

Advent 2025

# Stockbridge Church BRIDGE

STOCKBRIDGE CHURCH NEWSLETTER

[www.stockbridgechurch.org.uk](http://www.stockbridgechurch.org.uk)  
[admin@stockbridgechurch.org.uk](mailto:admin@stockbridgechurch.org.uk)

**In this newsletter  
you can expect:**

**Minister's letter**

**Advent Services**

**Congregational  
news**

**Updates from  
the Kirk Session  
& Church of  
Scotland**

**What's on in  
December**



## 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:

- **Locum Minister Rev John Munro** [revjohnmunro@hotmail.com](mailto:revjohnmunro@hotmail.com)
- **Joint Session Clerk Ben** [sessionclerk@stockbridgechurch.org.uk](mailto:sessionclerk@stockbridgechurch.org.uk)
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- **Church Organist Ben Shanks** [benshanksmusic@outlook.com](mailto:benshanksmusic@outlook.com)

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



# **A letter from our Locum Minister, Rev John Munro**

## **“Stepping Back”**

Dear fellow members, a few weeks ago, I announced that I would be stepping back from my job as locum minister at the end of November, on St Andrews' Day. My reasons for doing so are many, but overall I feel a pressing need to tie up some of life's loose ends which I cannot do while I am working for most of the week as your minister. However, this does not mean I am leaving Stockbridge and our church in Saxe Coburg Street for good. Instead, I hope you will find me and Lillian regularly at church on a Sunday as part of the worshipping congregation and as such I will be willing to play a full part as a member and help wherever possible with any requests for pastoral assistance that require the services of a minister of Word and Sacrament. That said I have offered my services to the session as someone who would be willing to do several jobs and even some pulpit supply, at least from time to time.

As a result of this change and following four years as your locum minister, the question arises as to what will happen next. I have shared with the elders my own thoughts about this, but of course the Kirk Session will have to decide and share their decision with the congregation. As I see it, there is at present no real appetite for a union with another church in this area, and I believe the feeling is mutual. There may come a time when greater collaboration with one congregation or indeed several churches may feel the right thing to do, but it is not now or in the foreseeable future. Instead, and with the encouragement and support of the congregation, I would hope that some members of the church will feel able to play a fuller part in ministry and mission and not least in the presentation of Sunday worship along the lines of the early Christian congregations.

Already we have members who carry out several of the functions of a minister and some would be willing to take part in a worship group that could do even more. As far as the traditional sermon is concerned, then that can be supplied by ministers who have recently retired or by students who are candidates for ministry or by those working in other spheres of church life also on a rota basis. This will enable us to listen to several different voices on a Sunday rather than just the one and worship may be better for that. In any event, if it is found to be difficult on a given Sunday to find 'pulpit supply' then as I say I will make myself available particularly if an ordained minister is required for services of communion and baptism.

I know that some people will think I am outlining a situation that is less than perfect, but that cannot be helped. Ministers these days do not grow on trees and in any case a change may well be a blessing in disguise. The important thing is that we all rally round, for only if we do so can the parish church in Stockbridge have a future.

Please feel free to speak to me at any time about any of the above.

*Your friend and locum minister,*

*John*



## The future, and upcoming services

Representatives from Stockbridge Parish Church have been in discussion with Broughton St Mary's for the past 18 months about a future possible union or linkage. Broughton St Mary's have indicated that they are not willing to enter into union unless Stockbridge brings ministerial resources, and they believe Stockbridge should close if Presbytery were to insist on one of the two churches shutting. Their minister, on unrestricted tenure, is not in a position to take on additional responsibilities.

Stockbridge Parish Church believes that pursuing a union which results in closure is not in the best interests of our congregation or community. Our preference is to continue positively as we are, reviewing progress in five years in terms of membership, outreach, buildings, and finances, rather than rushing to a final decision now.

We will propose to Presbytery that we continue independently while exploring collaboration with other churches, including Broughton St Mary's. Productive momentum is already building with Stockbridge and Comely Bank Churches Together, and further opportunities may arise for working together with a range of other local congregations and denominations in 2026. However, we recognise that deepening our mission will require additional resources.

As you will have read elsewhere in The Bridge, our locum the Rev John Munro is stepping back at the end of November.

## The future, and upcoming services

John's dedication has gone far beyond what we could ever expect from a locum, though it is no surprise given his long and valued history with our parish. We are delighted that he and Lillian will remain members and John has also kindly offered to preach and conduct services on occasions and help with pastoral work. We plan to continue under vacancy with either pulpit supply, a new locum, a parish assistant, lay-led services, or a combination of these. Demonstrating financial viability will be key to sustaining this path.

Pulpit supply is already in place until the end of January 2026

*Session Clerk, Ben B*

# Advent & December Services

**30<sup>th</sup> November**

*1st Sunday in Advent*

Communion Sunday (Rev John Munro)

**7th December**

*2nd Sunday in Advent*

Nine Lessons and Carols (Rev John Cowie)

**14th December**

*3rd Sunday in Advent*

Regular Advent Service (Rev Anne Logan)

There will also be Carol Singing with Stockbridge and Comely Bank Churches Together outside M&S Food Raeburn Place straight after the service, with refreshments to follow in #7

**21<sup>st</sup> December**

*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent*

Regular Advent Service (Rev Robert Simpson)

**24th December**

*Watchnight Service - Lay Led*

Doors Open 11.15 for 11.30 pm start

**No Christmas Day Service**

**28th December**

Sunday Communion (Rev John Munro)

**4th January**

Epiphany (Rev Anne Logan)

**11th January**

Sunday Service (Rev Peter Bluett)

**18th January**

Sunday Service (Rev Robert Simpson)

**25<sup>th</sup> January**

Sunday Communion (Rev John Munro)

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## News from the Kirk



### **Edinburgh minister named Moderator-Designate**

We're delighted to share that Rev Gordon Kennedy, minister of Craiglockhart Parish Church, has been chosen as Moderator-Designate of the Church of Scotland's General Assembly for 2026–2027.

Rev Kennedy has served at Craiglockhart since 2012. He is married to Rev Fiona Kennedy, who also works in ministry in Edinburgh. He described his appointment as “an opportunity for service,” after reflecting with his wife and a close friend that it might be God’s call. *You can read more about the new Moderator-Designate via the Church of Scotland website.*

# A History of Lessons & Carols

**From our organist Ben Shanks**

As advent approaches our annual service of lessons and carols comes barrelling towards us. You will, no doubt, have already seen we are holding this year's service of lesson and carols in the 2nd Sunday of advent, the 7th of December. As you well know, the service of lessons and carols predates Stockbridge's annual tradition by some margin. Most people would assume, quite fairly, that it must have originated in King's College Cambridge in 1918. This was the first year King's held their service which included the traditional 9 lessons and indeed a selection of carols, devised by Eric Milner-White. Having served as an army chaplain both on the Western Front and in the Italian front he became convinced that the Church of England needed a more imaginative style of worship. However, the concept predates him by almost 40 years.

Milner-White was inspired by a similar service led by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, E.W. Benson. Benson's son A.C. Benson recalled: 'My father arranged from ancient sources a little service for Christmas Eve (nine carols and nine tiny lessons, which were read by various officers of the Church, beginning with a chorister, and ending, through the different grades, with the Bishop).

The suggestion had come from G. H. S. Walpole, later Bishop of Edinburgh.' While Truro Cathedral was under construction they led worship from a temporary wooden building. It was here that the first Nine Lessons and Carols service was held in 1880, attended by some 400 people. The service has been held in Truro ever since. This same service is what inspired the Dean of King's College in 1918. The backbone of the

service, the lessons and prayers, have remained virtually unchanged at King's ever since. The music and carols, however, have not been as static.

At Milner-White's first Lessons and Carols the organist was Arthur Henry Mann, a man who had a lasting legacy on the service as we know it today. Mann served as the Director of Music to the King's College Cambridge for over 50 years (1876 until his death in 1929). It was in the the second year of this great tradition that Mann made his mark. He selected and arranged Once in Royal David's City as the processional hymn. This has remained the traditional processional or opening hymn for the service ever since. In our lessons and carols this year I have opted for an alternative, the reason for which will become clear.

As this annual tradition began spreading across the country, different churches started putting their own spin on the service making slight alterations to fit their needs. We here in Stockbridge celebrate the Service of Nine Lessons and Carols during the season of Advent (or at least we have done in the time I have been the organist here).

For the uninitiated, advent is the season in the liturgical year that predates Christmas and beckons in the celebration of the birth of Christ. With this in mind slight alterations have been made to fit in with our schedule of worship. This year we will begin with O Come, O Come Immanuel, celebrating the coming of Jesus before we start the Christmas story with the 2nd hymn, Once in Royal David's City.

**So come and join us on the 7th of December at 11am** to hear the Christmas story in all its glory with joyous singing to mark the occasion.



# Church Community News

## Updates and news from our congregation

We give thanks for the lives of these members of the congregation who died recently – Muriel McGregor, Mitchell Manson, Irene Wilkie, and our former member Anne Liston. They made a huge contribution to the life of our congregation, and our thoughts and prayers are with their friends and family. We shared memories of Irene at our church on Friday November 21<sup>st</sup>, and the following is a message from Irene's family:



*It is with sadness we announce that our mother, Dr Irene Wilkie, died peacefully on 12th October 2025. As many of you will know, after Jim's death in January 2024, Irene moved to Mearns View Care Home, close to Cathy and her family in Glasgow. Although Irene wrestled with severe arthritis and latterly Alzheimer's she was, right to the end, very much herself and remained humorous, intelligent and compassionate. Though it may seem strange to say so, these past two years have been good ones for Irene and the whole family, with much joy and celebration along the way. This was in no small part due to our sister Cathy, who has been truly remarkable in the love, care and advocacy she gave to mum. Cathy has been supported at every step by her husband Alastair, the wonderful team at Mearns View and the wider family. In turn, we have all been buoyed and uplifted by the many friends, old and new, that continued to hold Irene dear.*

*As we begin a new chapter of our lives without Irene, we are deeply thankful for the friendship and fellowship you have shared with us across the years and we wish you and your families peace.*

*James Wilkie, Anne Wilkie, Maggie Davenport and Cathy Wilkie-Thompson*

There will be a memorial service in celebration of the life Dr Mitchell Manson at Stockbridge Parish Church, on Friday, January 16, 2026, at 12 noon, to which all family, friends and neighbours are warmly invited.

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We offer a warm welcome to two new members who were admitted by resolution of the Kirk Session, Melina Maclean and Sandi Downie.

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Our church participated in Edinburgh's annual **Doors Open Days** on Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th September. This event - which we last took part in during our bicentenary in 2023 - was a wonderful opportunity to open our doors to the wider community, offering visitors a chance to explore our beautiful building, learn about its rich history, and hear about our ongoing work and future hopes for growth and service. Over the two dates of September 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup>, we hosted many visitors, entertaining them with music performances, hospitality, and many displays about the past present and future of our church.

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We hope you like the new look Bridge! Our administrator Amber has been busy improving the presentation of our newsletter, and a new team is busy planning for 2026.

After 10+ years I am delighted to pass the editorship on to this new team. The email address remains [bridge@stockbridgechurch.org.uk](mailto:bridge@stockbridgechurch.org.uk), and there will be more information in the next newsletter.

All contributions for the January issue should be left in the Bridge pigeonhole or e-mailed to above email address.

SC

## New members of our church team

Cathy Albeson has joined us one and a half days a week as our new Finance Assistant. She is in the office on Mondays.

Amber Snary, our new church administrator, introduces herself:

“Hi! I'm Amber and I'm your new Church Administrator. I recently moved from Bath (which is like a tiny Edinburgh of the South) where I did my undergraduate in Psychology. I adore baking, though I have never made it onto Great British Bake Off YET, and I am forever on the hunt for a good recipe for chocolate cake - so would adore if anyone has a recipe to share! I had to campaign for my previous role as Education Officer, and I'm looking forward to being able to help promote Stockbridge Church with all the skills I learnt throughout those weeks - getting us more into the social media space and making sure that all of our community knows about the great work of the Church and congregation.”

## The Regulars

**Groups and events happening every week (or month!)**

### Craft Group

Please note that in December there is a change to the normal Craft Group routine. We will meet on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> December in the Session Room from 3pm to 5pm for an afternoon of Christmas Crafts. As always, new members are welcome but if you are coming along please let Judith or Lesley know, so we can make sure we have enough craft supplies for everyone.

We will return to normal in January, meeting at No. 7 from 2pm to 4pm on the last Tuesday of the month which is the 27<sup>th</sup>.



### Celebrating Age Project

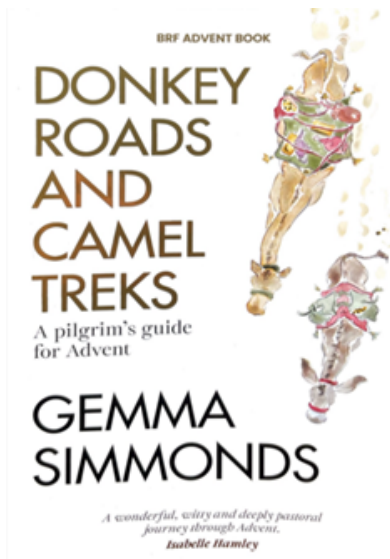
CAP meets on the 3rd December at 2pm in the Session Room, when Maureen Kelly will ask us "Did the Victorians invent Christmas?" Plus a little Christmas food to be enjoyed.

This is the last meeting of the year and as we do not meet in January, our next meeting is the 4th February when Liz McLaren will tell us about her time in Texas. ALL welcome!



## Kirk Fellowship Group

We have all really enjoyed a study of the Book of Acts, taking it slowly a chapter at a time which gave us lots of time for discussion. Thanks must go to Chris who patiently leads these sessions, Lesley who has an amazing knowledge of history and Margaret for her wisdom and insight. It's been good to welcome some new members too.



In advent we will begin a new study, following the book Donkey Roads and Camel Treks published by and available from the Bible Reading Fellowship. This has daily readings with a reflection and prayer for the season of advent for those who wish to follow them all. It isn't necessary to buy the book to join the group as we will concentrate just on one reading each week and you will be given details. As always, if you'd like to join us please speak to Chris Morison to be sent the Zoom link.

JW

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## Malawi Coffee Mornings

Our December 7th the Malawi coffee meeting will be held at number 7 in Stockbridge starting at 10.30 until 12 noon. We have a lovely friendly group and there is usually a home-made cake provided by one of our ladies. As it's our Christmas meeting we may also have some mince pies. We use a fancy coffee machine and cappuccinos and flat whites can be made to order.

We always enjoy when new folk turn up to join us. You are assured of a warm welcome. Our donations are sent to the mission hospital in Malawi and the support we send is much appreciated by the hospital director who uses the funds to provide essential supplies.

We will not have a January meeting as the first Friday of the month is the 2nd January 2026 and a public holiday.

LM

## Presbytery of Edinburgh and West Lothian



We were privileged to have Mark Evans, NHS Lothian Head of Service for Spiritual Care and Bereavement, speak at the last Presbytery meeting and tell us a little of how the Service works and some of his experiences. He is in fact a Deacon of the Church of Scotland but the service is designed to be sensitive to all beliefs and needs. Currently work is ongoing to train “Listeners” who will fulfil a similar type of role in general practice situations starting next year. Details of the service can be found online by searching NHS Lothian Spiritual Care and Chaplains can be contacted as follows:

Any member of staff can contact an on-call chaplain for you via the hospital switchboard. If for any reason you need to contact a chaplain from outside the hospital, please call -

Royal Edinburgh Hospital: 0131 537 6516

Royal Hospital for Children and Young People: 0131 312 0168

Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh: 0131 242 1990

St John’s Hospital, Livingston: 01506 522188

Western General Hospital: 0131 537 1402



## Volunteer hosts for festive stays wanted

Each year our charity, EIL UK, receives hundreds of applications from international students studying at British universities hoping to experience Christmas or New Year in a British home. We are looking for more volunteer families in Edinburgh who could host an overseas university student for a 3-night stay between 24<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

We would like to invite your parishioners to be part of this rich and rewarding experience and continue the traditions that HOST UK started in 1987 by offering a student who is far from home, hospitality and friendship through a Festive Stay.

For more information, contact Calvin Hewitt, Volunteers Manager on [calvin.hewitt@eiluk.org](mailto:calvin.hewitt@eiluk.org)



Experiment in  
International  
Living UK



Crossreach offers a range of Christmas cards, calendars and gifts that may be just what you are looking for to let your friends and family know you are thinking of them. You can find them online via their website: [shop.crossreach.org.uk](http://shop.crossreach.org.uk)

## Brass memorial for Scottish Holocaust victim unveiled in Edinburgh



A brass Stolperstein – or “stumbling stone” – has been installed in Edinburgh in memory of Jane Haining, a Church of Scotland school matron who died in Auschwitz in 1944. It is the first Stolperstein in Scotland, joining more than 112,000 across Europe commemorating individuals persecuted by the Nazis.

Born in Dumfriesshire, Haining worked at the Scottish Mission School in Budapest from 1932, caring for around 400 Jewish and Christian pupils. As persecution increased, she taught domestic service skills to help Jewish women emigrate to safety.

Despite repeated instructions to return home as the situation worsened, she refused, saying: “If these children need me in days of sunshine, how much more do they need me in days of darkness?”

In 1944 she was arrested, accused of working with Jewish families, imprisoned, and finally deported to Auschwitz, where she died a few months later.

Haining is the only Scot recognised as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem for protecting Jewish children during the Holocaust.

Haining's memory continues to be honoured internationally, including with a Stolperstein in Budapest and a UK Government Heroine of the Holocaust award, as well as church memorials in Scotland. The stone is placed outside St Stephens Howe St, where a service was held the day before Jane set out to Budapest.



Miss Haining and her girls



# Stockbridge Music Hub Events

In December, the Music Hub is hosting three fantastic events. As well as Hannah and Anna providing a delightful duo for TMI Friday, there is also the opportunity to see the original Scrooge movie with live music accompaniment as it would have originally been seen.

As well as this, we are also looking forward to creating the first ever Stockbridge Carol, using input from our very own community here in Stockbridge. The first session, on 12<sup>th</sup> December will focus on lyrics with guidance from renowned Stockbridge Colonies poets Diana Hendry and Hamish Whyte, whilst the following week will see composer Nigel Osborne help us form the tune. Refreshments provided, and any all input is very appreciated!

Stockbridge Music Hub  
in collaboration with Stockbridge Church  
**TMI FRIDAY**  
presents  
**Hannah  
and Anna**



**Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December  
1pm**  
Stockbridge Church, 7b Saxe Coburg St, EH3 5BN  
Entry by suggested donation of £10  
[www.musichub.uk](http://www.musichub.uk) 

Stockbridge Music Hub  
in collaboration with Stockbridge Church  
CULTURE CLUB presents  
**Old Scrooge**  
1913 Silent film with live music



Jane Gardner - piano Roddy Long - violin  
Hazel Morrison - percussion  
plus 'A Christmas Carol' (1929)  
**Saturday 13th December 6pm**  
Stockbridge Church, 7b Saxe Coburg St, EH3 5BN  
Tickets £15/£10 via:  
[www.musichub.uk](http://www.musichub.uk) 

**Come and create a  
Stockbridge  
Carol**  
with literary guidance from poets  
**Diana Hendry and Hamish Whyte**  
and musical assistance from composer  
**Nigel Osborne**  
Creative process open to all  
- to contribute or observe!  
**Friday 12<sup>th</sup> and 19 December  
12.30-2pm**  
Stockbridge Church  
7b Saxe Coburg St, EH3 5BN  
 Refreshments provided  
Admission free

More information on the Music Hub can be found online via their website  
[musichub.uk](http://musichub.uk)

They run Cello Choir every Sunday from 4:30pm, as well as TMI Fridays at 1pm on the first Friday of every month, and Culture Club at 2pm on the first Saturday of every month.

# What's on in December?

**6th December**

**7:30pm**

**The Auditorium**

St Andrew Orchestra will be performing a winter concert featuring the works of Grieg, Mozart, and Tchaikovsky.



**10th December**

**7:30pm**

**The Auditorium**

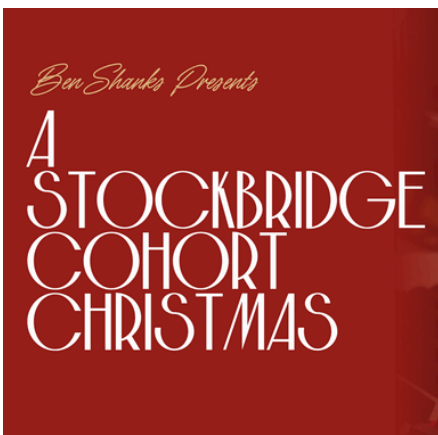
The Bohemian Opera Lyric Company will be returning to perform their Christmas concert, with proceeds helping Rock Trust.

**11th December**

**7:00pm**

**The Auditorium**

Combat Stress will be performing their annual carol concert, including Locum Minister John Munro.



**12th December**

**7-10pm**

**The Auditorium**

Our church organist Ben Shanks takes the reins to present a concert alongside the Stockbridge Cohort.

**18th December**

**7:30pm**

**The Auditorium**

Octavoce visits Stockbridge Church to bring us a (battery) candle lit Christmas concert with mulled wine provided.



**19th & 20th December**

**7pm**

**The Auditorium**

Opera Caledonia brings us a double bill of Carols by Candlelight (once again battery operated!).

**20th December**

**2pm**

**The Auditorium**

The Edinburgh branch of the Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain hosts a Nativity to finish up our festive season.



The Church Office will be closed from **3:30pm, 19<sup>th</sup> December**, with Administrator Amber returning on **January 2<sup>nd</sup>**. We will kick off our New Year with a Malawi Coffee Morning at #7 as usual, followed by a TMI Friday here in the Auditorium.



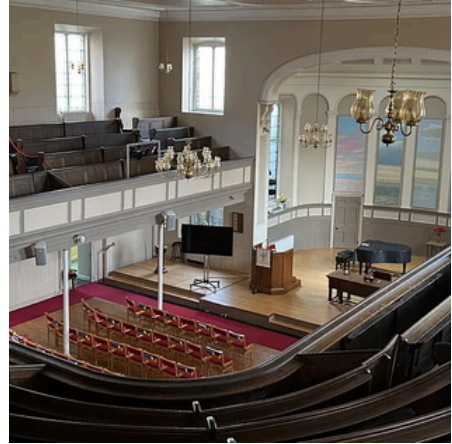
# What's on in January?

**17th January**

**7pm**

**The Auditorium**

Newtown Ensemble brings in the new year with a concert



**24th January**

**6pm**

**The Auditorium**

Isla Ratcliff and Natalie Hass perform as part of the Music Hub events

**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](http://www.stockbridgechurch.org.uk)*

**Come and join us! All are very welcome.**

