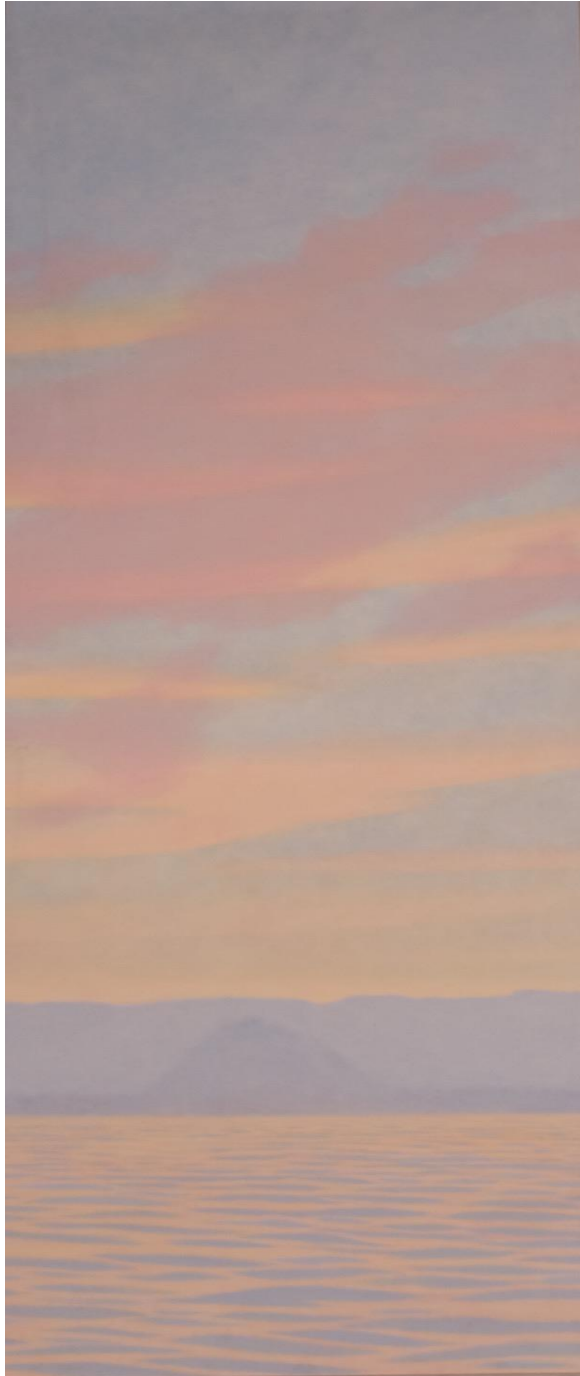


Stockbridge Church

bridging
the gap



The Bridge

Stockbridge
Parish Church
Newsletter

Saxe Coburg Street,
Edinburgh

www.stockbridgechurch.org.uk

January 2021

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

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The church office is closed but Helen is available by phone on Tuesdays and email between 10am and 3pm.

**currently on furlough*

Letter from the Minister

From the manse

Psalm 92

¹ It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
to sing psalms to your name, Most High,
² to declare your love in the morning
and your faithfulness every night
³ to the music of a ten-stringed harp,
to the sounding chords of the lyre.

Dear Friends,

It has been a matter of sadness that we are no nearer to reopening the church for worship in 2021 than we were at the end of 2020. I hear of people getting their vaccinations now but the Kirk Session is following the advice to keep closed and until further notices our services will stay online in order to keep everyone safe.

This morning I have been recording a song for the service this coming Sunday. The way that was organised was first to get Marion to provide the accompaniment (on her new second-hand organ but that's another story). Then we listen to the accompaniment, record our own contribution in time with it, and then all the parts are then added together on a computer. If you want to join in this singing please let me know.

Esther has very successfully organised such music for choir items, and we are going to add voices to Marion's hymn accompaniments which we have been using in the services this past year. Why do we go to all this effort? Because as the Psalmist declared a long time ago 'It is good to give thanks to the LORD, to sing psalms to your name, Most high.'

But why sing? Well there is something special about the activity of adding voices together in worship that transcends the words used or the music that is sung.

I've gone through stages of thinking that the most eloquent, the most polished words or music are what matters. Or that the better we sing

is what is important. But I've discovered that we don't have to be brilliant singers to add our voices to praising God. We don't even have to be in tune all the time. One ministerial colleague of mine will readily admit to being tone deaf (I can testify to that because I've sung alongside him) but it doesn't stop him adding his joyful noise heard to the thanksgiving. Singing together lifted the words and the music to another level.

I thought about this after listening to Elizabeth Marteiijn, whom I'd invited to take part in the service on the 24th of January to mark the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Her background is in one of the stricter reformed denominations in the Netherlands. And she admitted during her sermon that her background and training as a theologian in the Protestant Tradition was one of written and spoken words. However living and worshipping amongst a Palestinian Christian community in the village of Taybeh had changed her outlook. What people do together matters, 'the visible, audible and tangible are as important as the textual basis of theology.'

So when I listen to the recording of just my voice for the music recordings I'm making I will readily admit that to listen to it on its own is not wonderful. But put the voices of God's people together and it becomes the sound of a congregation, of God's people audibly giving thanks to God, breathing and aware together. A simple song becomes a demonstration of our unity.

That's why, despite the ban on coming together physically because of COVID, I think it's important that we continue to sing together. So I hope you join in the singing when you share the hymns in our Sunday recordings. We can't be together in person but we can sing as a community, rehearsing our faith with words of faith. We can demonstrate a unity of voice and perhaps share our joy with neighbours and passers-by.

On a housekeeping note the church and office will remain closed until further notice but you can contact me or your elder at any time, by email or telephone, for support or help.

Your friend,

John Cowie

Remembering George

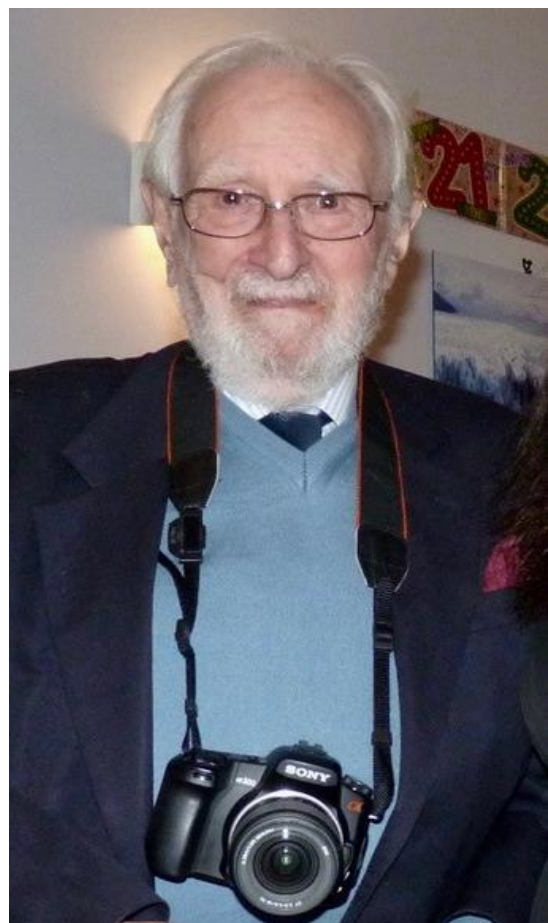
George was interviewed by GC for the December 2019 Bridge, updated here:

"George had been involved in the church in Stockbridge for many, many years. He was married in St Bernard's South and was Sunday School Superintendent in St Bernard's Davidson. He remembered playing Santa. On one occasion he brought with him daughter Andrea in a sack, dressed as an elf in a costume made by Isabelle! George first served as an elder in the 1960s. He gave many years of service to the church since then and continued to do so as he planned the readers for each Sunday service.

George had an amazing memory for poetry. He remembered reams of poetry and could always find a suitable quote. You can read George's poetry in every edition of the church magazine. He published two books of his own poetry and photographs. His daughter Elfreda, an artist and publisher, helped her parents with the preparation of the books and they are a wonderful testament to George's talent as a photographer, a poet and a life well lived."

George and Isabelle's daughter Elfreda writes:

"George had a fascination with early history and all things Roman. He visited the Antonine Wall and Hadrian's Wall, among other places, and took great pleasure in organising school trips to Roman and prehistoric sites.



He and Isabelle visited Andrea in 1980 when she was living in Germany, and he was very excited to find that there was a reconstructed Roman fort nearby.

They also visited Andrea in France, and sat in the amphitheatre in Nimes with thousands of people just like in ancient times, watching a spectacle (no Christians or animals were harmed!). As always, George took every opportunity to record and interpret his experiences with photography."

JW remembers:

"George was always such a cheerful and encouraging person. We were proud to have him amongst our group of 'Friends' of Girls' Brigade. He happily gave his time and talents to support us, and with Isabelle would attend our special events providing us with wonderful photographs."

LL recalls:

"My memories of George extend to St Bernard's Davidson days. A friendly, approachable man who always showed interest in others. Poetry and photography were two of his many interests as was travelling. Many benefitted from Isabelle and George's trips abroad as they both enjoyed sharing their experiences of countries visited with others at an illustrated talk. Any special occasion in the Church saw George and Isabelle armed with their camera equipment, ready to capture the event.

The Bridge and its readers will miss George's poetry."

SC remembers his welcome:

"The first time I came through the doors of Stockbridge Church in the 1980's, I was welcomed by a cheery bearded gentleman, who I later came to know as George. His welcome continued over the years, encouraging new members to join the readers' rota, and was one of the first to extend the hand of friendship to new members."

AW remembers his spirituality:

"A wise and thoughtful man who loved to talk about the mystery of God's world. But he was not in an ivory tower because he always remembered your interests when he talked to you. And I think he talked to many of us on many occasions over the years."

Isabelle has written to express her gratitude for all the kind messages and cards from all her friends in the congregation. She sends her heartfelt thanks.

My Thursdays...



Dear Readers,

It was suggested to me shortly before Christmas that people might like to know what I get up to every Thursday. After all it was a very busy day for me.

Before the new term started and remote learning became the norm once again, I would spend my Thursdays in Broughton High School.

This is a school with a big catchment area, taking in pupils from Stockbridge, Flora's, Ferryhill, and Granton Primaries. It is obviously the first of those schools that starts our connection with it.

Through some trailblazing work by Derek Harley, a former youth-worker for St. Stephen's Comely Bank (SSCB), I began mentoring at the school a few years ago. It involves meeting one-to-one with pupils from the school to be a listening ear. The pupils are chosen by the guidance department and allocated to one of a team of youth-workers coming from the Granton Youth Project, u-Evolve, the school itself, and SSCB (and obviously Stockbridge church as well).

During the pandemic we have reduced the risk by meeting exclusively outside, so I had to make sure I came to work on Thursday with plenty of extra layers and a flask of coffee; especially as we got closer to the Christmas break.

Each week I would plan individual sessions depending on the young person, utilising 'wellbeing webs' to identify key areas to discuss in future sessions. Every young person responds very differently to being allocated a youth worker. Some are ready to talk and share immediately, while others take a little while before they start to open up, and others see it as a massive inconvenience and would rather be in class. I try not to take offence at the last one!

That spectrum of responses means each session is quite unique. With some I play catch and talk while we're engaged in an activity.

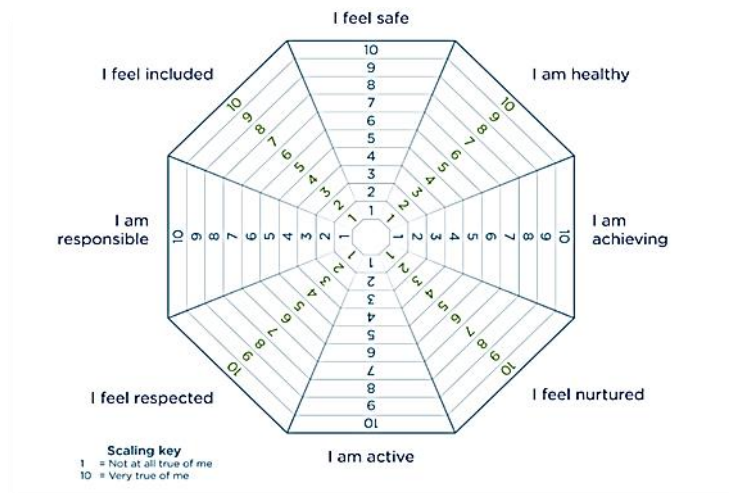


Figure 1- Example of a wellbeing web

Utilising the fast growing willow in the school garden to do some weaving is particularly popular. Some enjoy the big questions of life and love going through my deck of 'Deep Meaningful Conversation' cards. With others I simply chat away.



It is such a privilege to be able to listen to these young people and I'm grateful for the welcome Broughton High School have given us. I am not a trained counsellor, but this project shows that in providing spaces for people to be listened to communities can help support positive mental health and, when needed, be there to refer people on to more specialist support.

Alex Johnson

Number 7 Smart Screen

This is just to note that Alex continues to operate the Smart TV at Number 7 remotely. Between 8am and 11pm the screen displays bible texts, community messages and information about the services. The minister and Alex would welcome suggestions for content.



Starter Packs:

Imagine being homeless and losing all of your possessions. You could be sleeping on a friend's sofa, living in a hostel, or on the streets. You've not only lost your material possessions but any hope for the future. Then you are offered the tenancy of a flat, a glimmer of hope, an opportunity to start again.

But you have nothing - where do you begin? Fresh Start helps by providing our Starter Packs, basic essential household goods to help set up and sustain your new home. There are 10 packs in total that we can provide: - Cleaning products; crockery and cutlery; curtains; food; pots; kitchen utensils; single or double bedding; small electrical appliances; toiletries and towels

Currently, in light of the current Scottish Government lockdown announcement, they are unable to accept donations. They ask that if you are able to hold on to the items, they will hopefully be able to take donations in the future.

You can make a one-off donation by accessing:

<https://www.freshstartweb.org.uk/donate>

They ask: Please also think about Regular Giving, this can be every month, or once a quarter or once a year, but knowing we have this regular income is a huge help to us. If you would like to know more, please give us a phone or an e-mail.

You can contact our office by phone, 0131 476 7741 or email admin@freshstartweb.org.uk

Rory Helps Out

Rory was fed up! He was bored of being indoors. He really wanted to go out and play in the snow, but his mummy was busy. She seemed to be going through his wardrobe picking out some clothes and putting them in a bag.

"What are you doing, mum?"

"Just looking for some clothes you don't need."

"But I like that jacket! And that jumper!"

"They are too small for you now, Rory. We are going to give them to a little boy who is feeling very cold."

Rory looked in the bag of clothes. He saw a warm jacket of his mum's in there too.

"But that is your favourite jacket, mum!"

"It's ok," Mum replied. "I have other jackets."

Rory looked puzzled so his mum explained what she was doing. There was a new family in town. A family from Syria, a country far away. They had left their home because it was not safe for them to live there anymore. They had arrived with almost nothing. The winter in Scotland was too cold for them and they were all suffering. The mum and dad and three children had been given a house to live in, but they needed clothes and many other things to make it a home. Rory's mum and her friends at church had decided to make them feel welcome and help them settle in.

Rory suddenly remembered the shy boy called Aryan who had joined his class just before Christmas. He had come from a different country. Rory and his friends had enjoyed trying to teach him some English words.

"I think I know someone from that family. There is a new boy in my class. Let me help!" Rory said excitedly. His boring day had suddenly become interesting.

Rory and his mum picked out more things for the family and even added some toys for the children. They chose a doll and toy cars and some puzzles to add to the bag.

That afternoon, mum and Rory set off enthusiastically to visit their new neighbours. They had a wonderful time there. Rory and Aryan played while the two mums talked and drank tea together. Aryan's family were so pleased to get warm clothes.

That evening, Rory went to bed happy. He had a new friend and he had learnt about the joy of sharing. When his dad came up to say goodnight he talked to Rory about sharing. He explained that sharing is a kind of loving. Sharing and loving grows into more sharing and more loving. It is important to be loving to others because, in the Bible, Jesus tells us that when we do good and kind things to others, we are also doing it to Him.

Just before he went to sleep Rory said this prayer.

Dear God, thank you for all the good things you give me. Thank you for mummy who showed me how to share with others. Thank you for Jesus who taught us about loving and sharing. Thank you too for my new friend Aryan. Please keep him and his family warm and safe tonight. Amen.

GC



Our Viewing Figures!

These figures indicate people who viewed our Advent Carols broadcast (for at least three seconds on Facebook), YouTube and Zoom. The numbers were hugely gratifying, and we were very encouraged when we heard that the carols were used by other congregations in Scotland and abroad.

Date	Viewing number	Daily Carol
Sunday 29 Nov	610	Worship
30-Nov	368	In the bleak midwinter
01-Dec	386	301 Away in a manger (version 1)
2	512	316 Love came down at Christmas
3	189	Gentle Jesus Meek and Mild – Ben Wightman
4	153	Ding Dong Merrily on High
5	378	Santa Claus is coming to town
Sunday 6 Dec	>1k	Worship
7	171	309 Still the night
8	116	324 Angels from the realms of glory
9	113	315 Once in Royal David's City
10	98	How far is it to Bethlehem
11	146	I wonder as I wander
12	130	320 Joy to the world
Sunday 13 Dec	>1k	Carols and readings service
14	205	The Angel Gabriel
15	515	O Holy Night
16	151	Quem Pastores
17	230	Away in a manger 2
18	144	What Child is this
19	133	319 Of the father's love
Sun 20	608	Worship with children's nativity
21	180	God rest ye merry
22	153	296 While shepherd's watched
23	332	314 Child in a manger
24	132	The Virgin Mary
24 Christingle	275	(live from the manse)
24 Watchnight	167	Watchnight service
25	55	O Come All Ye Faithful

The carols can still be found on our website and on Facebook.

Charity Collections in 2020

The church treasurer paid out £3500 this month to different charities. The money was collected during 2020 by the Baby & Toddler Group, the Wednesday Lunches, Sunday Coffee, Mulanje Coffee mornings. The money went to Mulanje Mission Hospital and Mary's Meals. This is less than we have collected in previous years because of the closure of the church, but many special donations are still being received especially for the Mulanje Hospital Prison Clinic. If you want to know more contact the minister.

Donate to the Church

Our usual Sunday collections are not possible but you can make payments to the church account using the link on our church website – or on the [Church of Scotland website](#). You can also Gift Aid donations if you are a UK taxpayer – this increases the gift by 25% at no additional cost to yourself.

Community Climate Asset Fund



We are delighted that Stockbridge Parish Church has been awarded a grant of £3790.80 from the Scottish Government's Community Climate Asset Fund, for the supply and fitting of secondary glazing to seven windows of our church office, kitchen, and hall. This will help Stockbridge to reduce local carbon emissions through the much upgraded insulation. It has been calculated that the heat losses through the windows could be reduced by up to 65%.

The windows will be installed by a local firm during February.

The CCAF is Scottish Government fund, administered by Keep Scotland Beautiful, and 279 community-based organisations from across Scotland have been awarded more than £3.2 million of funding to tackle climate change.

Further details from [www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/...](http://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/)

News from the Kirk

The Church of Scotland General Assembly for 2021 will be held online for a second year. The annual event will begin on 22 May with commissioners and other attendees joining together remotely from across Scotland and around the world.



Rev Dr George Whyte, Principal Clerk for the Church said:

"We regret that we cannot join together in person as usual given the uncertainty about the Covid restrictions that may still be necessary this spring. However we intend to make our online experience as good as it possibly can be."

In ordinary times the event brings around 800 commissioners and visitors to Edinburgh to debate on Church matters and the issues of the day.

Your contributions for The Bridge are very welcome

Just email bridge@stockbridgechurch.org.uk or, when we re-open, leave in Bridge pigeonhole or speak to Shona Cameron in church.

All contributions for the next issue should be e-mailed to Shona at above email address. If you do not have access to email, please phone her.

The deadline for the next edition, out at the end of March just before Easter, is **Sunday 14th March, 2021**.

And finally

Our worship continues online,
Sunday at 11 and Wednesday at 1pm
on Facebook, and via the links on the
website. You can also find past services
on YouTube.

Join us for a virtual coffee on ZOOM after
the Sunday Worship from 11:30am.



Study – Wednesdays from 7-8pm
via Zoom on your computer, smartphone or
tablet, or on your telephone. Contact the
minister for details.

This **Wednesday Night Small Group** is continuing reading 'Living Jesus' by John Pritchard together. This book seeks to explore what it means to have a relationship with the person of Christ. That relationship with a living person means our faith is dynamic and constantly deepening, however well practised we are.

Stockbridge Church

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Stockbridge Parish Church of Scotland, Edinburgh

Registered Scottish Charity, Charity No – SC002499

Enquiries about use of the church and halls for later in the year are welcome.