



Edinburgh: The New Town Church Parish Profile 2024

FAITH, FRIENDSHIP AND A SANCTUARY IN THE CITY

Being Church in the City Centre



Being Church in the city centre is a wonderful and challenging calling for us, reaching out to tourists, residents and those who work in our parish. We are looking for a minister to share our mission to be part of God's voice in the heart of the City as the twenty-first century unfolds.

We are a congregation with a strong heritage of Christian service – in ways particular to our community; in ways which stretch beyond our parish; and in programmes which are international yet based on strong personal relationships.

We are a congregation with a theology and a faith which is deep and also wide. Our spiritual life and our love shown in action go side by side.

We are ready to explore how we can do some of our existing activities in a way which is relevant to our combined parishes and to take account of societal changes. We are ready to look at the possibility of new challenges and are ready to examine whether some of our long-treasured initiatives are no longer right for today.

We have many different skills and experiences within our congregation, and we come from a variety of backgrounds.

What do we seek in a Minister?

We seek someone whose own deep faith can inspire and deepen our faith in their preaching and conduct of worship and in their interaction with individuals and groups.

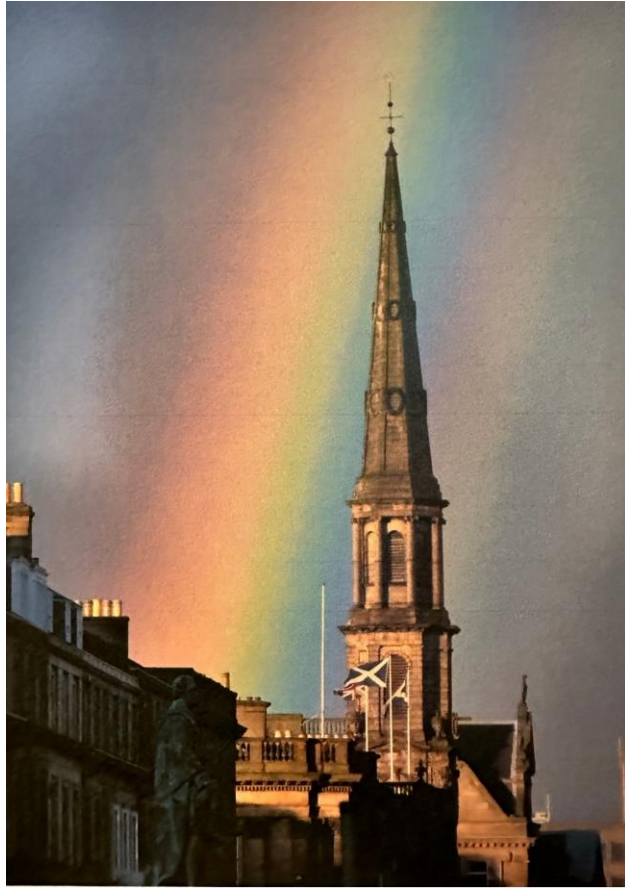
We seek someone with proven leadership skills; someone with the ability to work creatively with volunteers and who can bring out their talents and encourage their aspirations.

If that sounds like you, then please read on and find out more about us.





Our congregation was formed in February 2024 from the former Greenside and St Andrew's and St George's West congregations, and we are now based in and worshipping in George Street. Our Basis of Union is in the Appendix. Like so many others, our congregation has a wide age range, predominately retired but very energetic. We come from across the city and beyond and tend to attract people with a wide perspective on life, ready to embrace the City centre as a place to be, and in which to be reminded of the issues facing the wider world. We are committed to providing an environment of inclusion, fairness and respect for all.



The Kirk Session voted to depart from the Church of Scotland's traditional position and we welcome applications from ministers in civil partnerships and same sex marriages.

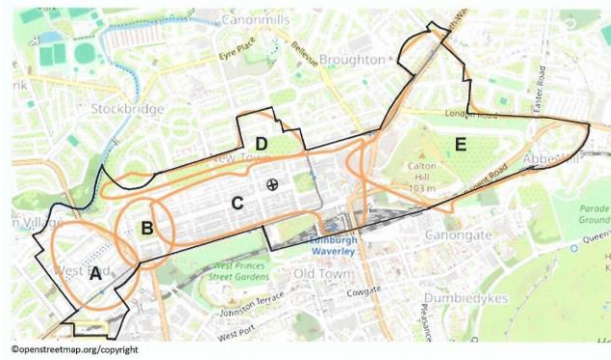
We have a Unitary Constitution. Implementation of the Presbytery Plan will result in review of the Charge in 5 years.

An Exciting Parish

The diverse community which God has called us to serve presents great opportunities and great challenges.

Our building is right on the pavement in one of the main streets at the heart of the city and has a high footfall every day including Sundays. Major retailers such as Harvey Nichols and those in the St James Quarter, national institutions such as the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the Church's main offices and Hadeel (the shop of Palestinian handcrafts) are within a short walk. We have links to many businesses through our membership of the George Street Association. The Dome and the Hard Rock Café are opposite us and we are immediately flanked by the George Intercontinental Hotel and ABRDN Standard Life.

The City Council is considering proposals to close George Street to most traffic, giving priority to pedestrians and cyclists and creating an "events space" outside the Church. This will offer us new opportunities and new challenges.



1 - The Parish is an East-West ribbon with different sectors and diverse uses.

Area A is one of increasing residential use. In **Area B** residential use gives way to commercial use mostly in the way of entertainment, restaurants and bars. **Area C** is a mix of retail, offices, hospitality and entertainment. Only in **Area D** are there significant residential areas.

Edinburgh, of course, has a significant number of those without permanent, or any, accommodation. Some of our practical work aims to respond to this even if the visible impact of homelessness is not so acute here as it is in other parts of the City.

There are no schools within this western part of the Parish (**A-D**) and resident children are in the catchments of schools within other parishes.

Area E is mostly residential, with much young, single occupancy, but also includes the Omni Centre and the Playhouse Theatre. Here there are two Primary Schools within the Parish, Abbeyhill and Leith Walk; and we have had chaplaincy connections with them. We also have links with the Friends of Calton Hill and the Regent, Royal & Calton Terraces and Mews Association.

Our parish, therefore, has a diversity of uses and we have strong links to those in the arts and theatres as well as to retail, office and leisure workers.

Our wealth of engaged members and available funds give us the opportunities to work out what mission we should now offer in the parish. We have regularly reviewed our mission to our diverse communities, and we are again at one of those points.

As regards the eastern sector of our Parish, an immediate priority for our Kirk Session required by the Basis of Union is to determine how the Greenside buildings are to be sold, let or otherwise disposed of, subject to the approval of the Presbytery and the General Trustees.

Services of Worship



Being together as part of God's worship on a Sunday morning is central to us.

As a gathered congregation, being present on Sunday involves a commitment quite different to that of a church located in a purely residential parish. Our 10.30 service is timed to allow fellowship before parking restrictions engage; and, in person, our usual congregation is 60-80, and this reflects perhaps 120 worshipping regularly. After the 10.30 Service there is always a lively time over tea and coffee in the Undercroft. Online services are accessed some 40 to 70 times a week on a regular basis.

Communion is celebrated at 9.00 a.m. on the first Sunday of the month and, with a short address, provides a calm space for a small group. Communion on the last Sunday of the month at 11.30 am provides a similar opportunity for those attending the morning service. There are more formal services of Communion quarterly.





As a new congregation, looking ahead our worship patterns have the opportunity to develop as they did in the past, with the potential for a variety in styles of worship suited to the 21st century. For the present, congregational participation comprises a responsive Call to Worship, sharing the Peace, reading the Lessons, presenting the Prayers of the People and hymn singing. **The Choir** is of a high standard and regularly sings an anthem as well as leading the congregational singing. We are very fortunate in having a team of fine organists. Our **Band of Change Ringers** provide a palpable signal, at the end of morning worship, that our service to the City for that week has begun.

Albany Deaf Church, an integral part of the Congregation, meets once a month on a Sunday afternoon in the Sanctuary, followed by tea and fellowship. Communication is in British Sign Language. If any hard of hearing or hearing people are present the minister signs and speaks in English at the same time. We also have a Deaf Choir. Sometimes Albany and the hearing congregation join for a Sunday morning service, and these are also signed.







Our specially prepared prayer guide, ***Pause for Prayer***, is distributed weekly by email and on our Facebook page. A small area of the Sanctuary is set aside as an area for private prayer. There is a book for visitors to write prayers. A permanent exhibition tells our story.



Developing and Deepening our Faith



Learning by doing is what we do. We develop our talents and participate with each other, and with those whom God sends us.

A **Book Group** meets monthly by Zoom to discuss a book relevant to the Christian Faith. These have included *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Say it to God* by Luigi Gioia and *Called To Be Friends: Unlocking the Heart of John's Gospel* by Ian Galloway.

Thoughts @ 9:30 meets monthly on Sunday mornings for 45 minutes of lively discussion or activity on a Christian topic, chosen by the lay leader of the day.

With our neighbouring congregations of St Cuthbert's and St John's Episcopal a few of our members have regularly engaged in Lent Study and other educational groups.



Looking After Each Other

Elders, members and at times a specially appointed Associate Minister maintain pastoral contact with fellow members who, through age or ill health, are no longer able to get to church. Pastoral care for us is a much wider ministry than our essential care for those members who are feeling challenged in any way.



Previously, for the George Street congregation, district elders and active members maintained general pastoral contact with fellow members. Until the end of 2023, a part- time Pastoral Minister was the principal contact for the housebound, those in hospital and in care, assisted by a few pastoral visitors who continue now in this role and liaise with the Locum Minister.

Pastoral Care had long been a priority at Greenside. The Minister, elders and members of the congregation all participated to create a family care structure. This included regular visits including home communion from a Minister of Word and Sacrament, Christmas and Easter cards and little gifts. There was also a monthly Coffee and Chat drop in, a Christmas Lunch and the marking of family birthdays and other events.

As a new congregation we will seek to review our pastoral care work to ensure that proper care is available to all members who are in need.



The George Street building is open each weekday. Our welcome team understands that some visitors might just wish to see an interesting building, others to find a quiet space for prayer and others to engage more broadly with a sacred place.

The Undercroft below the Sanctuary is a meeting place for groups and social events and, most importantly, an accessible café for our communities. ***The Undercroft Café***, usually open Monday to Friday 10.30 – 2pm, provides a warm, inclusive place of welcome and service in the Christian tradition, with an emphasis on local, sustainable, organic, fairly-traded produce at prices which are fair to all. Placements and training for volunteers including those with additional support needs, as well as the provision of work experience have provided benefits to us all.

Regular ***Undercroft Exhibitions*** portray our activities and initiatives or can be used by third parties and charities: all focussed towards increasing an understanding of God and deepening an understanding of what it means to be Christian in the 21st Century.

Our monthly ***Walking (and talking!) Group*** provides 8 to 10 miles of exercise, fresh air, a chance to see places often overlooked and the opportunity to glory in God's kingdom; often with a meal together at the end of the day.

The Church in the City

Our aims for our work in the City are to continue God's outreach to our community and to support Christ's message in the world.



Imaginative engagement with outreach has been an essential part of our heritage. The union which created St Andrew's & St George's West brought together ministries which showed innovative outreach, extensive use of premises and cafés and support for charities. St George's West established 'Creative Space' for use by the community at the west end of the City Centre and St Andrew's & St George's West supported an Associate Minister who was chaplain to shops and offices. Members of the new congregation continue as workplace chaplains under the new voluntary system.

Our work initiated a special chaplaincy to support the City's theatres and arts scene. Greenside's part in this involved not only chaplaincy to all the Edinburgh Theatres and the Omni Centre but also the promotion of the arts within the church with film and discussion evenings and theatre trips including a time to reflect on performances. More recently Ukrainian refugee families have been offered theatre outings supported by local theatres.

In collaboration with St Cuthbert's and St John's Episcopal, our **Art Exhibition** prior to COP26 on the theme "Our Precious and Precarious World" was a huge success, raising awareness of climate change with 900 people attending over 5 days.

The buildings of the former congregations have been **Edinburgh Festival Fringe** venues for many years. Front-of-house volunteers come from the Church and our friends. The Greenside building has continued to be in demand for use during the Fringe.

The congregations have supported the work of the **Bethany Christian Trust**. Currently, a catering team from our members prepares food in the Undercroft kitchen to be served, often by our own volunteers, at the Bethany Care and Welcome Centre.

Both former congregations have supported **Fresh Start** since its inception. **Tearfund** has benefited from regular support from Greenside for many years. **Creative Together** uses craft skills and recycled materials to make things that charities need, such as twiddle cushions for those with dementia, warm hats for folk who are homeless, and trauma teddies for refugee children.

Uniformed youth organisations have been sponsored by both former Congregations. Those sponsored at George Street fell away some years ago. At Greenside there has continued to be a sponsored Scout Group; and Rainbows, Brownies and Guides are also supported by the Congregation. Greenside is the base for the local Scout District.







The Church In the World



We have a long commitment to the wider world, actively and regularly supporting charities at home and abroad.

The ethos of service to the city centre and the wider world has attracted a wide range of members and volunteers. The ***Christian Aid Sale*** at George Street has taken place since 1973 with volunteers from other churches and from those with no church connection. These sales have raised over £3 million (£5 million at current values).

A relatively new initiative allows approved charities to use ***The Portico on George Street*** as their “shop window”. These have included Amnesty International, Freedom from Torture and the Mamie Martin Fund (which seeks to advance the development of young women and girls in North Malawi and has a special fund for those with hearing challenges).



We have particularly strong links with the **Mulanje Mission Hospital** in Malawi. Two – now deceased – members were ministers at the Mission and the Director of Medicine recently retired was a Missionary Partner of the George Street congregation. A group from the George Street congregation visited in 2013 and we have given significant financial support for projects such as medical treatment in the prison and post-natal work, and for additional tertiary education for senior staff. The current Director of Medicine has visited us twice.

In 2023 our **Benevolent Funds** supported: Fischy Music, The Mamie Martin Fund, Dignity Boxes, The Rock Trust, Mulanje Mission Hospital; The Trussell Trust, Edinburgh Direct Aid, the Earl Haig Poppy Fund, and the SOKO Fund (supporting women in Malawi to access university education).

We provide space for a Fair Trade Stall to sell a wide range of foods once a month after Sunday service. The George Street congregation has been an **Eco-congregation** for many years.

The ***Edinburgh Undercroft Amnesty Group*** meets monthly in the Undercroft to write urgent action letters in defence of people worldwide who are suffering human rights abuses.

Our Ecumenical Work



To speak of our community, of course, must include our ecumenical partners; and we continue what was an essential element in the life of each of the recent congregations of Greenside, St Andrew's & St George's and St George's West.

A covenant with St Cuthbert's and St John's Episcopal provides annual joint worship as well as links of fellowship for the respective ministry teams. We are also in a new Local Parish Grouping with Broughton St Mary's.

We maintain long term links with the German Speaking Congregation and our joint service takes place on Remembrance Sunday. Formerly, at Greenside, on the first Sunday of Advent, an All Nations Service has been hosted, involving Christian Churches including Russian Orthodox, Asian Concern (a Christian non-denominational group), German, Iranian, Coptic Church, African, Chinese and Caribbean.

Advent, Christmas, Holy Week and Easter traditions engage us with neighbouring congregations.

How we work together



The Kirk Session's Working Groups enable it to deliver more activities and deal with much more business than would be possible without them. Membership includes members of the congregation with appropriate experience and skills.

Each Group has a written remit and a protocol sets operational rules. The Minister will choose whether to participate in any group. In addition, we have a number of less formal arrangements and activities which don't fall explicitly under the wing of any Kirk Session Group. All of these arrangements enrich the life of the Congregation.

Currently, the main groups are:

Mission Groups

- Café – Operating the Undercroft café.
- Christian Aid – Raising money for and giving publicity to Christian Aid
- Creative Together – see above
- Education – Delivering opportunities for Christian education.

Resource Groups

- Fabric – Maintaining the building and its contents
- Staffing and Management – Overseeing the recruitment and employment of all staff and volunteers to the Church, through the Kirk Session
- Finance and Stewardship – Advising and delivering on financial matters.

Groups to consider restarting

- Wider World – Promoting justice, peace and the integrity of creation
- Music – Overseeing the musical life of the church

- Publicity and Communications

To Sum Up.....



We are a thriving congregation, participating in many sacramental and sacrificial activities to enhance our relationship with God and to be God's eyes, ears and hands in our parish. We know that, in order to develop at this stage in our journey and in the journey of the Christian faith in Scotland, we need to refocus and find out how new initiatives might help us live out Christ's message to the world.

What about you? Does this engage your ideas as to fresh expressions of faith and a ministry in a new place?

Further important information is set out below. In order to discuss an interest with the Interim Moderator, the Rev. Ann Inglis, please contact her at revainglis@gmail.com¹



2 - Our new manse is on the right.

¹<mailto:revainglis@gmail.com>

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Note On Finance

Scottish Charity, SC008990

Our funds stand at about £2.8 million. About £1 million of this is in the Church of Scotland Consolidated Fabric Fund and can only be spent on our short and long term fabric requirements. Only a further £74,000 is restricted,

Sacrificial and sacramental giving is almost exclusively through regular standing orders. It is several years since we had a stewardship review and it may be time for another, focussing not just on finance but also on the availability of other resources to enable the Church to thrive.

Our Expenditure creates a deficit of income over expenditure. This is mainly due to both the energy, insurance and fabric costs from maintaining two large buildings in the centre of Edinburgh pending the disposal or let of the Greenside building as well as the running costs, including staff salaries, associated with our varied missional use of the buildings. Fortunately, most of our activities deliver benefits to members and the community at little or no direct cost. Our key in-house mission project, the Undercroft Café, makes a significant surplus on direct trading costs, due to careful cost control and pricing, plus the support of many volunteers. It is impossible to put a price on the many benefits it provides or set them alongside the financial costs such as energy and equipment.

Overall, we have a sound financial base from which to carry out our mission initiatives.

Note on Staffing

We employ a Church Manager who is responsible for the line management of all our paid staff – Caretaker, Church Administrator, Head of Café Operations and Café Assistant. The Minister has responsibility for the line management of the Church Manager.

Recruitment of a Director of Music is being held back pending the new induction. They will report to the Minister for music in services of worship and to the Kirk Session for music beyond public worship.

The Kirk Session, acting through the Staffing and Management Group seeks to ensure compliance with safe recruitment, including safeguarding, employment and employment legislation.

The Group, working with the Church Manager and after approval by Kirk Session, is also responsible for implementing the policy for letting the church buildings. It liaises with other Session groups to ensure that the church operates as a safe environment.

Note on Fabric

The Congregation benefits from a long standing, well experienced and committed group of volunteers who take a pride in the continuing care of this important historic church building. They bring with them a variety of relevant skills to the task of monitoring, maintaining and developing the Congregation's heritage, its buildings, [Church/Halls and Manse], and other physical assets, fixed and movable.

In its advisory role to the Kirk Session, a key responsibility for the Group is ensuring our compliance with current Health & Safety requirements and relevant Statutory obligations.

Meeting regularly and working with stakeholders within our church family and out with, our objective is to help provide a welcoming environment and safe spaces for those who worship, visit and work within our premises.

Our newly acquired manse is at 8, Berry Drive, Edinburgh EH12 5FE. It has five bedrooms (one of which could be a study) and two public rooms and enjoys an EPC Cat. "A" rating. It is a newly built property and snagging work is currently underway. Travel time to the church is 38 Minutes by the regular 31 bus service. The manse is within a number of catchments for primary school children and Craigmount High School for secondary.