbridge Church 7b Saxe Coburg St, EH3 5BN

Tickets via
www.musichub.uk

Amati

Stockbridge Music Hub
in collaboration with Stockbridge Church

Culture Club presents

Far Flung Trio



'Under Paris Skies...'
Musical gems to warm the heart

**Saturday 14th February
6pm**

Stockbridge Church,
7b Saxe Coburg, EH3 5BN

Tickets via
www.musichub.uk

Amati

Stockbridge Music Hub
in collaboration with Stockbridge Church

TMI Friday presents

Nikita Naumov - double bass
Shola Sharbakova Miller - piano



Friday 6th March 12.30pm

Stockbridge Church, 7b Saxe Coburg St, EH3 5BN

Voluntary donations welcomed

Tickets via
www.musichub.uk

Amati

Stockbridge Music Hub
in collaboration with Stockbridge Church

Culture Club presents

Martin Kershaw - saxophone
Steven Osborne - piano



Waltzes and Jazz!

**Friday 13th March
6pm**

Stockbridge Church, 7b Saxe Coburg St, EH3 5BN

Tickets via
www.musichub.uk

Amati

More information on the Music Hub can be found online via
their website - musichub.uk

Chocolate Cake Corner

In the last edition of the Bridge, I asked you all for a good chocolate cake recipe – and I have been getting them in bits and pieces. Here are the current bakes, and upcoming ones too!

Helen Goh's forest floor cake (The Guardian)

Gorgeously moist thanks to the kefir, but with an overwhelming taste of the almost copious amount of olive oil it calls for. The rosemary chocolate ganache adds a deliciously novel touch, and the variation of toppings totally make it!

Ash Baber's chocolate fudge cake

This made a MASSIVE amount of batter – filling both a loaf and my usual brownie tin – not quite the level of ooey gooey rich chocolate I was looking for as dark chocolate is integral to keeping the ganache stable, but overall a great recipe! I wish I had made it in tiers as Ash does.

UPCOMING – Meera Sodha's vegan chocolate, date and coffee cake (The Guardian), recommended by Music Hub superstar Clea

As I finish this edition of the Bridge, I have made **miso caramel millionaires**, which are an absolute hit at home! I just add **one tablespoon of miso to my caramel**, and finish the marbled chocolate top with flakey salt for a gorgeous umami rich treat!

**Our worship continues on Sunday at 11am in person, and livestreamed
online via our YouTube channel.**

You can find us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and on our website
www.stockbridgechurch.org.uk

Come and join us! All are very welcome.

