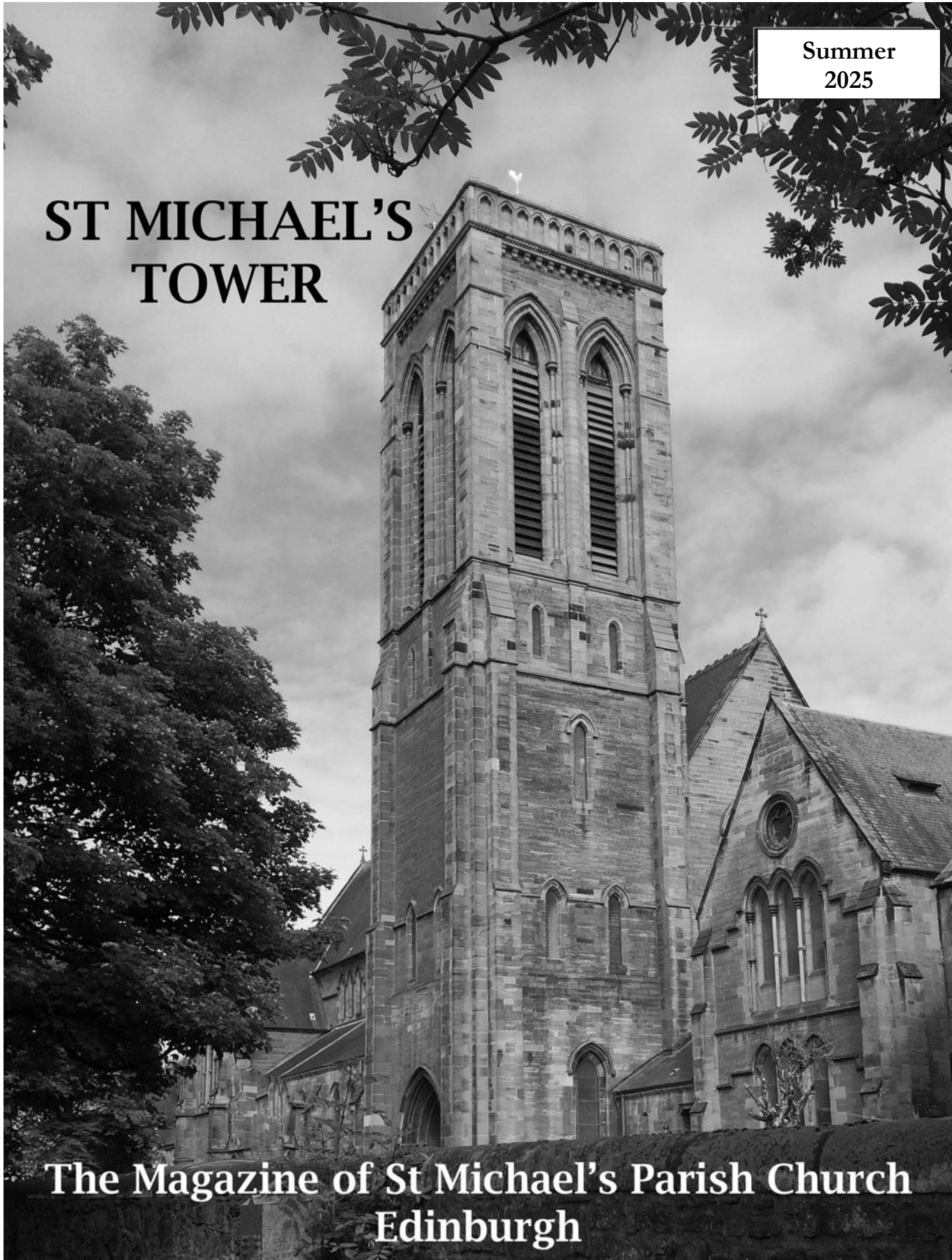




Summer
2025

ST MICHAEL'S TOWER

The Magazine of St Michael's Parish Church
Edinburgh

Scottish Registered Charity no: SC 009038

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Dear Members and Friends of St Michael's

Letter from the Manse

Dear Friends

Do you like cooking? I do and think it is applied chemistry magic. How wonderful to get fresh vegetables or a fine piece of meat, the first local asparagus or Scottish strawberries and celebrate the arrival of Summer.

But sometimes my cooking can go disastrously wrong. The family will never let me forget the time I tried to make a peanut butter chicken stew. They hated it. Or another time when I tried to make a fancy pudding and nothing worked out. I still do not know why. Wrong sequence, wrong actions, wrong ingredients? Who knows. What I do know is that the ingredients were plentiful and expensive so there was no way that I would chuck all this good food out. So what would you do? Well, it turned into a humble, if slightly rich, rice pudding and was fine.

Why am I telling you this kitchen disaster? Well, you have all been there and know what it feels like and what options one has; chuck it out – necessary if burnt! – or turn it into something else.

The church and our congregation is at such a point. Will we chuck it out or turn it into something else?

I hope you agree with me that our faith is too valuable and important to abandon and 'bin'. In spite of all our talents and skills, modern inventions and technology, our privilege of living in a 'well to do' part of the world with many possibilities, ... in spite of all this, and more, we humans still need guidance and regular reminders of what to do with this privilege and how to live well rather than just selfishly.

The prophet Micah put it like this: *Micah 6:8*

God has told you, O mortal, what is good and what
does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to
love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God

Jesus summed it up like this:

Love God and love your neighbor as yourself.

The church is there to remind us of this and to provide a platform to discuss how on earth we can go about doing this together.

So, in spite of what is happening and as long as we are 'in business' do not lose faith but seek our Lord's presence in your hearts and minds and with your congregation of St Michael's.

God bless you all this lovely summer time.

Andrea (still your Minister)

Update on Presbytery Planning

By now many of you will have heard that our congregation has voted against uniting with the congregations of Barclay Viewforth, Craiglockhart and Polwarth. The Elders of the Session stated in an indicative vote on Monday 28 April 2025 that the worship style and theological emphasis in teaching the faith of the other congregations and the two ministers retained is too different from St Michael's tradition and practice to agree to a union.

On Sunday 11 May 2025 members and adherents present at the morning service had the opportunity thereafter to vote on the future of our congregation. The results were:

10 for and 50 against the Union

8 for and 52 against the Ministers

(Rev David Clarkson and Rev Gordon Kennedy)

10 for and 50 against the Basis of Team Ministry

(how the congregations would work together)

This is in contrast to the other three congregations (Barclay Viewforth, Craiglockhart and Polwarth) who overwhelmingly voted for all three questions.

However, this leaves us and Presbytery (the regional body of the Church of Scotland in our area) at a loss as to what to do next. At our next Session Meeting on Monday 2 June, the session members shall be asked by two representatives of Presbytery's Deployment Committee what we wish to do next. I expect we will also ask them what they suggest given the parameters they have set us.

The parameters imposed upon us are:

- 1 Our building is to be sold by the end of 2026 (a presbytery decision)
- 2 We are a reviewable tenure charge and, as such, Presbytery could now end my post at any time
- 3 There is no spare ministry post in the Presbytery Mission Plan for congregations who cannot see their way forward according to the present plan

Given these boundaries the available options are few:

- 1 Speak to another grouping about joining them in union (NB: this will not save our building)
- 2 Dissolve the congregation (every member will receive their 'lines'/membership certificate and may then join another congregation of their choice; the Parish area will then be reallocated by Presbytery to other parishes)

There is no doubt that difficult discussions lie ahead for your Elders. Please, therefore, help us by coming and speaking to us, pray for us and support our activities as much as you are able. Perhaps you may be able to contribute a thought or an idea to open up a new pathway.

Thank you to the Friendship Club

When Rev Margaret Forrester was Minister of St Michael's Parish Church she had numerous funerals to conduct and became aware that there were many widows and widowers in the Parish who suffered the acute loneliness of bereavement.

What could be done about it? Not everyone was willing to come to church on Sundays or join the Womans' Guild, which is a church organisation practising worship and prayer, at their meetings. So, with the help of a trainee female deacon who was training with her in the 1980s, Margaret decided to start a friendship club.

Margaret remembers the first meeting all too well. Someone had baked a cake and made tea which was then set out in the hall along with tables and chairs.

However, so many turned up to the first meeting that someone was despatched post haste to acquire some extra packets of biscuits in the wee corner shop across the road.

And thus, 'The Friendship Club' became a well beloved group - meeting at St Michael's for many decades. Led for many years by Grace Taylor, then by Rae Lawrence and, most recently, by Ruth Andrews with Aileen Bottomley as her valiant treasurer, many ladies – and some gentlemen – experienced the friendship and care of their leaders and members in meetings or during phone calls, as well as by receiving cards and having 'happy birthday' sung to them.

A programme was set up with speakers and musicians invited to entertain the Club of an afternoon.

However, change has not stopped for The Friendship Club either. The number of people participating over recent years has dropped. Our parish area is changing its occupants – housing younger people who are out at work and not free to join us for afternoon activities.

The present leaders have come to an age to deserve retirement. With a heavy heart Ruth and Aileen have decided to call it a day and, so far, no-one has stepped forward to offer to carry on the work of The Friendship Club.

A warm and heartfelt thank you to Ruth and Aileen was given by Mr Douglas Bannantyne, the Session Clark, at the recent concert afternoon in April – starring Stuart Montgomery. The last meeting, held on 14 April 2025, was a lovely tea party with many contributions made by members.

A great Thank You to all who helped run The Friendship Club for so many years. Thank you to Margaret Forrester for starting it and to Ruth and Aileen for leading the club in the last few years.

Have a read of Ruth's lovely speech at the last meeting and the Thank you note received from one of the regular entertainers. (Both of which can be found in pages 22 to 24 of the Magazine).

Morning Coffee

Please join us in the Church Garden or the Church Chancel for morning coffee on Wednesdays during the months of June to the end of August – from 10.30 am to 12 Noon. With chat and a cup of tea we hope to make the summer friendly and lightsome for you (weather permitting) as we enjoy our summer staycation!

Choir concerts in St Michael's

On Sunday 15 June at 4pm we shall host a concert by a church choir from South Germany, the Kantorei from Stuttgart-Degerloch. Barbara Straub will conduct a repertoire of Choral music from the 17th to the 21st Century: Henry Purcell, Heinrich Schütz, Joseph Gabriel Rheinberger, Ola Gjeilo, John Rutter and more. There is no need to buy tickets, just come along and give a donation at the end for church funds.

The conductor has also been in touch to invite some singers to join them. If you are interested you would need to sign up on the sheet at the back of the Church or let the minister know – you would also need to attend the rehearsal in St Michael's on the afternoon of Saturday 14 June.

Canal Festival

On Saturday 21 June 2025 we shall, again, take part in the Canal Festival. This year our baking stall and the Teddy Bear Tombola shall be in Harrison Park West, on the lawn just in from the moored boat. We hope that you will visit us and support both us and CHAS (Children's Hospices Across Scotland) who will receive any money we make that day. CHAS shall also send some representatives to help 'man the stall' and there will be information leaflets available to explain more about their very worthwhile work.

Christian Aid – 80 Years and Going Strong

(Celebrating eight decades of fundraising, community support and tackling poverty worldwide)

This year we celebrate 80 years since the end of WW II. Looking at pictures from Gaza we may be able to imagine the destruction of many cities around Europe where battles had raged with the subsequent migration of populations, the hunger, loss and despair.

Christians in Britain and Ireland decided to put their faith to action and began to raise funds for the destitute around Europe. This was such a success in helping thousands that it was decided to form a charity – Christian Aid.

Christian Aid week began in 1957, with the first-ever fundraising total reaching £26,000. Spent fundraising from between 6 to 11 May that year, laid the foundation for what would become a vital part of Christian Aid's mission.

Over the decades Christian Aid week has adapted to changing times but its core purpose remains the same: **to mobilise the Christian community to take action in the fight against poverty.**

This year we learnt about the inspiring work of Aurelia in Guatemala. Climate Change and exploitation of resources, like water, by large companies is making life difficult for small farmers. Christian Aid is supporting a local charity to train farmers to deal with the changed conditions and enable them to cope better. Aurelia is passing this knowledge on to her neighbours and her family, thus helping them build resilience to extreme weather and to regain control of their harvests.

Thank you for all your prayers, support and donations.

A Prayer

God of Hope,

We give thanks for 80 years of Christian Aid's faithful witness, for lives transformed, communities restored, and justice pursued.

In a world of challenge, You have stirred hearts to compassion, lifting the weary, feeding the hungry, and bringing light to the darkness.

Renew our strength to walk in Your love and labour for Your kingdom.

May hope continue to rise, justice flow like a river, and peace embrace the earth.

With grateful hearts, we trust in Your faithfulness for the years ahead.

In Jesus' name,

Amen

Short Article by Kirsty Nicolls

St Michael's has the joy and privilege to offer space to another young person wondering if God is calling her to serve as a minister (Full time or as an ordained local minister), reader or deacon. Kirsty will be with us until September 2025 and we are delighted to have her.

As part of her studies she has started thinking about what 'mission' means in our modern world. So here are some of her thoughts and findings:

Talking About Mission: Faith in Conversation, Unity and Action

How Do We Share Faith in a Modern World?

Speaking about faith can be a challenge. In a society where beliefs vary and are often considered private, starting a conversation about spirituality can feel risky or intrusive. How do we share our experience of faith, especially when we do not know whether someone is open to the subject?

The answer may lie in small, sincere acts of love and presence.

Faith is not only spoken about, it is lived. When we create support structures, build relationships, and offer care, we reflect the love of God. This is a gentle way of reaching out, one that opens doors rather than forcing them.

There is growing recognition of the connection between spiritual well-being and mental health. Caring for people's spirits matters. Sometimes, mission starts with something as simple as giving someone space to talk. Much of our daily conversation stays on the surface – the weather, the football results, local chit-chat. True fellowship happens when we go deeper, sharing feelings, fears and hopes in a safe and trusting environment.

In a house group, for example, people often discover creativity, purpose and potential they did not know they had. This can be a powerful way to encounter the image of God in ourselves and others.

Church Beyond the Building

Church is not just about a building or a Sunday service. It is about community. It is about people.

Evangelism alone is not enough to help people in Scotland come to faith and stay rooted in it. For many, the culture of the Church feels distant or unfamiliar. As Liam Jerrold Fraser puts it, "The culture of Church is so alien to non-Christians that it forces them to choose between it and 'normal' culture."

This is where innovation in mission matters. Pioneer Ministers in the Church of Scotland are often based in community settings, finding ways to engage through ordinary activities. Could mission begin with offering hot drinks at a local football tournament or hosting a bake sale at a school fair? Do we need to speak explicitly about faith from the outset?

Perhaps not. Mission begins with God. The Church exists to serve that mission, not the other way round. As one theologian wrote, "It is not the church that has a mission but the mission that has a church."

Jesus entered fully into the life and culture of his people. The early apostles showed that no one culture owns the Gospel. Every culture can express and live it in ways that are true to both faith and context.

Drawing the Circle Wide

"Draw the Circle Wide" is a phrase often used in ecumenical mission. It expresses the desire to include more people, more communities, and more voices in the work of the Church.

Mission and unity are closely linked. They are not separate tasks but part of the same calling. The Church of Scotland believes that God calls us to work alongside other Christian denominations, both in Scotland and across the world. This is expressed through local partnerships, national dialogue and international relationships.

The current Presbytery planning process reflects this call to unity. Congregations are coming together to share resources and to reimagine

mission for today's world. This brings challenges but also great opportunities, encouraging us to think more widely about the people we are called to serve.

Playing to Our Strengths

Each of us has been given gifts. The question is, how can we use them in mission?

"God, please give me guidance in the best way to glorify You with this gift. I pray that through my strengths, others would be able to see You and know that I am Yours."

The psalmist writes, "I praise you, because I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14, NIV). This is a reminder that our unique personalities, skills and passions are not random. They are part of how we serve God.

Your strength might be hospitality, listening, story-telling, music, teaching, administration, encouragement, or countless other things. These are not secondary to mission; they are central to it.

Transformation or the Status Quo?

Disciples are called to transformation. By definition, they cannot settle for the status quo. They look at the world through the lens of God's promises and are inspired to act.

This raises questions. Are we trying to change others too quickly, or are we listening to what God is doing first? What would mission look like if we allowed God to lead more and ourselves less? Mission is not about pressure or persuasion, but about openness to the Spirit's guidance.

Trusting the Weaver

Sometimes, faith is most visible in the quiet moments. In the poem "The Weaver," Grant Colfax Tullar reflects on how God sees the bigger picture of our lives, even when we do not:

"The dark threads are as needful
In the weaver's skilful hand,
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned."

Mission often unfolds quietly, in the background of everyday life. It is not always dramatic or measurable. But it is real, and it is holy.

Conclusion: Mission as a Way of Living

Mission is not a programme or a strategy. It is a way of living. It is about embodying Christ in all we do, so that others might glimpse something of his love through us.

So let us talk about faith when the time is right. But let us also live it, in unity, in service, in creativity, and in trust.

Draw the circle wide. Begin where you are. Let God's mission shape our calling as Church.

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The Invisible Man and his Quiet Muslim Friend

A true story

While minister of St Michael's Church in Edinburgh I was often called upon to take a parish funeral. This was a service for a person from the parish who had lived there and had died. The service was usually well attended by family and friends and often some of the family would drift in to church for a 'taster', especially around Christmas.

Also there was still the pauper's funeral, a funeral for whom there was no relative who could pay. The undertakers agreed to an annual rota so that nobody went to the 'crem' alone. The costs were met by the undertaker concerned. One car and one floral tribute were paid for. The minister was NEVER paid. It was part of the job description!

One day I had a phone call from a Funeral Director. 'A man has died in your parish. But nobody knows him'.

This particular man was 'invisible'. He had lived in a tenement flat in what was described in the 1982 census as one of the four areas of poverty in the city. The other three areas being the 'sink' estates on the outskirts of town. He was unknown by anyone in the stair and had been reported to the police by a concerned shopkeeper, a genial Muslim who knew everyone and cared for them in a pastoral way. The 'Invisible Man' came in daily for a newspaper and twice weekly for food and household supplies. He was shy and would not talk beyond the bare civilities. Nobody knew about autism in those days. Children must have had a rough time at school.

After one day when he did not turn up, it was the shopkeeper who asked others about him. But he appeared to be unknown. He was 'invisible'. After two or three days the shopkeeper phoned the police.

A forced entry was made and the man who lived there was found to be dead. 'Was the place a complete tip?' I asked nervously. 'No,' said the undertaker. 'It was shingly clean. But it was in a time warp. It looked as it would have looked when he was brought up there as a boy. The taps were brass, as were the door knobs, polished to the soft sheen that comes from weekly if not daily cleaning. There was a hand knitted rag rug in front of the sink. It was immaculate. But in a time warp. It looked as it would have been when his family first moved in, possibly when that block was first built in the 1890s or so.'

'But there must be some clue there. He had money ... a pension ... a name?'

'Oh yes, there is a name and we now know that he worked as a demonstrator in the Physics Department at the University. Mrs Forrester, could you bring one or two elders with you? It doesn't seem right that anyone should be alone like this.'

'I'll do my best,' I said. Privately I knew I had an unexpected card up my sleeve. I had a cousin living in Edinburgh, retired now, who had been Reader in the Physics Department. Dr Alastair Rae. I phoned him up. Immediately he recognised my 'Invisible Man'. 'He was an amazing demonstrator! If I wanted an intricate experiment set up I would always ask him. He was a perfectionist. Nothing was too difficult for him and he would spend long hours getting it just right. How sad that he died alone.'

'Alastair ... could you come to the funeral? Please?'

But Alastair was far away. 'I remember now, some of the students behaved badly. Hooligans. They teased him and made fun of him. I used to get there early to stop their silly carry-on ...'

'So you will come? Please?'

'Leave it with me ... I shall come but ... Maybe some others ...'

Two of my splendid elders turned up as requested, fine singers both of them. But there were others there; eight former professors of the University of Edinburgh and some present staff, including, as I discovered afterwards, Professor Peter Higgs, Nobel Laureate. We gave the 'Invisible Man' a good send off, remembering his efficiency, his hard work, his agonizing shyness and the respect in which he was held.

Margaret Forrester

Summer Concerts in August 2025

Organised by Neil Price

As in the last few years, we are going to put on some concerts in the church during the last week of the Edinburgh International Festival. These have been a great success in the past, bringing many new people across the threshold of the building, some for the first time, and highlighting what an excellent venue it is for music.

Saturday 16 August at 4pm

Our very own Stuart Montgomery will give his usual opener, this time playing entirely organ music and featuring some new additions to his repertoire, including music by J S Bach, Vierne and the Belgian composer, Joseph Callaerts (1830-1901).

Sunday 17 August at 3.30pm

In our midst over the last few years, we have witnessed the burgeoning talent of Simon Mercieca, a pupil of Stuart Montgomery. Still only 15, he has already passed Grade 8 with Distinction in both piano and violin, but has recently been branching out into jazz. Last year his jazz band had their first outing with us and we are delighted that they will return again this year.

Monday 18 August at 7.30pm

This will be given by the Malvina Guitar Duo of Adam Brown and Stewart Kelly. Adam is from Edinburgh and studied at the Royal College of Music in London and the Juilliard in New York. He has performed all over the world. His colleague Stewart is based in Glasgow where he studied at the Royal Scottish Conservatoire.

Tuesday 19 August at 7.30pm

For the first time at St Michael's, we welcome Edinburgh's Capital Concert Band, a 50-piece band of brass, woodwind and percussion directed by their new conductor, Dean McGain-Harding. From humble beginnings in 2004, the Band has gone from strength to strength. Noted for its varied musical and entertaining programmes, the Band includes its principal trombone, Marcus Price, one of our members and son of our minister.

Wednesday 20 August at 7.30pm

We are delighted to welcome to St Michael's, Jack Oades, who commenced his appointment as Organist and Master of the Music at St Giles' Cathedral in January 2025. A music graduate of Cambridge University and a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists, as well as a

singer, choral conductor and composer, Jack is an exciting addition to the Edinburgh musical scene.

Thursday 21 August at 7.30pm

When going to press, an evening of peace and reflection at home!

Friday 22 August at 7.30pm

Local guitarist and much-travelled recitalist, Ben Kearsley, will give a concert of suites for guitar by the German composer and lutenist, Silviu Leopold Weiss, an almost exact contemporary of J S Bach and one of the most important and prolific composers of lute music in history. Ben recently recorded this music which, in our times, has unjustly fallen into obscurity.

Saturday 23 August at 7.30pm

This will be a programme given by David Mowle (piano) and Barbara Geller (violin), featuring some piano solos but mainly the wonderful Sonata for Violin and Piano by the 19th century French composer, Cesar Franck. A retired neurosurgeon and a doctor in general practice, David and Barbara are proof that it doesn't have to be your living to be an excellent musician. Last year, David gave us a memorable piano recital.

Sunday 24 August at 3.30pm

As last year, our series will end with the annual reunion of the Renaissance Group Corncrakes, the choir from St Andrews University in which Andrea and Neil Price met in 1982. The founder, the late Douglas Gifford, never let people leave the choir once they graduated – they just became bad-attending 'Corncrakes'! The joy of the choir coming together again will be demonstrated in an exuberant programme of Renaissance church music including a mass by the 16th century English composer, Christopher Tye.

These concerts are church fundraising events and, as such, there are no advance ticket sales or admission charges at the door. There will be retiring collections, and those attending are asked to donate what they would expect to pay for a ticket to a concert of this quality. In the past, this has pleasingly averaged about £10 per person. The musicians will be offered remuneration from these collections.

We look forward to seeing as many of you at the concerts as possible.

And.... **PLEASE SPREAD THE WORD!**

Neil Price

St Michael's Fundraising

In the previous Tower (Winter 2024) I reported that the Session agreed that Coffee Morning donations would go to St Michael's and the Soup Sunday donations would be for various charities. See below for an update:

Coffee Mornings For St Michael's		Soup Sundays For Others	
December 2024	£1,085	Fresh Start	See Babs Webster
January 2025	£312	Church of Scotland HIV Project	£230
February	£522	Crossreach	£87
March	£529	CHAS* See below	£127
April	£472	Medical Aid for Palestine	£270
May	-	Christian Aid ** see below	£600

In March 2025 we held the World Day of Prayer and £311 was received in donations which has been passed on.

* For our Lent Appeal this year we supported CHAS and £964 was raised during that time. Including the Soup Sunday donations we raised a fantastic £1,091.

** Christian Aid money is still coming in. The Quiz raised £37 and I have had a couple of envelopes totaling £110. I will hopefully get further envelopes as the weeks go on.

Thank you to all those who support our Coffee Mornings and our Soup Sundays.

Well done.

Moir Gray, Treasurer

World Council of Churches on Gaza

Today we need the kind of rage that ended Slavery. Millions of us in these weeks are walking in Solidarity with those who are raising our awareness of the continuing slaughter of Palestinians (over 54,000 including 15,000 children and over 10,000 women) by the State of Israel. For too long many Churches have been too quiet, but, at last, the World Council of Churches Executive Committee meeting, 12 to 16 May 2025 'unequivocally condemns the atrocities being perpetrated in Gaza by the State of Israel.'

Since Israel's destruction of Gaza began in October 2023, following the appalling attacks in Southern Israel by Hamas militants, the scale of devastation of lives and communities in Gaza has reached unspeakable levels. The deliberate targeting of civilians, widespread destruction of hospitals and other essential infrastructure, and the total blockade of humanitarian aid since 2 March 2025 represent serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights laws and can never be justified by the claim of targeting militant Hamas fighters. In addition, these actions sabotage all efforts to come to a solution for ending the occupation and bringing back Israeli hostages to their families. The actions mentioned undoubtedly constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The now, openly-stated, intention to reoccupy Gaza and permanently displace the Palestinian population, including refugees from 1948, amounts to a policy of ethnic cleansing that must be firmly denounced by all members of the international community.

The Executive Committee further denounces the complicity – whether active or passive – of states whose actions or inaction has enabled this ongoing brutality.

The World Council of Churches reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the principals of international law and justice without discrimination, in this and all contexts. We call on all governments to respect and implement the provisional measures and rulings of the International Court of Justice, and to support the vital role of the International Criminal Court in ensuring accountability for crimes committed.

The churches of the World cannot remain silent in the face of such appalling inhumanity. We call urgently for:

- + An immediate and unconditional ceasefire

- + An end to the blockade of Gaza, and to all forms of collective punishment of the population of Gaza
- + Immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access to all those in need in Gaza.

Beyond Gaza, we are concerned that the policies and actions of the Israeli authorities are posing increasingly grave threats to the Palestinian communities of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, including for the churches and Christian communities of the region, and for an end to the impunity with which the violations of the rights of Palestinians have been committed for so many years."

Allan Gordon.

'Feed my Sheep'

Margaret, taking our gospel text literally! She is one of our longest serving members and still takes a great interest in all that is happening in St Michael's even though, sadly, she can no longer join us in person to worship. On my latest visit to the Home the menagerie from Damhead Farms had brought lambs, goats, alpacas, chickens, a duck, a rabbit and a guinea pig for the residents to feed, stroke and handle. How they were enjoying themselves in the glorious sunshine.

Allan Gordon.



Photo of Margaret Brown

First Year at St Michael's

I passed St Michael's parish church countless times in my life before seeing the inside. As a teenager in the seventies I walked past it on my way to Tynecastle on match days – for a few seasons I sold Hearts programmes on the corner of Gorgie Road and Ardmillan Terrace.

I would trudge past St Michael's on the way home, usually after a disappointing performance from the home team. The 1970s were not a triumphant period for the boys in maroon.

In 1997 I moved to Shandon as a family man, with one son and a second on the way. I would pass St Michael's on the way to work, or when walking to the Diggers to meet my new Shandon chums. The Church building did not impinge much on my thoughts. I only noted that the great tower and the large sanctuary often looked a bit grim on a grey morning. It looked like a forbidding contrast to the compact Gorgie Parish Church or bucolic Polwarth.

In recent years, and during the long Covid era walks, the Church caught my eye more often. Some of the other churches had taken to displaying evangelical posters or adverts for the Alpha Course but St Michael's looked tidy, restrained and (IMHO) more dignified. Its posters were more likely to advertise musical events.

Those recitals drew me inside for the first time and the large and light-filled sanctuary seemed to be a contrast to the stony exterior of the building. It also had a wonderful acoustic – perfect for secular music or worship.

I learned more about the parish at the 2023 exhibition to mark St Michael's 140th anniversary. The old publications and log books testified to its long history at the heart of the local community and I was impressed by how vibrant and active its congregation had been over these years with its youth organisations, debating societies and musical performances.

It wasn't all in the past either. At the monthly coffee mornings I could see the members of the congregation still formed a lively and thriving fellowship.

After chatting to Andrea (the minister, Rev Andrea Price) at coffee mornings, I started attending some Sunday services. In spring last year I decided to commit to membership of the congregation and was confirmed at the service on 21st July. Andrea had suggested it would be a journey rather than a destination and so it has proved. Making the

declaration of faith that day made a strong impression on me that I had not quite anticipated. I suppose one does not expect to go through a 'rite of passage' at the age of 66.

I was also moved by how welcoming and genuinely helpful everyone was. It wasn't the first church I'd been in and not the first services I'd attended (both my parents were Church of Scotland) but it was certainly the friendliest. To give one example, the practice of having a member of the congregation (at least one) at the door to greet anyone coming in is a pleasure. I suppose the same must be done at some other churches but I don't recall noticing it anywhere else.

So it has been a fulfilling year, but my joy will be balanced with sadness when (or if) St Michael's closes. I know and understand that the church is not just a collection of buildings. I also know that church congregations do not, individually, last forever. All those early Christian communities who received St Paul's letters must have moved on at some point. The church may be permanent but its congregations, however long they last, are transitory.

Nevertheless, it will be a sad day. As I walk past St Michael's now (still on my way to the Diggers or Tynecastle) I can't help but note that one day I might walk all the way from Haymarket, along Dalry Road, up Ardmillan Terrace, along Slateford Road and past the Corn Exchange without passing a single building housing the national church. That is something that would have been unimaginable in the world in which I grew up.

Alastair Clyde.

St Michael's Friendship Club

St Michael's Friendship Club, very sadly, held its last gathering on Monday 14 April 2025 in the Church Hall.

During the meeting there was an Easter Quiz and Marion Whitelaw said a lovely poem about Friendship. Fay Anderson also recited two beautiful poems about love and Christa Black gave a stylish rendition of Lilly Marlene in an authentic German Cabaret manner. Andrea gave a valedictory speech and the Friendship Club then closed.

Ruth Andrews, the President for many years, gave the undernoted thanks.

'Good afternoon everybody. Welcome to our final Friendship Club meeting.

I have enjoyed my experience as President of the Club and I would like to thank you all for being such a great crowd of loyal friends. I especially want to thank Mr Gray for all his help with technology – he goes out of his way to be helpful to us and his assistance has been greatly appreciated. I also would like to thank Moira Gray for being such an excellent Church Treasurer and a helpful friend. We could not function as a Club if we didn't have so many helpful folk around us and I would like to include Billy Miller, who is a great asset to our Club. Every meeting he has to carry heavy tables and chairs around, open the hatch for us and sometimes we shout for him to come and open the oven door because we find it too stiff to open!

I am surrounded by folk who make life easier for me. Really, all it takes to be a President is a lot of brass neck to get up and speak in public. The really difficult job is to be responsible for the finances! Aileen has been treasurer to this Club years before I arrived on the scene. She worked diligently in the background for Irene Herd and Ray Lawrence and probably others that I never met! I am always amazed at how well she puts up with me and just quietly works like a Trojan in the background. Aileen has a birthday on the last day of this month. To carry on working at 91 years of age is a tremendous achievement. We have a cake to celebrate you Aileen and express gratitude for all you have done for the Friendship Club.

Thanks also must go to Cathy Neil for her wonderful baking and card making. Sybil Bateman also deserves a vote of thanks for her help in the kitchen and for the stamps she donated to help us to send cards to our members. We would all like to thank Andrea, our Minister, for her support and inspirational guidance.

I would also like to thank each and every one of you for trudging along in all weathers every fortnight. Thank you for your cheerful loyalty and friendship. I have made wonderful Friends here in St. Michael's and I hope you all have a good Easter and a happy year ahead. Thanks again and God bless you all.'

Ruth Andrews

From: Carol Main Live Music Now
Subject: St Michael's Friendship Club
Date: 20 March 2025 at 16:43:55 GMT
To: Ruth Andrews

Dear Ruth

I was so sad to read in your last report of the Live Music Now concert that St Michael's is closing and that there will be no more concerts there. It is especially poignant as I come to the end of my time running Live Music Now Scotland after 40 years. I shall always think of St Michael's Friendship Club with great fondness. It was one of our earliest audience groups and always so welcoming to our artists. I used to keep your slots for musicians who had recently joined, knowing that they would feel valued and gain confidence from performing at St Michael's.

You may or may not be aware that your raffle, which is legendary among our artists, inspired the song The Raffle by Anna Massie and Mairead Green and which is on one of their albums. It's on Spotify – which I don't use – and may be available elsewhere.

For now, all very best for what lies ahead and our many thanks for all your support over I don't know how many years. It's been a real pleasure to work with you, those who preceded you and all the members of the Friendship Club.

With best wishes

Carol

Aileen Bottomley, Treasurer



Photos of the Friendship Club Members on Monday 14 April 2025





Fresh Start Summer 2025

Once again many thanks to everyone for giving so generously to Fresh Start in the recent months. We have had to make quite a number of trips to the Fresh Start warehouse in Ferry Road Drive, which is just fantastic. There must have been a lot of spring cleaning going on!

A Starter Pack Success Story

Recently Fresh Start had the pleasure of collaborating with Amy, who is a dedicated Community Police Officer based in South-East Edinburgh. She has been working to break down barriers and build relationships with young people through her project.

The project uses football as a platform to engage young women and help them develop essential life skills such as teamwork, decision-making and leadership.

Amy recognised that hygiene concerns could present a significant barrier to participation. Having previously worked with Fresh Start, Amy reached out to them again to see if they could help. Of course they were delighted to provide tailor-made packs filled with towels, sanitary products, personal care items and even to make items.

By ensuring the young women had access to these items each week it helped them feel more comfortable and confident. 'I feel great' one participant said, while another said 'I've never felt so fresh!'

What great team work!

If anyone would like to leave a legacy to Fresh Start in their Will there are some leaflets on the table in the vestibule explaining how to do this.

Wishing you all a happy summer.

Alasdair and Babs Webster

Changes to the Church Family

New Adherents

Sandra Baldwin
Avreil Stapley

Deaths

May Meikle (December 2024/notified April 2025)
Charles Dodds (April 2025)
Wilma Hardie (May 2025)

Church House Chatter

I have now been working with/'wedded to' St Michael's Church for three years! Where has the time gone ... Some of you may have spotted my anniversary 'theme' from past Summer editions where I check to see what the Traditional and Modern 'wedding anniversary' gifts might be.

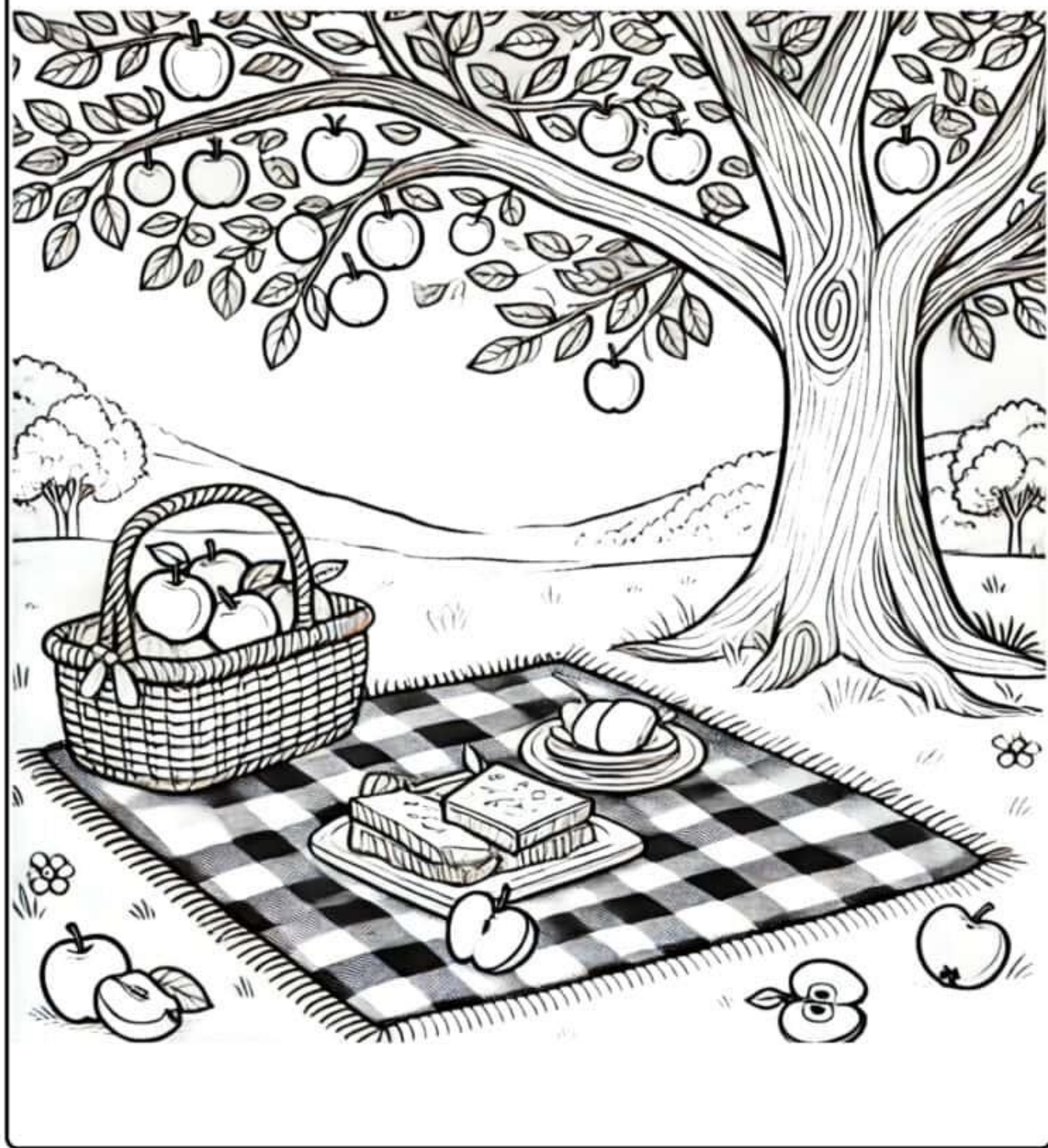
Apparently, traditionally, Year 3 is signified by **Leather** – which 'improves with age'. I am not sure that I have necessarily improved with age but hopefully I haven't deteriorated either! Like all ageing leather I suspect that some cracks are beginning to show ...

Ironically the 'modern' equivalent for the three year wedding anniversary is the shiny but fragile **Crystal/Glass** – the complete opposite of the strong and flexible leather. It did cross my mind recently, however, that this is one of the many times where having a crystal ball to see in to the future would be rather helpful.

Let's all stay strong as we continue to navigate through these uncertain times.



Fiona Lunn, Editor



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Word Search

Find these "beachy" words! Look up, down, backward, forward and diagonally.

S	B	E	A	C	H	B	A	L	L
U	P	O	L	F	P	I	L	F	S
N	N	M	C	S	K	R	N	F	H
A	B	E	A	C	H	A	B	U	E
C	M	C	A	R	C	O	C	N	L
H	H	I	S	E	A	G	U	L	L
Y	P	B	W	T	B	B	B	S	S
A	A	A	A	S	P	H	A	T	C
W	G	X	S	U	L	N	G	K	L
A	L	W	C	O	D	H	A	Q	I

BEACH
SEAGULL
SAND
BEACHBALL
FLIP FLOP
SHELLS
SUN

SWIM
BOAT
FUN

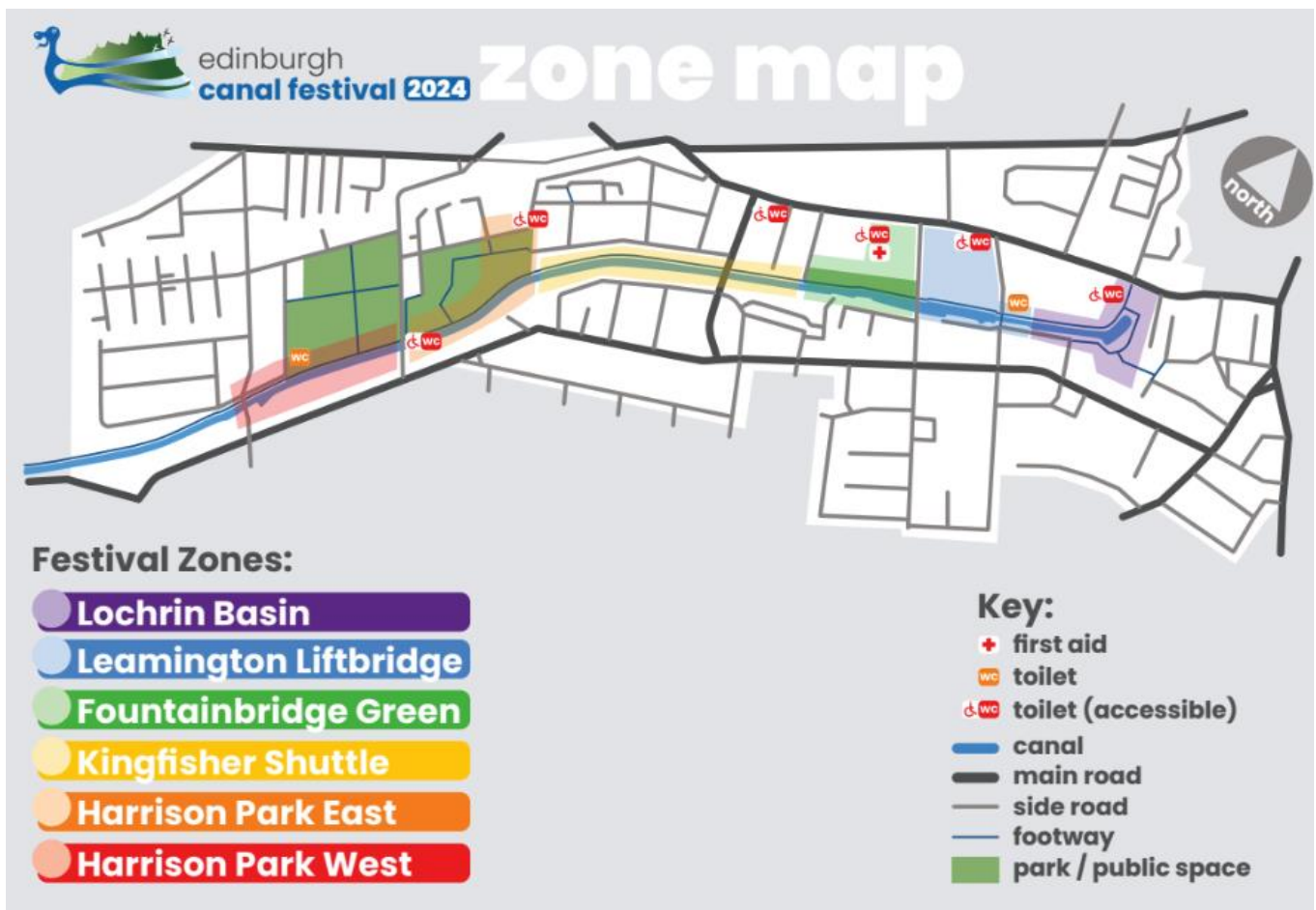


www.minutesformom.com

The date for this year is

Saturday 21st June 2025, 12-5pm

Residents and visitors are invited to explore the Union Canal between the Lochrin Basin and Harrison Park and to meet some of the great organisations that operate year round on and near to the canal. There will be loads of [free activities](#) and [entertainment](#) as you travel along the canal in the heart of Edinburgh.



This year the St Michael's Church baking stall and the Teddy Bear Tombola shall be in Harrison Park West, on the lawn just in from the moored boat.

Edinburgh Canal Festival is being organised by Fountainbridge Canalside Community Trust, c/o Scottish Canals Office, 23 Lower Gilmore Place, Edinburgh EH3

9NY www.fcct.scot

Charity Reg. No: SC035342 Company Reg. No: 265866

St Michael's Parish Church



**Wednesday Coffee
Mornings
4 June to 27 AUGUST
10.30AM to 12
ALL WELCOME**

Scottish charity number 009038