

Summer 2025

stJohn's
Dumfries
a church for everyone



M A G A Z I N E

st John's Dumfries

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The St John's Magazine is published quarterly and is available free of charge. **People occasionally ask if they can contribute to the cost. If you would like to do so, we would suggest £20 per year would be a suitable sum.**

There is a facility for doing this on the St J's website, or the office can take card payments. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the editorial team or of the Vestry of St John's, but are intended as a sharing of the life of the people who make up the community there, and those elsewhere whom we invite to contribute.

The next magazine is due out, we hope, in early October, and the nominal copy deadline is 15th September. Please send comments and/or contributions to pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for articles, please contact the Editorial Team. Copy should ideally be 300-700 words, with supporting illustrations or photographs (these available as separate files), if possible.

Editorial team: David Kerr, Margaret Morton

You can contact us at pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org, or 07754 596140.

See www.stjohnsdumfries.org and weekly notices for more information.

worship

Regular family Eucharist at 11.00 on a Sunday, said Eucharists at 18.30 on a Tuesday, 10.30 on a Wednesday morning, and the periodic observation of Saints', and other special, days as advertised, continue as normal. Choral Evensong, MU Eucharist and the Contemporary Service are taking a break for the summer, but all will resume in September. Watch out for announcements in our weekly notice sheet and on the website, both of which are good places to get up to date information about what's going on.

rector

Following the retirement of the Rev Janice Aiton, our Interim Priest is the Rev Jim Booth. He can be reached on 07487 653069, or rector@stjohnsdumfries.org. Please **do not** use the Rectory landline – 01387 254126 – meantime; it is out of use for the present.

If you wish to contact any individual or group within St John's, please email pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org, or call 07754 596140, stating your name and how we can contact you back. We will pass on your details to the correct person or people, and ask them to contact you.

All post should be addressed via the Rectory/ Office, 8 Newall Terrace, Dumfries DG1 1LW.

getting in touch

The Office is currently staffed on Mondays and Fridays and, in fact, most other weekdays besides, between 10.00 and 17.00.

It may be best to get in touch before making a special trip. pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org / 07754 596140.

from the registers

Funerals:

Bill **Cussons: 17/05/2025**

St John the Evangelist

Junction of Newall Terrace and Lovers' Walk, Dumfries DG1 1LW
St John's is a Local Ecumenical Partnership between the Scottish Episcopal & Methodist Churches.

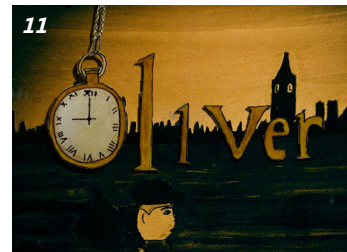
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editors' notes

Like trains on Avanti West Coast, this edition, though later than scheduled, has at least made up some of the time lost awaiting the arrival of the previous service, the delayed Christmas 2024 (arrived late Spring 2025). This time, Interim Priest the Rev Jim Booth has also been looking at the passage of time, arrivals and departures, and finding that one very important thing remains constant. Depute Choirmaster Billy Riddick shares his enthusiasm for the Anglican music tradition and the Rev Canon Peter MacKenzie reports on the Consecration of our new Bishop at St Mary's Cathedral, Glasgow. In one of his other hats, Billy Riddick is back, outlining St J's ethos in terms of the way we communicate with each other, Kim Jackson describes the very successful MU Summer Outing and Fiona Seagrave has been giving it some Oom Pah Pah. On another musical front, Sue St Joseph has written about the latest interactions with our German partners in the Regional Youth Choir, Annette Beagrie and Carolynne Sorrell outline some recent fundraising and social events and David Kerr has been springing, or possibly flinging, passengers round parts of D&G, with the help of Thornhill Community Transport. Relative newcomers (to the wider congregation, at least) Tom Lochhead and Zara Ross describe their experience participating in a couple of St J's Study Groups, David Kerr (him again) sets out some of the ways we're trying to make St J's more welcoming to newcomers and Jamie Brand reports on the progress of the Vacancy Committee to date. We finish with the usual brief News Roundup. We hope you enjoy it and are enjoying the summer. Our cover photo is of this year's very successful Children's Holiday Club: more about this in the next edition.

The Interim Priest writes...

I have been reminded recently of that familiar (perhaps because of the folk song based on it, which always comes into my mind!), but not often used passage from Ecclesiastes Chapter 3: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven..." And, perhaps as a consequence, I've found myself reflecting on that theme of 'time'; the passage of time, the constraints of time within which we are held. And, how, with the passage of time, we come to those points of ending and new beginning. For that's where we are in our life together here at St. John's, and also in the wider Diocese. We have experienced an 'ending' – our former Rector, Janice, has moved on into her 'new beginning' of retirement and, over time I am sure, the discovery of the shape that her continuing ministry will take. We have welcomed to our Diocese our new Bishop Nick – and, for me, it was both a joy and a 'first', to be present at his consecration in Glasgow. At St. John's we're in that in-between time of waiting and preparing for the new beginning that will come with the appointment, in time, of our new Rector.

In the meantime, as we pray for the guidance, strengthening and encouragement of the Holy Spirit for the work of the newly appointed Vacancy Committee, for the Vestry and for our continuing life, worship and witness as the community of St John's here in Dumfries, I, with the help and support of a great many people, serve once more as Interim Priest. And, frankly, it doesn't seem that long ago that I previously fulfilled this role. Time does seem to have a way of speeding up as we get older! My elder son has a theory as to why this might be – but I'll save that for another time!

I was reading recently that a new species of dinosaur has been recognised from fossils discovered in Mongolia – a discovery that, potentially, re-writes the evolutionary history of tyrannosaurus rex! (I must remember to mention this to my younger grandson!) These fossils show that this dinosaur lived some 86 million years ago, a period of time past that I find it very difficult truly to comprehend. When compared with the time that humanity has lived on this planet, or the time that the

whole universe has existed, the utter insignificance of humanity



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in the whole scheme of things would, many would argue, seem self-evident. Yet we know, because this is our experience, that we are loved of God, who is love and whose love lies at the heart of all that is, whose love has been at the heart of all that is from the beginning of time, whose love will continue through time, to the end

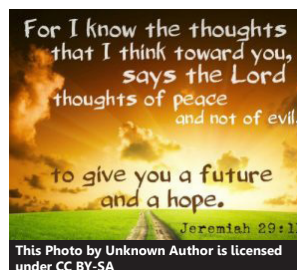
of time, and on into eternity – a love made real in His gift to us of Jesus, living, dying and rising.

That love of God which values every human life and gives meaning, purpose and direction to life itself is what holds us together, is at the heart of our life together, as the people of St John's. That love of God for each one of us and for all people will support and strengthen us as we journey together through this time of interregnum into whatever God's future for us may be.



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In the meantime, as we wait, we trust the process for filling the vacancy and pray that the Holy Spirit will bless us in our journeying together.



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So, whatever these coming weeks and months hold for each one of us, may we know the blessing and assurance of the loving, living presence of God with us – the God whom we meet in the person of Jesus, His Son, alive among us in the power of the Holy Spirit.

With every good wish.

Jim Booth - Interim Priest

The Importance of Anglican Music in Our Churches

A Reflection on Choral Evensong- Billy D Riddick

Music is an integral part of Christian worship. From the trumpet blasts at Jericho (Joshua 6:4–5) to the psalms sung in the courts of King David, from the angelic host proclaiming glory at Christ's Nativity (Luke 2:13–14) to the hymns sung by Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16:25), the Scriptures affirm the power of sacred music to lift our spirits and draw our hearts closer to God. Within the Anglican tradition, music is not an accessory to worship—it is woven into the very fabric of our liturgical life.

Indeed my dear friend The Very Reverend Paul Burbridge once said, I think quoting one of his esteemed colleagues, "Music is the bicycle upon which the liturgy rides".

Among the vast expanse of Anglican music, the service of Choral Evensong stands as a unique and enduring witness to the beauty of holiness.

A Sacred Heritage

The tradition of Anglican church music is one of the most distinctive treasures of our Communion. It draws from the plainsong of early Christianity, the Reformation's call for intelligibility and participation, and the extraordinary flowering of sacred composition in the UK across the centuries. The works of composers such as Tallis, Byrd, Gibbons, Stanford, Stainer,

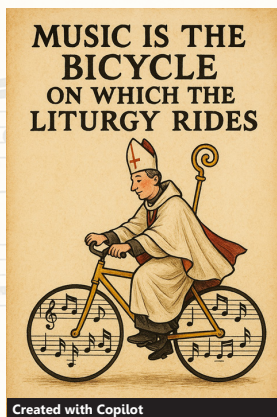
Noble, and Brewer (to name just a few) have given voice to generations of prayer and praise.

Psalm 96:1 encourages us, "O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth." Anglican music answers this call, not only by preserving the finest of our musical inheritance, but by continuing to create and offer sacred works in each generation.

The Gift of Evensong

Of all the church services enriched by music, Choral Evensong perhaps speaks most deeply to the soul. Originating in the monastic evening offices of Vespers and Compline and given its classical form by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer (c.1549), Evensong has become one of the finest expressions of Anglican spirituality. It is a service rich in Scripture, poetry, and silence. A space in which the Word is not only read, but sung, proclaimed, and inwardly digested.

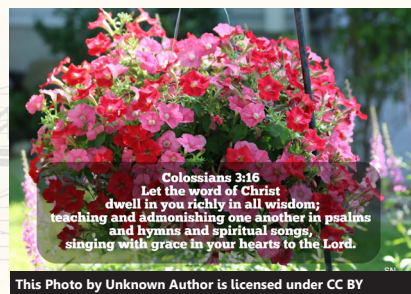
The structure of Evensong is itself a liturgical gem. The psalms, the Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis, the readings, and the prayers all form a seamless narrative of light in the gathering dusk. As the day draws to a close, Evensong places our lives back into the hands of God, echoing the words of Simeon: "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word" (Luke 2:29). It is a service that both closes the day and opens the heart. Importantly, Evensong allows space for reflection. While the choir offers the words of the service on behalf of those gathered for worship, the congregation is invited into a contemplative posture: resting in the beauty of the music and the truth of



Scripture. This is not passive worship, but deeply participatory in the most profound sense. Romans 10:17 reminds us, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." In the quiet glories of Evensong, faith is both kindled and sustained.

Music as Sacred Theology

Anglican music is not simply ornamentation. Rather, it is theology made audible. The *Magnificat*, Mary's song of prophetic hope and reversal (Luke 1:46–55), and the *Nunc Dimittis*, Simeon's serene affirmation of fulfilment, have been set to music countless times. Each setting opens new windows into the text's depth.



Through this music, composers express not only the words, but their meaning. It is not merely an accompaniment to the text; it interprets and proclaims it.

In this way, sacred music becomes an instrument of devotion. A well-sung anthem can carry complex theological truths into the heart with a clarity that surpasses prose.

As Colossians 3:16 encourages us, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." This is the vocation of church music, and the musicians that facilitate it, to allow the Word to dwell richly within us.

Formation and Fellowship

Anglican choral music has also long been a school for the soul, particularly for the young. Cathedral, Church and Chapel choirs have nurtured countless singers (myself included) not only in musical discipline, but in faith, community, and service. Choristers are trained to work together, to listen attentively, to strive for beauty, and to



offer their gifts in worship. Many speak of these experiences as formative for life.

Such opportunities must be cherished and sustained. They represent one of the few remaining spaces where children and adults, amateurs and professionals, may share in the making of something greater than themselves. As 1 Corinthians 14:15 reminds us, "I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also." (This is also the motto of the Royal School of Church Music). The Anglican musical tradition offers both: spirit and understanding, beauty and depth.

An Invitation and a Witness

Evensong is an opportunity not to be missed. This service offers a gentle form of outreach—one that welcomes the seeker, the weary, and the curious with open arms. No declarations are required, no active participation demanded. All that is needed is presence, and a willingness to listen. In this stillness, the Holy Spirit often speaks in ways that surprise and console. For our churches, this invites a renewed sense of purpose. Whether through monthly choral services, feast-day celebrations, or investment in musical training, we are called to steward this treasure faithfully. Evensong is not a relic of the past, but a living and vital gift for today.

A Personal Reflection

It has been one of the great privileges of my life to take part in this form of worship at St John's, Dumfries (now well into my third decade of doing so). Week by week Evensong forms a rhythm of grace: shaping the lives of those who sing, those who listen, and those who come simply to be held in its beauty. To have shared in this tradition is not only a joy, but a responsibility.

Beauty for the Glory of God

Psalm 29:2: "Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Choral Evensong, offers such beauty—not for its own sake, but for the glory of God. It lifts our eyes, stills our hearts, and reminds us that in the midst of all things, there is grace, there is order, and there is praise.

Choral Evensong here at St John's

Poster: Christine Guthrie

Sung by the Choir of
St John's Church, Dumfries

Choral Evensong

Sunday 4th June
at 6pm

Introit: Go Forth Into The World In Peace - Rutter
Preces & Responses: Ferial
Psalm
Canticles: Magnificat & Nunc Dimittis: Brewer in D
Anthem: Blessed Be The God And Father - Wesley

st John's
Dumfries

All very welcome
St John the Evangelist Newall Terrace, Dumfries DG1 1LW
enquiries@stjohnsdumfries.org

Choral Evensong is sung by the choir on a regular pattern of the first and third Sundays of the month. These are advertised along with the music to be sung therein. Keep an eye out for these services. May we cherish this heritage, invest in it, and share it boldly with others. In doing so, we honour not only our tradition, but the God to whom all music, all worship, and all life is offered.

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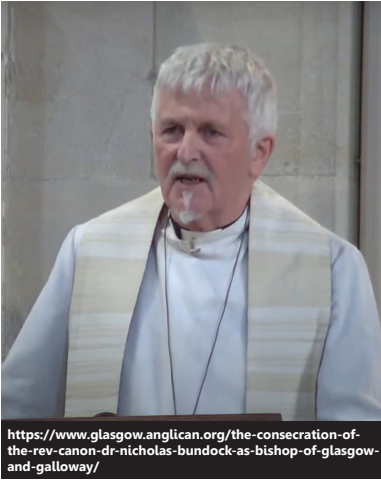
Consecration of the Rt Rev Nick Bundock as Bishop of Glasgow & Galloway

the Rev Canon Peter MacKenzie

Over the last twenty years or so I have been an occasional worshipper at St Mary's Cathedral in Glasgow. There I have valued the well-deserved reputation for its choral music, its intelligent preaching and been challenged by its inclusivity. An opportunity to join a diocesan-wide congregation for a service to consecrate the new bishop was not to be missed. Tickets, I was told, were very limited, but, undaunted, I applied and was delighted to receive the promise of a ticket, although, thanks to the vagaries of the postal service the actual ticket did not arrive until the Monday after the event! I was delighted to find that I could travel up with Jim Booth, so the journey passed quickly as we shared our experiences of ministry over the last few decades.

As we approached the cathedral I sensed that something was missing! Where was the warm welcome I had come to expect outside the cathedral. Uniquely, in my experience, visitors were greeted by the officiating clergy before they even entered the building, rain or shine. Of course, there are always things to be done before any service, but if cathedral clergy can manage it, why can't the rest of us? But not for a service like this, with all sorts of visitors wandering about and needing organising. Jim went off to robe while I worked out where I could sit to catch as much of the service as possible. I had scarcely seated myself when Janice, our former Rector, quietly slid alongside me, joining the ranks of the recently retired!

Just time to skim the service before we begin. The second surprise! The first hymn was 'Behold, the mountain of the Lord in latter days shall rise.' It is usually sung (as here) to the tune 'Glasgow.' It is a paraphrase of Isaiah 2.2 – 6 appearing in the Scottish Psalter of 1745. I first came across the tune in about 1961 in a 'Wee Free' church in Dingwall. There was no organ (of course) so the minister announced the name of the tune which stuck in my mind until I came across it again, many years later at St Mary's! Neither tune nor words appear in any Anglican hymn book, so I suspect that most of the congregation in the cathedral would be defeated. Very Scottish, but very un-Anglican! Except, of course, that the Cathedral very helpfully prints all the music on the congregational orders of service. I wonder if this is something we could adopt in our



own orders of service at St John's, since many of our hymns are sung to unusual tunes!

I was looking forward to the sermon by John Bell, well-known member of the Iona Community and hymn writer. John is a familiar figure in the cathedral. I remember commenting to Kelvin the Provost just how well the congregation had sung one of his hymns that morning. 'They always

sing well when he is in the congregation,' he replied. Today he regaled us with a story of a Victorian priest in Ayrshire whose institution was so unpopular that he and his patron were assailed with volleys of mud and a dead cat! Turning to the lesson from Acts he pointed out how, very early in the life of the Church, the Apostles called other godly men to extend the life and work of the Church. Drawing on the gospel story of Jesus walking on the water, he suggested that it was the recognising the presence of Jesus which reassured and encouraged the disciples and suggested that Jesus often appears to us in a stranger's guise and suggested that even today there are many opportunities open to us to reach those seeking God in the life of the Church.

Still pondering the challenge presented to all of us, we turned our attention to the one chosen to be our new bishop, Nicholas Bundock. As always there are two contrasting elements. Firstly, the consecration or setting aside of a priest for the ministry of a bishop. Our senior bishop in the SEC is known as the Primus (rather than the Archbishop) and they gather all the other bishops present to lay hands on the new candidate for the episcopacy as he or she kneels before them. Ordination, whether at Confirmation, as a deacon or priest or as a bishop is primarily to service rather



than as statement of status, hence the kneeling and the prayers of invocation of the Holy Spirit.

Firstly the bishop elect is presented to the Primus by representatives of clergy and laity and we all joined in the solemn singing of the Church's ancient hymn 'Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire.'

After the newly elected bishop makes the declarations, the congregation signals their assent and the Primus solemnly invites the bishop:

'Nicholas, in the name of the Holy Spirit and the Church of Christ, we call you to serve as Bishop of this diocese. Do you accept this call?'

Answered: I do.

Nicholas kneels before all the bishops present, who are led in prayer by the Primus.

The newly consecrated bishop is then robed in cope and mitre.

He is given a bible, his pastoral staff and his episcopal ring. The next section of the service refers rather coyly to the 'Seating' of the Bishop,

While the Church of England, partly because of its role as the Established Church, clings on to much of the language of political power Lord Bishops, even, historically, Prince Bishops (Durham) and grandiose seats (thrones) and posh palaces and seats in the House of Lords, the SEC rather more comfortably manages with seats or perhaps stalls.

And so on to the Peace. We were instructed to bow to one another!

We were back to the glory of Anglicanism with John Mason's great poem 'How Shall I Sing that Majesty' set to Ken Naylor's soaring tune, surely the twentieth century's greatest pairing of words and music.

Majestically the service drew to a close with the singing of 'For all the saints' leaving all who would or could make the trek to the Kelvingrove Museum for the Reception and the long trek home! What a great day!

Building Up the Body

Our Church WhatsApp Group as a Tool for Fellowship - Billy Dewar-Riddick



WhatsApp

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At St John's Church, Dumfries, our WhatsApp group serves as more than a digital noticeboard. It is a living expression of our shared faith and fellowship. As we navigate the world of instant messaging, it is essential to remember that every word we type has the power either to reflect Christ's love or to detract from it. This is why we have created a simple set of WhatsApp guidelines, rooted in Scripture, to help us live and communicate together as a respectful and supportive community.

The Apostle Paul reminds us, *"Let all that you do be done in love"* (1 Corinthians 16:14). This foundational principle shapes the tone and intention of our group. Whether we are sharing a prayer request, announcing an event, or offering a word of encouragement, our goal is to build each other up in faith.

In this spirit, we are called to speak with kindness and grace. Ephesians 4:29 instructs us: *"Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up."* Disagreements may sometimes arise, but even in these moments, Colossians 4:6 guides us: *"Let your conversation be always full of grace."*

The guidelines also urge us to respect privacy and boundaries.

We are reminded that the details others share, especially those involving health or personal matters, must be treated with sensitivity and care.

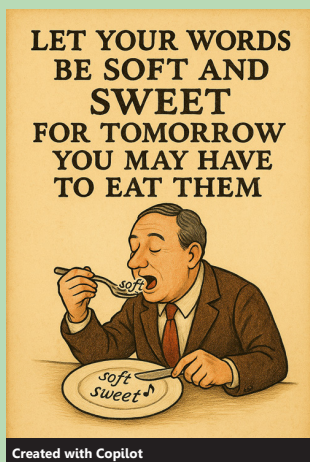
In a world often divided by politics and harsh rhetoric, our WhatsApp group offers a different witness. Galatians 3:28 reminds us of our unity in Christ, which transcends earthly differences. Our conversations should reflect that unity by focusing on encouragement, faith, and the life of the church.

When disagreements occur, we are encouraged to respond as Christ would, seeking peace and reconciliation (Romans 12:18), and taking particularly sensitive matters into private conversation when appropriate.



Finally, the group is also a place of care. We are called to be mindful of one another's wellbeing, especially that of the vulnerable. If any safeguarding concerns arise, members are encouraged to contact me, as PVG Coordinator, directly and in confidence.

Our WhatsApp group is a gift, a tool to strengthen our life together as a church. Let us use it to embody the love of Christ, build one another up, and be a light to each other in both word and spirit.



Mother's Union Summer Outing

Kim Jackson Tofield reflects on 'a grand day out'

In June the Mothers' Union concluded their official 2024/25 programme with a visit to Arbigland House and Garden.

The party travelled on the Thornhill Community Bus, driven by David Kerr. En route we stopped at New Abbey Parish Church for Middy prayers. Mothers' Union has a worldwide membership of over four million, and each member in their own country and time zone is encouraged to pray at midday, this results in a continual wave of prayer. On this occasion we were led in prayer by New Abbey's Minister, the Revd Johannes Wildner. The parish kirk sits in a lovely location on the edge of the village. It is described as 'Mechanical Gothic' having been built in 1875-7, and the kirk employed a local man, James Barbour as the architect.



MU prayers in New Abbey Kirk with Rev Johannes. The group is in front of the Burne-Jones/Morris East Window.

Next stop was the Abbey Cottage Tea Rooms for lunch, and afterwards some of the members explored another 'kirk' in New Abbey, the former Cistercian Sweetheart Abbey. Founded by Lady of Galloway, Devorgilla who had married the much older John Balliol; and on his death carried his heart in a casket around her neck. The casket and Lady Devorgilla were buried in front of the high altar in the Abbey.



Kalpana entering the Abbey Cottage Tea Room.



The resplendent remains of Sweetheart Abbey.

The final stop of the day was to Arbigland. Some years ago, the big house and the garden had been sold by the Blackett family and the new owners Alistair Alcock and Wayne Whittaker warmly welcomed us to their home. We were split into two and while half of us had a tour of the 'Lost Gardens' with Wayne the remainder viewed the house with Alistair.



Wayne showing a group of us round the Lost Garden.

We learnt that the gardens were originally laid out over two hundred years ago, and it consisted of many mature trees. One of Wayne's favourites are the Toffee Trees, although the writer prefers the Cedar Trees. The former mansion house at Arbigland was turned into a sunken garden feature by Italian Prisoners of War during the Second World War and many roses reside there now. The Italians departed, gardeners were employed for some time afterwards, until they too left. Leaving a Lost Garden for Wayne to restore when he and Alistair moved in in 2018.

Arbigland House dates back to 1755 when the laird was William Craik, a gentleman farmer who lived during most of the eighteenth century. His bride was one of the Stewarts of Shambellie, a family which had close links with St John's and its predecessors, St Mary's and the chapel on English Street. Although there are hints of 'Adam' in the design, the architect is not known and it is thought that Craik himself was the principal designer. In the nineteenth century a 'bow' was added to the back and an entrance porch to the front, otherwise the layout of the house is similar to



William Craik's 1755 Mansion House at Arbigland.

how William Craik knew it.

The Mothers' Union will be meeting informally in July and August for coffee and our 2025/26 programme starts in September. The first Thursday of the month is always a Eucharist and the third Thursday we meet for lunch in the church hall and then listen to a talk. Dr Lindsay Florey has been booked for the first meeting and she will be revealing to us her experiences of end-of-life care; please come and join us.

Reviewing the Situation:

OLIVER! at Annan Academy

Fiona Seagrave



(We're showing both front and rear cover of the programme – artwork by pupils Nahla Matthews and Sophie Smith – seemed a pity for you not to see the whole thing)

As in the opening lines of Fagin's famous song, I am indeed reviewing, not the situation, but Annan Academy's recent senior production of Oliver.

A small party of us set off in anticipation of an entertaining evening, and we were not disappointed.

There were some outstanding performances.

Fagin, played by **Joel Currie**, whose stage presence and strong mature voice belied his years.

Nancy, **Annabelle Woodward**, like Fagin, displayed a good stage presence and maturity of voice. She portrayed the tragic character of Nancy, an outwardly brash young woman, concealing a compassionate heart which conflicted with her fatal love for the evil and brutal character of Bill Sikes, depicted with menace by **Dan Stevenson**.

Edward Pickles, recently in the Academy's junior production, played the innocent Oliver, whose beautiful soprano voice was in perfect contrast to Fagin's boys and the roguish senior pickpocket, the Artful Dodger.

Mr Bumble, played by **Marley Patterson**, was suitably intimidating, and his entrance in the first scene bought the show to life. He was ably abetted by the unscrupulous and callous Mrs Bumble, (**Amy Thomson**). Mr and Mrs Sowerberry, (**Devlin Murray** and **Ailsa McDairmant** respectively), Charlotte (**Summer Thomas**) and Bet (**Megan Martin**) brought their characters to life and added to the high standard of all the principals.

The supporting cast fulfilled their roles with enthusiasm, and used the stage well. The cast were ably supported by the excellent musicians whom we have come to expect at Annan Academy productions under the expert and enthusiastic musical director Jamie Brand. However, it was occasionally difficult to hear the choruses and those individuals without mikes. This is not uncommon, as getting a balance between musicians and singers can be very difficult particularly when some are miked and some not. Importantly, it did not detract from the enjoyment of the performance. There were also a few microphone hiccups with some of the principals, particularly Nancy. However, it did not put them off their stride — a testament to their professionalism.

A special mention to those responsible for the scenery. The backdrops, particularly of the street scenes, were outstanding.

To conclude, we returned to Dumfries extremely impressed with what was a first class show in all respects, from the front of house team, backstage crew to the performers. This was a standard which we have come to expect from Annan Academy shows.

At a time when so few schools support and encourage the arts it is a privilege to be able to enjoy the performances which Annan Academy produces year after year, and to view the achievements and enjoyment which so many of its pupils gain from these experiences.

WELL DONE ANNAN ACADEMY!!



D & G Regional Youth Choir Annual Update

Sue St Joseph

First of all, a big thank you to St. John's for hosting our rehearsal and concert on Sunday 15th June – it feels very much like our second home and EVERYONE enjoys being here. It's always interesting to see how choir members interact with the building – the choir stalls cause great excitement! And an even bigger thank you for everyone who not only supported the concert by attending, but who donated so generously and helped raise over £500 for the choir fund – it will be put to good use!

The last time I wrote, we had had a residential trip in the Hartington with the Gifhorn Twin Town Singers (GTTS); taken part in the Dumfries Festival of Remembrance Service and were planning the trip to Germany in December 2024 for 'Nothing can keep us apart Part 2'.

Saturday 14th December 10.00am Castle Douglas was the start of the pick-up run across the region to get to North Shields for the overnight ferry to Ijmuden – 45 choir members; 5 staff and Ed, 'our' driver. It was very dark, and cold and a bit windy – the crossing was a bit bumpy but, importantly, we all managed dinner and breakfast.... and the food stayed down! We arrived safely Sunday morning and, once disembarked, headed for the youth hostel in Petershagen where we were staying for the week with the GTTS. It was a stunning venue, with wonderful facilities for musical activities – Germany seems to have many such venues which we have been privileged to experience (<https://www.jugendherberge.de/en/youth-hostels/petershagen/>). Room allocation and unpacking preceded the meeting of the choirs, ice breaker activities, getting organised and dinner. The priorities over - time for rehearsal and discussion.

We had opportunity for three discussion sessions on topics that had been suggested by choir members during our October trip –

- The difference in education systems in Germany and Scotland; Is social media a good thing?
- Climate Change; Homophobic/Transphobic/politically extreme behaviours

- How can we improve our mental health? Record your views
Video or Audio bite session

A lot of lively conversation took place, but our hosts were responsible for collecting information so we await further feedback.

Rehearsal sessions dominated our days, but these were interspersed with trips and outings –

Monday - Trip via Schachtschleuse - The locks - to the City of Minden where we had a guided tour and time at the Christmas market. The Battle of Minden, fought in Germany in 1759, has



strong links to Scotland through the participation of the King's Own Scottish Borderers, a regiment that some of our members have family ties with. Our tour included a visit to Minden Cathedral and to view the stunning re-creation of their altar piece.

Tuesday – For the young, a 'Rallye' in Petershagen in mixed groups - a sort of treasure hunt with various tasks and clues, requiring 'technology' and uploading answers to Instagram! They all disappeared, and the 'grown-ups' made the most of the opportunity for "Kaffee und Kuchen" to catch up with old friends.



Wednesday - A busy day with a trip to play 'mini-golf' in Bad Oeyenhausen. Not mini-golf as we would understand it, but NeonGolf - three different themed rooms, brought to life with 3D glasses: underwater, through the jungle, and space in bright colours and shapes.



After that, time outside for a hiking tour to "Porta Westfalica" to see the Kaiser-Wilhelm monument & museum. Time and the weather were against us and the 'hike' turned into a walk when the coaches dropped us at the bottom of the road to the monument – the view was stunning!

'Home' for a quick rehearsal and dinner before the first of our



concerts in the church in Petershagen, then back to the hostel for a 'Bunter Abend' and Ceilidh as this would be our last evening together in the hostel.

Thursday - Packing up and heading off to Gifhorn for time in the town before a rehearsal in St Nicolai Church in preparation for our concert in the evening. It was a tight squeeze fitting in the choirs; the audience packed the pews. A truly wonderful evening showcasing the skill and talent of our young singers. There was a farewell party at Humboldt Gymnasium, after which GTTS members went home and RYC went back to the youth hostel for one final night.



Friday – Our final day 'abroad'. We set off for home, stopping to give a short concert at Oosterbeek Church in Arnhem – a place with which Jamie and Annan Academy have strong links and which they visit frequently – before heading to DFDS terminal Ijmuden to check in for our return ferry home. Our itinerary said '17.00 Ship sails (Dinner on board included)'. Sadly, not many on board managed dinner and those who could didn't retain it for long – A VERY BUMPY CROSSING! But most enjoyed a hearty breakfast on Saturday before disembarking at North Shields and heading back to Dumfries & Galloway. Timing, scheduling and the proximity to Christmas didn't allow for a concert in D & G.

Suddenly, it's June 2025 – exams are over; school shows and end-of-term concerts are under way; a new timetable has started – everyone seems as busy as ever. But plans were already being made for October, so we had to get together and do some singing. We only had two rehearsals before our concert at St.



John's on June 15th but managed to gather a choir of about 50, most of whom have sung with us before. Having had to 'start again' after Covid, it's been so encouraging to see how they have developed as a choir – tackling new pieces and performing them in a short space of time. We had a wonderful evening – much enjoyed by all involved.

For the next UK leg of our collaboration, we are going to meet with the GTTS in Chester. Departing on Monday 6th October 2025, and staying at Trafford Hall Youth Hostel near Chester - as usual, a combination of rehearsals, social time and visits, including Chester Zoo and Blackpool Pleasure Beach. We'll return for a concert in Dumfries on Friday 10th October – make sure you save the date!

(See the RYC Facebook page for videos of the concerts.)



Fun and Fund raising

Annette Beagrie - An update and plea from your Social committee

St John's Social Committee met recently to look at our programme of events for the next few months.

These have now been published in the pew notes.

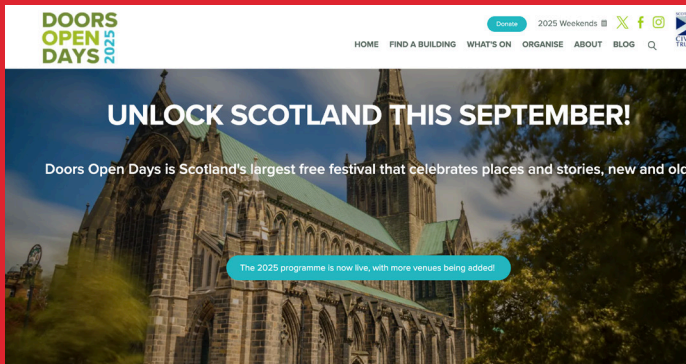
By the time you read this we will have had our annual **Strawberry Tea** [and maybe a couple of other events...]. We do hope you were able to come and enjoy them. We were happy to see so many people there. Most people stayed for the afternoon and enjoyed the lovely scones, and home baked goodies. Christine's cake stall was a great success, and we had an amazing raffle.

We have tried to choose a variety of events to suit everyone. We did ask for suggestions from the congregation, and we have tried to include some of those.... And some are saved for the future.

Coming up [at the time of writing] **Annan Town Band** are using our wonderful church for their **summer concert**.

At the end of the month, we have another of St John's famous **Bring and Share lunches**. This is when we can all bring food for a buffet table and join together after the service to share food, eat and enjoy fellowship. It gives us a chance to meet and mingle in a relaxed way. There will be another Bring and Share Lunch at the beginning of October on the day of our **Harvest Festival**. Our final Bring and Share Lunch for this year will be our **Christmas lunch** in December.

At the beginning of September, we are participating in **Doors Open Day**. There will be more details nearer the time but we will need lots of help. We get a chance to share our wonderful building with lots of people and maybe even persuade some to join us at a service. Look at the pew sheets for more information and see how you can help. Our monthly Friday night **Quiz nights** start again at the end of September. Another great way to meet people, and have a fun night. Do not be afraid to come on your own. We just make up into teams of three once we are there, have a cuppa at half time, and always a good selection of raffle prizes!! More fun and fellowship.



<https://www.doorsopendays.org.uk/>

On the 4th October we are hosting the **Leeds Male Voice Choir**. They are on a tour including Carlisle Cathedral, and are performing in our beautiful church. This is a **major fundraiser for us** and we hope to be able to have refreshments and a raffle at the interval. Should be a fantastic night and we are thrilled they are including us in their tour. Tickets are available on line. See posters and the QR code available in the church



We plan to have a bus outing for **10 Pin Bowling** in early November, a **Beetle Drive** in January, **Film show at the Burns Centre** in February, and a **Craft**

afternoon in March. More details later for these events... so keep an eye on the Pew Sheets for more information nearer the time.

Our **Fashion Show** earlier this year was a great success and we would hope to be able to do this again some time soon.

We hope you agree we have an interesting programme of events for the next few months. We may be able to add to these if we get ideas and help. SO.... this is where you come in.

We can only put on these events if we have **help**. Help with ideas, Help with catering, Help with raffle prizes..... and all of you to come and support our efforts. Most of the events are Fun Raisers and some are Fundraisers. So PLEASE come along, and bring friends and family. We have a wonderful building, and a great church family here at St John's. Please support our efforts. Have fun with us, and help us raise the profile of our church in the community.

Carolynne says... [at the time of writing this] I'm currently sitting on my cruise ship in the port of Vancouver waiting for my cabin to be ready!

The Spring Fashion Show and afternoon tea was a way to generate some funds for the repair of the hall. When I approached Plum Boutique, the owner Audrey was enthusiastic and agreed immediately. We chose the date and time together and recruited the models. I gathered the tea team and approached the Eden Flowers shop for the jewellery. This was all agreed and then we sold the tickets, all 80 of them. The day arrived and with tables in place, the guests arrived and the models in their carefully chosen outfits, strutted the catwalk with explanations by Audrey. Tea was served swiftly, the raffle was distributed and a happy time was had by all and a good amount was added to the repair fund.

Spring Fling 2025

David Kerr

This year's Spring Fling tours were a little different to previous ones. In this area, only Thornhill Community Transport was running tours, though Galloway CT also ran a tour on Spring Fling's Blue Route, starting from Kirkcudbright.

Saturday morning, the beginning of a beautiful day, saw a full bus of 15 passengers setting off to undertake the Green route (Nithsdale) and about half of the rural section of the Orange (Solway Coast) route. It was pleasing, thanks to Tatyana's influence, to have a number of passengers who had booked in via The Depot (formerly known as MOOL), as well as a couple of kent faces from St J's.

First stop on the tour was Alex Rigg (Studio 57), at Auchenstroan, a farm a few miles west of Moniaive on the B729 and, like many of the exhibition spaces, in a place that, mostly, you'd have no occasion to visit. In addition, the venue, like various others, is at the end of a bumpy track, but I always check all the venues beforehand, to make sure there's adequate ground clearance, headroom and somewhere to turn the bus round, so I don't have to reverse miles back out again!

Alex's studio was, for those, like me, who didn't know what to expect, both a surprise and a delight. The majority of his exhibits were costumes, particularly hats, and our visit there got the day off to a fun start...as you can see from the pictures.



On to Thornhill for a more extended stay, including lunch opportunities. A number of popular, regular exhibitors there,

in their own premises or the relatively newly redeveloped Old School Thornhill (OST), a community enterprise providing meeting and exhibition spaces etc, developed from the disused upper school section of the old primary school. Particular favourites in Thornhill include potter Samuel Sparrow and, of course, blacksmith Nate Robinson, whose house-size fork, wrought iron mythical creatures and exciting demonstrations are always hugely popular. Then on to our friend Anne Butler in Durisdeer to admire her abstract landscapes and, not incidentally, a chance to catch up with both Anne and Steve.



That concluded our travels on the Green route, but we still had time to visit some venues on the Orange route: Rachael Ashcroft (Studio 65) a woodworker, just outside Kirkgunzeon, and Louisa Birdsall, a landscape painter and Rebecca McLellan, a textile artist, both in Rockcliffe. Rockcliffe also provided the opportunity to take in a breath of sea air, walk on the beach, and sample the wares of an ice cream van; and then it was time to return to Gracefield.

Back the following morning (Sunday) as His Reverence used to say, for a brand new show, we set off with a different, smaller, group, to embark on the Red (Annandale & Eskdale) tour and the other half of the rural section of the Orange tour. First stop was the very popular and welcoming Rebecca Woods (Studio 75) in Moffat, a potter who specialises in Mishima technique (no, neither did I, but she explains it very well and her work is beautiful). And then on to another surprise: Sonny Cooper (Studio 76); beautiful jewellery in a stunning woodland location.

One would have to say that the family house, redeveloped from what must have been derelict stables, and not, itself, part of the exhibition, was pretty popular, too.

A longish trundle on from there to the Hub at Eskdalemuir, another community enterprise located in a former primary school, which, despite being extremely busy, managed to provide us all, and pretty promptly, with lunch. And on to Langholm to Daniel Lacey (Studio79), whose beautiful, sensuous furniture has been remarked on before. Also, this year, almost next door, was Mike Dixon, who gave fascinating demonstrations of the progress, using traditional carving techniques, of turning a block of wood into a spoon. He, and other members of his family, were also exhibiting photographic prints, illustrated cards, natural soaps, and so on. Last stop on the Red tour was Chris Renshaw (Studio 80), just outside Cummertrees. Chris is a blacksmith specialising in bespoke chefs', hunting, camping etc knives. Surprisingly beautiful objects and, of course, at least one member of the party had a go at part of the forging process. Another unexpectedly popular exhibition, in large part thanks to Chris' enthusiasm and the same welcome that was extended by all the exhibitors.

Final part of today's tour was to do the 'other half' of the rural section of the Orange tour. We visited Ailsa Black (Studio 71) in a lovely seaside location at Carsethorn. Pictures of village life and 'colourful art for a whole range of creative gifts', cards etc, including my personal favourite Belties. Getting late now, but we pressed on to Alan Cameron (Studio 70) to admire his relief prints from sawn wood. He had actually closed for the day, but kindly opened up again, just for us, and that, and his work,

were much appreciated. Then on to Kate Bentley at Sandyhills, with an eclectic collection of oils, print, watercolours and mixed media and finally Mark Welland [he also kindly re-opened, especially for us], near Dalbeattie, who has curated an amazing portfolio of beachcombed material, including manufacturing his own pigments. There were extensive studies of a single, enormous, Kentish oak tree, as photographs, paintings and, now it has fallen, a quantity of its timber, awaiting reuse. As a bonus, as we were leaving, we encountered Mark's wife and were able to admire her collection of show sheep and newly born lambs. Tour participants were frisked after this, to ensure no ovine passengers had been smuggled back on board the bus.

And so back to Gracefield. We managed to get round all the venues we'd planned, on both days. Those passengers on Sunday must have felt they'd somehow booked themselves into a Ken Dodd gig, as we didn't actually get back to Gracefield until 7.30pm. Feedback on both days was very enthusiastic, both for the tours and for the welcome, enthusiasm and talent of all the exhibitors. As I've said before, those booking on the tours enjoy the more elevated view out that the bus affords and that they don't have to worry about getting lost, or feeling places are too remote to venture to. Encouragingly, on one day, two passengers were here from the Stirling area, taking notes on how things were organised, with a view to restarting something similar in the Falkirk/Stirling/Alloa area. Big thanks to all the exhibitors, and to Chris and all at Spring Fling for devising all the routes, producing the beautiful brochure and so on. If you haven't done this yet, what are you waiting for? It'll be back next year.



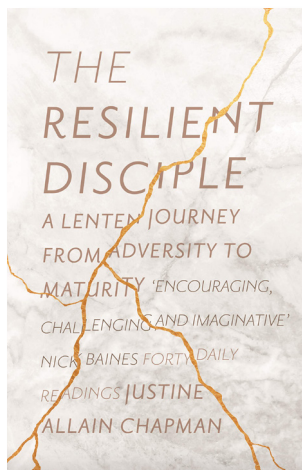
Study Groups



House/Lent/Advent Study Groups have enjoyed a bit of a resurgence at St J's in recent years, thanks to Janice's promotion of them. Relative newcomers to St J's Tom Lochhead and Zara Ross give us their impressions

For the last 25 years we have attended two (very different) Church of England parish churches in Bristol and Wokingham, feeling very much at home in both of them. However, after arriving in Dumfries in January, we felt we should keep an open mind and prayerfully explore where to settle for worship. We have been pleasantly surprised to find such a range of sincere and loving worshipping communities in all of the varied churches we have attended. But here we would like to reflect on our experience of being made particularly welcome at one of St John's Lenten bible studies and then the post-Easter study on Habakkuk.

Kay and Esther very kindly welcomed us to their home for weekly sessions based on *'The Resilient Disciple: A Lenten Journey from Adversity to Maturity'*.



The subtitle on the cover on the study guide set a high expectation bar – 'Encouraging, Challenging and Imaginative'. Of course, much depends on how much energy and

commitment we bring to these activities, but we did find the study very helpful. We traced parallels between the Apostle Peter's experience of encountering and getting to know Jesus and our own faith journeys with all our own 'ups and downs', failures and hopes. This felt like a safe space in which to be honest and explore our doubts and challenges. We also got to know some lovely people and pick some brains about church life in Dumfries.



The second study (held in the Rectory and led by David Kerr) had quite a different focus but felt just as relevant to our time. The prophet Habakkuk argues with God, rebuking Him for failing to discipline the Children of Israel for their callousness and injustice. When God informs Habakkuk that He will use the Babylonian army to punish Israel, Habakkuk is horrified as the Babylonians are even more corrupt and cruel than Israel. However, after God explains that the Babylonians will then be defeated and God's ultimate purpose for Israel restored, Habakkuk is reassured and praises God. He encourages those

who will have to live through this tribulation to 'live by faith' and in hope and commitment to justice even though circumstances become dire. We had lively discussions about whether we can argue with God – e.g.: asking how He can allow the injustice and suffering we see around the world? Can/should God use 'evil to achieve good?'. The study referred us to some of the Psalms which very honestly and powerfully expressed feelings of despair, anger, frustration, but also of hope and worship.

We know from our own past experience that 'bible studies' tend to draw small numbers and so church leaders and organisers might well ask themselves if they are worth the effort. We have no 'silver bullet' suggestions for increasing numbers but we have greatly appreciated these groups and would ask that they please continue. We all need safe spaces where we can explore our faith, ask questions and develop our understanding.

Tom Lochhead & Zara Ross



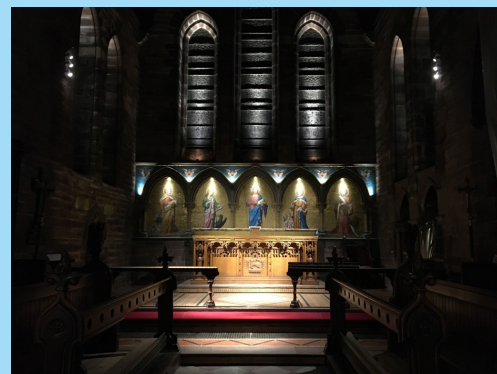
User Friendliness

David Kerr

St J's is pretty good at welcoming visitors and newcomers. David Kerr has been looking at two known 'hurdles' for people coming newly to a strange [sic!] church: first: actually crossing the threshold; second: finding out what's going on and how to join in.

Welcoming people who come into St John's is something we generally reckon we do well. The fact that the church building, almost uniquely in Dumfries, is open all day, every day, is clearly valued in the town.

It's something we've either always done or, at least, something we've done for a long time. People from elsewhere are often astonished – I think horrified is perhaps a better word to find it so. 'But what if...?' we are often asked. Well, odd things do happen from time to time but, on the whole, surprisingly few and there are, in fact a lot of people drifting in and out of the building almost every day. Some light candles, some have clearly come to admire the architecture and artefacts, but many just choose to sit and have a few moments' quiet. Sometimes that is assisted by someone else playing the organ or the piano; other times it's the relative silence people appreciate; a bit of a chance, for those who believe in that, to have some time alone with God and, for others, just a bit of peace and quiet, or to admire the beauty of the place. Many people, those of faith and those of none, remark on the peace and stillness of the building...and that has little to do with what may actually be going on in the church at the time.



Then there are the events we host from time to time, whether run by ourselves or, as with the Christmas Tree Festivals, by another organisation, such as Dumfries Flower Club. Even for events in the hall, former Rector Janice had a bit of a thing

about wanting people to enter via the church, so that they got a glimpse of it and a waft of who knows what as they passed through. And the fact that there are often St J's people floating about, doing flowers or other jobs around the place, and ready to be welcoming and answer questions, is appreciated, too.



But our 'core business' as the *Clipboarderati* would say, is services. The most important factor when newcomers cross the threshold is people. We are blessed with a dedicated group of people who do duty as welcomers, stewards and the like.

In times where newcomers or visitors may have much less experience of 'church', how it works and, in particular, how St J's works, the reassurance and welcome they – and the rest of us, who may end up sitting next to a newcomer or visitor – provide, is crucial. Almost exactly ten years ago, I was at a conference/training day, run by the Diocese, on the subject. Here's one of the slides from it (rather than my rehashing what it said) -

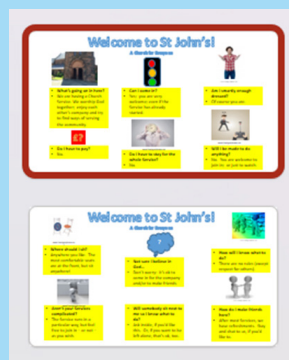
Invitation:

- Many people view church as a club, so would need to be invited.
- If we wait for our church to be perfect, we'll never do it.
- If you run special events, (*Christingle...*), are people from the *Congregation there?*
- Don't underestimate the difficulty people have crossing the threshold; knowing what to do.
 - Should we have a notice, saying, 'Can't hear? Can't read? Don't know what to do? Don't worry!'
 - Or laminated cards / 'W board outside?'
- "We went to our church for 15 months, but didn't know there were housegroups; they had become private clubs."
- Everyone needs a group to belong to (however informal) – they'll know if you're ill, away etc.
- After 6 weeks, approach newcomers and see what they like/don't and if they'd like to contribute.
 - Evidence is that lay follow up is better than Clergy ("he's paid to do it")

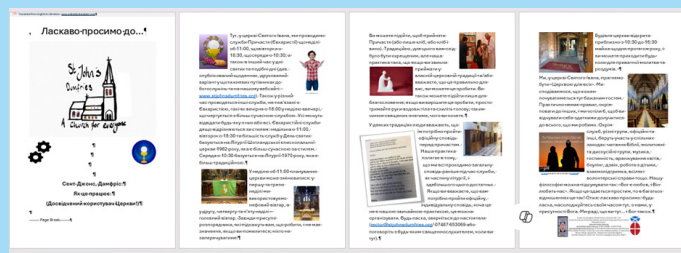
We already do quite a few of these things, but the stand out thing may be Bullet Point 4: (circled in **red**) how difficult those not used to us, or to 'church' may find it both to come in

through the door when there's a service on, and to follow what's going on, once they've made the decision to come in.

To that end, we've now got various leaflets available: in stands labelled, variously, '**New to Church – Start Here**', '**St J's – How It Works (Experienced Church User)**' and another one I'll refer to in a minute. Some people arriving won't have a clue what to expect; others may be well versed about how their own church does things, but be worried about, say, messing up any one way system we may have at communion time, whether they can receive etc.



Others, from other traditions, have been known to worry about not having attended specific 'one to one' confession before participating in the Eucharist. And there's the business of *Presby, Presby, dinnae bend; Piscie, Piscie – Amen – doon on yer knees an' up again* and knowing when to do what, as if it mattered much. So – we've done our best to demystify all of that.



There are English and Ukrainian versions of both these leaflets. Also a short contact form, for people to leave their details, if they'd like us to be in touch with them, without their feeling they're signing up to a full membership they wouldn't be able to cancel...we've all been there!

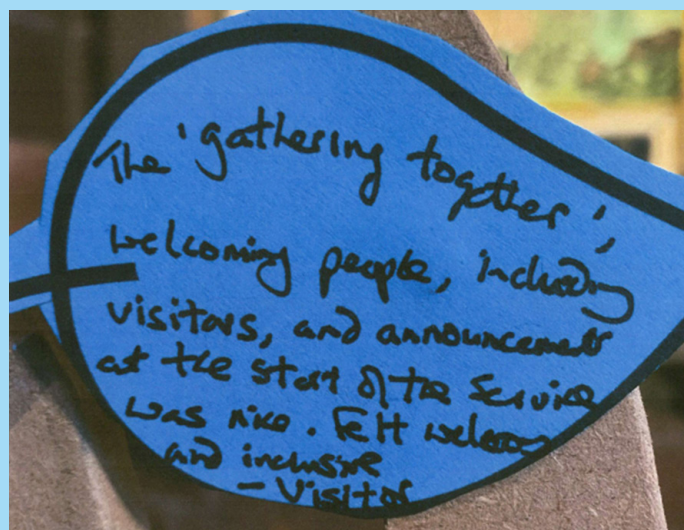
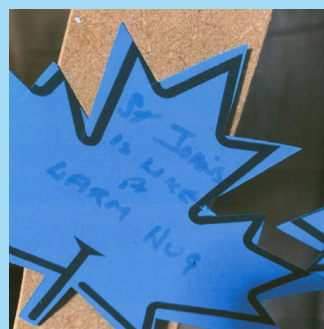
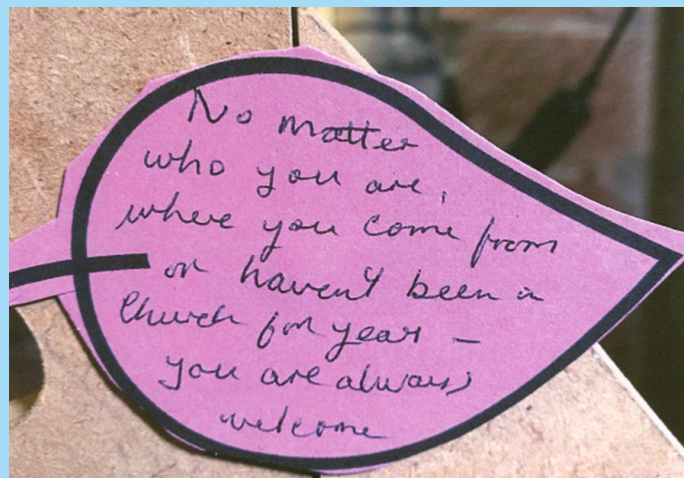
Finally, I'd draw your attention to the few lines outlined in **blue**. Despite what the *Clipboarderati* might think, a large part of what we do is **not** confined to services; but **is** other Kingdom work. That can be another big hurdle: people have often wanted to join something, contribute or whatever, but have felt they needed to wait and be asked...and never were. In a place like St

J's, which, despite its size, operates in quite an informal way, we don't generally expect that – we tend, I suspect, just to assume people will have the confidence to put themselves forward, but sometimes they don't. And they don't always know what there is that they might join. So there is now also a booklet, entitled 'Things We Do Which Might Interest You' (Catchy title, I'm sure you'll agree), which lists, so far as possible, all the things that happen here and tries to make the point that people should feel free to approach any group, or do it through the Church Office.

I've included a selection of 'leaves' from the tree at the back of the church. The comments on them – some clearly from visitors – suggest we're already getting quite a bit right.

If you think all of this is unnecessary, maybe that's because you've been here a long time, or you are confident enough to breenge straight in and join things. Lucky you. But it's very often the apparently very small things that make the initial difference to people feeling welcome, feeling they can put themselves forward, and so on. This is our attempt to improve that aspect. So...whoever you are, if you see people looking a bit lost, you could offer them one or more of the leaflets/booklets mentioned; but (and most of us are already good at this), remember to talk to them first.

stj



“Vac.Com” – an update on the work of the Vacancy Committee

Jamie Brand (Chair)

Following the update to the congregation on the 15th June, we wanted to let everyone know where in the lengthy and complex process of appointing a new Rector we are. As I write this, it strikes me that a Churchill quote fits quite well.....albeit in a very different context 'Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.'. I hope that what follows will let you know what we have done, why we have done it and what needs to happen next.

Following the SGM in March, the Vacancy Committee were asked by the Dean to wait for a meeting with him before taking any action. This was because recruitment procedures had changed greatly since the last vacancy.



We were charged at that meeting with undertaking the following tasks:

- Completing financial forms giving details of the Church and confirming St John's ability to support a Rector. These have been completed, with help from Christopher Pierson – Harvey, for which we are very grateful.
- Completing a Congregational Profile, outlining the type of Church we are, what our approach to mission is, how we function, what we do and so on. This was also to include details about the church building, the rectory and the Hall. This has now been completed and is being worked into its final format.
- Completing a video overview of our activities, groups, services etc This is on – going work, which will continue over the summer. We are grateful to Annette's son Stuart for videoing services at Easter, and David & Amie have been putting together clips of various activities. We hope to put in some

'Talking heads' clips – for those of you familiar with Alan Bennet's work, accompanied by suitable music and video clips.

- Completing a Priest's Profile – a person spec – which would identify the kind of person we are looking for, their skills and experience. A key aspect of this was consultation with the congregation. We did this by using the trusty tree at the back of the church, and asked people to write ideas on the coloured leaves. We have used material from the leaves to complete the Congregational Profile, including what you said that you value about St John's as well as our weaknesses and strengths. The Vacancy Committee will continued to reflect on these as we prepare to complete the Priest's Profile.

It is our hope that we will complete the Video and Priest Profile by the end of October, with a view to proceeding to the next stage in the process thereafter.

My thanks go to all members of the Vacancy Committee for their ongoing commitment to our task. I am however, particularly indebted to Lizanne MacKenzie for the massive amount of work that she has put in preparing the Congregational Profile, and also to our Clerk, David Kerr who diligently keep us supplied with information, minutes and never tires of answering questions on how to use our on-line, shared folder!

Above all, we want ALL members of our Church community to be able to contribute to this process. Please speak to any member of the Vacancy Committee to make your views and opinions known, particularly if you feel that you have not yet been able to express these.

We all remain grateful to you all for your support and prayers.

PS: Since this article was written, the position has altered somewhat; not least because of potential changes in the Diocese, following the arrival of Bishop Nick. More on this next time.

News Roundup - David Kerr

On the subject of which (Round Up) steps have recently been taken to address the **weeds** in the car park.

Take a moment, also, to admire the new **planters** in the car park, kindly gifted by a member of the congregation.

I'm grateful to the various members of the Congregation who have stepped up to help with the **opening and closing of the church**, day by day. It's one of the things that looks as if it happens by magic, but, particularly when there is no resident Rector on site, requires organising. Your efforts are much appreciated.

There will be a detailed report about the **Holiday Club** in the next edition of the Magazine, but, in the meantime, thank you to all, including both Morrison's and Tesco Extra, Dumfries, who have contributed cardboard tubes, juice, biscuits, baking and other things for use at the HC. To say nothing of those who have offered to turn up and help. Again, much appreciated.



First Aid kits (pretty outdated) in kitchen and church have been inspected and, in fact, replaced in their entirety. The kitchen one is where it's always been; the church one, (formerly in the office) is now in the cupboard in the porch next to the defibrillator. Should you have occasion to use anything from either of these kits, please would you let me or Robyn Brotherston know, so we can organise replenishments. You'll also need to remember, please, to fill in details of any incident in the Accident Book in the kitchen, next to the First Aid kit there. We also need to identify First Aiders in the Congregation and, maybe, train up some new ones. If you are one, or think you might be willing to be one, please speak to Robyn. And thanks to her, also, for dealing with the new First Aid kits.



Glad to say there's not been much in the way of **repairs or maintenance** needed recently, though the church building, hall and Rectory are all closely monitored. We haven't lost sight of the need to address the **hall roof and windows**. Listed building consent has been obtained for replacement (if we decide to do it) of the hall windows. The usual council planning notice was displayed on lamp posts in the area. Given the positioning of the notices and the rather general

nature of what they said, I wouldn't have been surprised to get approaches from members of the public thinking we were going to replace the stained glass windows with white UPVC...but no-one did. (And we aren't). The roof, as a repair of the existing, doesn't need consent. Our friends at the Diocesan Architects are now drawing up specifications for the roof repair and possible window replacement. That should enable us to get quotes and to apply for grant funding. Grant funding should cover a fair bit of the work required, but almost certainly won't cover all of it and, once we know what the shortfall is, we'll need to consider how to make up this difference. This will be a number of months off, yet, but we all need to start now prayerfully considering what to do about it. Some people have, of course, already generously made donations towards this repair fund. We're grateful for this, and will not refuse further contributions!

There are also, separately, but, in a way, related, plans to improve the insulation etc of the **Rectory**. The Rectory is generally in a pretty good state, thanks to what we did last Vacancy and how well Janice, and we, have looked after it since. That's not to say there aren't plenty of other things we could do, and a few that we should. More as this story unfolds.

As Annette mentions elsewhere, we will be participating in **Doors Open Day** this September. It's a weekend when places that are not usually open (though we, of course, are) allow people to come in and look round. We'll need folk to help staff the building, so there are more on hand than usual to answer questions and probably help with some hospitality (teas & coffees etc as we have done on similar occasions). More on that in the weekly service sheets in due course.

And make sure you get a ticket (some still available at time of drafting, but don't delay) for **Leeds Male Voice Choir's concert in St J's on Sunday, 04/10/2025**. Promises to be an excellent evening. Tickets may still be available on the door, but you're safest to book now.



