



STATED ANNUAL MEETING
Sunday 19 March 2023
1130am – Sanctuary



Dear Member,

And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and brought the Lord's offering (Exodus 35:21).

As the congregational Treasurer, I am writing to ask you to review your offerings to our Church. This is something that the Kirk Session has asked me to do each year at this time. I would also like to say a sincere thank you if you increased your offering following my letter last year.

Our accounts for 2022 show a surplus and you may be surprised that I am still writing asking you to increase your offerings. However, the largest part of that surplus arose from legacies and a considerably lower expenditure on Fabric than had been budgeted for. Some of that expenditure will now take place this year.

Our Budget for 2023 is included in the SAM papers. The Finance Team have tried to be as realistic as possible in the budget. Much of our expenditure is pre-determined and essential, such as staff salaries and heating & lighting. These known costs rise year by year through inflation and this year with inflation at elevated levels that is having a noticeable effect. Despite taking considerable care, the budget predicts a deficit of £11,952. This will have to come out of our reserves.

The budget assumes that members will increase their offerings by 5% and allows for the reduction in offerings that we know of from members who have left the congregation and unfortunately for those who have died. So once again, to meet our budget and ensure the financial future of our church we ask our faithful members review the amount they give to our Church and if it is possible, increase their giving, to meet our increasing costs.

If you contribute to the Church through a standing order and wish to increase your payment, the easiest way is to go online, if you can, and increase the standing order. If you don't have online access to your bank account, the next easiest route is to telephone your bank and ask them to make the change. If all else fails, please speak to me or the church office and we can give you a new standing order form that will set up the new amount and cancel the old order.

For St Columba's Church to be an effective witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Blackhall community and for it to carry out its mission in the parish, we rely on your support and commitment as a member of our church. The vast majority of St Columba's income comes from the giving of our members. With this in mind, I would ask you to respond to this reminder.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Johnston
Treasurer

BLACKHALL ST COLUMBA'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, EDINBURGH

STATED ANNUAL MEETING

SUNDAY 19 MARCH 2023

This year's Stated Annual Meeting of the Congregation will take place after the 1030am morning Worship Service on Sunday 19 March 2023 at 1130am. This meeting will not be livestreamed. Participation in the meeting will require members to be present in the Sanctuary.

1. SAM Agenda
2. Reports on the Agenda.
3. The 3 financial statements are separate documents: Accounts for Year End 31 Dec 2022, The Budget 2023, and BfTF Appeal. Both the SAM report and the 3 financial statements can all be found on our website under the Stated Annual Meeting section within the Resources folder.

AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. SAM 2022 Minutes
3. Moderator's Report
4. Session Clerk's Report
5. Congregational Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts
6. Gift Aid Convener's Report
7. Fabric Convener's Report
- 10 Premises and Staff Convener's Report
11. Any Other Competent Business
12. Closing remarks
13. Benediction

BLACKHALL ST COLUMBA'S CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, EDINBURGH
MINUTE OF THE STATED ANNUAL MEETING OF THE CONGREGATION
SUNDAY 27 MARCH 2022, 1130AM

The Reverend Fergus Cook constituted the meeting and welcomed those attending. The Stated Annual Meeting papers and the Financial Report for the year to 31 December 2021 were available on the Church website. Reports contained in the Meeting papers and referred to below are included in the Appendix to this Minute.

Sederunt: The Reverend Fergus Cook and 44 members of the Congregation were present. There were 5 apologies for absence.

Minutes: There were no Minutes pertaining to the SAM 2021 due to its cancellation.

Moderator's Report: The Minister referred to his summary of the year which had been full of challenges, but it had been a positive year for us with Covid restrictions easing and being back in the refurbished sanctuary. A key element had been the celebration of the re-dedication of the sanctuary and marking the second anniversary of his ordination and induction. There were no questions.

Session Clerk's Report: The report of Eddie Thorn, Session Clerk had been available online before the Meeting and there were no questions.

Congregational Treasurer's Report and Annual Accounts: The Trustees' Annual Report had been provided by Adrian Johnston before the meeting. He thanked his Finance Working Team for all the work they had done, in particular Diane Fulton - Clerk, Sheila Mackintosh - Deputy Treasurer and Sandy Weir - Gift Aid, Tax Reclaim and Freewill offerings.

Members had been asked to review their offerings and many did with an increase on 2020 income. The Giving Appeal had also raised additional funds and together with legacies received resulted in a surplus for the year. This has meant that we have been able to put a sizable sum into our Fabric Reserve Fund. The church is now in a healthier situation than in the years 2018 and 2019.

Budgeting ahead as membership is gradually falling, and Presbytery dues, reduced during Covid, will return to their previous level in 2022, mean that we still need to keep giving. Expenditure will rise again, and a deficit is expected at the end of 2022.

Building for the Future Accounts. Pledges are expected to come in until October 2023 when it is estimated that the account will hold approx. £82,000.

A question was asked whether the budget for energy was underestimated with rapidly increasing costs. The Treasurer replied that we are on a fixed contract so increases are likely in the following year.

Gift Aid Convener's Report: The report of Sandy Weir had been made available and there were no questions.

Fabric Convener's Report: The report by Mike Whiteside had been made available and there were no questions.

Premises and Staff Convener's Report: The report of Frances Douglas had been made available and there were no questions.

Any Other Competent Business: There were no points raised.

Closing Remarks: Eddie Thorn thanked the members for their attendance at our first SAM meeting since 2019 and thanked the Minister for adapting to the challenges of ministry during Covid restrictions. He also thanked the elders who have supported him throughout the year. St Columba's is in good heart and ready to go forward with a positive outlook to the proposed future Presbytery changes.

Benediction: The Reverend Fergus Cook thanked the Session Clerk then closed the meeting with the Benediction.

2023 REPORT FROM THE MODERATOR –REV FERGUS COOK

Each year, the Office Bearers of the Church prepare reports regarding the ongoing work of Blackhall St Columba's. I have great pleasure in adding my own report which in addition to providing an overview, focuses on just some of the highlights and achievements of the year.

I would suggest that, whilst there are still some 'hangovers' from the pandemic, we, as a Church, are very much back to full operations. We have kept some of the innovations of the pandemic, such as the weekly service sheets delivered by email, but, for the most part, have resumed our normal worship structure. For some, the livestreaming of services may be seen as a pandemic initiative, but this was actually something that was planned for before the pandemic began. BStC's foresight stood us in good stead and continues to do so as people join us from all over the world and when they are unable to get to Church due to holidays, illness or for some other reason.

On the subject of worship, we continue to offer a monthly service to Strachan House residents and a less frequent service has now been made available to residents of both Queen's Court and Lyle Court. A number of care homes receive our weekly service sheets, and they are invited to join us online weekly. We continue to develop our relationship with the Monte Casino Society and this year the annual Monte Casino Remembrance Service in May will include the dedication of a new memorial bench which the society has donated to Blackhall St Columba's. Our 'Blue Christmas Service' can now be regarded as an annual event, and it continues to be well received with many people finding solace and comfort from this time taken to remember loved ones. We have moved our regular Communion services from the last day of the month to the first. This has been primarily to allow for an Annual Youth Service when we mark 'Thinking Day' and 'Founders Day' for the Guides and the Scouts. We have also instigated an 'Afternoon Communion', on the same day as our regular communion, which is geared towards those who need additional assistance to get to the Church. This is followed by an equally important time of fellowship.

Blackhall Primary School has now had both Christmas and Easter Assemblies within the sanctuary, and I have been invited to take classes for a number of the primary year groups which have been working on specific projects. The monthly 'story time' which I reported on last year continues for the Blackhall Nursery, Playgroup and Parent and Toddlers group. It is well received and has allowed us to reach a whole new group of younger people.

Work has now been completed on the creation of an accessible toilet on the same level as the Sanctuary. As I said last year, 'this facility will make our claim to be welcoming of all a greater reality as we continue to look for ways in which we can attract members of the Blackhall Community into our Church'. Another change to the Sanctuary is the blinds which help with 'glare' on our screens on those rare sunny days in Scotland.

On the social side, we have continued to attract members of our local community by hosting a number of events in the church throughout the year. In addition to the highly successful and popular, 'Music @ St Columba's' secular events, we have hosted a Murder Mystery Evening (with a fish supper tea), a Burns Supper and much more. We were also delighted to be able to host the Christmas Fair. We even managed a Church outing to Canty Bay in the summer which was enjoyed by all who attended. There are too many clubs, activities and organisations which regularly use our buildings to mention here but they are all an important to keeping our buildings and 'the Church' at the centre of the community.

As always, I am indebted to everyone who contributes to the worship and life of the congregation. I will take this opportunity to express my thanks, both personal and on behalf of the congregation, to our team of elders who work so hard at keeping contact with the Church membership. In addition to them, I would add thanks to the myriad of people who contribute to the life of the congregation in

the numerous ministries that are ongoing. As always, many of these people work selflessly and quietly in the background but we would not manage to achieve nearly as much as we do without them. I am a great believer that often people 'belong before they believe'. It is for that reason that the sense of community that is felt here is so important. This sense of community has already allowed us to weather the pandemic and other issues. However, community can also change and grow. I anticipate our community will grow with the Presbytery Plan.

One of the things that has dominated the life of the wider Church of Scotland has been the creation of Presbytery Plans. We are now much further on in those plans, and I am glad to say our comments and observations have been listened to. We are presently in discussion with Drylaw Parish Church and are closely examining how we can work together to form a Union of the two parishes. As you would expect, there is much work to be done and it will take time. I foresee this coming year a lot of work being carried out to see in what areas we can work together. Whilst the prospective union will take much of our time, we should also not forget that we are part of wider 'Parish Grouping' and work will continue to develop our relationships with our other neighbours, Cramond, the Old Kirk & Muirhouse and Davidsons' Mains.

Once again, I am encouraged that we, at Blackhall St Columba's, have shown ourselves to be flexible, adaptive, and innovative and, consequently, well placed to respond to whatever the following year brings.

Fergus Cook
Moderator

2023 Session Clerk's Report

Membership

The annual statistical return as of 31 December 2022 to The Presbytery of Edinburgh & West Lothian shows a fall in the Communion Roll – from 592 to 573. During 2022 we welcomed 15 new members, compared to 8 the year before. Sadly 22 members died during the year and 12 members left us as a consequence of moving to another part of the country or for other reasons.

In the past a census was carried out two or three times each year to ascertain Sunday morning attendance. These carried out in late 2022 indicated an attendance in the region of 130, still a creditable figure but well down on that recorded pre Covid. We are not alone in seeing this material drop in attendees as our experience is consistent with other Edinburgh congregations. Members still have the option of watching the Service being live streamed or catch up via You Tube at some later time. Our Christmas Eve Services were extremely well attended especially the Christingle when the duty Elders struggled to put out sufficient chairs for the welcomed attendees.

Kirk Session

During 2022 there were no Elders ordained or inducted. Linnette Aitken and Judith Lowther retired from active Eldership during the year after long periods of faithful and diligent service to the Congregation and in particular to the members in their Districts.

During the year Mike Galloway and Phyllis King sadly passed away. Both had retired from active Eldership, but each had made an earlier significant contribution to the life of the Congregation.

Blackhall St Columba's like all congregations depends upon an army of loyal volunteers who continue to play a vitally important role in the smooth running of Church life and the many activities carried on for members and the Parish community. While there are too many individuals to name in person, I should wish again to record grateful and sincere thanks to those who directly support me in my role, namely Sheila Mackintosh (Roll Keeper), Jacquie Lowe (Safeguarding Officer), James Burr (Communion Convener), Jim Logan and Frank Morrice (Minute Secretaries for Session meetings), and Joy McGonigal-Paget for her assistance and the efficient maintenance of minutes. I am particularly grateful to Jim Logan, who readily stands in for me when I am unavailable.

During the year Fay Stirling took over the Editorship of Kirk News from Christine Denham and continued the fine work of all previous incumbents in that role. Jim Laing retired as Communion Convener after a number of years of sterling service and was succeeded by James Burr.

Achievements and Performance

The year started with Covid still an issue and guidance from the Scottish Government. We gradually got back to the long-awaited normality and there was a lot achieved in the subsequent period.

- A happy bench was installed at the side of the church facing the Queensferry Road.
- A second defibrillator was installed on the wall of the large hall, funded by the Presbytery.
- An accessible toilet was installed off the Sanctuary next to the office.
- In February a Timeline of the Church's history and activities was completed and placed on the north facing wall of the Sanctuary.
- On Sunday 20 March a Service of Rededication was held which coincided with Rev Fergus Cook going into the third year of ministry.
- It was decided to dispense with the issue of Communion cards, replacing these with an invitation to join in Communion.
- We continued to live stream the Sunday morning Services.
- On 14 May a Service of Remembrance was held for the Monte Cassino Society.
- We again supported the Operation Christmas Child shoebox appeal and were pleased to send 127 boxes from the Congregation.

- No further work was carried out under Building for the Future and a decision on any new project has been deferred to June 2023. This was deemed to be appropriate given the Presbytery planning exercise.
- In December a Warm Space project was initiated to offer a warm space for fellowship over refreshments. This was provided on a Wednesday and every second Friday.
- During the year from Retiring Offerings, we supported the following charities.

February Communion	Afghanistan Appeal
Easter Services	Barnabas Fund
June Communion	Pilton Equalities Project
October Communion	Bethany Trust
Christmas Services	Scottish Bible Society and Fresh Start
Special	Pakistan Appeal

The WATCH Committee continued the proud record of supporting deserving causes out with our own walls by during the second half of the year raising £9,200 from various activities for Pilton Equalities Project.

We continue to publish and distribute two fine magazines, namely Kirk News and Blackhall Bulletin which allow us to reach out and communicate across the Parish and to our members. Fay Stirling and Barbara Wilson, respective Editors, both do an excellent job in producing these publications.

The Presbytery Consultation Document featured heavily in Kirk Session business throughout the year. While the document initially proposed a Union of Blackhall St Columba's, Davidson's Mains and St Stephen's Comely Bank there was no attraction for such an entity by any of the three congregations. Our immediate neighbour is, of course, Drylaw Parish Church and following a number of "getting to know each other" meetings of Elders from each Kirk Session it was agreed in October to pursue a Union of both congregations.

The final version of the Consultation Document, which allowed for the aforementioned Union was approved by Presbytery late in the year and went forward for approval by various Church of Scotland committees.

Meantime a Steering Group consisting of six members from each Kirk Session has been established to work on the practical issues leading up to the Union. The union would be the coming together of the congregations to create a new entity. We should all look upon it as a new beginning. It is not the case of one taking over the other - it would be a marriage of equals. A union of the two congregations would bring real benefits as well as challenges and there can be no doubt that both congregations could learn from each other. The combined parish would encompass a sizeable area and one that gives great scope for mission, which is, after all, what this is all about.

In March of this year (2023) our Minister will go into the fourth year of his ministry here at Blackhall St Columba's. The first two years were fraught with the challenges brought about by Covid but the period under review (2022) allowed him the opportunity to preach directly to good attendances on a Sunday morning and get out fully to carry out excellent mission work across the parish.

We should all have a positive outlook for the Church and for the forthcoming Union with Drylaw. This will be an opportunity to further deliver the good news of Jesus Christ.

Eddie Thorn
Session Clerk

2023 Congregational Treasurer's Report

FINANCE REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2022

This is the Finance Team Leader's report into the financial position of the Church. We finished 2022 with a surplus of £8,720. This is despite having budgeted for a sizeable deficit. There are two main reasons for the surplus. The first is that Fabric expenditure was a lot less than the Fabric Team had expected it to be and the second is that we received legacies totalling £6,504.

Overview

Our Freewill Offerings in 2022, made through envelopes, cheques and standing orders, were 1.1% lower than in 2021. When all offerings including the Plate and the gift aid recovery are included, our total income from offerings fell by £8,028, a drop of 4.25%. However, in 2021, we held a COVID gift appeal that raised £11,705. If that is excluded from the comparison, offerings actually rose by £3,677. That increase came from the open plate offerings which are higher since the end of the COVID restrictions.

Under Other Ordinary Income, we benefitted from the use of the halls getting back to normal after the pandemic lockdown and that is reflected in the rents we received. The grants we received in 2021 under the furlough scheme were not repeated in 2022 but overall, Other Ordinary Income was £2,369 higher than in 2021.

Once again legacies played an important part in the Church's finances. The James & Jessie Shaw Charitable Trust made a donation of £5,000 and three smaller legacies took the total to £6,504.

With congregational life getting back to normal after the pandemic, expenditure in 2022 was higher than in 2021 but still less than had been budgeted for.

The net effect is that we ended the year with a surplus of £8,720.

The main trend we might draw from the accounts is that our income from Freewill Offerings is declining slowly whilst our expenditure across a range of headings, but particularly salaries and heating and lighting, is rising due to the effects of inflation.

Income

Income from Congregational Giving (including Gift Aid Tax Recovery) was £181,034, an increase of £3,677 (+2.07%) against 2021. This excludes the COVID gift appeal.

Other Ordinary Income, which includes use of premises by outside Organisations, Congregational Organisations, Weddings, Funerals, Interest and Dividends amounted to £28,099 a rise of £2,369 (+9.2%) on the previous year.

Our Total General Income for 2022 which includes legacies was £215,637. This is £29,303 less than in 2021 which included the COVID gift appeal and a much higher level of legacies.

Expenditure

Our overall General Expenditure in 2022 was £206,917 which is £12,186 more than in 2021 (+6.25%) This is approximately £10,000 less than had been budgeted for and all of that can be explained by the low level of Fabric spending. It is expected that Fabric expenditure will rise back to normal in the coming year and that is reflected in the 2023 budget.

Within the expenditure figure, our Ministry & Mission Charge was £100,846 and our Presbytery Dues were £3,544.

Surplus

Thanks be to God that we finished the year in a strong position with a surplus of £8,720. The budget had predicted a deficit of £14,671. However, the undershoot on fabric spending and the very welcome receipt of legacies meant that we finished the year as we did.

General & Restricted Funds

Our total funds including General and Restricted Funds at 31st December 2022 amount to £165,552. That is an increase of £8,720.

Budget 2023

The Ministries & Mission contribution is being replaced across the Church of Scotland with a new arrangement called, "Giving to Grow". Despite a different method for calculating our contribution to the central church, for us, the amount turns out to be very similar at £100,658 for 2023. The Fabric Team Leader has advised that a realistic estimate for Fabric expenditure would be £5,250 on the Church, £8,900 on the Halls and £3,050 on the Manse.

The high level of inflation that we are all experiencing is also experienced by the church so I have assumed our freewill offerings will increase slightly. As there is a gradual reduction in the number of people making freewill offerings, this really means that we are asking our members to raise their giving to make that possible.

In preparing a budget, we cannot assume we will receive legacies and I would ask you sincerely to respond to my letter on reviewing giving and make that a reality.

I have tried where possible to calculate what our actual expenditure would be but for those categories of income and expenditure where that is not easily done, I have budgeted close to the actual experience of 2022 with inflation adjustments where I thought appropriate.

The outcome is another deficit. I have had to budget for spending being £11,952 more than we will take in. Unless we receive legacies to bridge that gap, this will be taken out of our reserves.

You will also receive a copy of the B4tF appeal accounts. They are very simple and should require no explanation, so I present them without comment. However, I would be happy to answer any questions at the SAM.

On behalf of the Kirk Session, I would like to thank members for their continued support through your giving. The Kirk Session greatly appreciates the many people who give by standing order and who use gift aid which forms such an important part of our income. I would ask all members not yet using standing orders and / or gift aid to consider doing so if they can.

Our accounts will be presented under the rules of the charity regulations. The accounts are examined by an independent examiner who will audit the accounts in accordance with the regulations set by the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator, (OSCR). A meeting of the Kirk Session will approve the annual accounts.

Adrian Johnston
Congregational Treasurer

2023 Gift Aid Convener's Report

For the year to 5th April 2022, we claimed Gift Aid on

General Giving	£121,140.41 = tax reclaim	£30,285.10
B4tF Appeal	£ 20,120.00	“ £ 5,030.00
Congregation App	£ 9,910.50	“ £ 2,477.63
GASDS	£ 4,950.00	“ £ 1,237.50
Total	£156,120.91	£39,030.23

Congregational General giving was £121,140 ahead of the previous year's £118,208. The Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme (GASDS) claim for undocumented small cash donations could not be claimed last year when insufficient collections were made but post-covid we were able to claim on such gifts this year amounting to £4950 (maximum permitted £8,000)

The claim also included Building for the Future (B4ftF) & the Congregational Appeals which though now winding down contributed this year a tax rebate of £3,715.13.

Our aim must continue to have as many of our donors as possible use the Gift Aid scheme which adds 25% to their donations. If in doubt, please consult me.

It is appreciated not everybody can Gift Aid donations and all gifts are very gratefully received. To Gift Aid, you must pay income or capital gains taxes and sign a Declaration specifically in favour of Blackhall St Columba's Church of Scotland. To satisfy the scheme's audit requirements the giving must be by any one or more of the following three ways: -

1. Banker's Standing Orders (our preferred option)
2. Cheques/cash banked by the Finance team or directly by online banking including your name for reference.
3. Weekly Freewill Offering envelopes are very rarely used but old supplies are available if wanted.

Only individuals can gift aid, but this is regularly done by one of a couple for their joint giving. However, a surviving spouse or partner, who did not sign one previously, needs to sign a fresh Gift Aid Declaration if donations and the tax recovery on them can and are to continue.

What cannot be Gift Aided but can carry other tax advantages to the donor's estate and provide essential income to the Church is a future Gift in your Will. I will be pleased to give general, confidential, unbiased information in this respect if you would like it. Otherwise please arrange now to make a gift in future when you cannot make it yourself by, literally and figuratively, continuing your support of the Church through your Will with a gift for General use or purposes you specifically wish.

All matters concerning individual giving including legacies are always considered personal, private, confidential, and strictly honoured as such.

Sandy Weir
Gift Aid Convener

2023 Fabric Convener's Report

During 2022 the required annual servicing of the Fabric and Appliances for the Manse, Church and Halls was carried out. This included Boiler Servicing, Gas Safety Checks, Security Alarm System, Portable Appliance Testing (PAT), Kitchen Equipment, Fire Extinguishers, and our extensive Fire Alarm System. Throughout the year, as required, there were 'minor' repairs undertaken on Roof areas, Electrical Items and Plumbing. Following Kirk Session approval, the installation of the Accessible Water Closet (AWC) in part of the office area was progressed. This is now completed, and the Approved Completion Certificate received for retention. My thanks to Fay Stirling for her work with the project.

Mike Whiteside
Fabric Convener

2023 Premises & Staff Convener's Report

The Sanctuary

The installation of the accessible toilet is now complete and operational.

Church Office

Joy McGonigal-Paget continues to cope extremely well with her new blended/flexible working contract, both WfH and with set Church Office days. Thank you very much on behalf of the Church.

Church Organist /Director of Music

Donald Cameron has kept us going during the past year providing much needed music and we thank him, Elizabeth Smith, and the Choir for their contribution to this ministry.

Church Halls/Sanctuary

The Halls and Sanctuary have been well maintained by Dorothea and Kevin. We thank them for their hard work and for standing in for each other during holiday and illness periods.

Health & Safety

Sincere thanks are recorded to Ruth Laidlaw who is our Halls Team Leader and Donald Stirling our Health and Safety Co-ordinator. Thanks also to Betty Watt who manages our defibrillator, first-aid boxes and wheelchairs. And thank you to Mike Whiteside our Fabric Team Leader and Fire Representative.

Beading Duty Rota and Sound.

Thanks are recorded to Adrian Johnston, Jonny Coy and both the teams.

Thank you to all the organisations that use the Church Halls.

Finally, a thank you to all the gentlemen and ladies who assist with the jobs required to be done in and around the Church and to the Gardening Team of volunteers.

Frances M Douglas
Premises and Staff Convener

