



STOCKBRIDGE CHURCH MAGAZINE

BRIDGE

Stockbridge Church

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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

Back To School!

An introduction to this issue

This issue of *The Bridge* takes “**Back to School**” as its theme – not simply in the classroom sense, but as an opportunity to learn, discover and reflect.

With that in mind, we explore some of the history of our church here in Saxe-Coburg Street, alongside personal stories, biblical reflections and much more.

As always, Amber in the Church Office would be delighted to hear any stories, memories, or reminiscences that you would like to share. We are gradually building a fuller picture of the life and history of Stockbridge Parish Church, with the aim of developing a comprehensive church history and archive for future generations. Every memory, photograph, document, or story can help us to preserve and celebrate our shared heritage.

Keep on Keeping on!

Rev John Munro – Former Minister

As the Church of Scotland in general, and Stockbridge Parish Church in particular, continue to wrestle with a period of considerable change and uncertainty, it is important that we do not become discouraged. It has now been several years since the outline Presbytery Plan was first presented to congregations, and there have inevitably been periods of uncertainty along the way. Not every question about the future has yet been answered.

While plans do not always move as quickly as some might wish, and questions remain about the future, as members and adherents of this church community we are called as Christians to keep going and to continue to be the body of Christ in this place and beyond.

The work of the Church continues Sunday by Sunday through worship, in which God's word is read and proclaimed, prayers are offered for the world and for one another, and, as a caring community, we seek to offer encouragement and support to those who are most in need.

Mission and outreach must also remain at the heart of our thinking about the future, and there is a need for a realistic and workable plan for the Church's mission and outreach in this place. In times gone by, this church enjoyed the services not only of a minister but also of a missionary. While the circumstances in which we find ourselves today are very

different, that same commitment to mission remains important.

Mission is, of course, important work and needs to be approached carefully and thoughtfully. I am happy to offer my services in developing a mission strategy which I hope will work and help us meet the criteria laid down by the Presbytery for our continued life as a Church of Scotland congregation in this place.

The elders and other volunteers are doing much to carry out these and many other responsibilities, and a great deal of their work goes unseen. More help is needed, however, and as a congregation we can all take the opportunity to ask ourselves whether there is something we might contribute to the life and work of our church. Who are we as a congregation? What gifts are to be found among us? How can we best contribute and be of service, in the way of Christ, to this community?

Overall, the message is simple: keep on keeping on. Let us not give up or give in, but persevere in prayer and in hope for the future.

As the apostle Paul wrote: “Let us not become tired of doing good; for if we do not give up, the time will come when we will reap the harvest” (Galatians 6:9).

Edited for length and clarity.

My Journey – Chapter One

Rev Peter Bluett – Interim Moderator



Belville suburb – 1964. Credit: Etienne du Plessis

I was born in a place called Bellville, a city twelve miles from Cape Town, South Africa, in December 1966 to Judy and Arthur Bluett.

My mum was born in Loughborough, England, in 1935 and my dad, born in 1931, was a first generation South African whose parents were from Sunderland. Mum, her mother and her two siblings left England and travelled to South Africa two years after World War Two ended to join her father who had been working in South Africa. He had fought in the First World War as a machine gunner, which at the tender age of 18, had affected him terribly.

My siblings were/are Linda, the eldest child and Steven. Six years later, Jillian, our youngest sibling was born. We lived in Parow North, a suburb of Cape Town. My family were middle class, my dad having been a ship's captain with a company called Safmarine, which he sought to join at the tender age of fourteen. The chairman, Sir Arthur Harris, known as "Bomber" Harris during the Second World War, interviewed my dad and told him that he would only be eligible to go to sea when he was 16. Harris had just become the chairman of the first South African shipping company, known as Safmarine. In 1965, the year before I was born, my dad left the sea to take up a post as a marine superintendent, which meant he wasn't away from home for seven months at a stretch.

Having been at sea for most of his life my dad wasn't in the habit of going to church when I was young but my mum used to wake us up and take us to Sunday School. I must confess, I wasn't fond of it, not because it was terrible, but because I was very shy and introverted by nature. I much preferred going to church, and I can remember standing on a pew beside my mum trying to see past the beehive hairdos and the hats, and listening to the hymns, which I loved.

A few years ago, chatting to my dear late mother, she told me that I was a contented child, happy in my own company. I used to love to read, and still do, and I was curious about the world I lived in. When my parents bought a set of encyclopedias I can remember paging through them, looking

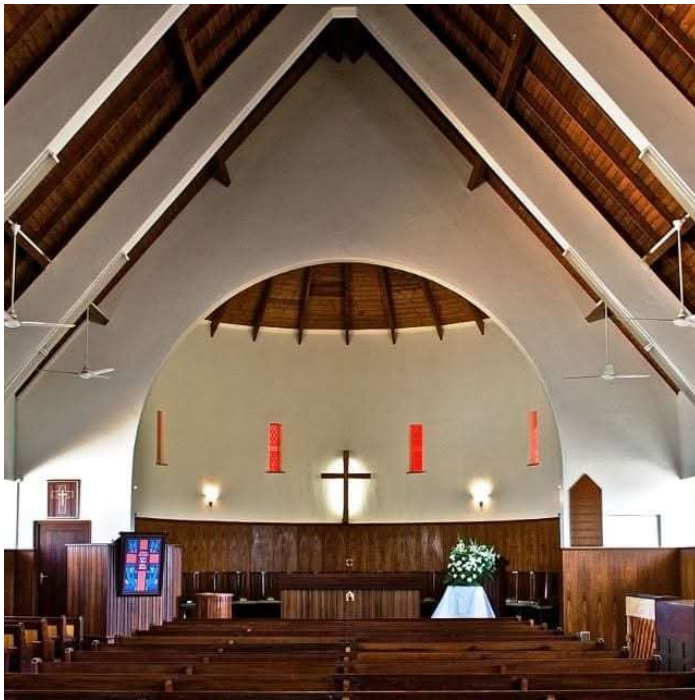
at all the pictures and illustrations and reading about different places in the world. My dad travelled a lot and often used to take ships on sea trials and paging through his passport was always a treat. He always encouraged us to see the world if we were given the chance.

I had two close friends, Michael and Jacques, and we played together every day. We were adventurous, riding our bicycles and homemade skateboards and playing in a local blue gum tree forest that we called “the bush.” We went on hikes and hunted snakes, much to my mum’s horror, and built dens.

All the neighbourhood children got together at one point, and we built a cycling track in “the bush.” The older child who spearheaded the operation was a huge F1 fan and we had bicycle races. We even had a pit lane and children with stopwatches timing laps. The prize for winning was an old yoghurt cup that was painted gold and glued to a small wooden base.

I attended a good state primary school in another suburb called Boston, which was about four miles from home, and used to ride my bicycle through the morning traffic to get there. We had a tremendous amount of freedom as children when I think about it. It taught us to be independent, and I loved my independence.

I played rugby and cricket at school, although I decided to pack in my cricket career in U10 because our coach, the school's PE teacher, once bowled a ball at me at full tilt and it hit me where a cricket box might have been. I concentrated on rugby after that and loved it. All my schoolmates played rugby, and we were a good team. It was great fun. I am still a huge rugby fan. It's in my blood.



Inside of Bellville Presbyterian Church, Feb 2021.

Credit: Bellville Presbyterian Church Facebook

Jumping ahead a few years, I was sixteen years old when a new minister named Rod Botsis was called to our church, the Bellville Presbyterian Church. I was in his first confirmation class, and he was a first-class preacher and teacher.

I found his teaching about Jesus especially intriguing and his relationship with Jesus was authentic. He set a good example

of what it was to be a follower of Jesus, and I absorbed all his teaching like a sponge.

At the time I found my thoughts were filled with questions about the Christian faith and one night, after having a quiet evening with my friends watching videos at someone`s house, I felt the “Hound of Heaven,” as it were, breathing down my neck.

I went into my room which was on the side of our house, knelt on my knees, and committed my life to Christ. As I sat there contemplating what I had just done, I felt a tremendous warmth move through my body from the top of my head to the soles of my feet, and I felt a sense of love and joy that seemed to want to gush out of me like a fountain. A sense of love and joy I had never experienced before even though I was raised in a loving family. To this day I find it difficult finding the words to express what I felt.

Two things I knew from that night. First, what I experienced wasn’t self-generated. Second, I knew without a doubt that I belonged to God.

The following day my brother Steven and I packed our surfboards into my mum’s Toyota Hi-Ace and headed off to a local beach to go surfing.

My heart was still filled with an enormous feeling of joy and when I told my brother that I had committed my life to Jesus, he hugged me for the first time in our lives and told me he was happy for me. In the grand scheme of things, it might have seemed like nothing unusual, but it meant the world to me to have my big brother's approval.

The following year was my final year at school and at that time, I began to think very seriously about what I was going to do with my life. I was also reading a lot of books about the Christian faith.

Then, towards the end of the year, something happened.

I began to believe that I was feeling a calling from God. It felt odd because I had never spoken a word in church and hadn't belonged to any youth club or the like. Plus, I was introverted and shy. I couldn't imagine standing up in front of people and leading a service or preaching a sermon, but the feeling persisted and was getting stronger.

I made an appointment to speak to Rod, our minister, and he smiled when I told him what had been happening in my life and said, "I've seen you concentrating during my sermons." He told me to let whatever was happening unfold naturally and if God was indeed calling me, I would know.

I matriculated in 1984 and my marks weren't very good. It wasn't for lack of trying though. I loved subjects like History and English, but I found Maths and Science very challenging. In fact, in order to raise my maths and science marks, I enrolled in a technical college the following year and my maths and science marks improved dramatically.



SA Vaal, 1977. Credit: bandcstaffregister.com

With the call in the back of my mind and wanting to follow in my dad's footsteps, albeit it down in the bowels of a ship and not on deck, I joined Safmarine as an engineering cadet officer. I was immediately placed on board a medium- sized container ship named the Vaal and set sail for the Far East. The year was 1986.

To be continued...

Stockbridge Church News



Picnic in the Park

Picnic in the Park: Our Stockbridge & Comely Bank Churches

Together picnic on Sunday 2nd August turned into a wonderfully relaxed summer afternoon. The weather was kind, the park looked beautiful, and friends from four of our member churches gathered with rugs, chairs, and plenty of good cheer.

It was a lovely chance to meet, chat, and enjoy simple fellowship in the sunshine. There was a real sense of appreciation for being together - and enthusiasm for doing it again.

We're hoping to repeat something similar next summer.
Thanks to everyone who came and helped make the afternoon
so enjoyable.

- Ben B



The scratch choir. Credit: Kim Edgar on Facebook.

Packed out Fringe!

This August, we hosted 47 shows and workshops from nine different acts – ranging from mainstays like ‘Recitals for Wrigglers’ and Chris Seed’s double piano act, to those brand new to the Fringe like ‘My Princess Tea Party Singalong’ all the way from Australia, and a story of football, family, and keeping the faith through the lens of Leicester City Football Club from Northampton's Bard and Baptist minister Chris Matthewman.

Church of Scotland News

Kirk school matron recognised at Auschwitz



Jane Haining, a Church of Scotland school matron from Dunscore, Dumfries and Galloway, has been honoured at Auschwitz with her name added to a memorial wall recognising prisoners for whom no registration photograph exists.

Haining worked at the Scottish Mission School in Budapest and refused repeated requests to leave Hungary during the Second World War, choosing instead to remain with the Jewish and Christian girls in her care.

Arrested by German forces in 1944, she was deported to Auschwitz where she died. The memorial recognises her courage, compassion and sacrifice, ensuring her story will be remembered by future generations.

You can find her Stolperstein (stumbling stone), the first of its kind in Scotland, outside St Stephen's.

Historic church with links to King Robert the Bruce could be taken into state care



The Church of Scotland has asked Historic Environment Scotland (HES) to consider taking the Abbey Church of Dunfermline into state care as part of an £18 million redevelopment vision.

The church, which contains the final resting place of King Robert the Bruce, is part of one of Scotland's most significant religious heritage sites.

The proposal aims to preserve the building, improve visitor facilities and strengthen its role as a destination for worship, culture and learning. Facing major repair costs and ongoing financial pressures, the congregation hopes the move will secure the church's future while protecting its historic legacy.

What's In A Name?

A history of Stockbridge Parish Church

Although we are known today simply as **Stockbridge Parish Church**, the church at 7b Saxe-Coburg Street has a long and fascinating history, stretching back more than two hundred years to 1822.

The story begins with a meeting of St Cuthbert's Kirk Session in 1822. It was reported that the population of the northern districts of the parish stood at 5,120, of whom 4,070 were over the age of six. Yet the total number of seats available in places of worship was only 1,954.

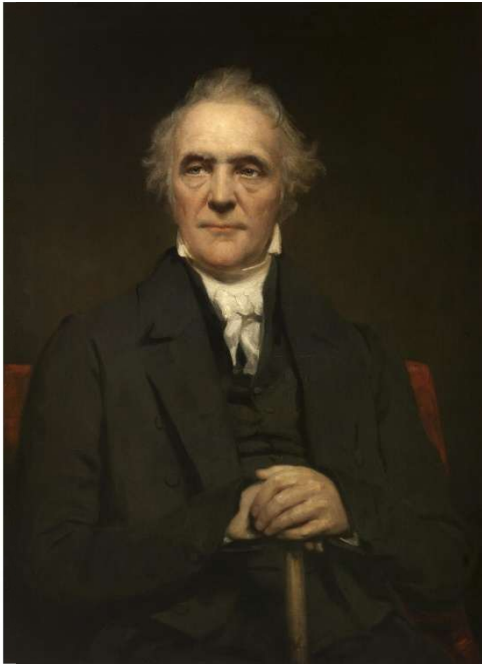
There was another difficulty. St Cuthbert's Church could be reached from Stockbridge only by a long and steep route, along what we now know as Gloucester Street and Gloucester Lane, then known as Church Lane. For many local people, attending worship was therefore far from easy. With a growing population and too few available seats, a request was made for a **Chapel of Ease** to be built in the village of Stockbridge.

The proposal was approved by the Presbytery and the General Assembly, and work began on a new church designed by James Milne, who also designed Saxe-Coburg Place. The building cost approximately £4,000 and opened for worship on **16 November 1823**.

At that time, Saxe-Coburg Street was known as Claremont Street. The new building consequently became known by several names, most commonly **Stockbridge Chapel**, but

also **Claremont Street Chapel** and **St Cuthbert's Chapel of Ease**.

Rev. Thomas Chalmers. Credit: National Galleries of Scotland



In 1834, following the work of the Rev. Dr Thomas Chalmers, arrangements were made for a number of churches to become *quoad sacra* parishes. A *quoad sacra* parish had its own church and minister responsible for the spiritual care of its people, while remaining part of a larger civil parish for secular purposes.

Our church was one of the first to acquire this status. On **31 May 1834**, it became **St Bernard's**, taking its name from the nearby St Bernard's Well, which was itself associated by tradition with the saint.

Another major change came with the **Disruption of 1843**, when around 450 ministers left the established Church of Scotland and formed the Free Church of Scotland. The minister of St Bernard's at the time, the Rev. Alexander Watson Brown, joined the Free Church, accompanied by the majority of the elders and congregation. They moved to a church in Henderson Row.

In November 1851, the Court of Teinds formally disjoined the parish of St Bernard's from St Cuthbert's. St Bernard's therefore became responsible for the pastoral care of its own parish, rather than remaining part of the much larger parish of

St Bernard's Davidson (Henderson Row) in 1982. Via trove.scot



St Cuthbert's.

Further changes followed during the twentieth century. In 1929, the United Free Church of Scotland united with the Church of Scotland. The congregation in Henderson Row subsequently became **Edinburgh St Bernard's South Church of Scotland**.

In 1945, Edinburgh St Bernard's South joined with the congregation of Edinburgh Davidson to form **Edinburgh St Bernard's-Davidson**. The site on which Davidson Church once stood is now occupied by Eyre Medical Practice.

The two strands of the St Bernard's story came together again in **November 1980**, when Edinburgh St Bernard's Parish Church in Saxe-Coburg Street united with St Bernard's-Davidson in Henderson Row. The united congregation took the name **St Bernard's Stockbridge**. The former Henderson Row church has since been converted into housing, opposite Edinburgh Academy.

A further union took place in **October 1992**, when St Stephen's Parish Church united with St Bernard's Stockbridge. The united congregation adopted the name by which we are known today: **Stockbridge Parish Church**.

Across more than two centuries, therefore, both the name and shape of our congregation have changed many times. Yet through chapels, parishes, divisions and unions, Christian worship and witness have continued in Stockbridge from generation to generation.

Preach!

A history of the ministers of Stockbridge Church

Just as the name of our church has changed over the years, so too have the ministers who have served its congregation and community. Take a walk through our gallery and meet some of the people who have preached, ministered, and served here during more than two centuries of church life:



1823 - 1827

Rev. James Henderson, D.D

Rev Henderson originally served at Berwick-on-Tweed before translating to our church. He is famed for being a modertator of the General Assembly to the Free Church for 1855/56.



1828 - 1831

Rev. James Martin, A.M.

Rev Martin was ordained to Glenisla on 18th September 1823, and induced here on 16th May 1828. He was highly praised by Dr Chalmers who he formed a friendship with while he was the minister here. He died aged just 34 years old - eleven years into his ministry.



1832 - 1841

Rev. James Macfarlane, D.D.

Rev Macfarlane was induced here on 12th January 1832, before translating to Duddingston on 18th May 1841. He was moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1865, and died during his year of office.



1841- 1843

Rev. Andrew Watson-Brown

Rev Watson-Brown left the Church at the Great Disruption, and became first minister of St Bernard's Free. He is famed for providing Dr Chalmers with his own robe uring the procession to Tanfield Hall, and also for the numerous "frogs" of ribbon it is embellished with.



1843 - 1845

Rev. James French

Rev French was formerly a professor of Rhetoric at Glasgow - and this church was his first charge. He left to become minister of the second charge in the Abbey Church, Dunfermline.



1845 - 1850

Rev. James Hay D.D.

Rev Hay was licensed by the Presbytery of Aberdeen on 15th June 1843, and came here on 2nd October 1845.



1850 - 1852

Rev. William Caesar

Rev Caesar was licensed by Dumfries Presbytery on 12th September 1847, and ordained to this church in 1850. During his time, the church received quoad sacra status.



1852 - 1855

Rev. David Brown

Rev Brown was licensed in 1846, and this church was his third charge - serving at St Mary's in Dumfries and Rodney Street Church in Liverpool beforehand.



1856 - 1858

Rev. William Robertson

Rev Robertson was ordained in 1854 to the parish of Midmar, where he remained until he translated here in 1856. He left for Hamilton in 1858. Due to his health, he left to go to Sydney, Australia with his wife in 1863. He died during the journey at 34 years old, and was buried in the English cemetery near Sydney.



1859 - 1865

Rev. A. K. H. Boyd D.D.

Rev Boyd was licensed by the Presbytery of Glasgow. This church was his third charge, following Newton-on-Ayr and Kirkpatrick-Irongray. He left to be first charge of St Andrews in 1865, and died in this role in 1899. He was moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 1890.



1866 - 1885

Rev. John McMurtie D.D.

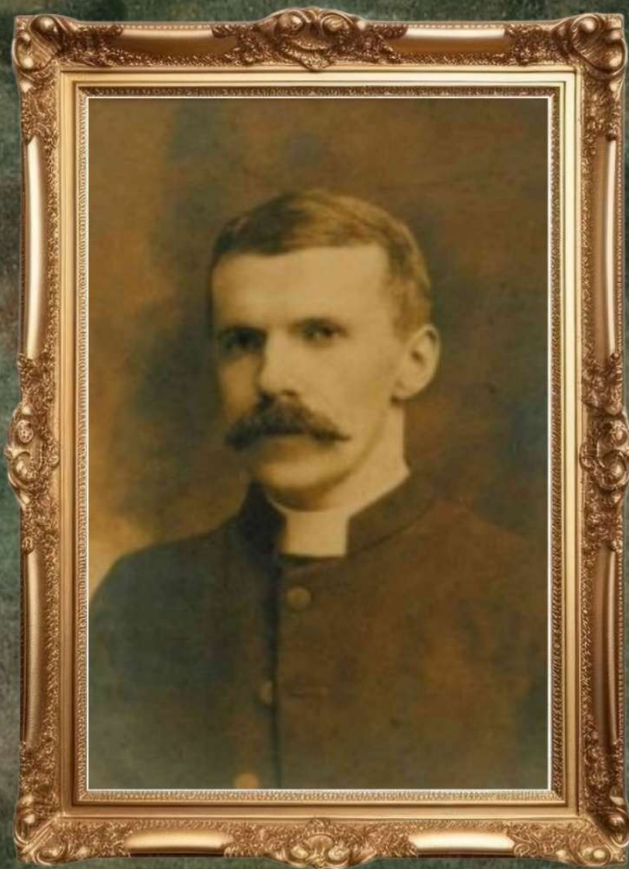
Rev McMurtie was licensed by the Presbytery of Ayr on 12th August 1856, and became minister here on 11th January 1866 - where he remained until he was appointed by the General Assembly to the Convenership of the Foreign Mission Committee on 28th May 1885. He was moderator in 1904.



1886 - 1899

Rev. George Matheson D.D.

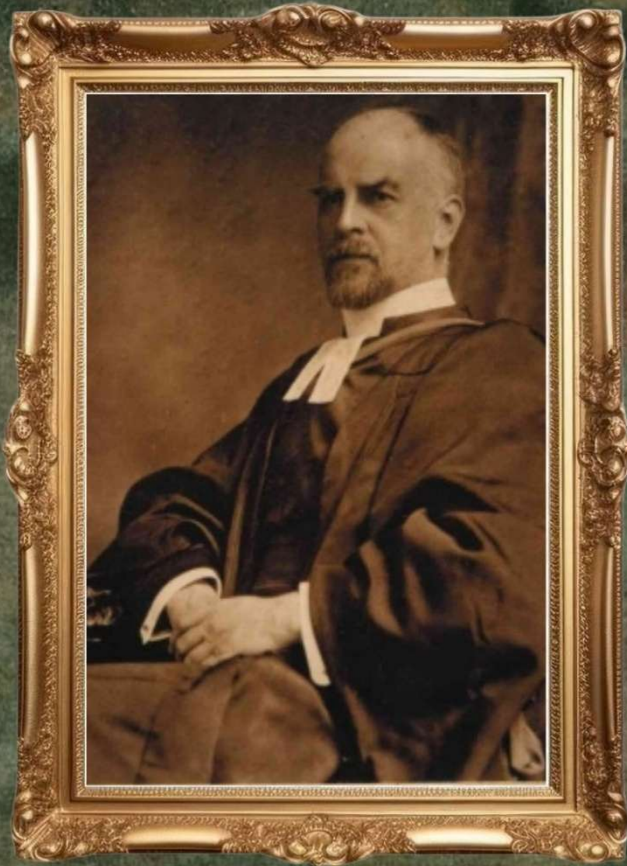
Rev. Matheson was licensed by the Presbytery of Glasgow in 1866, and was minister of Innellan from 1868, until he translated here. He was invited to preach for Queen Victoria at Balmoral, published many books, and wrote the hymns "Oh love that wilt not let me go" and "Make me a captive, Lord". Through all this, he is also known for his blindness.



1897 - 1899

Rev. James Johnstone Drummond B.D.

Our 'missing minister' - there is little information on Drummond. He was licensed by the Edinburgh Presbytery in May 1890, and ordained minister of Longformacus in July 1891. He was appointed colleague and successor to Matheson in 1897, and translated to Jedburgh when Matheson retired.



1900 - 1925

Rev. Alexander Fiddes D.D.

Rev. Fiddes was licensed by the Aberdeen Presbytery in May 1882, and St Bernards was his second charge, serving at Cairnie Parish Church beforehand.



1926 - 1957

Rev. Albert Alexander Diack

Rev Diack is the longest serving minister here, serving for over 31 years. George Young described his ministry as being characterised by “sincere devotion and compassion”.



1957 - 1983

Rev. George Young M.A.

Rev. Young served as an Army Chaplain during WW2, and was inducted to Winchburgh in 1947, before translating here in 1957. In living memory, he is famed for his welcoming nature and keeping children entertained during services.



1976 - 1992

Rev. John Munro

Rev Munro overlaps with Rev Young due to the unification of St Bernard's Parish (Saxe Coburg Street) and St Bernard's Davidson (Henderson Row). He left in 1992 to serve at Fairmilehead.



1992 - 2013

Rev. Dr Anne Logan

Our first female minister, Rev Logan was ordained in 1981 and has consistently served in Edinburgh. Both her father and grandfather were also ministers. Her PhD, completed in 2010, examined the Ordained Ministry of Women in the Church of Scotland. She was appointed a Canon in 2016.



2013 - 2021

Rev. Dr John Cowie

Rev Cowie studied ministry at Edinburgh University and served at Kirkcaldy and in the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam before coming to Stockbridge. During his time, the church saw the creation of the Music Hub, the opening of #7, and a Stockbridge wide Summer Solstice celebration.

Music Hub

Stockbridge Parish Music Hub

With the introduction of new groups Tutti (a weekly drop-in session for adults with any instrument who play at any level on Sundays) and Good Vibrations (a weekly drop-in session for adults with carers to make and create music together on Wednesdays) – it seems only right to look back on the timeline of the Music Hub so far:



TUTTI 

**DO YOU HAVE AN INSTRUMENT?
DO YOU WANT TO PLAY IT?
LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN CREATE!**

**DROP IN TO –
STOCKBRIDGE MUSIC HUB
SUNDAYS 2.30–4PM
STOCKBRIDGE CHURCH**

**ALL LEVELS WELCOME, LGBTQ FRIENDLY
1ST MEET-UP SEPTEMBER 20TH**

Contact Clea to find out more
cleacello@hotmail.com
www.musichub.uk

In collaboration with  Stockbridge Church Funded by  Amati



Stockbridge Music Hub
in collaboration with Stockbridge Church

**GOOD
VIBRATIONS**

**Inclusive music session for
adults with carers.**

Wednesdays 12-1pm

Weekly drop in from
September 16th - December 9th

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

Contact Clea for more info
cleacello@hotmail.com 07989 563358
www.musichub.uk

Sep 17th
2021

Music Hub goes live!
The Hub was the first initiative of its kind, and was introduced with live music, presentations, and a Q&A.



October
2021

The first Thank Music It's Friday & Culture Club events are launched - these will continue to run every month for free or 'by donation' so all can attend.

"I am passionate about music to life, using quality for those especially for those who may not have access to it."

2020

In 2020 Amati Global Investors, Clea Friend and Stockbridge Church united in supporting the idea of a Music Hub, posing the question - what if the giving of a local business could help with encouraging members of our community out again after lockdown?

576 HOURS

Spectrum is launched. In collaboration with Hear My Music, the scheme offers participant-led music making for children and young people with complex needs and/or autism.

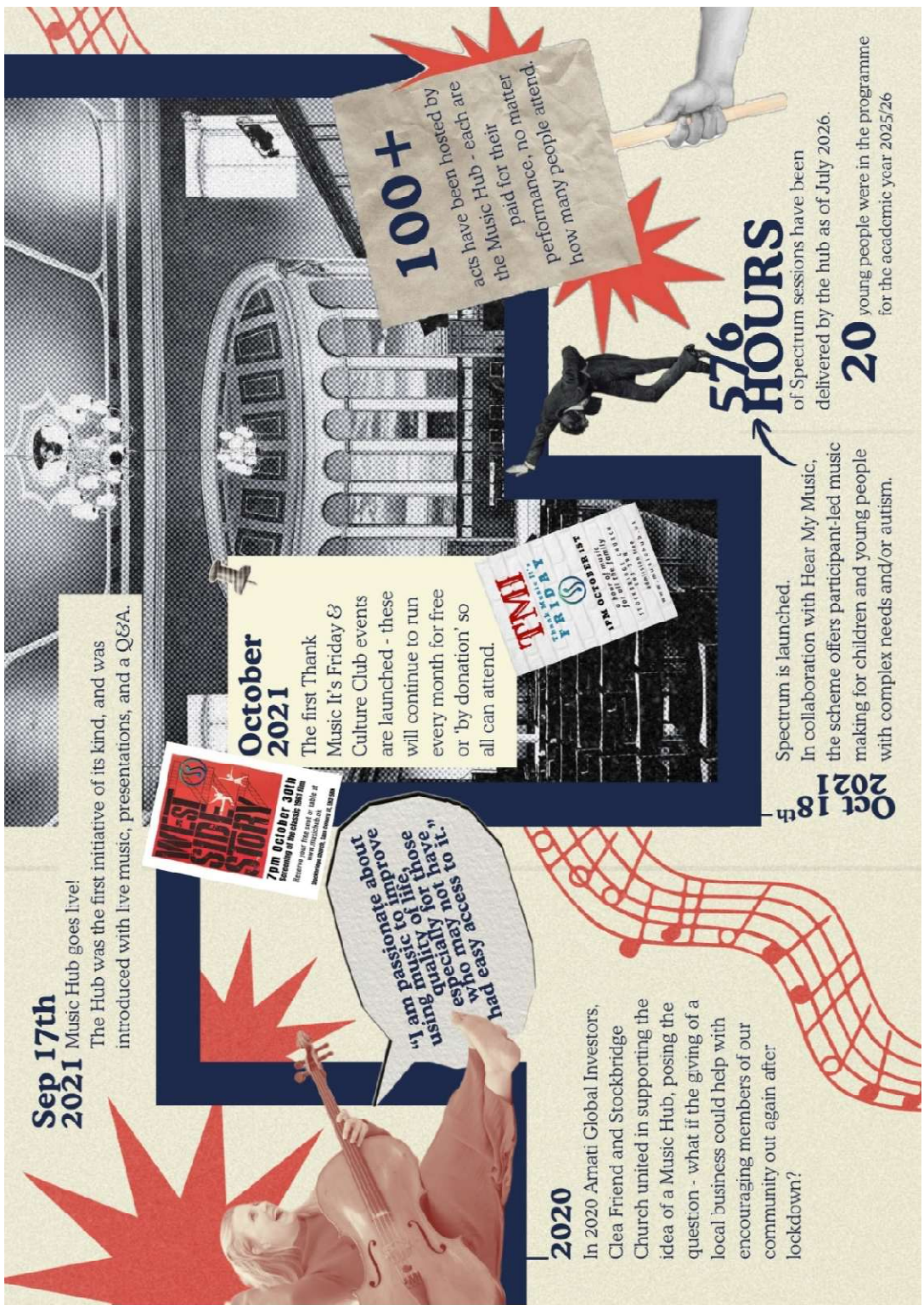
of Spectrum sessions have been delivered by the hub as of July 2026.

20

young people were in the programme for the academic year 2025/26

100+

acts have been hosted by the Music Hub - each are paid for their performance, no matter how many people attend.



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Alphabetical Order

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