

Stockbridge
Church

BRIDGE

STOCKBRIDGE CHURCH MAGAZINE

www.stockbridgechurch.org.uk

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10-16 May 2026

christian

aid

week

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.

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

For this edition of the Bridge, we are going **red** to highlight the work of **Christian Aid** – our signature blue will be back for our next edition

Christian Aid Week

10th – 16th May 2026



Founded in 1957, Christian Aid Week has grown into one of the UK's largest annual fundraising efforts in support of Christian Aid's global work. In its first year it raised £26,000 — roughly **£813,000 in today's money** — and last year **16,583 churches and organisations** took part, helping to raise an impressive **£4.4 million**.

The week is central to the work of Christian Aid, and helps fund work across their five key areas:

- Gender, power, and inclusion
- Humanitarian aid

- Respond to violence and conflict to build peace
- Climate adaptation and resilience
- Governance and rights

This year, the focus of the fundraising week is on promoting urban farming projects alongside specialist training to help parents fight food insecurity, grow fresh vegetables in small city spaces and earn an income to support their families.



Fridah's Story

In Nairobi, we meet Fridah. She is a recently widowed grandmother and the sole provider for her family. Rent, school costs, water and food all

depend on what she can earn.

Fridah lives with her children and grandson in a rented corrugated metal shelter. There is no running water and space is extremely limited. Many families in Dagoretti manage just two meals a day. Some manage only one.

To support her family, Fridah sells vegetables at a market stall. With no refrigeration or storage, she travels long distances to buy produce, six days a week.

Through training, tools and seeds, Fridah learned how to grow food in small city spaces. She learned how to use cone gardens, make compost and conserve water.

Fridah now tends her own urban farm. She grows kale, tomatoes and indigenous vegetables. Some feed her family, and she sells the rest. For Fridah, this means more than food. It means stability and choice.



Belinda's Story

Belinda lives with her husband, David, and their five children in a one-room rented home in Dagoretti, Nairobi.

Work in the settlement is unreliable. When there is no work, there is no money. And when there is no money, there is no food.

Belinda was already part of a women's savings group when she heard about Imarisha Kilimo, a project supporting women to grow nutritious food in the city.

Through the project, Belinda received tools, seeds and a cone garden. This space-efficient design allows many plants to grow in a very small area.

“That’s a blessing because it’s very difficult to find a place to grow food here in Nairobi.”

Belinda’s urban farm now produces spinach, beetroot, maize and local vegetables. When she sells what she does not need, she earns money for school costs and household essentials.

Her independence has changed how she sees herself. She said,

‘As a woman, you don’t have to be dependent on the man for everything.’

Belinda now supports other urban farmers and hopes to become a leader in her community.

You can find more about Fridah and Belinda on the Christian Aid website.

The Gathering 2026

Notes from Christian Aid's Annual Meeting



This year, the focus of Christian Aid' week is 'Beacon of Hope' – a partner charity in Kenya.

Kenya is a lower income country with a significant poverty crisis – as much as 46% of the population are living below the national poverty line. This poverty is driven by climate change, high unemployment, and staggering National Debt. At the time of writing, this debt converts to roughly £70-75 billion, and about 63%-67% of government revenue is allocated to debt servicing. For comparison, this sits at about 8.3% here in the UK.

This poverty is higher in rural areas, so many people hoping to gain employment move into the cities. Here, they continue to find high unemployment, alongside very poor housing, sanitation issues, and multiple hardships.

Beacon of Hope was founded by Jane Wathome in 2002. She felt called by God to help women affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The project has since developed, and now provides support for economic, spiritual and social wellbeing. At the meeting, Jane talked about how Beacon of Hope and Christian Aid were working with the local population using local resources to produce food for the family, as well as for sale – as an income will allow children to go to school.

James Mwanda, a project worker in Dagoretti, also spoke about his work with Beacon of Hope. The main focus on the sub-project 'Imarisha Kilimo' (translating to 'strengthen agriculture') includes advising mainly women how to grow food in almost any size of container, in any space, so that they can gain an income. Any space can be used – alleyways, roofs, or church land. These demonstration gardens encourage others to plant suitable, sustainable food sources.

As well as finding space, women are also advised on techniques such as using rabbit urine as a natural pesticide, drip feeding crops due to limited water, and using organic compost from locally sourced projects. With this work, women are able to feed their families, and form co-operatives to help each other, as well as with managing the money they earn.

The last speaker was Ester Kawira – she spoke about how Beacon of Hope has provided her with the knowledge, confidence, and skills to provide food for her family, as well as earning an income which allows her to educate her children.

Beacon of Hope's work is a reminder that small, faithful acts can transform whole communities. As we support Christian Aid this year, we have the chance to stand alongside women like Ester, helping them build futures filled with dignity, stability, and hope. May we be generous in prayer, in giving, and in sharing their story, so that this beacon continues to shine brightly in Kenya and beyond.

- *Fiona & Amber*

Aid in Auld Reekie

Coffee Morning
8th May, 10am
Inverleith St Serfs,
EH5 3BD

Afternoon Tea
10th May, after 11am service
Leith & Restalrig Church,
EH7 6LF

Book Sale
Drop off donations 9am-
8pm, April 27-May 2 &
May 4-7th
Sale on 9th May, then
11th-15th May.

Edinburgh New Town
Church, EH2 2PA



This poster is not an official Christian Aid poster, and instead is made by a member of the public to promote Christian Aid Week 2026 events in Edinburgh.

For more information on Christian Aid and their work, please visit their website (christianaid.org.uk), write to Christian Aid at 35-41 Lower Marsh, London SE1 7RL, or contact a spokesperson.

A prayer for Christian Aid Week 2026

**Gracious God,
when we stand on the plains of
uncertainty,
with no path before us, we look to you.**

**We remember what you have done
before
and our anxious hearts are comforted.
Showing mercy, you delivered us then;
in your love and faithfulness,
you will do it again.**

**Give us the strength to step forward in
hope.**

**Give us faith that changes us,
hope that feeds us,
love that moves us.**

In Jesus' name,

Amen.



Church of Scotland General Assembly

15th – 18th May 2026



The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland meets in Edinburgh from 15th–18th May, and commissioners will gather to consider some of the most significant questions facing the Church at this point in its life. A major item this year will be the Assembly Trustees' proposed new strategy for 2026–2031, which places **growth, financial sustainability, simplification, and duty of care** at the heart of the Church's future

direction. The Trustees argue that the Church must shift from “managing decline” to intentionally fostering growth, supported by structures that are lighter, more flexible, and financially realistic.

Alongside this, the Assembly will continue to scrutinise the **implementation of Presbytery Plans**, which remain a challenging and sometimes painful process for many congregations – including ours. The new strategy emphasises reducing administrative burdens on presbyteries and congregations, which may shape how planning and deployment evolve in the coming years.

The Assembly will also receive the usual wide range of reports on mission, ministry, social care, and public life, helping to shape priorities for the year ahead. As always, the proceedings will open and close with an address from the **Lord High Commissioner**, Lady Elish Angiolini, representing His Majesty The King.

For congregations like ours, this Assembly is likely to be especially important. The financial realities facing the national Church, the desire to support growth, and the ongoing presbytery planning process all have direct implications for local ministry and mission.

For Stockbridge specifically, our Session Clerks and Kirk Session will continue to keep the congregation updated

via communication channels such as the Newsletter and the Bridge.

Further news and information regarding the 2026 General Assembly will be on the Church of Scotland's various social media channels. The General Assembly proceedings will also be publicly live-streamed.

From Number 7 to 7pm Service

Former Parish Assistant Alex Johnson has been ordained in Kinross!



On Thursday, 19th March at 7pm, our former Parish Assistant Alex Johnson was ordained and inducted into his new role as a Minister of the Church of Scotland in Kinross.

He joins the Kinross-shire Parish of Church of Scotland team, and has since led services at Fossoway Church and Orwell Church, with Kinross on the horizon.

Alex, his wife, Hazel, and their children, are settling into their manse in Crook of Devon, and we wish them all the best with their journeys, and every blessing.

From Reflection to Rejoicing

Easter at Stockbridge



The Labyrinth

The Labyrinth was set up in the church from 31st March through to 2nd April. We saw over one hundred people in attendance following the stations of the cross – including members of the congregation, folks from our neighbouring churches, the wider community, and those visiting Edinburgh from afar.

A big thank you goes out to all those who volunteered their time for the event – it truly is not possible without you

Maundy Thursday

On Maundy Thursday, we shared in a joint service hosted by our neighbours at Broughton St Mary's. It was a thoughtful and beautifully shaped evening service, marking the beginning of the Easter weekend with prayer, reflection, and a real sense of shared purpose between our congregations. A number of folks from Stockbridge joined the gathering, which was led by the Rev Laurene Lafontaine. Those who attended commented on how warmly they were welcomed and how naturally the service encouraged participation. It was a gentle, reflective, and very human occasion — the kind of moment that reminds us how much we gain from worshipping alongside friends from nearby churches.

Good Friday & Walk of Witness



Earlier in the day, folks from many congregations gathered at Stockbridge Church to start the Walk of Witness – traversing throughout Stockbridge and ending up outside M&S to bring joy to the public with Easter eggs and hot cross buns. There was lots of friendly engagement with folks passing by, including a Big Issue seller who joined in on wishing Happy Easter to all who passed.

News from Malawi Mission Hospital



CPAP Training

The hospital conducted a week-long training on the care of newborns and young infants, including the use of Bubble CPAP. Clinicians and nurses gained practical knowledge and skills aimed at improving newborn survival & health outcomes.

Digitalization

The hospital has now moved from a paper-based system to a digital one – covering patient files, lab requests, prescriptions, & billing. This will help speed up processes, reduce risk of errors, and make it easier to share information between departments.



Indoor Residential Spraying (IRS)

IRS involves the application of insecticide on the walls of houses, where it remains effective for up to 6 months, killing Anopheles mosquitoes responsible for transmitting malaria. A total of 63 villages were covered, reaching a population of 38,505 people, including 4,978 children under the age of 5.

Smart Health System

The hospital is introducing a new digital system for medicine dispensing – to help reduce errors from handwriting and alert the staff to medicines nearing expiry to reduce waste.

As always, copies of the latest newsletter are available near the pigeonholes, and Malawi Coffee morning continues on the 1st Friday of every month from 10:30am at #7.

Baptisms

Since our last edition of the Bridge, we have conducted two baptisms within the Church – namely Grace Smith on March 22nd, and Helena MacKenzie on March 29th.

Both were baptised by Rev John Munro, and we wish the girls and their families every blessing.

Church of Scotland News

King Charles Honours Church Members with Maundy Money



His Majesty King Charles thanked three Church of Scotland members for their faithful Christian service by presenting them with Maundy money at this year's Royal Maundy service in St Asaph Cathedral, North Wales. Ruby Davidson, Christopher (Chris) Hill and Anne Croft were nominated for their long dedication to their congregations and communities, and each expressed surprise and gratitude at being chosen.

The Maundy tradition, around 800 years old, takes place on the Thursday before Easter and reflects Christ's command to love one another. Recipients receive two purses: a white one containing specially minted silver coins equalling the monarch's age-77 pennies this year- and a red one with commemorative coins.

Ruby, a retired depute head teacher and lifelong Girls' Brigade member, spoke of how its motto shaped her service. Chris, a former RAF meteorologist, was honoured for guiding his rural congregation and supporting local initiatives. The service recognised 77 men and 77 women from across the UK.

Shahrukh Gill Becomes Third-Generation Minister



Shahrukh Gill, 28, was ordained as a Minister of Word and Sacrament and inducted into Inverleith St Serf's Parish Church in Edinburgh on 23 March 2026, becoming the third generation of his family to enter ministry. He follows his father, Rev Peter Gill, and grandfather, Rev George Gill, who served congregations in Pakistan.

Born in Lahore, Shahrukh fled Pakistan with his family at age six due to religious persecution-an experience that shaped his gratitude for the safety and dignity found in Scottish faith communities. Raised in Glasgow and Paisley, he sensed a call to ministry from childhood, later studying psychology at the University of Glasgow and completing a Master of Divinity at New College, Edinburgh.

Reflecting on his ordination, he described ministry as "a privilege to answer God's calling." His background in mental-health work informs his holistic approach to pastoral care. Shahrukh and his wife Essi recently welcomed their first child and hope to help others find peace, dignity and the good news of God's grace.

Church Responds to Assisted Dying Bill Vote



The Church of Scotland has expressed deep disappointment following the Scottish Parliament's recent vote to advance the Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill to the next stage. The Church's long-held position is that assisted dying is incompatible with Christian teaching on the sanctity of life, and leaders said the decision raises serious ethical, pastoral and societal concerns.

In its statement, the Church acknowledged the sincere intentions of those who support the Bill but warned that legalising assisted dying could place vulnerable people at risk, especially those who may feel they are a burden. It also noted that many healthcare professionals remain uneasy about the impact on medical practice and the doctor-patient relationship.

Church Elder Honoured in Malawi



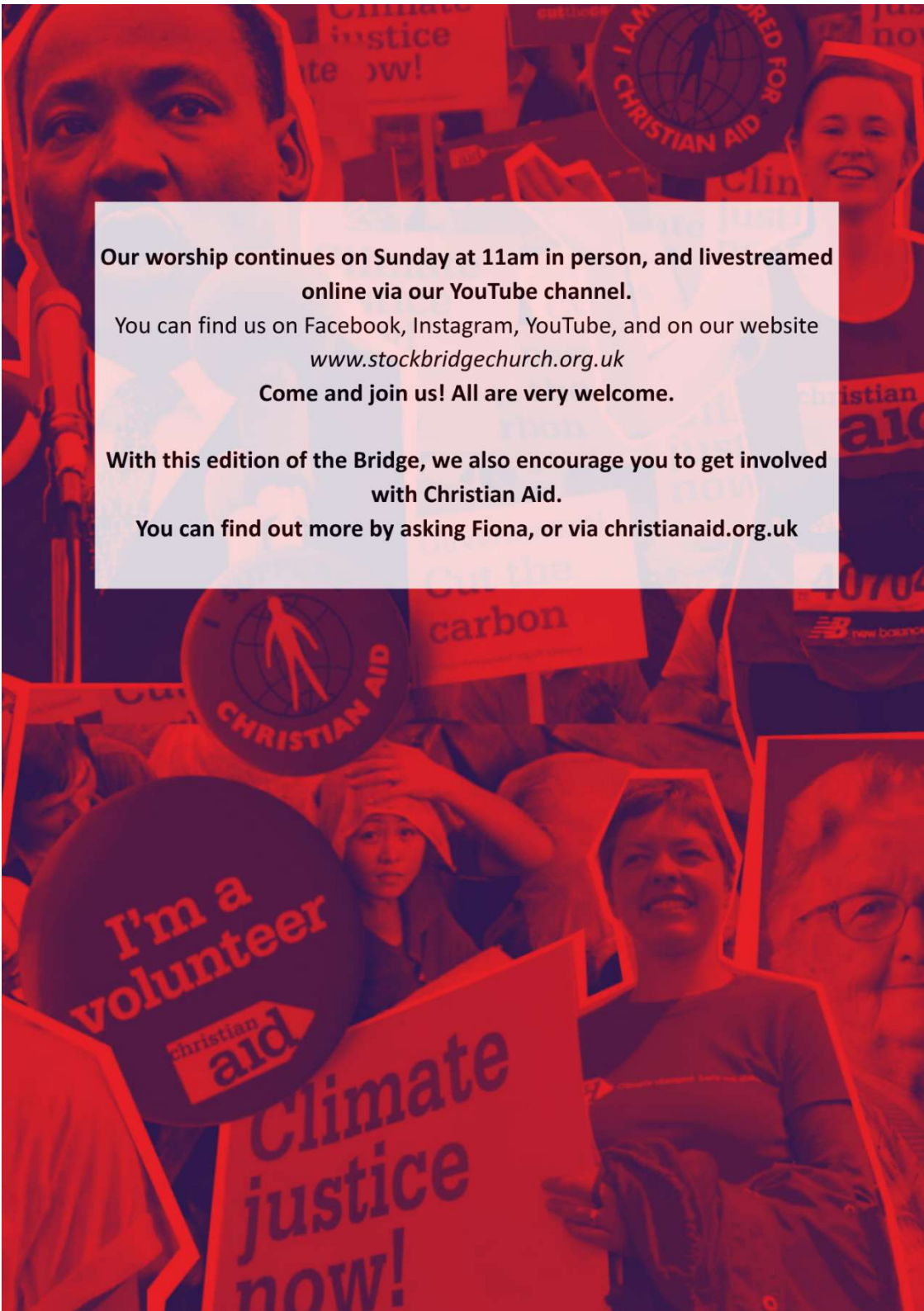
A new classroom block at the Ekwendeni School of Nursing in Malawi has been dedicated to Carol Finlay, a Church of Scotland elder from St David's Carrick Knowe in Edinburgh. Carol spent 10 years working in Malawi, where she helped establish the school's general nursing course. By the time she returned to Scotland, the programme was fully staffed by Malawian tutors and continued to grow as part of the University of Livingstonia's College of Health Sciences.

At a ceremony on 17 April, led by Rev JM Kamisa, the Synod Moderator, college leaders praised Carol's dedication and her role in strengthening healthcare

training. Principal Lusayo Ghambi Mwangomba said her work had laid foundations “when we were still a dream,” and hoped future nurses would carry her spirit of compassion into hospitals and communities.



Carol said she was humbled by the honour and grateful that her contribution is still remembered 25 years later.



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.

With this edition of the Bridge, we also encourage you to get involved with Christian Aid.

You can find out more by asking Fiona, or via christianaid.org.uk