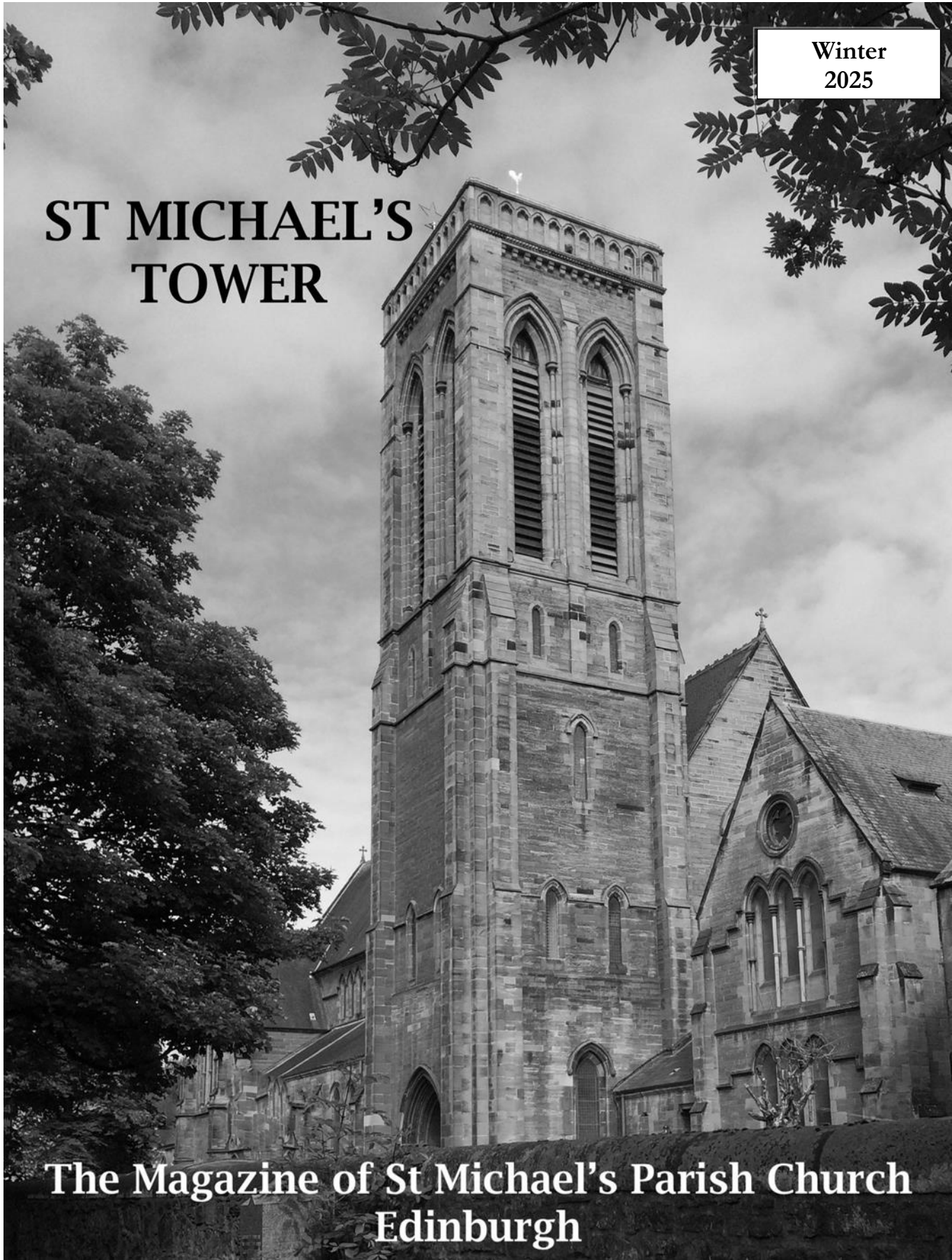




Winter
2025

ST MICHAEL'S TOWER

The Magazine of St Michael's Parish Church
Edinburgh

Scottish Registered Charity no: SC 009038

Contact details

Minister:	Rev. Andrea Price Hampton Cottage, Battery Road, North Queensferry KY11 1JZ Tel: 07763 956178 E-mail: APrice@churchofscotland.org.uk
Session Clerk	Mr Douglas Bannatyne, 6/6 Appin Terrace, EH14 1NN Tel: 444 2935 E-mail: douglasbannatyne@msn.com
Chair to the Board	Rev. Andrea Price Contact details as above E-mail: APrice@churchofscotland.org.uk
Website Administrator	Mr Michael Bareford Tel: 07469810559
Treasurer	Mrs Moira Gray, 54 Stevenson Avenue, EH11 2SN Tel: 337 9028 E-mail: moira_gray@blueyonder.co.uk
Safeguarding Officer	Miss Moira Miller
Cradle Roll Elder	Mrs Babs Webster, 322 Oxbgangs Rd North, EH13 9NE Tel: 441 1328 E-mail: babs.webster@hotmail.co.uk
Organist	Mr Stuart Montgomery, 2 Henderson Row, EH3 5DS Tel: 556 2092 or 07713606117 E-mail: stuart.montgomery3@btopenworld.com
Fabric Convenor	Mr Bill Bremner, 104 Balgreen Road, EH12 5UB
Gift Aid Treasurer Traidcraft	Tel: 337 7048 E-mail: bill.bremner@blueyonder.co.uk
Admin Assistant/ Tower Editor	Fiona Lunn, Church Office. Tel: 478 9675 E-mail: office@stmichaels-kirk.co.uk



Dear Members and Friends of St Michael's

Letter from the Minister

Dear Friends

The daylight hours get shorter every day at this time of year. We have to switch on the lights earlier and earlier and, if the clouds cover the sky, it can be 'right gloomy'!

Then when we switch on the news on TV or radio or read the papers the gloom seems to intensify. You have to look hard for the good news stories.

World experts, campaigners and politicians gathered recently in Belem, in Brazil, to discuss Climate Change and what can be done about it. The head of the United Nations said that it is almost certain that the earth will warm more than 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.

In 2015, in Paris, 200 countries signed up to keep to 1.5C and well below 2C as this would have terrible consequences for sea level rise, extinction of species and food security for many due to extreme heat.

Sadly only one third of the 200 countries have sent updated plans of how they aim to cut their emissions before the conference. Donald Trump is withdrawing from the process entirely because he still does not believe it. Trump thinks climate change is a con. I wish it was!

There was a time in my youth when the world was seriously worried about the world tearing itself apart in a nuclear world war. Tenacious diplomacy and common sense ensured that this was avoided.

I hope and pray that the biblical descriptions of the apocalypse we find in the writing of the Old Testament prophets or in the book of Revelations will not now become a reality for the whole world due to climate change.

Many times humanity has inflicted utter horror and destruction on land and all of creation – think of Israel and Gaza or scenes in Ukraine, the thousands of refugees in Africa driven from home because of civil wars. All this can leave us feeling utterly helpless and desolate.

We are entering the season of Advent, four weeks before Christmas. This is a time when, in growing darkness, we light one more candle every Sunday in church on the Advent crown until we light the central candle and celebrate the coming of God's greatest messenger – Jesus Christ, his son – as the light of the world.

A vain hope and little to cheer us? A Jewish proverb says; 'one little candle can drive away a whole lot of darkness.' God calls us to do just that. Let your light shine and let it be lit by the faith, the trust and hope in our creative and creating God.

Advent is the beginning of a new church year and so we start in the darkness, God's people oppressed and depressed. Into this reality God entered himself in the man Jesus of Nazareth, who did not come in power or might but in the smallest and humblest way, the child of refugee parents, who would grow to lead and guide people to trust and hope in God, the god of love, and change their way of living as a result.

So light your candle. Maybe even adopt the German tradition of lighting one more candle every Sunday at home before Christmas (starting on 30 November this year, 1 Advent) and then light your Christmas Tree on Christmas Eve, joyfully remembering that God did not stay far from us but

entered this world, flesh from flesh but also Spirit from God's spirit to bring joy into a dark world.

Bless you all this Christmas.

Andrea

Update on Presbytery Planning

Following the vote in May, and further discussions with the Deployment Representatives, we took the Summer months to consider what we considered best for the family and congregation of St Michael's.

At the end of August we had a Session Meeting and, for the first time in a long time, there was nothing on our agenda about unions and re-adjustments.

In October, Andrea and a few Elders reconnected with our representatives, Robert Armour and Pauline Weibye, from Presbytery and received an update about changes and issues the other congregations in our original grouping are currently experiencing. Together we discussed some possibilities for the future. Robert and Pauline will take the ideas from our meeting to the full Deployment Committee and we await guidance from them before the next Presbytery meeting in December.

Continue to prayerfully consider the best direction we must take for the continuation of our faithful congregation.

In our earlier planning many got to know Rev Gordon Kennedy. We wish him well in his appointment as Moderator Designate of the General Assembly – 2026/27.

Douglas Bannantyne

St Michael's Matters, Natters and Chatters

Do you like cake? Do you like a good laugh? Do you like a good natter?

Then this group is the perfect group for you! We meet every alternate Wednesday afternoon from 2pm to 3.30pm. We have two dates left before Christmas – 26 November (craft stars) and 10 December (Santa

Drive & Quiz). We shall then start back up again in January. We have a mix of men and women of all ages.

So far we have done something different each week including Bingo, Beetle Drive, Dominoes, Snakes & Ladders, Quiz and a short talk. Any suggestions for future gatherings are welcome.

All of our cakes are donated and there is no fee to join this group. Donations are, however, welcomed to cover the costs of tea, coffee and milk.

We would really love you to join us and we guarantee a warm welcome and fabulous cakes!

Sheila Bremner

Gifts for Prisoners' Children

In the last few years we have supported the families of prisoners by collecting presents for their children. For why should the children be punished for the sins of their parent?

A now retired prison officer, Colin O'Flaherty, and his wife are organising the collection of gifts from a number of congregations and he sent this letter:

'I have once again asked for and been given permission by the Governor of HM Prison Edinburgh to organise the 2025 gift collection.

This is the 40th time that the good people of Edinburgh and the Lothians have been asked to support the gift collection begun by the prison chaplain, the Rev John Murie, in 1985.

Personally, I think it is a wonderful achievement that so many parishes have supported the gift collection for 40 years.

So, once again, I am looking for the good people of St Michael's Parish to support this year's gift collection.

*Best wishes
Colin O'Flaherty'*

Our gifts will be collected under the Christmas Tree in St Michael's from 30 November 2025, which is the 1 Advent service. Colin and his wife will pick up the gifts on Wednesday 17 December and take them to Saughton Prison, where the folk of Barnardos, who run the Visitor Centre there, shall make sure the gifts reach the right children – they know best their ages and stages.

Wherever possible prisoners will be allowed to give the gifts to their children themselves.

Please do **not** wrap the gifts. And a huge thank you, in anticipation, for your generosity.

Advent and Christmas Services



1 Advent	Sunday 30 November at 11am
2 Advent	Sunday 7 December at 11am
Carol Service	Friday 12 December at 7pm
3 Advent	Sunday 14 December at 11am
4 Advent	Sunday 21 December at 11am
Watchnight Service	Wednesday 24 December at 11.30pm
Christmas Day Communion	Thursday 25 December at 11am

Flying High - Reflections of a Flexwing Microlight Pilot

Someone asked me the other day 'Why do you fly a Microlight?' A simple question on the face of it, but with a much more complex and difficult answer!

I could say that it is to satisfy my thwarted ambition to become a Fast Jet Pilot with the RAF, after my initial RAF Aircrew Selection was rescinded over 50 years ago, following an unfortunate motorbike accident in 1970, but that's not the whole story.

I did think about learning to fly privately several times over the intervening years, but work and family responsibilities always came first.

Then my younger brother told me (back in 2006) that he had just got his Private Pilot's Licence allowing him to fly Microlights. He took me up for a flight over Glen Wyvis in the back of his 2-seater open-cockpit microlight aircraft on a freezing cold day in January 2007, gave me a shot of the controls from the back seat – and I was hooked.

I did my training locally at East Fortune in 2008 and qualified as a Private Pilot with a Microlight Rating in May that year, having by then bought myself a brand new P&M Quik GT450 2 seater open-cockpit flexwing microlight – Registration G-TPAL (which stands for Peter and Liz – though Liz isn't particularly keen on flying, but has been with me a few times, firstly to Glenrothes for 'coffee and cake' and back over Edinburgh Airport, then later to Inch near Aberdeen, to Bute a few times for lunch and our latest, and longest trip together, out to the west coast island of Gigha for a weekend visit – though she drew the line at camping and only agreed to go when I booked a B&B).

I myself still fly as often as I can which, as well as ad-hoc local flights, also includes multiple trips up north or to the south of England, and several trips into France – as far as the Pyrenees on two occasions, the first of which was way back in 2009, when I had to make my way back completely on my own after my 'mate' had an unfortunate accident while landing at a small private airstrip near Rouen. Fortunately he wasn't seriously injured, but his aircraft was unflyable so he made his way back from Rouen on Ryanair, while I had to face only my second ever Channel Crossing alone.

Despite the odd minor setback, I have now chalked up over 1000 hours as 'Pilot in Command', mostly in my trusty GT450, though I have also piloted several other types on various occasions and, for the past few years, have

been involved in a group called 'The Flexwing Adventurers', which was formed to promote the use of Flexwing Microlights for longer distance touring, rather than just for local flying. The Group continues to go from strength to strength, with another major trip (which I am co-leading) planned to head off to France (and perhaps further afield) next June.

So why do I fly a Microlight ...? Whether it's a local trip to the Borders or a major adventure overseas, I think I can simply say ... 'For the pure sense of freedom that it gives me, and the ability to wander at will among the clouds and marvel at the beauty of God's Creation'.



Peter Robertson

Introducing Wisdom Allies: A New Intergenerational Friendship Project

Over the last few months, I have been exploring an idea that has grown out of prayer, study and involvement with local Christian befriending networks.

Many of you will know how much I value the time I spend with the older members of our church family. Your stories, humour, faith and resilience have shaped me more than you know. I often come away from a conversation in the hall (or, in better weather, outside in the garden!) feeling encouraged and steadied by the wisdom you carry.

At the same time, I am aware that many younger people in our area do not have family nearby or family who are readily accessible to them. Some are studying away from home. Some are growing up without parents or grandparents in their lives. Others simply long for someone who will listen, laugh with them and take an interest in who they are becoming.

Bringing these two groups together felt like a very natural next step for us as a congregation.

With this in mind, St Michael's will soon be launching a new intergenerational friendship project called Wisdom Allies.

Wisdom Allies is very simple. Once a month, we will bring together older adults and young people for relaxed conversation, shared stories and gentle companionship. There is no pressure and no expectations. It is simply space to listen, talk and enjoy one another's company. Every person, whatever their age, brings something valuable to the table.

Part of what inspired this idea was the Christian Befriending Conference I attended in September. Churches and charities from across Scotland gathered to explore how we can respond to loneliness. One of the key messages was that befriending is not quite the same as friendship. It is a supported relationship with healthy boundaries which helps people connect in ways that are both safe and meaningful. I found this freeing. We are not asked to fix someone's life. We are simply invited to walk alongside them. Jesus teaches this beautifully when he says, 'Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

To help us offer this project responsibly, St Michael's has been exploring affiliation with Linking Lives UK, a Christian charity that equips churches to run befriending projects well. Affiliation provides us with access to safeguarding resources, volunteer training, and ready-to-use templates for record-keeping and best practice. It also provides the frameworks and support that facilitators like me will need, ensuring that the project is safe, thoughtful and well-guided from the beginning. There is also encouragement and advice from other churches across the country that are doing similar work.

So, why are we doing this?

Because loneliness affects every generation. Because your stories matter. Because young people flourish when they hear from those that have lived through more of life. Because some young people do not have family nearby, and our church can offer a sense of belonging. And because reaching out into our wider community is part of our calling as a church. Wisdom Allies is a simple way to offer welcome, warmth and Christian hospitality to those who need it most.

Over the coming weeks, we will share more information on how to get involved, whether as a friendly presence at our monthly gatherings, as someone who prays for the project, or as someone who helps spread the word.

My hope is that Wisdom Allies becomes a small but meaningful expression of our life together. A place where generations meet, wisdom is shared, and God's love is made visible in conversation and connection.

If you would like to know more or think you might enjoy taking part, I would love to hear from you.

Kirsty Nicholls

Time Out Evening Services

Can I recommend the Wednesday evening Time Out services to everyone. They are on the last Wednesday of the month, last around 30 minutes and are held on the chancel in the Church.

Since I started worshipping with St Michael's I have been a regular attendee at these. Each evening starts and ends with worship and there is a led reflection and prayer in the middle.

The current series is working through the first letter from Paul to the Corinthians and each session works well as a standalone – if I'm being honest I probably can't remember what we did the previous month anyway!

For me, the Time Out service allows me to prioritise God and my own faith journey. It provides a mid-week opportunity for me to step away from the business of being a teacher and pause with God's word. I'll admit it can be hard to motivate myself to be on the 7pm bus to church in the depths of winter when it's cold, wet, windy and dark – however I also know that when I do make the effort it has always been worth it, even more so when I've been in the middle of a really busy week at school.

I hope to see you at the next Time Out.

Linda Garside

St Colms@St Michael's Guild

The Guild has had a successful session to date, hearing from Kirsty Nicholls about her journey leading to the Ministry and from Andrea telling us of a family history story to tie in with the theme 'Living Stones'.

Brian Pool spoke to us on the life of bees, which was fascinating, and, in some ways, spiritual as we could see God's pattern in their way of life, a place for every bee in the hive as it is with us in the world – if only we and leaders could see it that way – how to work in harmony together for the common good. The honey he brought was also delicious!

We heard from the project 'Bibles for Bairns', a very worthwhile project again, setting a pattern for children in encouraging them to read and follow bible stories. This project offers every baby born in Scotland a FREE 'Share a Story' Bible on their first Birthday. Every Birthday after that the Scottish Bible Society will send a Bible-related gift and, on their 5th birthday, every child receives an early reader Bible. Anyone interested in this project, or who knows of a baby about to be born or who is under one year old, see any Guild member for information on registering for this scheme.

Our meeting on 19 November was to disburse funds along with a Bring and Buy table sale.

On 29 November we have a visit to the pantomime at the Lyceum Theatre which, this year, is Cinderella with a difference.

We shall hold our Christmas party on Wednesday 3 December in the Hall.

On 11 October we hosted a Guild mini gathering at which 70 members from Guilds in Edinburgh and the Lothians attended. We heard from Kay Coull, our National Convener, and Karen Gillon, Guild General Secretary, plus speakers from the projects. This was a great success and huge thanks must go to Andrea, our Minister, who presided over Communion and to the team here at St Michael's who organised this event and helped the day to run smoothly ...

On 8 October, rather than hold a Guild meeting, a celebration of the life of the late Wilma Hardie was held with her nephew, David Simpson, his wife and his sister Sheila (well known to Guild and Friendship Club) catering with lovely home baking and entertaining us with music and memories of Wilma, a well-known church member and stalwart of the Friendship Club.

It was an afternoon of fellowship, remembrance and gratitude for a long life, well lived. Wilma would have been proud of such an afternoon.

The Guild resumes on **Wednesday 14 January 2026** when we shall hear from Eric Melvin speaking on 'The Athens of the North'. Eric has spoken to us before on Mary Queen of Scots and we look forward to hearing such an erudite speaker once more.

From 14 January we meet fortnightly until 25 March. In February we have 'Robert Burns in Words and Song' plus many other speakers planned until the end of this session in March.

We hope to have an outing in the Spring to Galashiels to see the Great Tapestry of Scotland, now housed in a lovely building built especially to hold this magnificent artistry. It is fitting that such a treasure is housed in the Scottish Borders, once the centre of the Scottish Textile industry.

All are welcome to Guild meetings, whether members or visitors.

The Guild wishes everyone a Happy Peaceful Christmas and 'A Guid New Year'.

Fay Anderson, co-convener Guild

Amnesty International Write for Rights 2025

Once more we will, in our own small way, be joining the battle to bring justice to many individuals and groups of people who are suffering in their communities around the world.

Globally we seem to be in the perfect storm of interconnected issues: climate change, displaced people and the rise of authoritarian regimes. It can appear to be an overwhelming storm but simply writing messages of support on a card can make a difference, bring hope to the recipient and put pressure on those in power.

Last year more than 4.6 million messages of support and letters of appeal were sent in the Write for Rights 2024. They helped to create positive actions for the people featured in the campaign and were powerful symbols of solidarity.

We at St Michael's have been involved in Amnesty International campaigns for nearly 50 years and will continue to do so on **Sunday 30 November**, 10 days before the 77th anniversary of the Declaration of

Human Rights. We will hear of some of the cases this year – of the people and groups who need our support. Please come ready to write a message on a simple card, with maybe some cash for the postage.

Derek Wilson

St Michael's Film Club

Do you believe in angels? There may be times when we feel we need them and in Berlin in 1989 that is the case. ***Wings of Desire***, directed by Wim Wenders, reveals a place and people, and angels.

The place is a city divided since the war ended in 1945 and, physically so, by a massive wall from 1961. The angels have always been there, unseen and unheard by the people though the angels hear their thoughts and bring comfort. One of the angels, played by Bruno Ganz, becomes curious about humans and makes a life-altering decision.

This beautiful film, in black and white (and colour!) won Best Director award at the Cannes Film Festival.

With English subtitles for a film in German with an all-German cast, apart from Peter Falk, not playing a detective.

Sunday 7 December at 7.00pm.

Still Alice

Julianne Moore won Best Actress Oscar, BAFTA, Golden Globes etc for her outstanding performance as Alice in this film made in 2014. Directed by Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmorland with a strong cast including Alec Baldwin and Kristen Stewart, it is based on a novel by Lisa Genova. The film-making in all respects shows great compassion, done with personal insight into health conditions known to many.

Sunday 11 January at 7.00pm

After ***Wings of Desire*** (December), Wim Wenders directed many thoughtful movies including his most recent, ***Perfect Days***, an award-winning film in 2023.

This is the story of Hirayama, a man whose job is to clean public toilets in Tokyo.

The director was expected to make a documentary when invited by the Nippon Corporation to look at the newly-designed 'conveniences' but conceived a film about much more. Koji Yakusho won Best Actor at Cannes for his role as the cleaner with his own way of living, a mysterious past and a cracking musical soundtrack.

Sunday 1 February at 7.00pm.

Derek Wilson

The Shandon Paradox

It has been a busy few weeks: I returned to paid employment after five years of retirement and relative ease. Although the job is part-time, the early starts have been, literally, a wake-up call. But when the nation calls, even a demobbed civil service lawyer must press his old grey suit and walk his brogues into the office.

The call has come from a public inquiry – public inquiries need a lot of lawyering and, at least in the case of the one I've signed up for, they are an important means of getting to the bottom of an issue or event raising public concern. Often the inquiry ends up referred to by the name of the judge (usually a serving or retired judge) who presided over it: 'The Saville Inquiry' or 'The Cullen Report'.

Life in the civil service is full of principles, rules and guidance that some lucky public servant has his name attached to: 'The Nolan Principles', 'The Osmotherly Rules', 'The Armstrong Memorandum' and many more. In wider usage we have all heard general observations known as 'eponymous laws' such as 'Murphy's Law', 'Parkinson's Law', or 'Betteridge's Law of Headlines' (that last one, fwiw, is: *any newspaper headline ending in a question mark can be answered 'no'*).

I give these examples because, on returning to work, I reflected that one of the many disappointments of 25 years in government service was that I never managed to have a law, principle, rule, report, paradox or perplex named after me. Even something like 'Alastair's Law' would have been nice – perhaps a modest form of immortality. But 'The Clyde Paradox' would have been so much grander! I started poking about the internet to see if there were any paradoxical musings that I could lay claim to.

This led me down the rabbit hole of 'The Stockdale Paradox' – a philosophic observation which has attracted the interest of Christian writers, business gurus, and followers of the Stoic philosopher Epictetus.

The Stockdale Paradox is a call to faith in the most difficult circumstances. Stockdale said; *'you must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end – which you can never afford to lose – with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.'*

Who was Stockdale and what made him paradoxical? Vice Admiral James Stockdale (1923-2005) was a US Navy pilot who, after flying 150 combat missions, was shot down over North Vietnam in 1965. As the most senior US officer in captivity he attracted the special attention of his captors – he spent seven and a half years as a prisoner, four of them in solitary confinement.

He organised and led prisoner resistance, reminding his comrades that they were still on active service and subject to a code of conduct. He was often tortured and beaten, and denied medical treatment. He was among a group of the most recalcitrant prisoners who were locked up in windowless cells, 3 foot by 9 foot, with a light kept constantly on and legs locked in irons every night.

Stockdale was released in 1973 and reunited with his wife Sybil (who had campaigned on behalf of all the US PoWs) and their four sons. He spent most of his subsequent career lecturing and writing, mainly on military and philosophical subjects.

What sustained him in captivity? He was not optimistic or unrealistic, and neither was he a pessimist. He had faith that he would return home to his family one day but, more significantly, that his experience as a prisoner would ultimately be positive – that it would become the defining experience of his life. It would not break him – in fact it would make him. The outcome would be such that he would not change his experience even if he could.

Writing about captivity in his book *'Confessions of a Philosophical Fighter Pilot'* Stockdale observed that fellow prisoners with a strong faith, such as a Christian faith, had a better chance of survival. They understood that life was not fair. They were familiar with the trials suffered by Job in the Bible, Evil exists and, with it, undeserved suffering.

Prisoners without an underpinning of faith might come to see their lives as meaningless and fall into the trap of 'why me' thinking. Other prisoners

had an undue, irrational optimism. They convinced themselves that they would be 'home by Christmas' but Christmas passed; then they expected to be 'home by Easter' and so forth, until another Christmas passed. Eventually, the disappointment would crush them.

A paradox is a proposition that **appears** contradictory or absurd. However, Stockdale's statement is not really contradictory at all: you can hope for a better future but that must be balanced with a realistic assessment of how things stand today. Having returned to work, and facing the challenges that come with it, one has to remember the importance of resilience in the face of adversity.

But Waverley Gate, my new office, is 1,000 miles from the 'Hanoi Hilton' (as the North Vietnam PoW camp was known). How does Stockdale's wisdom apply to a more humdrum working life?

Maybe a more modest version would be 'the Shandon Paradox': getting out of bed and looking out the window there is no point in expecting anything other than a cold, wet November morning and a trudge into work; on the other hand, the work still has purpose and the prospect of a good outcome. More than that work, despite the inevitable frustrations and vexations which attend office life, is a privilege and an opportunity.

Alastair Clyde

Fairtrade

Please support our Fairtrade stall, which is open before and after the Sunday morning service each week. We stock a selection of coffees, chocolate, pasta, rice and peanut butter. We currently have Christmas cards and a few small gift ideas. We also sell a selection of home-made jams, marmalade and chutney – lovingly made by members of the congregation.

It's not too late to purchase a St Michael's Church 2026 Calendar! Full of photographs of happy occasions around the church and grounds over the recent years. The perfect gift idea at only £6 per calendar.

Recycling @ St Michael's

We continue to collect:

- **Used Stationery Items - pens, pencils, Tippex etc**
- **Used Postage Stamps**
- **Unwanted Spectacles**

Please note, we no longer collect milk bottle tops as these can now be recycled in your home recycling bin.

We also have our **Recycling for Good Causes Box** which takes:

- **Jewellery, including costume jewellery and broken items**
- **Banknotes & Coins of any currency, including obsolete currencies**
- **Stamps and First Day Covers and Presentation Packs**
- **Watches**
- **Mobile Phones**
- **Cameras, including video cameras**
- **Sat Navs**
- **Electronic Gaming Devices and games**
- **Ipods/MP3 players**
- **Tablet Computers - NOT LAPTOPS**

Electronic devices do not have to be in working condition

The items in the Recycling for Good Causes Box are sent off when the box is full and we receive a small amount of money for this. Every little helps!

If you are unsure about any item you wish to recycle, please check with either Sheila or Bill Bremner before depositing it in the box.

Sheila & Bill Bremner

World Day of Prayer (WDP)

This is advance notice of the World Day of Prayer service in 2026. This year we, at St Michael's, held an extremely successful Service on Friday 7 March, including contributions from neighbouring churches. In 2026 Gorgie Church shall be holding the service on **Friday 6 March**.

More information re bible study etc shall be available in the Spring edition of The Tower and in posters and announcements at Church. The service for 2026 has been written by the Christian women of Nigeria with the theme '*I will give you Rest, Come*' from Matthew 11:28-30.

Fay Anderson

Readers in Church

I know from many in Church that the Congregation enjoys the variety of readers of the Lessons on a Sunday. I can remember how Ministers long ago just used to announce the readings, say Ezekiel or Jeremiah, and it was a mad scramble – or almost competition – to see who would find the book first!

Now the speaker and the screen give the page numbers, although I prefer to listen to the readers. All have a different way of reading a passage and, their interpretation helps the understanding of the meaning.

I know that most readers dread the Pentecostal passage at Acts 2 v3-13 with all of the native languages involved! Look it up and see the difficulties it gives a reader. We all love to read the Nativity story at Christmas although it too has its sadness with the escape to Egypt and the Massacre of the Innocents.

It is easy if reading aloud in Church to look up a passage beforehand to ensure the meaning so this then comes across clearly to the Congregation. It does happen though when actually reading on a Sunday that you suddenly feel the story or message more keenly and realise what a privilege it is to impart the word of God to listeners.

On behalf of those who read in Church we fervently hope that the Word of God truly does dwell in the hearts of those hearing it.

Thanks go to all who undertake to read God's Word each week.

Fay Anderson

RITUALISTIC

Ritualistic bread and wine,
Tell us of a love divine,
The ultimate sacrifice.

Ritualistic Christmas time,
Tell us of a birth sublime,
The ultimate gift of love.

Ritualistic Easter time,
Tell us of a cowardly crime,
They Crucified Jesus Christ.

Ritualistic bread and wine,
Tell us of a special time,
We all will know God is Love.

Ruth Andrews

Fresh Start

Once again a huge thank you to everyone who regularly brings donations for Fresh Start – especially for the donations for Christmas gift packages.

Our next target for Fresh Start is the 'Cookers for Christmas' appeal. For those with little or no money, replacing or purchasing a cooker can be an unaffordable luxury. Fresh Start's Cookers for Christmas campaign helps those in need by providing cookers and other essential white goods. You can make a difference this Christmas.

Please look at the Fresh Start notice board at the entrance to the Church for more information on Fresh Start and the different ways you can make a donation. This can be done online, by cheque or bank transfer and, if possible, please make a Gift Aid declaration.

There are donation envelopes at the Fresh Start noticeboard for anyone who wishes to make a cash donation.

For anyone who is unable to bring donated items to St Michael's please contact us on 0131 441 1328 and leave a message. Or email to Alasdair.webster@hotmail.co.uk

Alasdair and Babs Webster

A new lease of life for our Lime Tree

As you know, our lovely Lime Tree was a casualty in the storm earlier on in the year when a huge branch was ripped off. This has been lying in the garden since then.

The Church was contacted earlier in the month by Rebecca Kemmer, who is the Workshop Leader in the Joinery Workshop at Garvald Edinburgh - a charity which support adults with learning disabilities. They had not long moved, on a temporary basis, into the Phoenix Centre at Harrison Road and had been looking for some workshop-based projects to undertake while they were based there.

Having spotted the branch in the Church garden Rebecca thought that there might be a way to benefit both the Church and Garvald. The charity relies on donated timber for its projects and so offered to bring a team along to clear the broken branch away. The hope is that our tree may end up helping to produce some tealight holders or stool legs. We would certainly be delighted to see the end results.

I cannot claim to be any kind of expert on lime trees (or indeed trees!) but apparently there are three types which are regularly seen in the UK – the Broad-leaved Lime, the Common Lime and the Small-leaved Lime. And for those of you, like me, who are wondering why they have never seen limes on the tree it is apparently because the citrus fruits that we know as limes actually come from a tree (called *Citrus aurantifolia*) from South-East Asia. In Britain the 'lime' tree is assumed to come from the word 'lind'. 'Lind', in turn, is possibly associated with the word 'linden' – as in the linden tree - known for its strength and beauty.

We did have some concerns that the tree may have to be taken down as a result of the fairly substantial damage created by the storm. However, our 'Tree Man' believes that by trimming it back and 'balancing' the tree we shall be able to save it. This work is scheduled to take place at the end of November.

If you'd like to know a bit more about **Garvald Edinburgh** then please click on the website link. <https://www.garvaldedinburgh.org.uk/>

Please see overleaf a photograph of two of the team members hard at work in the garden.



Fiona Lunn, Editor

Changes to the Church Family

Welcome

Joachim Greiling (August 2025)
Carl Pearson (November 2025)

Deaths

Norman Slorach (August 2025)
Margaret McKie (November 2025)

Church House Chatter

Judging by the loud gasps at a Sunday service a couple of months ago when Andrea opened an umbrella in the Church to demonstrate 'protection' I suspect it wasn't just me that cringed! But why have we come to think that this means bad luck?

A bit of digging around suggests that the original explanation may stem from ancient Egypt where umbrellas (from '*umbra*' meaning shade) were actually used to shelter their users from the sun. By opening an umbrella indoors it was felt to be disrespectful to the sun god Ra. His wrath could potentially result in bad luck for the hapless 'indoors umbrella opener'!

However, variations on a theme also suggest:

- 1 You are inviting ghosts to pop in. Not all are 'bad' ghosts but do you really want to take the risk?
- 2 It's generally considered to be a bad omen. You may be inviting tricky times ahead – ranging from friendship issues to illness.
- 3 Access to your spiritual side may be 'hidden' by the shade of the umbrella.
- 4 It may create general clouding of the mind - leading to confusion and poor sleep. (In my opinion this is otherwise known as 'stress'!)

I am happy to report that you **can** reverse this bad luck in a variety of ways. The one I found most amusing was to give the umbrella to someone who lives far, far away – thus removing the source of all the potential problems from your own house. It did cross my mind that maybe it would be best to find a distant recipient that you are not super keen on – just in case.



Fiona Lunn, Editor



ColoringPagesOnly.com