

Cathedral News



March 2026

Who's Who at the Cathedral...

...and who is the contact for what

Provost

The Very Rev'd Dr Stephen Holmes

Manager

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From the Provost

Dear friends,

Lent has well and truly begun here at St Ninian's Cathedral. We had a great pancake party on Shrove Tuesday with games for the young people organised by Jamie Gardner. This year Fr Ross shone as champion clergy pancake tosser while the Provost repeated his feat of last year and threw his pancake behind the bookcases. The children, and some adults, did much better and they also found 94 alleluias which Jamie had hidden in the cathedral. A*****a is a word we don't use in Lent, so it was ceremonially taken away.



After all the partying, Ash Wednesday was more serious although there were some comments on the ash crosses made on our foreheads by the Bishop and clergy (I absolutely refute the suggestion that the one I put on the head of the editor of this venerable organ looked like a swastika). It was good to have Bishop

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Ian with us and Fr Ross preached an inspiring sermon about St Scholastica and the priority of love in our Lenten observance.

This month continues our Lenten journey and I would encourage you to come to our weekday services and Lent groups. Sung Compline on Thursday evenings at 6.30pm is a beautiful service, ancient, short and unchanging, which has become very popular with students and young adults in recent years. At the end of March we enter into the dramatic journey of Holy Week and Easter, and I would encourage you to attend all the main Holy Week services: Palm Sunday Eucharist, Maundy Thursday Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, Good Friday Liturgy of the Passion and the Easter Vigil. These services can change your life. They take you right into the heart of the Easter Mystery of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Only this can help us in the current political and cultural crisis.

This year on Wednesday in Holy Week we are also planning to have the popular service of Tenebrae, a candlelit meditation on the passion when fifteen candles in a special candlestick are put out one by one as psalms and readings are proclaimed until only one candle is left representing Christ, abandoned by all. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overpower it.

On Sunday 22 March at 4.00pm at Choral Evensong we will have the blessing of our new icon of our holy patron St Ninian, given in memory of Canon Celia Matthews. Bishop Ian and ecumenical guests will attend together with members of Celia's family and you are invited to join us for Evensong and a reception afterwards in the Chapter House. The icon and its oak housing were made by the distinguished iconographer Aidan Hart and woodcarvers and blacksmiths from his workshop. Aidan made the screen for the coronation and our icon was recently shown to the King who was very impressed by it and wanted to know more about Perth Cathedral.

In the forthcoming events section you may notice that in June there will be monastic professions here at St Ninian's Cathedral. We have been blessed over the past few months by the presence of Br Andrew-Thomas in our congregation - you may have seen him in his black monastic habit. There were once many religious (the technical name for monastic men and women) in the Scottish Episcopal Church and some of you remember the nuns or sisters who served at the cathedral. Monks and nuns are the canary in the coalmine of the Church:

when monastic life flourishes, it is a sign that the Church is flourishing. It has not flourished in recent years and with the blessing of the Primus, Bishop Mark of Moray, Ross and Caithness, we are pleased that this new revival will begin at St Ninian's Cathedral. I hope Br Andrew-Thomas will write more about this new community in a future issue.

May you all have a blessed and holy Lent,

With love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Stephen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Very Revd Dr Stephen Homes, Provost

Readings and Collects for March

Second Sunday of Lent - 1 March

Collect: Almighty God, you show to those who are in error the light of your truth, that they may return to the way of righteousness: grant to all those who are admitted into the fellowship of Christ's religion, that they may reject those things that are contrary to their profession, and follow all such things as are agreeable to the same; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Readings: Genesis 12.1-4a, Psalm 121, Romans 4.1-5, 13-17, John 3.1-17

Third Sunday of Lent - 8 March

Collect: Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first he suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Readings: Exodus 17.1-7, Psalm 95, Romans 5.1-11, John 4.5-42

Fourth Sunday of Lent - 15 March

Collect: Merciful Lord, absolve your people from their offences, that through your bountiful goodness we may all be delivered from the chains of those sins which by our frailty we have committed; grant this, heavenly Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our blessed Lord and Saviour, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Readings: 1 Samuel 16.1-13, Psalm 23, Ephesians 5.8-14, John 9.1-14

Fifth Sunday of Lent (Passion Sunday) - 22 March

Collect: Most merciful God, who by the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ delivered and saved the world: grant that by faith in him who suffered on the cross we may triumph in the power of his victory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

Readings: Ezekiel 37.1-14, Psalm 130, Romans 8.6-11, John 11.1-45

Sixth Sunday of Lent (Palm Sunday) - 29 March

Collect at the Liturgy of the Palms: Assist us, Lord God of our salvation: that we may enter with joy the mysteries of this most holy week, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Readings: Matthew 21.1-11, Psalm 118.1-2, 19-29

Collect at the Liturgy of the Passion: Almighty God, who, in your tender love for the human race, sent your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to take our nature upon him, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: mercifully grant, that we may both follow the example of his passion, and also, be made partakers of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end.

Readings: Isaiah 50.4-9a, Psalm 31.9-16, Philippians 2.5-11, Matthew 26.14-27.66



Lent and Special Services

Every Thursday in Lent

6.10pm: Lent Talk on People of the Passion and 6.30pm: Sung Compline

5 March Judas (Maihri)

12 March Mary Magdalene (Lis)

19 March Pilate (Fr Stephen)

26 March Mary, Mother of God (Fr Philip)

Sunday 22 March, Passion Sunday

4.00pm: Choral Evensong with the Blessing of the Icon of St Ninian,
followed by a reception in the Chapter House

Wednesday 25 March, The Annunciation

11.00am: Mass and 7.00pm: Sung Mass

Sunday 29 March, Palm Sunday

11.00am: Palm Sunday Mass with Procession

4.00pm: The St. John Passion by Handel, sung by our choir

Wednesday 1 April

7.00pm: Tenebrae

Maundy Thursday 2 April

11.00am: Chrism Mass for the diocese

7.00pm: Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper

Good Friday 3 April

3.00pm: Liturgy of the Passion

Holy Saturday 4 April

9.00pm: Great Vigil of Easter

Easter Day 5 April

9.30am Mass; 11.00am Sung Mass

Sunday 19 April

4.00pm: Choral Evensong

Saturday 6 June

12.00 noon: Profession of the first members of the Community of Nazareth, a new monastic community in the Scottish Episcopal Church



Remembering Departed Loved Ones

The cathedral's Lady Chapel is a place of powerful spirituality where Jesus is present in the Sacrament, where we gather to pray, and where prayers are answered. In it a candle burns day and night to remind us of the loving presence of Jesus. It costs about £20 to keep the flame burning for a month and your donation can be given to the treasurer or Provost or made by bank transfer (subject - Lamp). You are invited to sponsor the flame for a month in memory of your loved ones. You can add their name to the sheet in the Cloister or contact Provost Stephen on provost.perth@gmail.com or Chris our treasurer on treasurer@perthcathedral.co.uk.

In March the flame will burn in memory of **Jean Gardner and John Miller**.

From the Registers

Deposition of the ashes of Pat Butler at the cathedral - 11 February

What's Been Going On?

The Pancake Party

Over 40 hungry pancake eaters descended on the Chapter House at 5.30 on Shrove Tuesday, ie 17 February, to enjoy the annual feast of pancakes before the rigours of Lent. Chefs extraordinaire, Ayesha and Wendy, spent much of the day making pancakes while others moved tables and chairs, laid out plates and cutlery, sugar and lemons etc. The pancakes were excellent, as always, and there were plenty to go round, while the toppings arranged from simple lemon and sugar (apparently still the nation's favourite topping amongst older people) to fresh fruit, nutella and skooshy cream.

Then came the pancake tossing competitions in which, alas! the Provost yet again managed to disgrace himself: for the second successive year his pancake ended up either on top of the bookshelves or actually behind the shelves, never to be seen again, in this life at least. We can only hope there will be a joyful reunion in the world to come with those pancakes we have loved and lost. After the races came a treasure hunt in the cathedral and all too soon the party was over. Many thanks to Ayesha and Wendy for long hours spent in the kitchen, to the others who set up and tidied away, and to the dishwasher crew at the very end. And thanks to the anonymous person who, in response to the genuine question, how do you make a vegan pancake, suggested tripping him up was the answer. Thanks too to Annabelle, Sasha and others for the following photos, which begin with the kitchen team, Wendy and Ayesha, hard at work in the morning...





The Stable Team

The photo below shows the team who dismantled the nativity scene's stable on 6 February and removed it, with the great help of Bill Beattie and his trailer, for storage in Jamie's garage. Bill's dog, Baxter, is waiting impatiently in the car for his next bowl of soup. Many thanks to Bill and Andy Beatson for all their help.



New Members of the Scottish Guild of Servers



Many congratulations to our team of young servers who were formally admitted to the Scottish Guild of Servers at a ceremony at the main service on 1 February. Avinu, Eilidh and Alexander are pictured after the service, wearing the crosses with which they were presented by the Provost. They were trained by former prior Barry, and Erica, and were presented to the Provost by Erica. Well done all three!

That day was Candlemas and the service began with a procession of servers, clergy and congregation around the cathedral. As was the case last year, it was a scene of happy chaos!

The St Ninian's Waterfall

Sadly, in the midst of such a prolonged spell of wet weather, it was no great surprise to find water once again pouring into the cathedral. As before, a veritable waterfall descended on the north side canon stalls, which necessitated mops, buckets and plastic sheeting to protect them from the worst of the ingress. The problem is seemingly not the relatively new roof but rather the drainage system from the roof which cannot cope with increased levels of rain. Water also came in at the children's play area, at the western end of the south aisle, and through the east window. The photos show the canon stalls and east window.



The New Vestry

Following the recent AGM, the cathedral vestry now comprises the following (the year in brackets is when their term of service is due to end): the Provost, Andrew Ballantyne (2027), Lis Burke (2029), Emma Dalrymple (2030), Wendy Duncan (2027), James Gardner (co-opted member, 2027), Erica Knott (co-opted member, 2027), Toby Moschard (2030), Annabelle O'Connell (2030), Tyro Panagoda (2029), John Wright (2027) and Maureen Wright (2029). The Rev'd Ross Stirling-Young and Dr Maihri Greenwood also attend. We thank them for undertaking this very considerable service on our behalf.



Sunday Club

Spring Term

Sunday Club is for primary school aged children and takes place in the lady chapel after our 11am Sung Eucharist service.

Sunday 15th February
Bookmark decorating activity



Sunday 22nd February
Lent craft activity



Tuesday 17th February
Pancake Party - 5:30pm to 6:30pm



Sunday 15th March
Mothering Sunday - handing out bookmarks

Sunday 29th March
Procession for Palm Sunday



Saturday 4th April
Easter craft morning with treasure hunt 10am



The Provost's Report (Part 2)

Love of Neighbour

This is about community and service - specifically about our community, gathered around the Eucharist, which goes out to love and serve the Lord in our neighbour.

I have to keep a roll of the members of our congregation. We don't have the formal membership structure of other churches but being a member involves: 1. coming to church and receiving holy communion (or receiving it at home); and 2. supporting the cathedral in practical and financial ways according to your ability.

This year we have 142 communicant members with 15 regularly worshipping children under 16. We also have 72 'adherents' who are part of our wider cathedral family and might come to services like Christingle, Carols or Easter but who don't receive Holy Communion. This year we welcomed two new children by baptism, Caitlin and Dominic, and 16 other new members. Some of our members died in the past year, including Canon Celia Matthews, Pat Butler and Dorothy Riley, and others moved on, but as a community we are growing with 12 more communicants than last year.

We believe in 'service not self' and our cathedral flourishes because you do things, though as always, work, family, illness and age mean that not all are free to serve and a minority do the majority of the work. If you do have time, it is not too late to volunteer. I'd like to thank Maureen and John for all they do, especially organising a successful Doors Open Day and for leading our catering team who have helped at many events which are so important for building community, such as the lunch at our feast of dedication in August. There was also our pancake party where 70 people filled the chapter house and Jamie organised games for children and clergy and the Provost and Curate demonstrated over-enthusiastic pancake tossing (their pancakes have still not been found).

This year we reformed our lay pastoral ministry team who go to visit and bring Holy Communion to the housebound and those in hospital. Thanks to Lis for her work here and also to those who were authorised to be ministers of Holy

Communion.

The other ministry team set up this year is for children and families - thanks to Izzy, Jamie and Maihri for all they have done. Over the year our families with young children have formed a community and we have listened to them, for example by installing a new speaker in the Lady Chapel so they can hear the service. I'd like to thank the team for things like Sunday Club, Toddler Church, the trip to St Andrews, and Christingle. Some of our young people serve at the altar and bring up the collection and we were pleased that Avinu could go as a delegate to the national youth week, Yeek, at Glenalmond where Jamie was an organiser and Izzy was quizzed by the young people on who is her favourite bishop. In tribute to all his youth work, Jamie was invited to represent the SEC at the World Council of Churches youth conference in Malaysia.

Our cathedral must be a safe place for children and vulnerable adults and we will take any action to ensure this. This year members of vestry and lay ministers did online safeguarding training and members of the ministry team attended diocesan training. Thanks to Maihri our safeguarding coordinator and to Chris and Jamie who have helped.

Jesus said do not hide your light under a bushel and as our country gets more secular we need to make sure people know what we do and what we stand for. Our presence online is essential and many people come to us because of this. Margot Dunnachie retires this year from being our website manager, and I thank her for all the work she has done and also for helping to design our new logo,



A preview of the icon which has been given in memory of the late Canon Celia Matthews, by her family. Artist Aidan Hart is on the left and carpenter Dylan Hartley on the right.

based on the oldest St Ninian's Cross at Whithorn. Old technology also works and thanks go to Chris for his work on the massive outside banners advertising our services which have contributed to the increase at Christmas and Easter. Our magazine straddles old and new and is a wonderful showcase of what we are up to; it's great to give to new people at the cathedral. Thanks to Jeremy and Wendy.

Service of the poor and marginalised was an essential part of the Anglican Catholic revival which inspired the foundation of our cathedral. This is still an essential part of our mission, and a highlight of the year was when Wendy Duncan was invited to receive the Royal Maundy from the King at Durham Cathedral because of her service to the community at St Ninian's Cathedral. Wendy and her team run Warm Spaces during the winter and she coordinates our collections for the foodbank and the Christmas shoeboxes. Another member of our congregation to be recognised for her community service was Jackie McRae who received a Community Champion award. We supported a number of charities such as the Anglican hospital in Gaza and the Arunima Hospice in Calcutta, which Fr Ross visited this year. Closer to home we have had a number of men from the Perth asylum hotels join us for worship and, discerning a need, Fr Ross and Fr Philip have start a chaplaincy in the hotels. We are a charity ourselves and I want to thank Andrew Ballantyne who has retired after a number of years running sales of our Christmas cards at the library.

We can't do everything on our own and it wouldn't be good if we did, so building partnerships is essential to our life. One of my priorities is building connections with local civic life and it was good to share in leading the Perth Remembrance and VJ Day services in St John's Kirk and to walk with the 'other Provost' in the pre-Christmas lantern parade. It is great to hear of all Fr Ross is doing at St Columba's, Stanley which I was pleased to visit last year. In June we hosted an impressive festival for the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem, where our own Pat Beatson was made an Officer of the Order. Our Christmas Nine Lessons and Carols is now a community event with people from our partner organisations reading the lessons, and this year they included Mindspace and PKAVS, who use our Gateway Centre, Chansons Chamber Choir, the Foodbank, YMCA, the Fire Service who help and our Alcoholics Anonymous group.

Our Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane is not really a partner because we are its centre, but it has been good working with Bishop Ian and hosting the diocesan synod, net zero day and festival of lay ministry. I am glad to say that the diocese has agreed to my suggestion that their annual grant to the cathedral go up from £1800 to £3000

Education is a way of serving our neighbour, and schools and Christian teaching have been part of the life of this cathedral since its foundation. Chris and I sat on the panel which appointed a new head teacher for St Ninian's Primary School, Mrs Joanne Philp. She shares my desire to develop its Christian identity as a denominational school and Maihri and I have been actively involved in this. We have a good musical relationship with Ardvreck and Strathallan schools; this year I am preaching at Glenalmond and have been invited to visit Strathallan to see how we can build on the links. Here, as well as our Lent Groups, we have built a partnership with the Scottish Episcopal Institute, where I teach, and held two popular theological study days on the Council of Nicaea and the Mystery of God, together with my talk on St Ninian. Our children's ministry has as its aim forming our children in the faith.

Love your Neighbour as Yourself

Jesus' commandment presumes we have a healthy love of yourself. A church must be well administered to allow it to love God and our neighbour.

I want to start by thanking our Vestry, volunteers and staff who ensure this cathedral is well run. Retiring from Vestry are Christopher Dingwall, Jamie Gardner, Erica Knott, John Wright and Tammy McGregor, to whom thanks. Among others, thanks go to our very efficient secretary Maureen, Chris our treasurer and Liz who helps with our accounts, John our deputy chair and to Erica who, with Chris in his manager role, has the challenging brief of looking after our buildings. It is hard to heat a large neo-Gothic cathedral and this year we set up a heating sub-group which, with the help of a grant from the council's Common Good fund, has made our current gas boilers and radiators as efficient as possible, which looks like saving up to 50% on our unsustainable gas bills. We also commissioned reports on the best and most efficient heating for us, allowing for the transition from fossil fuels, and are currently looking to install destratification fans and solar panels. We are also considering radiant or

underfloor heating systems.

This year we had a review of staffing and, with help from the diocese, introduced compliant contracts for our manager and cleaner, whose weekly hours were reduced. I want to express big thanks to both Chris and Jackie. A cathedral is a business and, in addition to his treasurer role, Chris deals with a lot of legal and administrative tasks that I and Vestry members don't have the time to do. Jackie not only keeps the cathedral clean but is a welcoming presence here and has dealt with many crises which come from having an open cathedral. I'd also like to thank the volunteers who came and did a deep clean of the cathedral; we intend to do the same this year.

Marion Swan retired as administrator at the end of 2024. I thanked her then, but it is great still having her helping in various ways, and her work has been taken over by Chris and by generous volunteers. I thank the team covering Monday mornings in the office and especially Jamie Gardner who has taken on cathedral bookings. We reviewed our room booking prices and increased them, something which hadn't been done for a decade, and he has developed a new booking system. This is essential both for income and for building relationships with the groups who meet here.

On our property we have taken advice and increased rents for the first time in a decade on the flat, diocesan office and the Gateway Centre, which is currently sub-let to Mindspace by PKAVS. I thank Chris for tireless work and hard-nosed negotiation on the complications around the Gateway lease. This year we received the quinquennial report on our buildings and this recommends much work but we are concentrating on our heating system.

Our property is not just buildings. We are required to have an up to date property inventory and we are grateful to Kipling Lemon, who catalogued our archive as part of his preparation for archivist training at Aberystwyth, and Bill Crighton who took high-quality photos of our silver. Outside, Christopher Dingwall has laid down his responsibility for our gardens and I'd like to thank David Martin Smith for all he does to maintain our grounds - in a city this is part of our care for creation. Our mission includes bringing our faith out of the building onto the streets and that includes our Nativity scene. Thanks to Andy Beatson and Bill for work on the stable - it looks great - and to Jamie, Wendy and the

volunteers who put it up. It was a great focus for the start of the pre-Christmas lantern parade.

Essential to a well-administered church are sound finances and that can be difficult. Last year we were looking at a deficit of £44,000 this year, to which was added unanticipated work on heating and the organ of over £40,000. Our accounts and treasurer's report will give the details but, as finance is essential to mission, I'd like to thank our treasurer and Liz again and am pleased to note that our deficit in the accounts is only £34,000. This was done by reducing costs, e.g. £9,000 in staffing, and increasing revenue, e.g. by increasing rents (which will make a difference to next year's accounts) and more activity and visitors. Accounts are useful but tricky and the £11,000 increase in income includes an increase of almost £9,000 in giving and donations, thanks to you and our visitors.

A key part of this is those of us who give by standing order or regular donations; over 60 of us give a guaranteed income of over £30,000 a year. Jesus spoke more about the right use of money than about sex or worship, and giving to church and charity is one of the basic responsibilities of a Christian, together with the practical work we do. Our costs go up each year and it is good to increase our giving when possible - otherwise the real value of our giving goes down. Recently, in the current financial year, a member of the congregation gave us £20,000. That person has allowed me to mention this here as 1. giving now rather than in your will allows us to collect gift aid, getting an extra 25% from the government; 2. leaving money to your cathedral in your will still makes a big difference. I'd like to thank the late Pat Butler for remembering us. Dundee Cathedral is kept afloat because someone left them a very significant sum. We have not been good recently in asking new members to give regularly by standing order and helping all taxpayers in the congregation to sign gift aid forms - we can get a certain amount of gift aid from open plate donations but you can only guarantee the full amount if you fill out a form and let us know how much is given.

Final thanks are to God who has called us to form this local community of the Body of Christ which is called St Ninian's Cathedral. I'm glad I've been called here as Provost and I want to thank you for all you do to make this such a faithful, welcoming and well-run cathedral church.

Reflections on the last four years of Vestry

As I'm writing this a few days before the cathedral AGM it is a good time to begin to reflect on not just the last year, but also my four years of being on the cathedral Vestry.

I came on to the Vestry at the AGM in 2022 at a time when the cathedral and wider church was rebuilding after the pandemic and all the disruption it had caused. My great-aunt Margaret Crowe, a former cathedral member, once said to me 'Remember that God has a sense of humour; you may not notice it at the time, but you will see it when you pause and think back'. A conversation that often comes to mind, when indeed I do notice the quiet sense of humour of God.

For me personally it was a time when my internal grounding centre axis still felt off-centre and to top it all off, in my church life, a rather significant spiritual bomb had exploded the previous November in my other church. In the mists of the shock and chaos that was left in its wake, I was also grieving the loss of a great priest and spiritual mentor. In the midst of all this, and rather than hiding away from vestry responsibility which would have been a perfectly reasonable course of action, I agreed to join the cathedral Vestry as a trustee a few months after.

At one of the early meetings of that year, we were informed of Provost Hunter's upcoming retirement. I remember thinking, Oh no, not again! I knew exactly what was ahead, and the time it was going to take, as I had been through the process on two other occasions within the last few years, as a Vestry member elsewhere.

This felt like God having a joke at my expense. I remember walking on the Sidlaw Hills questioning God and asking, 'God, really, why have you put this in front of me now? Don't I deserve a bit of an easier ride, just for a short spell, after all that has gone on?'

As it turned out God was right, and it actually became a bit of a blessing, and was also a form of healing from the grief. This period on the Vestry entailed a lot of

work on the cathedral mission plan, the cathedral profile, advertising the vacancy, keeping the cathedral going, interviewing, and appointing, and this took up over half of my four-year term. Some highlights include being the 'pigeon whisperer' after two pigeons gained entry through a back window and decided to take up residence in the cathedral rafters. It took a few days to get the final pigeon to leave by the back door, having encouraged it to go into the cloister. The hole in the window was then quickly repaired! I have enjoyed the final year and a quarter working with Provost Stephen.

This period also allowed me time to listen and discern where I was called to be and where I was being directed to use my gifts. I felt called to leave the corporate officer role I had in Perth and return to serving in and amongst communities as a community learning and development worker, in Crieff, Auchterarder and the surrounding villages - from the banks of Loch Tay in the west to Greenloaning in the south-west and up to Perth.

My church community life changed too, and I realised the time had come to leave what had been our family church since we left Saffron Walden in 2006. As the last family member I felt I could now move on and focus more of my time and energy on the cathedral.

Caring for the cathedral assets and the building is a key part of being on the Vestry, and sometimes it is easy to forget and take for granted how lucky we are to have such an amazing building, especially if you're dealing with leaks, repairs, and such like - a fact that was made clear to me when I was at the conference in Malaysia. I had taken some postcards and merchandise with me, some for giving out as a gifts. I kept a couple of cards in an envelope, having been advised to have something to hand that you can refer to if conversations or debates get difficult and you need a reminder of home. On the final day I gave one the cards - a view of the cathedral taken from the font - to one of the mission leaders (Amelia from Australia who also had Scottish family roots), and as soon as I gave her the card, she looked at it and said. 'Wow! You're so lucky to have such a wonderful cathedral, and it's good to see you have chairs so the space can be flexible.' Amelia was right; we are lucky and as I look down the cathedral on a Sunday and up at the high altar before the bell rings, I now take a moment to remember just how lucky we are.

The cathedral also played an important part in how my faith and particularly the children's and young people's ministry began. Not many people know this but it was here in our cathedral where everything really started off. It was at a diocesan 'Casting the Net' gathering when I was 16, possibly about to be 17, when I was at a workshop held in the north aisle, that the whole journey started. The workshop I was involved in was Godly Play, and we were sitting taking part in one of the taster sessions. During this workshop I had a spiritual moment: a prodding that this was something that I should do myself, and the following week, while sitting on a coach having lunch with Richard, also known as the 'school bus driver Rector', that I shared the idea of having a Godly Play session at church, and how it could work. Richard was very supportive and helped to get the Vestry on board with it. After some Vestry discussion, and going through the Disclosure process and doing all the paperwork, it started and continued once a month for a good number of years until the children had all grown up. Fast forward to six years later, and now we have Sunday Club back in place where for me the journey began. Who knows what could happen in the next six years?

Jamie Gardner

Choir News

On Palm Sunday (29 March) at 4.00pm we shall perform the St John Passion by Handel (1685-1759). Written in 1704 when the composer was 19, it is a long work with many repetitions. In 1935 J Michael Diack, a composer, arranger and adjudicator at music festivals, reworked it to make it performable for church choirs. It is this version we shall perform and for this we shall be joined by guest soloists Moira Docherty and Frances Taylor (sopranos) and Barbara Scott (contralto). Soloists from our own choir will be Toby Moschard (the Evangelist), Emmanuel Patterson (Pilate) and Alister Allan (Jesus and bass arias). Please do come and support us at the start of Holy Week.

3 May at 5.30pm: we shall sing Evensong at St James Church, Muthill as part of their 190th anniversary celebrations

24 May at 3.00pm: we have been invited by Perth Festival of the Arts to sing Evensong.

Alister Allan

Net Zero Roadshow

On another cold, wet January day the postponed Net Zero Roadshow finally got underway in the cathedral. We welcomed over 60 representatives from charges across the diocese and beyond, together with a wide range of organisations and individuals who were on hand to share their expertise and experience of working with churches in fields such as green technologies, sustainability and caring for creation. A number of members of the cathedral congregation attended and we all had something to learn.

We were able to chat with representatives of companies supplying various eco heating solutions and learn useful hacks to keep down heating costs whilst still maintaining the health of our buildings' fabric, organs, paintings etc. Besides attending assorted workshops we listened to an inspiring talk from Alan Werrity about the road that his church in St Andrews has travelled over the past 10+ years on a quest to make its listed building and hall into more comfortable and environmentally friendly spaces. This work has included solar panels, battery storage and secondary glazing and as a pilot project they are about to install two far-infrared chandeliers in the narthex where smaller weekday services are held. We look forward to hearing how that goes as these are under consideration for the future at St Ninian's.

First Minister John Swinney addressed the gathering thanking all the churches for everything they do to raise awareness of the consequences of climate change worldwide and of the importance of living more sustainably on this precious planet. He spoke movingly of an official visit he had made to Malawi where he had seen at first hand the dire effects of climate change on the poorest communities. He said he had returned a changed man and vowed to do his best to continue to support the longstanding Scotland Malawi link which currently includes Scottish funded initiatives on climate justice, health and education.

Huge thanks go to Maureen and John who did a fabulous job keeping everyone fed and watered throughout the day and to Giraffe for delicious soup and rolls which hit the spot at lunchtime when everyone was feeling pretty chilly! Emmanuel very kindly played for the closing service and Jamie was kept busy with other members of the Diocesan Environment Group and the Net Zero Team

on the organisational side of the event. Thank you all!

Wendy Duncan

The Primus and his Electric Car

'If you, the Primus can live with an electric car, what an example that could be for others'. So my journey began.

I live in the far North of Scotland, the diocese I serve is deeply rural and under populated, I drive for many miles to get to congregations and members of our church and as Primus I also travel across the length and breadth of Scotland. The thought of changing from a diesel car to an all-electric one filled me with apprehension. Friends, neighbours and random strangers all had an opinion and all said it won't work.

I read up on the complications of making the batteries, I listened to those who said I was being hoodwinked by the government and the many people who told me it would be more expensive. Anyway I agreed to the transition when my last car reached the end of its useful life and so began my new journey.

First thing to say is the car is wonderful, quiet, comfortable and the acceleration is excellent. Once I had adjusted to the power of the car and my tummy had returned to its rightful place I began to get a bit, well, anxious. I needed to know where the charging points were, how quickly they charged the car, which ones needed special cards and which worked with chip and pin. The first evening when we arrived in Caithness I plugged in using the three-pin cable. 'Your car will be charged by 12.30pm' - this was 3.30pm! This wasn't going to work unless I only intended to drive down to the village shop once a week.

It became very clear that I needed a home charger, something I realise is more difficult for those in built up areas than for me in the Highlands. The charger was installed and suddenly I could get from home to Inverness and back, with a range of 240 miles.



I also realised that almost every small community in the far North has a public charger, often in very interesting spots I might not have spent time in otherwise. But what an opportunity for local chat, 'You're the second one of you lot we have seen this week'. But there have been moments, creeping into Lochinver with 2% left, heating off, music off, no using the accelerator. Was this a sign of a lack of chargers? No it was me being late, rushing and saying I will reach the next one, no problem... something I could do before but not now and, do you know what? I am all the better for it. The 20min break every 200 miles has been good for me, except when the chargers are alongside a fast food outlet!

I have also rediscovered the joy of driving, no longer anxious about my driver's carbon footprint, the price of diesel or the time the garage closes. I know where the chargers are, if they are working and how much they will cost. Charging at home is cheaper than diesel and because of the savings that can be made by careful driving, I am probably a bit better at it than I was.

Do I recommend the transition? Yes I do, but do your homework, find out where you can charge and if you have the right cards to use.

So the only drawback is that no one listens.

'You wont get that charged round here, too expensive to run, it will never catch on' ...Well this is one Highland driver who is very happy to say, I love this electric car and thank you to all of those places that have installed a charger so that I can still explore the glens and straths of Moray, Ross and Caithness.

Most Rev'd Dr Mark J Strange

(Reprinted from the Scottish Episcopal Church's Net Zero Portal)

Cover Photo

Many thanks to Annabelle for sending in this action shot of the pancake tossing competition at the party on Shrove Tuesday. Provost Stephen consigns yet another pancake to the undiscovered country from whose bourn no pancake returns. Jamie, meanwhile, in a show of strength, has opted to toss cabers rather than pancakes...

From Deacon Peter

As you know the time has come for me to retire from authorised ministry in the SEC, and I wanted to express my appreciation to everyone at St Ninian's Cathedral for their support and encouragement over the last few years. In the Provost's report to the AGM last month, Father Stephen mentioned that I had decided not to take up his offer to mark my retirement in some way. As with so many events in life, retirement should be more about looking ahead rather than recalling the past.



Each member of the cathedral congregation, and indeed the cathedral itself, is on a journey. What went before may well influence what happens today but it's what we do today that influences what happens tomorrow.

The journey we are on never ends. One of the great privileges of authorised ministry is being asked to take an individual's funeral and I have been fortunate to lead many. The most moving and strangely peaceful part of the service is when the minister puts a hand on the coffin and addresses the deceased; 'Go forth upon your journey dear child of God...'

Now is not the time for the cathedral to look back but to keep turning the pages and move on. May we all know God's presence as we journey on through this life and beyond.

God Bless you all, and thank you for letting me journey with you over the last few years.

Mrs Margaret Leigh

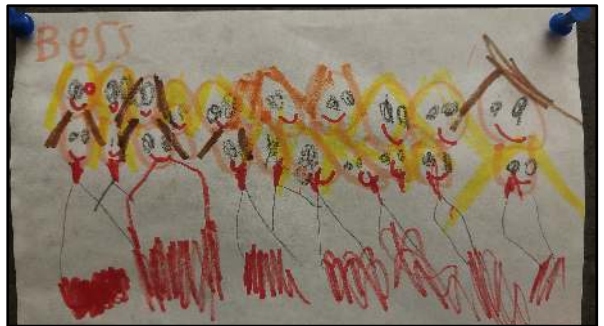
Older members of the congregation might remember Canon Ron Leigh who first came to the cathedral in the 1960s as Precentor. Ron died in 2006 and we have heard from Canon Christine Fraser, who was prepared for confirmation by Ron, that his widow Margaret has recently also died. The couple in retirement had stayed in the Kirkcaldy area and attended St Peter's where Christine ministers.

Apologies (again)!

Huge editorial apologies to Atira for wrongly attributing her two lovely drawings, which appeared in last month's issue and are shown again below, to Bess.



This month we can confidently say that the drawing (*right*) of the choir - which completes the triptych of clergy, servers and choir - is definitely by Bess. Our thanks to Atira and Bess, two talented young artists!



Top Tip!

Continuing our exploration of hazards, resulting from the cathedral single-handedly keeping the country's candle-making businesses afloat, Maureen writes in with the perfect way of removing candle wax from clothing. She writes:

'After a candlelit service I spilled some wax on my coat and managed to remove it successfully using this method (from YouTube!). Let the wax harden and scrape off what you can with a blunt knife. Lay two sheets of kitchen paper (one on top of the other) under where the wax is and another two sheets of kitchen paper on top of the wax and then run a medium hot iron over the paper a few times...it worked for me!' Thanks, Maureen!

St Andrews
Dunkeld
and Dunblane
SCO17654



supporting

christian
aid

in
Burkina Faso

Bishop's Lent Appeal 2026

Please give as generously as you can in 2026 to my **LENT APPEAL** supporting **CHRISTIAN AID** in their work with communities in **BURKINA FASO** in north-west Africa, being devastated by drought caused by **CLIMATE CHANGE**.

With my thanks and blessing for a holy Lent and a joyful Easter.

+ Ian G. St Andrew

Climate Change and Burkina Faso

In an area where a changing climate has been expanding the Sahara Desert southwards, securing local agricultural resilience is important both in the lives of local communities, and globally for our shared environment.

Burkina Faso is one of the poorest countries in the world, with more than 40% of the population living in poverty. The country also remains one of the most vulnerable, impacted by climate change, armed conflict and political instability.



The Centre-North and Sahel regions are especially vulnerable, and a humanitarian crisis is fast unfolding. Local communities are witnessing increasingly erratic and damaging weather patterns and events, including droughts, flooding, epizootic disease and locust attacks. For a population reliant on agriculture, who depend on crop and livestock production for their income and food, this is devastating.



in Burkina Faso

In this part of north-west Africa, where the changing climate has been expanding the Sahara Desert southwards, local agricultural resilience is needed for local communities, and for our shared environment. Christian Aid and its partners are working with local communities to enable them to adapt and change to meet the crisis being caused by climate change.

Working in the Centre-North and Sahel regions of Burkina Faso, this Christian Aid project, working with local churches and other partners, is aiming to reach about 10,000 people in 14 communities.

The project will bring a range of long-lasting benefits:

- **Improved and strengthened livelihoods**, with more diverse and sustainable income and opportunities. This will help people to meet their basic needs and to reduce levels of poverty, as well as building their resilience.
- **Greater food security and improved nutrition** through improved shared action and education, as well as the creation of jobs and monthly cash payments to the most vulnerable.
- **Improved environmental management and sustainability**, through training to ensure the better use and management of natural resources, as well as adapting techniques and approaches to become resilient to climate change.
- **More peaceful, stable and secure communities** thanks to a range of activities aimed at strengthening social and living conditions, as well as boosting peace and cooperation amongst neighbours.



More information can be found at

<https://www.christianaid.org.uk/our-work/where-we-work/burkina-faso>

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATION TO THE LENT APPEAL 2026.

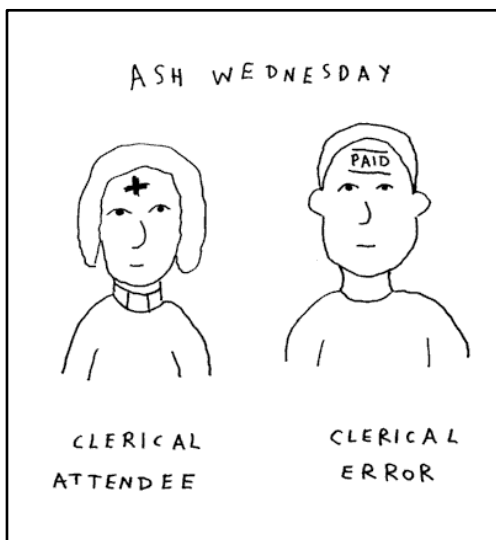
Please send it to your Scottish Episcopal Church Treasurer
or by Bank transfer to:

Diocese of St Andrews Lent Appeal (SC017654)
Sort Code: 82-68-31
Account No: 00187750
using Ref. 'Lent Appeal 2026'.

From the Farquhar Diaries

15 March 1926. My really active days at the Cathedral are quite a thing of the past. Until November, I think, I kept up some little pretence of visiting - perhaps at the rate of once round the congregation in 20 months. But, since November, even that pretence has almost vanished. I sat in the house (so far as congregational visiting was concerned) from the middle of November to the end of January, being quite unable to face the weather. I occupied all that time, however, writing 'The History of S. Ninian's Cathedral'. I took my part, however, in the daily Services... I am beginning already to feel disconnected from the congregation - neither visiting them nor preaching to them, but no actual steps have been taken for my retirement, till the Chapter meeting next week.

27 March [at a meeting of the Chapter]. Then came the discussion of my offer of resignation of the Canonry and Precentorship of the Cathedral. The Bishop made an extraordinarily nice speech about what he considered I had done for the Cathedral, the Diocese & the Scottish Church but deferred formal acceptance till they had time to provide for my future maintenance (in some degree) and also for the filling up of my place in the Cathedral. This last point, however, developed into a large question, for neither the Bp nor the Provost want to appoint any one to hold exactly the same position as Canons Humble, Mackey and myself have held. What is wanted under present circumstances at the Cathedral is a strong and comparatively young man. Hitherto we have had that in the Chaplain, but post-war stipends are double those, which prevailed before the War, and the Cathedral does not see its way to providing them. It follows that the Precentor must be a young man. But the Bishop does not want to make a young man Canon over the heads of older clergy. Therefore he wants the Statutes about the status of the Precentor altered. And, having done that, he wants to overhaul the Statutes altogether.



Eddie the Eagle says...

I hope it's not too sacriligious to wonder if the clergy were enjoying a little private artistic competition at the Ash Wednesday evening service. Ordinand Maihri, for example, came out with an excellent British Rail logo on her forehead, another had a fine Cross of Lorraine, while yet another - not widely known for his right-wing views - had something that looked suspiciously like a swastika. The works of art were obviously all black and white so no one emerged with anything worthy of the Sistine Chapel, but even so Banksy has got some rivals!



Times of Services etc

A warm welcome to everyone who comes to our services!

Sunday	Said Eucharist 9.30am; Sung Eucharist 11.00am Sunday Club 12.15-ish, after the end of 11.00 service in term time, for primary age children Choral Evensong 4.00pm on the third Sunday of the month
Tuesday	Morning Prayer 9.30; Rosary Group 1.00; Evening Prayer 5.30
Wednesday	Morning Prayer 9.30; Said Eucharist 11.00; Evening Prayer 5.30
Thursday	Morning Prayer 9.30, Evening Prayer 5.30 Sung Compline 6.30 (during Lent only) Toddler Church 10.30-12.00 in term time (for ages 0-5)
Friday	Morning Prayer 9.30 Said Eucharist 11.00am, with anointing and prayers for healing

And finally...

Please pass any contributions for the magazine to the editor, Jeremy Duncan, or email them to cathedralmagazine@gmail.com. The closing date for inclusion in the April magazine is **22 March**. Thank you!

**St Ninian's Cathedral
of the Scottish Episcopal Church in the
Diocese of St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane.**

We are one of the family of Anglican churches throughout the world.

The cathedral is served by a clergy and lay team:

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Tel: 01738 443173

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The Very Rev'd Dr Stephen Holmes
provost.perth@gmail.com

Assisting Clergy

The Rev'd Philip Francis
The Rev'd Ross Stirling-Young

Lay Reader

Lis Burke

Ordinand

Dr Maihri Greenwood

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