



Greyfriars Kirk & St Cuthbert's Parish Church

Working Towards Union Newsletter: Issue 6, Mar 2025

Personnel update

Earlier this year, Rev Sue MacGregor moved West to take up her first charge as Minister to Helensburgh Parish Church. So too, Rev Dr Peter Sutton moved further west, to become Associate Pastor of Education and Congregational Life at the First (Scots) Presbyterian Church in Charleston, South Carolina. We wish them both every success and joy in their new positions. We are delighted to welcome Rev Dr John Carswell as locum to Greyfriars Kirk and Rev Suzie Stark to St Cuthbert's. John and Suzie are keen to work together, and have met with Session Clerk Jo Elliot and Acting Session Clerk Christine McGuinness to think about how the two congregations can come together to get to know each other and live out church life in worship and fellowship as we look toward union. More on that below.

It is with sadness that we mark the passing of Margaret Pollock, Session Clerk to St Cuthbert and member of the union working group, in February. Margaret made great contribution to church life, both at St Cuthbert's and for the wider Church of Scotland during her life and she will be very much missed. A service of thanksgiving is taking place on Friday 21 March at noon, at St Cuthbert's to which all are warmly invited.

Joint Services

As we journey closer toward union, it is important for our congregations and communities to continue to get to know each other and join together in aspects of church life. With this in mind, a series of joint worship services are proposed to take place on the last Sunday of the month at one of the two churches (there will not be worship at the other church on those days). The first joint service will be at:

10:30 am Sunday 30 March at Greyfriars Kirk, led jointly by Rev Carswell and Rev Stark

At the end of April the joint service will take place at St Cuthbert's, and the location will alternate each month following that. This proposal is currently awaiting Presbytery approval.

There will also be opportunities to come together as part of the Easter worship programme, which will involve ecumenical partners as usual too. More information on this to follow in the usual church communications.

Union Progress

Now that both charges are vacant, with Rev Dr Frazer having retired from Greyfriars in 2023 and Rev Dr Sutton taking up his new post, the two Kirk Sessions will start to work together to develop a parish profile in preparation for calling a new minister to the united charge.

To date, the working group has continued to meet monthly and some practical aspects of union have been worked through and agreed or proposed to the Kirk Sessions for discussion as appropriate. These include:

- As reported in the Oct 2024 newsletter, the united church will be named “Greyfriars St Cuthbert’s”
- The united Kirk Session will delegate aspects of daily church management to a finance group, and aspects of church life will be coordinated by a congregation life group.
- Representatives of both churches have been appointed by the two Kirk Sessions to work together to determine the best location for the manse of the united charge.
- A plan is to be drawn up on the governance, finance and sustainability of the two churches going forward.

The assessors appointed by the deployment committee of Edinburgh and West Lothian Presbytery to support Greyfriars and St Cuthbert’s as they work toward union attended the most recent Kirk Sessions at each of the churches in January. The expectation is that the union will take place in 2025. With regard to the process, the working group has drafted a basis of union document, which has been reviewed by the two Kirk Sessions. The two Kirk Sessions are holding a joint meeting on 11 March to consider the next steps for progress, now that the two charges are vacant. The basis of union document will need to be reviewed by Presbytery, and once it is in satisfactory shape this will be put before the two Kirk Sessions for approval and then the two congregations so that a vote can take place on whether the two churches are to unite (or not).

Prior to that vote, the Kirk Sessions are expected to meet again, to work through some of the more detailed aspects of union: this will include worship patterns (where and when), united vision and missional aims and the model for the united Kirk Session. The working group will also organise a joint event at which both congregations will have the opportunity to find out more about union plans, ask questions, raise concerns and get involved to help work out the various aspects of coming together as a united congregation. More details on this to follow, meantime please do get in touch with a member of the working group if you’d like to ask any questions or discuss anything sooner.

St Cuthbert’s representatives – Christine McGuinness (Co- Chair), and Graham Maclagan, John Kirk, James McLean, Jeannette Barton, Scott Turnbull.

Greyfriars representatives – Gillian Couper (Co-Chair), Catherine Alexander, Anne Bradbury, Maggie Cormack, Jo Elliot, Jamie Sutherland.

Get in touch! Christine or Gillian can be contacted through the church offices: office@stcuthberts-edinburgh.uk or telephone 0131 229 1142; contact@greyfriarskirk.com or telephone 0131 225 1900. All thoughts welcome.