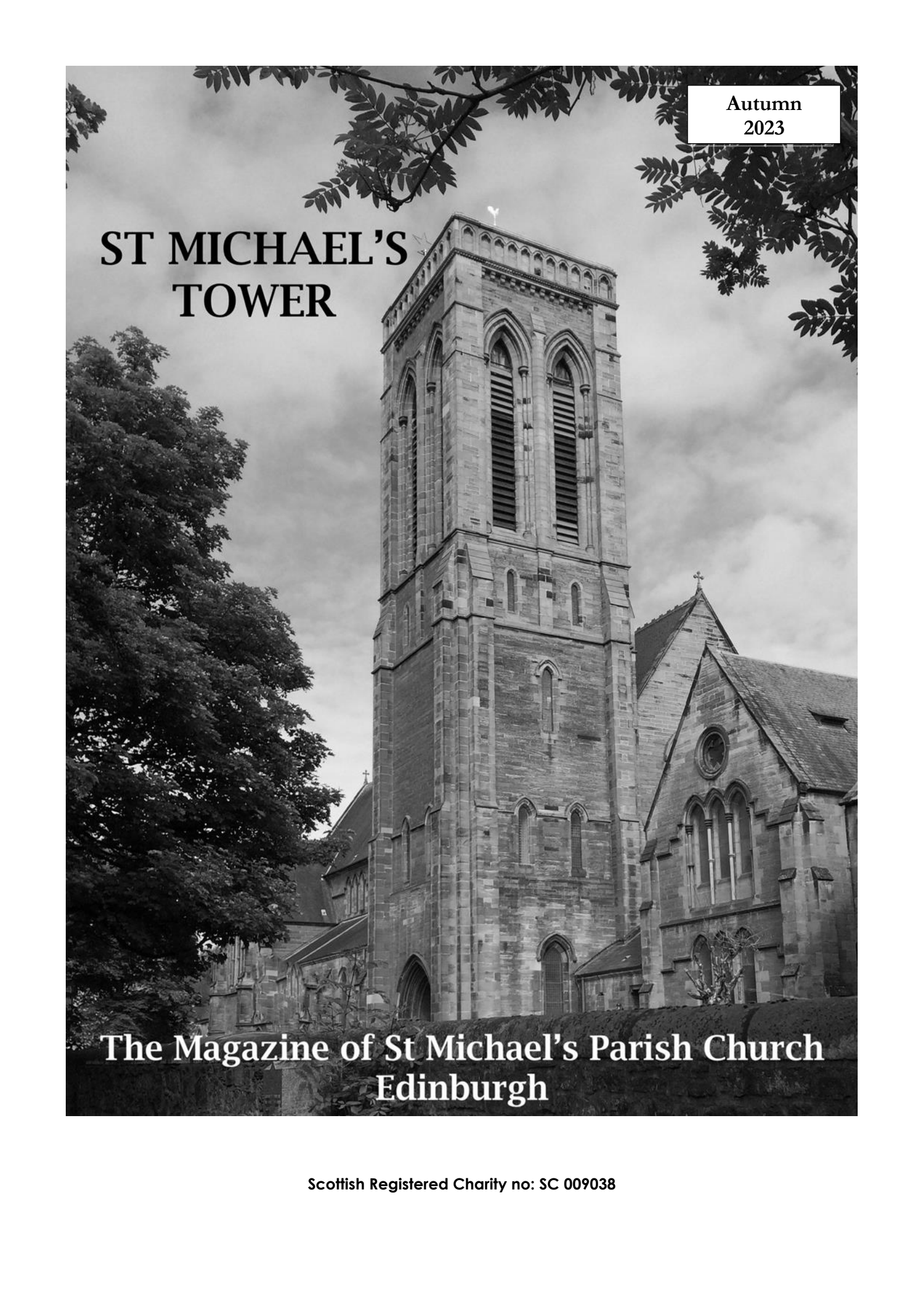




Autumn
2023

ST MICHAEL'S TOWER

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Edinburgh

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Greeting from the Manse

Dear Members and Friends of St Michael's,

We read in the Old Testament, in the book of Exodus 3:16:

'You shall observe the festival of harvest, of the first fruits of your labour, of what you sow in the field. You shall observe the festival of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labour.'

After a rather wet summer for us, but a burning one in countries south, we can and must be thankful for enough water and fruitfulness of our fields, gardens and orchards. Thank God for the harvest!

When we watch, hear or read the news - filling our heads with plenty of murder and mayhem, disasters of war and with climate change looming large - we could become utterly depressed. Yet it is not all there is. Thank God for the harvest!

In spite of troubles in our lives (health or personal), rising living costs or our age challenging us to adapt the way we live - compared with millions in other parts of the world we are still the lucky ones who have food to eat,

homes within which to shelter and family and friends to support us. Thank God for the harvest!

For harvest does not only come in the form of fruit or vegetable, or even natural resources. Harvest comes also from the way we have tended and cared for the growing of children or the care for neighbours and friends.

Thank God then for the harvest of inventions and innovations solving problems which arise. Thank God for the harvest of diligent care and thoughtful word and action, which help grow a caring community, making friends out of strangers.

Thank God for the harvest, the fruit of your labour and be glad. You are blessed.

So I am looking forward to seeing you at our harvest service on 8 October. And there are many other events planned this Autumn. We hope you will join us for them and encourage your friends and families to join in as well.

And do get in touch if you would like a chat or have a concern.

God bless you and yours.

Andrea, Your minister at St Michael's Church

Presbytery Mission Plan – Update

One consequence of peace and prosperity in our part of the world as well as the social democracy we are living in is that the church, as an institution, has been able to give up a lot of its functions of education and poor relief, psychological support and community building. People have many options nowadays to find help and friendship, entertainment and fellowship.

As a result there are now too many church buildings and smaller and smaller congregations having to run them. Fewer young people going to church also means fewer people stepping forward to train as ministers and, increasingly, our income will be affected.

The Church of Scotland is thus in the process of implementing Presbytery Plans all over the land. For St Michael's this means coming together with three other congregations in a union. The whole area of Barclay Viewforth,

Craiglockhart, Polwarth and St Michael's will be served in future by two ministers.

The ministers and two elders from each of the four congregations shall meet this autumn as an 'Implementation Team' to begin drafting a 'Basis of Union' and gather proposals about a number of other issues for which decisions need to be made – for example a future name and, of course, which of the four buildings to keep.

A report will be written and submitted to the four sessions and to the supervising committee at 121 George Street for approval. The congregations' agreement shall also need to be sought as well as that of Presbytery.

In the meantime we encourage all members and friends of our churches to take part in joint activities to help us get to know each other at, for example, the Four Churches Picnic/BBQ in St Michael's on 27 August.

Future Pulpit Swaps

The ministers have organised pulpit swaps to allow you to get to know them all. Here are the next dates for St Michael's:

22 October	Gordon Kennedy
5 November	Fiona Kennedy, Locum at Polwarth
10 or 17 December	David Clarkson

It's September

Edgar A Guest 1881 - 1959

*It's September, and the orchards are afire with red and gold,
And the nights with dew are heavy, and the morning's sharp with cold;
Now the garden's at its gayest with the salvia blazing red
And the good old-fashioned asters laughing at us from their bed;
Once again in shoes and stockings are the children's little feet,
And the dog now does his snoozing on the bright side of the street.*

*It's September, and the cornstalks are as high as they will go,
And the red cheeks of the apples everywhere begin to show;
Now the supper's scarcely over ere the darkness settles down
And the moon looms big and yellow at the edges of the town;
Oh, it's good to see the children, when their little prayers are said,
Duck beneath the patchwork covers when they tumble into bed.*

*It's September, and a calmness and a sweetness seem to fall
Over everything that's living, just as though it hears the call
Of Old Winter, trudging slowly, with his pack of ice and snow,
In the distance over yonder, and it somehow seems as though
Every tiny little blossom wants to look its very best
When the frost shall bite its petals and it droops away to rest.*

*It's September! It's the fullness and the ripeness of the year;
All the work of earth is finished, or the final tasks are near,
But there is no doleful wailing; every living thing that grows,
For the end that is approaching wears the finest garb it knows.
And I pray that I may proudly hold my head up high and smile
When I come to my September in the golden afterwhile.*

Kirk Session News

Since 1 January this year the Kirk Session has been operating under the Unitary Constitution – I'm sure you haven't noticed much difference, but basically we no longer have a Congregational Board but four sub-committees reporting to the Kirk Session with the following remits:

Worship and Teaching

- co-operating in shaping worship with the minister, discuss and plan Christian learning opportunities (for example bible studies, training courses, confirmation classes), plan special services, worship and Christian education for young people and deal with the recording and uploading of worship on social media platforms.

Pastoral Committee

- overseeing visiting or contact with household or sick members of the congregation, supporting the bereaved, liaising with the minister for special visits, organise training for pastoral visitors, encourage members to request support or visits, to deal with staffing issues when need arises and support the Safeguarding Officer and the Safeguarding Team when need arises.

Fabric and Finance Committee

- Care for the fabric of the church building, halls and the manse, investigate and organise repairs of the fabric, explore and suggest developments of the buildings, keep the property register up to date and submit to Presbytery, support the treasurer, ensure the preparation of the annual accounts, ensure the administration of giving under Gift Aid and make the necessary claims.

Outreach Committee

- To plan and organise events for fellowship and community interaction (for example coffee mornings, fairs, gardening, Burns Supper, annual outings), respond to needs in the parish (for example supporting parents or people living with dementia), liaise with the Eco Officer (Pamela Couper) and support her in caring for the planet, promote work of chosen charities (for example Fairtrade, Christian Aid, Fresh Start, Amnesty International, HIV/AIDS) at all times, publicise the committee's work by informing those responsible for posters, social media platforms and website.

Membership of any of these committees is not restricted to Elders and if you have a talent to offer or an interest in any of these subjects then speak to me, Douglas Bannatyne, Session Clerk.

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms.

1 Peter 4: 10-11

Submitted by Douglas Bannatyne

Four Congregations Implementation Team

Our four congregations, Barclay Viewforth, Craiglockhart, Polwarth, St Michael's, are journeying together towards becoming one united congregation. To take this journey forward our four Kirk Sessions have appointed an Implementation Team.

The members of the team are:

Barclay Viewforth: David Clarkson, Elaine Coull, John Ritchie.

Craiglockhart: Jane Chidwick, Gordon Kennedy, Gill Robinson.

Polwarth: Margaret Anderson, Maureen Bowman, Karen Campbell (Interim Moderator)

St Michael's: Douglas Bannatyne, Judith Merten, Andrea Price
OLM: Fiona Kennedy

The role of this team is not to make decisions but to gather information and prepare reports which will be discussed and decided upon by each Kirk Session.

This process of decision-making by our Kirk Sessions will produce a Basis of Union and a Basis of Team Ministry for our congregations which will be presented to the congregations and voted on at congregational meetings.

The first meeting of the Implementation Team was on Monday 21 August. The Team is committed to keeping you, the members of our congregations and parishes, well informed about the process as we work through the coming months together. This first note is to let you know of the work of the Team. The Team has agreed a busy programme of meetings and already has a long list of important items to be worked on.

The work of this Implementation Team depends upon your prayerful support. Please do regularly pray for the Team and the team members.

Please join us at our monthly Prayer Times, 7.30pm on the first Wednesday of each month at Barclay Viewforth.

By Gordon Kennedy

Four Churches Joint Events

Representatives from each of the churches in our group have been meeting to plan some joint events for over the next few months.

Picnic/BBQ in St Michael's Garden – Sunday 27 August at 12.30pm

Fun afternoon get together with food, games, quizzes, treasure hunt and Trips up the Tower (weather permitting).

This will take place in the halls if it's raining

Beetle Drive – Saturday 18 November 2023 at Barclay Viewforth

Burns Supper – Saturday 27 January 2024 at 7pm at Craiglockhart

Family Quiz – Saturday 11 May 2024 at Polwarth

Faith and Food

These are bible study and discussion evenings hosted by each church in our group. The theme is – **The Five Marks of Mission**.

Food at these events will be a light supper, provided by the hosting congregation and are planned for:

Sunday 29 October 2023 – Polwarth – 6.30 to 8pm

Sunday 25 February 2024 – Barclay Viewforth – 6.30 to 8pm

Sunday 28 April 2024 – St Michael's – 6.30 to 8pm

Sunday 23 June 2024 – Craiglockhart 6.30 to 8pm

By Judith Merten

Monthly Wednesday Meetings in our Churches

1st Wednesday Prayer Meeting @ Barclay Viewforth at 7.30pm

2nd Wednesday 8 week Course on Prayer @ Polwarth
(afternoons)

3rd Wednesday Café Church @ Craiglockhart at 7.30pm

4th/5th Wednesday Time Out Service @ St Michael's at 7.30pm

Doors Open Day

Saturday 23 September

10 am to 4pm

Together with many other places in Edinburgh we have signed up to open our doors to the public to have a look at our building on Saturday 23 September between 10am and 4pm. There will be information available in a self-guided tour giving a short history of the building. This will also include information on several interesting features within the sanctuary, for example the stained glass windows, the organ and the pulpit and lecturn art work.

Volunteers shall be available throughout the day to offer further information as required. There will be an opportunity for children to do a Treasure hunt and make a paper stained glass window, which they can take away. Tea, coffee and home-baking will be available to purchase in

the Lower Hall. Come along with your friends, explore some of the history and show off our Church.

Songs of Praise, Sunday 24 September

From Sunday 3 September there will be a flipchart at the back of the Church asking you to list your nominations for favourite hymns.

On Sunday 24 September 2023 we shall include as many of your nominations as possible in a Songs of Praise service. So come along and write your favourite down. If someone has already nominated the hymn then add a tick beside it. It will be interesting to see which hymns are the most popular.

Missional Listening Workshop, Saturday 30 September from 10am to 3.30pm

When St Michael's opened its doors in 1883 the congregation numbered over 800 people. And soon the numbers swelled so that in 1894 the roll counted 1488 people. In contrast last year our roll numbered about 250 people. What a change in 140 years.

Life has changed a lot since the beginning of St Michael's. Most people live more comfortable lives. Our time has so many activities to offer young and old by many different organisations and businesses.

But for all that are we happier than people in former times? When you hear about the many in crisis with mental health problems and how many are searching for wellbeing and peace within themselves, doubts arise as to whether all is entirely well in our modern world.

Christian faith still has a lot to offer people by way of guidance and comfort if only people would explore it. Yet many people think we teach fairy tales rather than tried and tested wisdom from the centuries of God's blessings upon this world.

As numbers are steadily declining in most parishes around the land we need to find ways of reaching new people. The last thing Jesus said to his friends before he ascended to heaven – at the very end of the gospel of Matthew is this:

(Matthew 28: 18-20)

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

Go therefore and make disciples ... How can we do this in our time when people do not come to church anymore and many think quite negatively about us?

This is why we are all invited to come on **Saturday 30 September 2023** from 10am to 3.30pm to Craiglockhart Church and spend time with others to explore this question. How can we reach new people, how can we serve their needs, how can we do '**missional listening**'? Dianne McWilliams from the Cinnamon Network will lead us in our conversations.

This meeting is a must for elders but also important for anyone who loves their church and congregation and wants it to thrive in the future. So please make time to come and contribute your thoughts.

St Michael's Film Club 2023/24

The Film Club returns for another year on **Sunday 1 October** with a broad selection of exciting films, some of which you will know and some which will be new to most of you. As usual, the Film Club meets at 7pm in the hall on the first Sunday of the month between October and May. The casual, relaxed atmosphere provides the opportunity for some chat after the film to discuss if you enjoyed the film and any key issues that it may have raised. There is no pressure if you just want to listen and it often makes you look at the film in a new way. The selection this year includes two very recent films that were in the cinema this year, along with some award winners: not to forget a 1950s classic filmed in Applecross on similar lines to 'Whisky Galore'. Most importantly there is another good selection of films this year and everyone is welcome. Look forward to seeing you there.

By Jamie Baxter

All the films will commence at 7pm

Sunday 1 October 2023	The Illusionist (2010, UK)
Sunday 5 November 2023	The Keeper (2018, UK)
Sunday 3 December 2023	Laxdale Hall (1953, UK)
Sunday 7 January 2024	Aftersun (2022, UK)
Sunday 4 February 2024	A Good Person (2023, USA)
Sunday 3 March 2024	Keeping Mum (2005, UK)
Sunday 7 April 2024	The Unlikely Pilgrimage of Harold Fry (2023, UK)
Sunday 12 May 2024	Local Hero (1983, UK)

Here's a bit of background information about the first two movies to be shown:

The Illusionist (2010, France, UK)

The French film director Sylvain Chomet brought his eccentric animation movie 'The Triplets of Belleville' to Edinburgh's Film Festival. The Festival audience loved the movie and he fell in love with Edinburgh's light and skyline, deciding to base his next project in the city. He had the rights to an unproduced script written by Jaques Tati, creator of the famously silent comic observer, Monsieur Hulot.

The story concerns a lonely and elderly stage magician struggling with the ending of Music Hall being killed off by the rise in pop music in the 60's. On his travels he works at a private party on a Scottish island and meets a young woman who believes he has real magical powers. She follows him to Edinburgh where the 'father/daughter' relationship develops.

The outstanding hand-drawn animation was mainly created in the city by Django Films, an ambitious project intended to help create a Scottish animation studio which, sadly, came to nought. However the film is their legacy, made with art that might just inspire you to walk the streets and climb the hills of our beautiful city. And maybe give some thought to lost relationships – another theme of the movie.

Screening on 1 October at 7pm.

The Keeper (2018 Germany, UK)

Bert Trautmann's name may not mean much in the world nowadays – or even in the football world. Remembered most for his heroic goalkeeping (with a broken neck as it turned out) for Manchester City, crucial to them winning the FA Cup in 1956, his story is a remarkable one before and after that famous event.

While serving as a Nazi paratrooper in the German Army in WWII, including in Ukraine, Trautmann was captured and deported as a POW to a camp in Lancashire.

His life changed and developed from there and it's quite a tale with its historic context showing resonance with contemporary issues.

Starring David Krista and Freya Mavor it is screened on 5 November

By Derek Wilson

Winter Coffee

Our Winter Coffee Mornings shall be restarting on the first Saturday of the month between 10.30 and Noon in the Church Hall.

Dates for the upcoming quarter are:

Saturday 7 October 2023

Saturday 4 November 2023

Saturday 2 December 2023

All are welcome.

Next Communion

The next Communion Service is scheduled for **Sunday 29 October 2023.**

Remembrance Sunday Service

This shall take place on **Sunday 12 November 2023.** The service will commence at 10.50 am that day and the congregation is invited to join the Minister in laying a wreath at the War Memorial in North Merchiston Cemetery at 12.15.

Prisoners' Week Service

The service shall be held on **Sunday 19 November 2023**.

In the Letter to the Hebrews 13:3 we read:

'Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them.'

People who have made bad choices and have to serve a prison sentence as punishment are easily forgotten. What led them to do the things they did? We will remember them, their families and victims during this service.

Bereavement Service

We shall hold our annual Bereavement Service on **Sunday 19 November** at 3pm.

This special afternoon service is planned for all those who are grieving the loss of a loved person. Those who involved St Michael's in funeral arrangements over the last year shall receive an invitation by post or email. The names of those who have died during the last year will be read out.

But everyone is welcome. Time may dull the pain of parting, but there is no knowing how long it will take and when grief becomes more bearable for someone.

And most important of all is to remember that love, the love we shared and still live by, will never die.

140 Years of St Michael's

On 2 December 2023 St Michael's Church will celebrate its 140th Anniversary. On that day Rev George Wilson dedicated the new church building in its first Sunday service.

We shall mark this anniversary on Saturday 2 December with an **Anniversary Coffee Morning** and, on Sunday 3 December, with a **Service of Celebration** followed by a **Pot Luck Lunch**. Everyone coming is invited to bring a dish or some food to share.

We are also hoping to prepare an **Exhibition of 140 Years** of faith and fun shared at St Michael's Church. If you have any memories or memorabilia you would like to share speak to the minister or one of the elders.

St Michael's Friendship Club

Did you see the brochure for the Edinburgh Festival this year? The heading was, 'Where do we go from here?' My answer would be that we went to Concerts, Theatres, Exhibitions, Films and Dance events.

During the Festival buses are crowded and traffic jams add to the problems of getting to venues on time, but Edinburgh is vibrant and overflowing with talent when it hosts the Edinburgh International Festival.

The London Proms at the Albert Hall were hailed as 'the Greatest Musical Festival in the UK'. I would dispute that assertion. Edinburgh audiences are much more enlightened, they don't clap between Movements of Symphonies and don't clap and cheer for second rate performers. Of course, as a citizen of Edinburgh, I am biased!

We have an abundance of talented musicians and Artists in Scotland. I hope that the Festival Director, Nicola Benedetti doesn't hang up her violin bow, I would miss the soaring lyricism of her playing. However, new young talent continues to arrive, eager to show off their virtuosity.

St Michael's has played its part in showcasing bright young stars of the future and now that the Festival is over, we have managed to find talented musicians and speakers to entertain and enlighten members of the Friendship Club. We are thrilled that we have been able to persuade Sheila Sapcota, the very talented violinist we heard last year to appear again this year. She hopes to bring a group of Scottish fiddlers, so that should turn out to be a fun afternoon. Sheila's brother, David, is also due to come and give an entertaining talk. He is a lively and engaging speaker and it is always interesting to hear what he has to say.

As usual we will host, 'Live Music Now', giving Artists fresh from University a chance to shine. Nikita Lukinov, who entertained us in January, is now embarking on a brilliant career. He is the youngest member of staff at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and regularly performs at venues around the world and has been heard on BBC Radio Scotland. St Michael's has played a small part in helping him along his chosen career path. I think we should be proud of our role in encouraging young Artists to blossom in the precarious world of the Performing Arts.

The very popular Juliet Wilson is preparing a talk for us. I am not sure what she will talk about but she is a brilliant scholar and her talks are always interesting and informative. Our Minister, Andrea, is going to open the new Session (on Monday 18th September) with a talk about the stained glass windows of St Michael's. Most of us take for granted the lovely surroundings of St Michael's Church. It will be good to learn the stories the windows tell.

I don't want to give too much away about all the forthcoming events because it will eliminate the element of surprise. However, I must mention that our favourite and very popular organist and pianist, Stuart Montgomery, will be entertaining us on February 12th 2024. Stuart was the first Artist I contacted. He fills the Church with devoted admirers and always gives a top class performance.

We have tried to ensure that we have a varied category of subjects to interest everyone – those with a nursing background will enjoy a talk we have scheduled on Edinburgh's Historic Hospitals. We also have a lady coming from the Sick Children's Hospital to speak about the work they do. We hope that there will be events for everyone to enjoy, along with tea, biscuits and a very warm welcome. Our 'Friendship Club Festival' kicks off on 18th September at 2pm – and where do we go from there? Come along and find out.

Submitted by Ruth Andrews, President

Fresh Start

Harvest Thanksgiving

The Harvest Thanksgiving service at St Michael's will be held on Sunday 8 October and we will, once again, be collecting goods and money for Fresh Start. In particular they are appealing for goods for The Pantry. Fresh Start have seen a significant drop in donations and yet an ever growing need for pantry donations. Due to the cost of living crisis, donations from the general public and community-based organisations have decreased. They believe that this is due to the fact that everyone is having to make cut-backs to their giving. The community food pantry is an essential lifeline and poverty/homelessness prevention service that allows families and individuals who are facing a financial struggle to meet their bills and rent while maintaining dignity and choice to shop for themselves for the items they want. The service runs from donations of food and fundraised money that they can purchase produce from. Please do help them to fill their

shelves again and donate what you can. Updated Pantry Item Request Lists can be found at the back of the Church.

As ever money and all the usual household items can be donated and will be gratefully received.

If you would like to consider leaving a gift to Fresh Start in your Will there are leaflets in the vestibule.

Many congratulations to Fresh Start who are the winners of the Community Action Award at the SCVO Scottish Charity Awards 2023. The award is for their continued work in the community, tackling the cycle of repeat homelessness and poverty across Edinburgh. This is **so** well deserved!

Good luck to everyone who is taking part in the Edinburgh Kilt Walk on the 17 September.

Thank you to everyone at St Michael's who has given so generously to Fresh Start or who have passed on the word. If you are unsure what to donate or would like us to come and collect your donations from your home then please give us a call on 0131 441 1328 or speak to us at Church.

Alasdair and Babs Webster

Youth Summer Concert Review

What joy!

The concert in July by the Strasbourg Youth Symphony Orchestra filled our church with the joy of music. For the first time in our 139 years (and a bit), a 50-person orchestra performed a varied selection of beautiful sounds.

The orchestra entered from the back of the church marching in stately manner to the chancel, playing the overture from Monteverdi's opera, *Orfeo*. In tribute to the Scottish leg of their short tour they continued with the beautiful Overture to *The Hebrides, Fingal's Cave*, by Mendelssohn. Thereafter we enjoyed a varied repertoire, ranging from Ravel and Rimsky-Korsakov to familiar music from *Aladdin* and *Phantom of the Opera*. Conductor Gustav Winkler charmingly introduced all the pieces and was very ready to highlight the soloists in every piece, as were the other members of the orchestra.

My own favourite was from the soundtrack of *The Mission* by the great Ennio Morricone: *Gabriel's Oboe*; you might remember Jeremy Irons

'playing' the piece on the bank of a river in the jungle in the film! It's a gorgeous sound played that evening by Salome Lipps.

It really was a joyous event, topped off by the exit of the orchestra at the end of the concert, marching out as they had marched in, this time to a traditional folk tune. Many thanks go to Neil for his introduction and management, to Elders for ushering duties but mostly to the marvellous Strasbourg Youth Symphony Orchestra.



Submitted by Derek Wilson

St Colm's @ St Michael's Guild

New Wine, New Wineskins

The above title is the Guild theme for 2023/2024, and will conclude our strategy of Look Forward in Faith. A new way of looking at the future of the Guild and how we do things is our 'new wine' and our hearts are the 'new wineskins'. We in the Guild here look forward to exploring this theme throughout the coming Session. Before that we can look back to attending the Big Sing during Assembly week, this, as always, did not disappoint with the singing 'lifting the roof'. It followed on from the Guild convener, Helen Eckford, presenting the Guild report to the Assembly, it was very well received and the August Assembly congratulated the Guild on all it does in the Lord's name throughout Scotland and abroad with the projects it supports. To date the amount raised for all the current Guild projects is over £290,000.

We also had a summer meeting on 31 May with Leona Thomas giving us an insight into the history of lacemaking. As always when a speaker is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about her subject it brought the craft to

light, it may be not so fashionable now but the materials and handiwork she brought were beautiful.

Our new session starts on Wednesday 13 September at 2pm when we will hear from the Vine Trust about the project we are supporting this year – Kazunzu Village of Hope. This is to help develop a multi-faceted and sustainable village on the southern side of Lake Victoria supporting vulnerable children.

At the next meeting, on 27 September, we have the pleasure of our Minister, Andrea Price, speaking to us on the new theme 'New Wine, New Wineskins'.

On Sunday 1 October Andrea will lead us in a Guild Service at 11am.

On Thursday 5 October Edinburgh Guilds Together is to hold its opening service for all guilds here in Edinburgh at St Michael's at 2pm. This will be a Communion Service with Andrea officiating.

A busy time ahead! The syllabus is being finalised and I have put dates in up to the end of this year at the foot of this report. All are welcome to Guild meetings whether guild members or just visiting - I think browsing is perhaps the modern term!

The annual fee this year for members is £14 and new members can join without paying in the first year. All are welcome whatever status.

A constant theme in the guild movement is our motto taken from Acts 27 v 23:

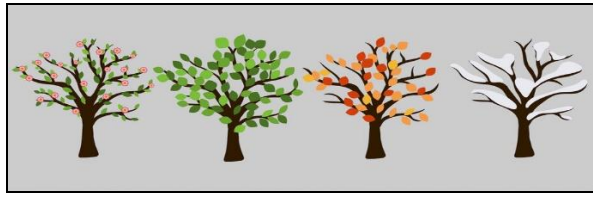
Whose we are and Whom we serve

Dates are Wednesdays at 2pm unless stated otherwise

13 September	Opening meeting Vine Trust
27 September	The Rev Andrea Price 'New Wine, New Wineskins'
Sun 1 October	Guild Service, 11am
Thurs 5 October	Edinburgh Guilds Together, St Michael's, 2pm
11 October	Topic tbc
25 October	Topic tbc
8 November	Topic tbc
22 November	Disbursement of funds
6 December	Christmas Party

Fay Anderson, Co-convener, St Colms @ St Michael's Guild

Gardening under the Tower – Chapter 8 – The Seasons



Every year – to my husband's great amusement and, I think, total disbelief – at some stage in late summer I come in from the garden and say the words: 'The switch to Autumn has happened.' There is suddenly something different about the smell of the air in the early morning, something like a sharpness in the air before the sun is fully up, and after it has gone down – not exactly a coldness but certainly a sharpness, which I can't describe in any other way. Things just **feel** different and some smell fresher.

When we were first married in the early 1970s this would happen in late August or even very early September; in the years after our children had flown the nest and I had more focused time for gardening, it had shifted to be in mid-August. To my horror, and totally unexpectedly, this year I had that feeling at the very end of July. And suddenly those beautiful, poetic words from Ecclesiastes popped into my mind:

Chapter 3:1-2

¹*To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under heaven:*

²*A time to be born and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to pluck up that which is planted.*

You will all know the passage well and, like me, you will probably also remember the song 'Turn, turn, turn' by the New Seekers which was so popular in the 1960s and 1970s and which was based on this passage from the Bible. If you want to take a journey down memory lane there is a delightful bit of the song on YouTube - accompanied by beautiful seasonal images. You can find it here: [youtube.com/watch?v=HaQkX_rXBbA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HaQkX_rXBbA) or you could Google 'Turn, turn, turn - New Seekers'.

But what has all of this got to do with gardening? Well, obviously, verse 2 speaks of planting and digging up plants whose season is over. As gardeners we are probably more aware of seasonality than many people. We know that the soil has to be at a certain temperature before we can sow seeds directly into the ground. We know that some plants are too tender to be planted out until all risk of frost is past. We know when it is the right time to prune our plants to enhance their productivity. We know that we need to plan our borders so that there is flower in them for as much of

the year as possible – and that means knowing the flowering seasons of our plants and mixing them up so that, together, they can provide colour to enrich our souls and nectar for our pollinators for the longest possible time. If we grow vegetables and fruit we know that there are times when certain creatures will feed on our plants and their produce – caterpillars and pigeons on brassicas in May/June, birds on berries and currants in July and August and greenfly on roses in June/July – meaning that we need to provide seasonal protection against such attacks.

Growing up as a child with both parents and grandparents who were competent and keen gardeners, I just assimilated knowledge about seasonal issues in the garden and, in my early adult life, I simply transferred that knowledge and applied it to my own garden. But it is no longer possible to do that. Our climate has changed – indeed is still changing – and there is no longer anything predictable about the seasons. This year we had brief moments of 18 degree temperatures in late February, but then hail in July. We've had droughts in winter and flooding in summer.

This is not the way God intended things to be. In creation he gave us a perfectly balanced system where everything was interconnected and where, for example, the right pollinator was emerging just as the flower they were adapted to service was coming into bloom.

In the era, now commonly called the Anthropocene, mankind has had a devastating effect on the natural balance in creation and this has led to the dire circumstances in which we now find ourselves. In previous 'chapters' of Gardening under the Tower, we have looked at sustainable ways in which we can tend the land we are responsible for at church and at home and sustainable ways of protecting the natural systems of creation, which we clearly never really understood.

In Ecclesiastes 3:10 the writer – the Philosopher – goes on to say this:

I know the heavy burden God has laid upon us. He has set the right time for everything; he has given us a desire to know the future, but never gives us the satisfaction of fully understanding what he does. So I realised that all we can do is to be happy, and to do the best we can while we are still alive....It is God's gift.

We have learned how to garden in a way which helps to store carbon in the soil in order to reduce the effects of climate change. We have learned not to use chemical pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers because of their destructive effect on biodiversity. We have learned how to prune at the right time and in such a way that we can support the health and productivity of our plants. We have learned to leave some wild corners in

our gardens to provide habitats that will encourage the widest possible biodiversity.

There is much we can do to reduce our personal carbon footprint in order to reduce the drivers of climate change and return to a more normal and predictable seasonality. There is also much that we can do in our gardens to make sure that they are part of the solution to climate change and biodiversity loss rather than being part of the problem. And we can do much to support others in their attempts to do the same – by buying organic and sustainable products whenever we can.

The writer of Ecclesiastes encourages us to be happy – which means living with joy and hope – and to do the best we can while we are alive. This applies to every aspect of our lives – including our gardening exploits.

Isn't this precisely what Jesus came to teach us? To live with hope in our hearts and to learn to be the best that we can be by following his example?

May God bless you and uphold you as you journey and garden through the seasons.

Submitted by Pam Martin

WHO AM I?

*I don't get embarrassed,
but my face turns red.
I never get harassed
when cross words are said.*

*When there's nothing to do
I am very blue.
When war trumpets bellow
I can turn yellow.*

*I am a high flier
My Country I serve.
I will never tire,
As you will observe.*

*My heart's all a'flutter
As I wave goodbye
to men going to battle
and hope they don't die.*

*I'll cover dead bones
and not say a word
when sobbing and moans
Scream 'WAR IS ABSURD'.*

*I am made out of cloth
Not any old rag –
Oh! Don't be a sloth,
You know I'm a flag!*

Submitted by Ruth Andrews.

Church House Chatter

I recently attended a Fringe Show where the tribute band played songs of my 'youth'. The music brought back many happy memories but was also a sharp reminder of friends who have been lost too soon – including some for whom life just became too much of a struggle. Our mental health is just as important as our physical health. One often impacts the other. Let's try to look after both - and to continue to look out for each other.

As a volunteer with Pain Concern I have just finished transcribing the latest *Airing Pain* Podcast. If you or someone you know suffers from Chronic Pain you may find their website useful: <https://painconcern.org.uk>.

Here's a suitably 'Autumnal' quote for you to digest ...

"Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant." — **Robert Louis Stevenson**

Fiona Lunn, Editor

Changes to the Church Family

Deaths: Bernard Murphy, May 2023
Leila Dunbar, August 2023

Harvest Rhyme Time

Write the rhyming word from the list below next to the word it rhymes with.

Happy Harvest!

flock
wool
cluck
neck
factor

carry
drought
cable
branch
blade
buy

reap
yield
neigh
meat
crow
fox

chop
swine
kale
cow
stake
plain

fresh
caw
seed
dig
tiller
pickle

sow
spread
barnyard
maple
farmhouse

hay _____

bull _____

grain _____

crop _____

dairy _____

feed _____

field _____

bale _____

plow _____

ox _____

millar _____

rake _____

spade _____

sickle _____

sow _____

sheep _____

sprout _____

rye _____

farmyard _____

wheat _____

cowshed _____

staple _____

truck _____

livestock _____

tractor _____

thresh _____

pig _____

ranch _____

vine _____

stable _____

straw _____

peck _____

hoe _____

henhouse _____