

CHURCH OF
SCOTLAND
GENEVA



ANNUAL
CONGREGATIONAL
REPORT 2024

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Farewell words from our minister

Some quotations from previous annual reports that are worth repeating – and remain true to this day!

“We are now settled in Geneva and finding kind and loving people there” –

“I am very happy here – because you allow me to be...and without your help, support. good humour, generous understanding, prayers, honesty and encouragement –the job would be impossible.”

“Worship has continued to be the beating heart of the life of the congregation, with enthusiastic singing, from the heart, a real sense of shared spiritual life and a rich mixture of traditions explored.

The addition of varied musical input, the involvement of readers, prayers and participants, expresses the rich resources within our congregation’s life, and avoids sameness and predictability.

The preaching takes us across the many strands of Christian experience and biblical teaching, always trying to be rooted in, and shaped by, the real questions being asked by real people – living, as they do, with the issues of the real world.”

“We continue to try to find a blend and a balance in the praise used – that will bring the best of contemporary Christian music alongside the rich heritage that we enjoy from the glorious and enduring past of the church.

And as ever – that balance requires of everyone a truly charitable spirit of tolerance – and an understanding that no one section of a congregation should ever monopolize, or have a veto, over the contents of worship. That would generate distortions that could only be destructive.

None of us is going to have everything the way we would like it to be- every Sunday without fail...

So, it is important that we allow the tastes and preferences and needs of others – be they children, teenagers, musical sophisticates or lovers of familiar old favourites – to have a place.

“But of course it’s the people thing that is so precious – working with people, caring for people – making tough journeys with people – sharing happy times, and enduring sad times with people in all the crazy sweet jumble that is every person’s life.

Young and old, rich and poor, educated and not...devout and searching...deeply interested in the faith – and not remotely interested – up close and personal with God – or in the far country – a long way from home...”

"And, of course, as is the nature of things, there is in me a huge sense of the expectations of some people not being met – their hopes of their minister and their church not being realized...as the crowded and demanding nature of ministry means that much is left un-done – many dreams unfulfilled."

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“That being said – and it needs saying, the reality is that, the glass is very much half-full rather than half-empty!!! – and that our reasons for gratitude and thanksgiving far outweigh any regrets we may have about unfinished business.

That is not to slip into complacency – but to recognize blessings when they pour down upon us.

It is important to emphasize the positive – and not to let anxieties about the future, or regrets about the past stultify our sense of wonder and joy at how good God has been to our congregation – and how generous his grace is towards us.”

“My earnest prayer is that the Nominating Committee will find a minister to bring before the congregation – who will love and value you all as much as I have, and still do...and that this wonderful congregation will grow in faith and love, serving God with vision and confidence.”

“To you the congregation – whose deep faith, sincere worship, and real love make the Church of Scotland, Geneva a wonderful place to come home to...a great church to belong to – thank you once again.”

And there is Lindy!

The truth remains unshakably true – namely, that her love and commitment are huge influences on my ministry and enable me to function in ways that would otherwise be impossible. Someday, I might find the right words to thank her enough.

And to those of you who have encouraged me with your love and kind words, whose example of faith and whose unerring faithfulness in worship, service, giving, and prayer make the impossible business of ministry almost possible...a special thank you.

In fondest love,

Laurence Twaddle (laurence.twaddle@gmail.com)

WORSHIP

Ushers

Ushers are normally the first people that newcomers and visitors, as well as regular members of our congregation, meet when entering the church. The warmth of their welcome has a big impact, particularly on newcomers' first impressions. Thank you to all involved in serving the church in this way!

The usher's role involves greeting those attending church each week and carrying out other tasks during the service to ensure its smooth-running. These include making hymnbooks available and collecting and counting the offering.

The rota for the following six months is published twice a year, in May and November. Each usher is on duty once every two or three months.

We are constantly looking for additional volunteers to usher. If you are interested in serving the church in this way, please speak to me or drop me an email.

Arthur Griffith (griffith@bluewin.ch)

Bible readers

The Bible readers group numbers some 25 people now, and their willingness and dedication seem to go from strength to strength. While some read on a regular basis and others just occasionally, everyone's contribution is very much valued and appreciated.

If anyone has considered reading in church but thought it to be too much of a commitment, we're all here to tell you that is not the case. We have a very flexible schedule, which is driven by availability and is drawn up by me every couple of months.

Reading at Sunday services is a rewarding contribution to church life, and I would be delighted to hear from you if you would like more information, or to give it a try. Don't be shy!

Nicola Hollyman (nicolahollyman@hotmail.com)

Music

Music in worship continued to be important in 2024, with all services except for Christmas Day having organ or piano accompaniment. We are lucky to have a group of volunteer organists/pianists – Peter Billington, Linda Revkin and Peter Tulloch - who played for services when I was not available. In addition, in December, I brought in some young organists, Gilles Martinet and Denis Steffen, recommended by Vincent Thévenaz, organ professor at the Geneva Conservatory, to replace me over the holiday season when I was in New York.

We have also been blessed with the music provided by Judith Peacock, Makoto Ikeda, Kathryn Watson and family (Ruben, Luke and Elsa) and Mark Jeffrey. Laurence Twaddle favoured us with his singing accompanied by guitar in a number of services. And of course, we all appreciated the solos provided for special services by Nicola Hollyman, Georgina Cofie and Vivien Liu. We are very grateful to Peter Billington for conducting the expanded choir for the Christmas service of Nine Lessons and Carols.

My thanks go to all these people for their beautiful contributions to worship.

Rebecca MacDonald (rebdirks@gmail.com)

On an ordinary Sunday, our choir numbers range from 5 to 15. Whether large or small, we make a joyful (and often harmonious) noise.

Aside from the summer break, we sing an Introit every Sunday; on the first Sunday of the month, we sing an extra piece during communion, and on the last Sunday, we have a stab at an anthem, or “anthem-type”, piece.

For the first time in a long time, our December carol service in 2024 was largely a home-grown effort. In recent years, we had joined forces with the UN choir and, before that, the choir of the German-speaking Swiss Reformed congregation in Geneva. This time, we had a tenor from the UN choir and two sopranos and two tenors from the English-speaking Lutheran congregation in the Place du Bourg-de-Four, but largely we did it ourselves.

What was unexpected, and impressive, was the number of folk from our own congregation who came out of the pews to join our usual suspects. We hope that they, and others, will do the same in 2025 (likely date: December 14, at 11h).

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New choir members are welcome on any Sunday. We rehearse from 10am before the service. Fortified by the congregational lunch in the Salle at the end of the month, we repair to the Auditoire afterwards to run through the choral music for the coming month. No one expects you to show up every Sunday, none of us do. If you are tempted, drop me a note!

Páraic Réamonn (paraic.reamonn@gmail.com)

Flower rota

Flowers may not be the most important part of our services, but they do enhance the “look and feel” of our Sunday worship. Members sign up to the flower rota for many reasons: to mark special dates in their lives or the lives of their loved ones – birthdays, anniversaries, deaths; to celebrate spring, summer, or autumn – winter, not so much; to remember the high holidays of the Christian year. Whatever the reason, your contributions are warmly welcomed!

For several years we had been without a flower coordinator, but in 2024 Rosemary Hill kindly offered to fill the role. She reminds everyone that we can sign up to the rota after worship in the Salle Théodore de Bèze or by emailing her (hillrosemary@yahoo.co.uk). She also reminds us that, if we were all to volunteer, say, once a year, she would have little or nothing to coordinate. Her work here would be done. (See *Mark 4:9* – ed.)

Christine Buhler (buhlerchristine@hotmail.com)

Order of service

“What is the use of an order of service,” thought Alice, “without pictures or illustrations?” In October 2023 we began to print a more elaborate order of service, with notices of upcoming events, due recognition of all those taking part in the service – and pictures and illustrations. Lewis Carroll would be pleased!

The order has developed organically since then but has now acquired a settled form. Eager and willing volunteers take turns in laying out and printing the order. We should like to grow this rota, so that no one has to do it too often.

Easy-to-follow instructions are available for beginners, as are easy-to-follow instructors. All you need is a laptop or computer with Microsoft Word and, ideally, a colour printer. If you would like to join our gang, just drop me a line or corner me after worship.

Páraic Réamonn (paraic.reamonn@gmail.com)

Sunday school

During 2024, the Sunday school welcomed three new families and grew to ten children, plus ad hoc visitors passing through Geneva. In May an ecumenical service hosted by the Eglise Protestante de Genève (EPG) in the cathedral was attended by some of our members and some of our Sunday school kids joined activities organized for kids in the Auditoire. In November the annual church fair again provided an opportunity for parents to make old toys available for sale at the Toys & Games table. In December the children joined the Advent Carol Service, singing “Once in Royal David's City” (CH4 315) with the church choir. For the online service on Christmas Eve, the children prepared a video recording of “Oh How Joyfully” (the old German “*O du Fröliche*”).

Cornis Van der Lugt (cornis.lugt@gmail.com)

Zoom worship connection

As most of you will be aware, I stood down as the church Zoom operator at the end of 2024 for family reasons. This was after having served as the main operator since I took over from Tom Snow, and consisted of running the Zoom session for more than 130 Sunday services, plus a similar number of Wednesday lunchtime services.

I'd like to thank Lindy for all her assistance during my tenure, especially fighting with sometimes uncooperative iPads in church, and Laurence for his strong support, preparation, commitment, and pastoral concern for all those who've made use of Zoom to be with us from their homes or around the world.

Mark Jeffrey (mark.jeffrey@microsoft.com)

Coffee and tea

A big thank you to all the volunteers who help prepare and serve coffee and tea each Sunday after church. It is very much appreciated, as it provides an opportunity to meet other members of the congregation and also to welcome newcomers and visitors.

We are always happy to add new names to our list. There are two people serving each Sunday so you are not on your own! If you would like to join this team of volunteers, please contact either of us, and we will add your name to the next rota. It is a wonderful opportunity to get to know the congregation and also to meet visitors.

Rosaleen Walker (rmwalker@bluewin.ch)

Hazel Griffith (hazelandarthurgiffith@gmail.com)

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

Kirk session

The session met six times during 2024. In addition, an additional meeting was held on May 22 to decide whether, in filling the current vacancy in the Scots Kirk, Lausanne, we should depart from the historic (and current) doctrine and practice of the Church of Scotland in relation to human sexuality and their application to ministers and deacons of the Kirk.

A vote in favour of departure allows the joint nominating committee of the two congregations to consider applications from, among others, ministers who are in a same-sex civil partnership or marriage. The session voted to depart, with 10 for and 2 against. The kirk session in Lausanne took the same view.

Matters of importance in the life of the congregation included:

- Our congregational profile and electoral roll were updated, because of the vacancy in the deferred linkage with Lausanne. The profile is a document which will be available to potential candidates and the roll determines who can vote for the election of the said Minister, once chosen
- A nominating committee was elected for the vacancy in Lausanne, with 13 members, 7 from Lausanne and 6 from Geneva (5 of whom are elders)
- A third *Future Focus* session was held in April finalizing plans to put the different initiatives in place in autumn

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- Sunday November 17 2024 was Safeguarding Sunday and this was incorporated into worship. Having fulfilled her remit in setting up safeguarding in the congregation, Christine Colliar stepped down in November, after approaching Lyndsey Bochaton as a very able successor. Lyndsey was duly approved by the Kirk Session and has now been given the go-ahead by the Church of Scotland safeguarding service
- The minister conducted a training session for elders on November 17 which was very informative

Rebecca MacDonald and Jenny Rietbergen were ordained as elders during 2024, and two elders, Ailsa Craig and Mary Couper, stepped down. With Mary's departure, we now have two session clerks.

Session members (as of December 2024)

Elders

Lyndsey Bochaton, Jane Broere, Christine Buhler, Christine Colliar, Alex Craeye, Laurent Djamen, Nicola Hollyman, Mak Ikeda, Mark Jeffrey, Rebecca MacDonald, Jane McKenzie, Jenny Rietbergen, Cornis Van Der Lugt, Rosaleen Walker

Ministers

Laurence Twaddle, Páraic Réamonn

Christine Buhler (buhlerchristine@hotmail.com)

Jane Broere (jane.broere@gmail.com)

Joint session clerks

Congregational committee

The committee met five times by Zoom in 2024 and had robust discussions on topics related to the temporal affairs of the church. Regular items on the agenda were the treasurer's report, finance, mission, fabric, relations with the Auditoire committee, and coordinating the St Andrew's Fair. Other discussions included the *Future Focus* sessions and outcomes, safeguarding training, the congregational website, safety in the Salle, clearing out the vestry, planning for a future minister, and contributions to local charities.

The annual congregational meeting (ACM) took place on Sunday June 9 in the Salle Théodore de Bèze.

The first part of the meeting covered the required business items:

- Approval of the minutes of the 2023 ACM
- Report on the 2023 accounts
- Approval of the 2024 budget
- Approval of the 2025 provisional budget
- Appointing an independent examiner for the 2024 accounts
- Reception of the 2023 annual congregational report
- Election of members to the congregational committee.

This was followed by a presentation and lively discussion on the *Future Focus* initiative to revitalize our congregational life.

During the course of the year, Jenny Rietbergen became an elder, Fiona Parrot stepped down, and Mwai Makoka returned to Malawi.

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As of December 2024, the elected members of the committee were, serving from:

- 2022 to 2025 - Grace Ansah, Sherree Atkinson-Bret
- 2023 to 2026 - David Hogg, Jason Leger
- 2024 to 2027 - Nan Braunschweiger, Han Broere, Ewart MacKenzie, Douglas Murray-Jones

Nan Braunschweiger (ntbraunsch@blueemail.ch)

Future Focus

In October 2023, our treasurer, Ewart Mackenzie, sounded the alarm. Our congregation was in crisis. This presented itself, in the first instance, as a financial crisis, but ultimately, it wasn't financial. Our underlying problem was falling numbers and a falling stream of activities in the congregation.

One immediate response was to reach out to and communicate with the wider communities in which the Church of Scotland, Geneva is set. But more was obviously needed, and early in 2024, our congregation embarked on a *Future Focus* exercise, under the genial guidance of Rob Robson from Scotland (he's actually from Manchester, but who's counting?)

In a first session, we looked at where we were and where, in living memory, we had come from. In a second, we thought about where we would like to be, three or four years from now. And in a third session, where we "flew solo", we looked at putting these thoughts into practice.

We are a "gathered" congregation. Indeed, we are the sort of congregation that gives "gathered" a bad name, drawing our members from three cantons in Switzerland and two departments in France Voisine. A first initiative, therefore, to give all members a chance to meet other members regularly, other than at Sunday worship, was to divide the congregation into neighbourhood groups. These groups would set their own agenda, organize their own events, and have two of their members as coordinators. WhatsApp groups would help them to communicate easily.

A second initiative was to start or restart groups cutting across the whole congregation: a book club, organized by Gillian Friedli (gillianfriedli@bluewin.ch), a Bible study led by our minister on the letter of James, so unfairly described by Martin Luther as "a letter of straw", a "men's group" that Laurent Djamen (f-laurent.djamen-t@hotmail.com) struggled manfully to kickstart, and more.

Our experience to date is that ideas and initiatives take longer to realize than impatient Irishmen would like, but already in 2024 focusing on our future began to show results.

Páraic Réamonn (paraic.reamonn@gmail.com)

Caring for One Another

The care group has continued to be a vital ministry in our church community over the past year, offering prayer, support, and encouragement to those facing illness, loss, or personal challenges. Through regular visits, phone calls, and cards, our team has strived to reflect Christ's love in practical and compassionate ways. We are grateful for the dedication of our volunteers and the opportunity to serve as a source of comfort and connection within our congregation.

Lyndsey Bochaton (lyndsey.bochaton@gmail.com)

Eco-congregation

During *Future Focus* discussions up to April 2024, it was agreed that one of the transversal activity groups of our congregation for future growth focus on the environmental agenda and build on the work of the Church of Scotland Eco-Congregation initiative. In May 2024, Mark Jeffery shared with us an update of interfaith activities in North America, as part of an Eco-Pentecost initiative that celebrated churches united in their efforts to help restore and protect God's creation. In October 2024, the final worship service of the International Presbytery meeting in Lausanne, attended by Geneva and others, included a sermon by Rev David Coleman, chaplain to the Eco Congregation initiative. By November 2024, we introduced parents and Sunday school children to Advent resources available from Eco-Congregation. Parents were referred to the Eco-Congregation website which offered an Advent 2024 landscape of various activities. The Eco-Congregation Scotland journey with "Advent: Landscape in Progress" included winter images, candle prayers and daily advent readings.

Cornis van der Lugt (cornis.lugt@gmail.com)

Safeguarding

Safeguarding protects children and adults at risk from harm in any part of the Church of Scotland. Safeguarding is about preventing harm and abuse and making a timely and appropriate response if it occurs. It is, regrettably, a permanent and necessary part of Church and congregational life.

The Church of Scotland aims to minimize the risk of harm occurring. With appropriate support and training, harm or abuse that does occur will be recognized and reported. If it occurs, we will work with the local police and social work services where appropriate. *The needs of the child, adult at risk, or survivor come first.*

The key safeguarding message, whether for current and historical abuse, is simple: *If harm or abuse is suspected or witnessed, or is reported to you, you must immediately report it to your safeguarding coordinator or safeguarding panel.*

Every role in church life requires a job description. We have these in place for:

- Sunday School teachers and door keepers
- members of the *Caring for One Another* pastoral care group

These descriptions are used in recruitment, which has to follow a procedure set by the Church of Scotland. Nobody can work with children or vulnerable adults without duly completing the recruitment process. This includes taking a safeguarding training course. Elders and congregational committee members are also required to take a course and have been asked to sign up online. The International Presbytery has two trainers – Rev Aaron Stevens (Budapest) and Rev Betsi Thane (Malta) and provided several courses in 2024.

Safeguarding panel

Christine Buhler

Cornis van der Lugt

Lawrence Twaddle (until end May 2025)

A safeguarding panel is in place. Members of the congregation can talk to anyone on the panel about issues concerning safeguarding. The safeguarding panel continues to encourage people to take the courses and did this on Safeguarding Sunday, November 17 2024, during morning worship.

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In November 2024, Christine Colliar stepped down as safeguarding coordinator, having completed much of the following remit:

- introduce a safeguarding culture in the congregation
- work with Sunday School, pastoral care coordinator, and organist to provide job descriptions
- use the safe recruitment procedure to recruit new members and bring existing members into conformity

Lyndsey Bochaton was nominated by the kirk session as the new safeguarding coordinator and has now been approved by the Church of Scotland.

Information about the Church of Scotland Safeguarding Service can be found here:

churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/safeguarding-service

Christine Colliar (ccolliar@churchofscotland.org.uk)

Fabric committee

General repairs

- No major issues to report; only minor ongoing repairs

Key schedule

- Completed.
- List of current key holders is with Arthur Askew

Safety features review

- Páraic Réamonn offered to be involved

Disabled access to the church

- Project delayed due to lack of funds
- Realization may take some years

Acoustic study

- Still pending.
- Han Broere exploring Bluetooth options for hearing aid compatibility.

Lift

- Otis initially recommended replacement several years ago.
- More recent feedback suggests a new model would use the same electronics as the current one.
- Nan Brauschweiger is reviewing the current situation.

Vestry

- Now rearranged and tidied, thanks to Christine Buhler and Jane Broere

Insurance policy (church & salle)

- Copy to be obtained from the EPG – ongoing.

Douglas Murray-Jones (dmurrayjones@aol.com)

COMMUNITY

Sunday lunches

Around 30 people usually attend our simple monthly, Sunday lunches with the menu changing with the seasons! The time that we share together is a moment which allows us to get to know each other a little better. Visitors often join us and enjoy the time of fellowship and of course the desserts! At the end of December, we pulled out all the stops and provided a 'Festive Lunch' which was enjoyed by all who attended!



A starter with smoked salmon, then ham, gratin, red cabbage followed by delicious desserts and all washed down with great wines and sparkling company. What more could you ask for to bring 2024 to a close!

Sherree Atkinson-Bret (sherreeatkinsonbret@gmail.com)

Burns Supper

After a break in 2024, we held a very successful Burns Night in the Salle on January 25 2025. This was attended by 54 members and friends of our congregation, the maximum number we could accommodate. We could easily have sold more tickets if we had more space available. Many thanks to all those who worked so hard behind the scenes to make the Night such an enjoyable evening of fun and friendship, while raising CHF1,660 for church funds in the process.

Jean Murray (jeancmurray@yahoo.co.uk)

St Andrew's Fair

Due to the unavailability of the Salle des Délices in Grand-Saconnex later in the month, our annual St Andrew's Fair was held on November 2. As numbers were down from previous years, it was felt that this was largely due to the earlier date. Nevertheless, the ambience, the fellowship, the pipes and drums, the food and the diversity of items on sale yet again provided for a thoroughly enjoyable day! Our financial result was a tad lower than previous years, but still around a healthy CHF13'000. The cèilidh continues to be a successful attraction for many wanting to spend an evening with excellent food, dance and music from the Lake Léman Band.

Many thanks to all those stalwart folk who turn up and make the Fair a resounding success year after year. After organizing the Fair, on and off, over more than three decades, I am now stepping down. It is way overdue to have someone younger, with fresh ideas and more energy to keep the momentum going. Jason Leger has kindly offered to be the new organizer, and I hand him the baton with every confidence that the Fair will be in good hands.

Once again, thanks for all your amazing support during the last few years . . . and most importantly, the laughs.

Reserve the date

St Andrew's Fair and Cèilidh 2025: November 22, Salle des Délices, Grand Saconnex

Christine Buhler (buhlerchristine@hotmail.com)

Book club

We met twice in 2024, to discuss Maggie O'Farrell's *Hamnet* and Barbara Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead*. In 2025, we have so far met three more times. We have enjoyed the discussions. We are sad that Laurence, with his enormous culture and wisdom, is leaving, and we thank him for his participation and support.

New members are more than welcome. There are currently 10 people on the participating list, and the attendance varies from 3 to 6. An ideal would be to have 4 to 8 people present for each meeting.

Members are often on travel and absent from Geneva. The club can still function if people confirm their expected presence and give suggestions for books they would like to discuss in the future.

The modalities of the meetings are also open for discussion. At present we meet at 14h in the Café Papon, 1 Rue Henri-Fazy, behind the Hôtel de Ville in the old city of Geneva. Our next meeting is on Monday June 30. The book for discussion is *Dream Count* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian author. She has published four novels, two collections of short stories, and a memoir and has written many articles and short stories for newspapers, magazines, and periodicals.

Gillian Friedli (gillianfriedli@bluewin.ch)



Creations (craft group)

The craft group continued to meet on an ad hoc basis during 2024. Not all of us craft now and for this reason we are currently rebranding ourselves! Look out for our, soon to be announced, new name. Nevertheless, our main activity remains offering an innovative, creative stall, full of attractive items, for the annual St Andrew's Fair.

We very much enjoy our meetings, friendship, laughter, and fellowship with cake! New members are always welcome to join and bring along new ideas.

Christine Buhler (buhlerchristine@hotmail.com)

MISSION AND UNITY

Mission here

Partage

The church began supporting *Partage* (the Geneva Food Bank, partage.ch/en) at the Harvest Service in September 2023 when a collection of food and other necessities was made, filling seven of the orange-coloured boxes that we have become familiar with.

We continue this support by having collections of non-perishable food and other household necessities on the first Sunday of every month when we have our communion service. The initiative gives us an immediate connection with the realities of the local Geneva community.



On average, we collect four full shopping bags of donations each month, for which the organization expresses its heartfelt gratitude. They say:

At a time when social challenges are increasing and many families are facing increasing difficulties, the Partage expressed its deep gratitude to you. Your support goes far beyond a simple financial gesture. It embodies a concrete solidarity that allows them to pursue their triple mission: to fight against precariousness, to fight food waste and to contribute to professional reintegration. Every donation made directly contributes to changing views, bringing welcome relief, and creating a positive and lasting impact within our community

Their recent report states that the equivalent of 3.9 million meals are distributed annually supporting more than 15,300 adults and children in precarious situations each week. This helps us to understand the levels of need in Geneva to which our congregation generously responds.

Fellowship of the Least Coin



The congregation has continued supporting the Fellowship of the Least Coin (FLC) by collecting 5ct pieces which are contributed to this worthy cause. The fellowship supports local projects with small grants to cover wide-ranging needs on a global scale. Collections of 5ct pieces – or larger denominations if you wish – can be given to Nan Braunschweiger or Jane Broere on the first Sunday of any month.

Please note we can only use Swiss coins.

Some snap-shot examples include:

- Sanitation and Hygiene Program, Bangladesh
- Dignity and Social Inclusion: Socially vulnerable children and youth, Argentina
- Iwaki Food Radiation Measurement Project, Japan
- Awareness Creation on Gender Based Violence Crimes, Tanzania
- Rehabilitation and Sessions of Intensive Vocational Training at the Central Women's Prison in Baabda, Lebanon
- Seeking wisdom to care for God's creation, Pacific Region
- Young Egyptian Women as Agents of Peace Building and Consolidation, Egypt.

Much more information can be found on the website: fellowshipoftheleastcoin.org

End-of-year giving

Our third Gospel tells us that Christ was born in a stable because “there was no room in the inn” (Luke 2:7). Accordingly, it has been our custom is to allocate our collection on Christmas Day and part of the proceeds of our St Andrew’s Fair to local charities. This, too, connects us with local realities in the Geneva area.

From 2024 funds it was decided to donate CHF1,000 each to:

- Maison de Tara, a palliative care hospice, with which some in our congregation are involved as volunteers (lamaisondetara.ch)
- Alzheimer Genève, ensuring the dignity of people with Alzheimer's by supporting and accompanying those affected and their loved ones (alzheimer-schweiz.ch/fr/geneve/page-daccueil)
- La Main Tendue Genève, an organization offering support by telephone, chat or e-mail to anyone in distress, free of charge (143.ch/fr/)

Mission elsewhere

Our mission committee oversees our congregation’s support for mission elsewhere, namely our partnerships with the Ekwendeni HIV Youth Resource Centre in Malawi and the Lalgadh leprosy hospital in Nepal.

This year has been a busy one for both projects and we continue to support their important work through regular (twice-yearly) donations. Here are some highlights of 2024.

In Lalgadh, Graeme and Meena Clugston wrapped up their 17 years of dedicated service and have taken a very well-earned retirement. We continue to support the hospital, financing the salaries of a doctor and a nurse.

A concert in the Auditoire in October raised funds towards a new x-ray machine for Lalgadh hospital. With special thanks to Vivien Liu, the concert generated nearly CHF3,200 towards the purchase of this important piece of machinery.

A concert in the Auditoire in June raised funds for the Ekwendeni Resource Centre. With special thanks to Rebecca Dirks MacDonald, the concert generated nearly CHF1,200 towards the resource centre’s vital work.

Jane and Han Broere visited the resource centre in September and had very valuable discussions with Shupo and others involved in the work.

A special appeal for Ekwendeni earlier in the year raised nearly CHF3,500 as a gift from our congregation to meet the most important operational needs of the Resource Centre, above the basic funding needs we cover. Jane and Han Broere delivered this gift in person and consulted with Shupo on the best way to use it. The funds were used to purchase new band equipment and a generator to provide power for the band when they go ‘on the road’ (live music is a key part of the HIV/Aids outreach activities in local communities), and new chairs for the Resource Centre. Remaining funds were deposited as a reserve to cover urgent maintenance of the Resource Centre building.

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The mission committee began exploring the possibility of hosting a visit to Geneva by two or three representatives from Ekwendeni, as we have done in the past. These visits are important in building meaningful relations and in offering encouragement to the visitors and our congregation to continue to maintain momentum for this project. The good news is that, following successful grant funding applications to cover the costs of these visits, we are now in a position to start organizing the visit – if sufficient members of the congregation are able to volunteer to help host the visitors.

Jenny Rietbergen (jennifer.rietbergen@gmail.com)

Communication

A congregational website is always a work in progress (or sometimes, not in progress). Christine Buhler and Páraic Réamonn continued to maintain the website in 2024 and (mostly) kept it up to date. With help from Linday Twaddle, we added a page for our congregational newsletters, stretching back to 2018 (churchofscotlandgeneva.ch/who-we-are/our-newsletter)

There is still much room for improvement. We plan a major revision of the site in 2025 (and next year we'll let you know how we got on). Constructive suggestions are always welcome, as is anyone rash enough to want to join our team.

Five issues of the congregational newsletter were produced in 2024, edited, designed, and partly written by the indefatigable Lindy. In March 2025, she produced her final issue.

Warm thanks are due from us all for everything Lindy has done for our congregation since she arrived with Laurence all those years ago.

Anyone who would like to help in producing the newsletter for the rest of 2025 should contact me or, preferably, Christine Buhler (buhlerchristine@hotmail.com). (Christine would prefer it to be me. 😊)

Páraic Réamonn (paraic.reamonn@gmail.com)

Ecumenical links

Our congregation has always been very ecumenically minded.

In recent times, our main links have been with

- the *Rassemblement des Eglises et Communautés Chrétiennes de Genève* (RECG, recg.ch),
- *Témoigner ensemble à Genève/Witnessing together in Geneva* (TEAG: johnknox.ch/programme/temoigner) and
- the ecumenical Cursillo community in Geneva (genevacursillo.org/wordpress)

Our congregation is still looking for someone to maintain our links with RECG. The dates for the next Cursillo weekends, held at Le Cénacle centre, are May 8 to 11 and November 6 to 9 2025.

Arthur Askew (arthuraskewge@bluewin.ch)

INTERNATIONAL PRESBYTERY



In 2024 the presbytery met in Rome in March and Lausanne in October as it continued to implement its approved mission plan, with a new minister, Rev Marius Louw, introduced in the English Reformed Church, Amsterdam. His appointment is for 3 years (as the holder of a restricted certificate of eligibility) but with the provision that there can be an extension of up to a further 3 years.

There was also considerable progress towards settling the future of St Andrew's Scots Kirk, Colombo, thanks in no small measure to the work done by its interim moderator, your own Páraic Réamonn. Also progressed has been the future for the Scots Kirk Paris which will now link with the Scots International Church, Rotterdam, on the demission of its current minister, Rev Graham Austin – already familiar to you as the interim moderator in the vacancy in the linked charge of the Scots Kirk Lausanne and your good selves in Geneva.

As regards the linking of Lausanne and Geneva, a draft basis of deferred linking was approved by both congregations and by presbytery in early 2024. Subsequently, the two congregations elected a nominating committee with 13 members to find a minister for the linked charge. This committee has been working through the vacancy process with a view to bringing a nominee to the congregations later this year.

In the meantime, although not part of what happened in 2024, I can hardly fail to note that the deferred linking in Lausanne and Geneva has now moved to become a linking, following Rev Laurence Twaddle's intimation of his intention to leave at the end of May.

Bermuda, Brussels, Geneva, and Lausanne will all be looking for ministers this year – so many changes are afoot in the Presbytery!

Also, in 2024 Presbytery finally achieved the status of a registered Scottish charity with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator, and much work was done on the preparation of numerous documents required to ensure Presbytery's compliance with data protection and safeguarding law and other aspects of Church law.

The Church of Scotland is faced with major challenges at this time: particularly, financial, ministerial and congregational. Finances have not recovered post-Covid and further cutbacks

seem inevitable; ministerial numbers have dropped and recruitment is not making this up; and congregations, too, have often failed to recover post-Covid. This last challenge is, I'd suggest, the most serious. Local congregations are the beating heart of the body that is the Church and, consequently, the future of the Church rests even more with congregations than with presbyteries and the general assembly – though these require to be more active in facilitating of mission in the congregations.

Add to this mix the changes that have been made in Scottish presbyteries (with now only 11 compared to 45 not so many years ago). How the International Presbytery fits into this new structure is very much under active consideration. So, a time of change for all of us!

With greetings and best wishes to all in the Geneva congregation – and may we all be encouraged to sing “Look forward in faith” (CH4 237)!

Derek Lawson

Presbytery clerk (International@churchofscotland.org.uk)

FINANCE

Treasurer's report

Managing change

2025 is the first time the Congregation will need to approve a revised budget. For those who may not recall, at the annual congregational meeting (ACM) in 2024, the congregation approved a provisional budget for 2025, which would be reviewed and, where necessary, adjusted and re-approved. The reason for this is that technically, the budget, once approved, constitutes an effective authorization from the congregation for the use of its resources to carry out its work. Without such an approval, any expenditures raised before the ACM are dependent on a future budget being adopted for them ultimately to be legal. By approving the budget in advance, this risk is removed. It also allows a more meaningful use of the budget by the congregation as a strategic tool.

It turns out that this is a very appropriate time to be adopting the new practice. 2024 was the first full year after the special appeal made at the end of 2023 when our finances were heading in a very alarming downwards direction. It now provides a much sounder basis for planning into the future. 2025 will also be very different to what was imagined one year ago since we now know that our current minister, Rev Laurence Twaddle, will be standing down as of the end of May 2025. Not only will we miss him greatly, a change in minister also brings with it several managerial challenges and also opportunities. Full-time ministers are more expensive than temporary cover, although the benefits to a congregation of a long-term minister are much more than can be quantified in financial terms. This means that we can plan for less expenditure in 2025 than was originally envisaged, but we also need to take a firm grasp over our plans for generating income while temporarily lacking the leadership which comes with an effective minister.

All of this makes the ACM in 2025 a good chance to see what our budget history can tell us and how we can use this to assess our performance in 2024 and plan for the road ahead.

A brief guide to budgeting

Broadly speaking, there are two types of budget: resource-based and results-based.

Resource-based budgeting is where you plan for the income you expect to receive and for the expenditures which you know you will have to incur and fund with that income. A household budget is the most common form of resource-based budgeting.

A *results-based* budget starts from the objectives an organization intends to achieve and defines the expenditures required based on that. Income is barely considered, except that it will have to come from somewhere, but that becomes part of the planning, along with the objectives.

Our congregation is essentially resource-based, although it does show a degree of results-based ambition with the relatively high income levels proposed. However, we basically plan around the expenditure we have to make to exist. This is partly because we don't typically make a lot of money but also because we are not in the business of making money. Our objectives are spiritual and are not accomplished or enhanced by raising more funding. Instead, we need finances to keep functioning. If the congregation functions, that is what is needed for it to do what it exists to do.

That basis, on which we operate at present, has a sensible logic. It prevents us from getting carried away by unrealistic ambition and presents something the whole congregation can relate to, approve, and own.

It does contain a degree of ambition. This is where taking a view over time can help to turn our budget into a tool, not just for planning but also for management. It lets us assess how well we're doing, where we are getting things right, where we need to be careful as we look forward, and where we could realistically achieve more. A little more focus on results could be a very good thing.

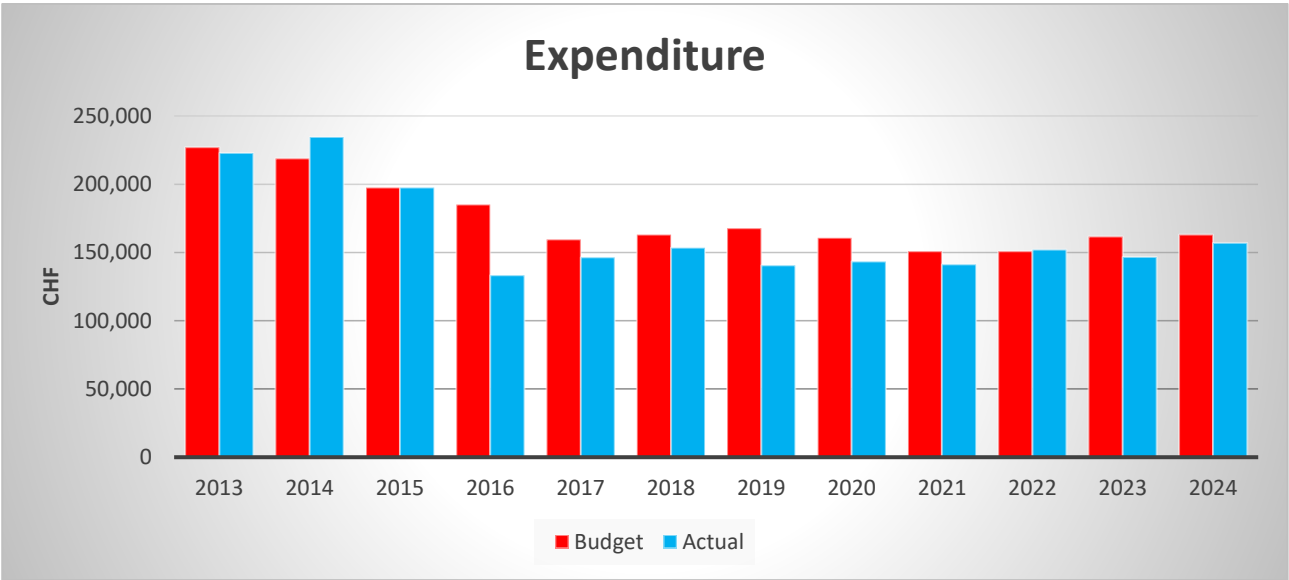
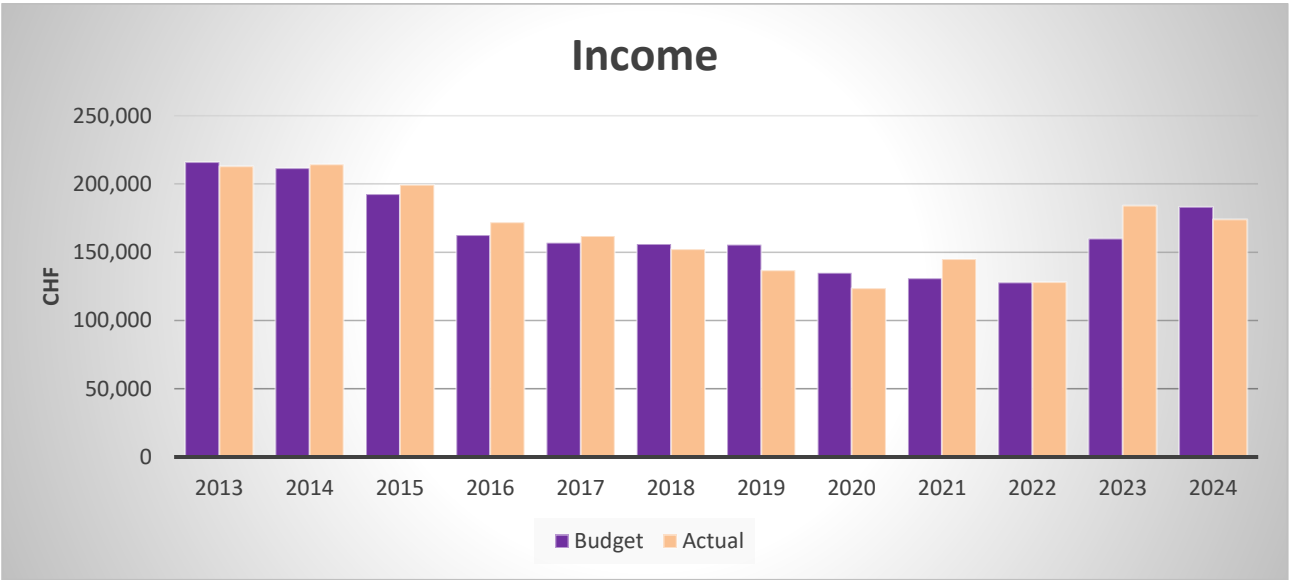
A brief history

We can look at performance against budget by both income and expenditure since 2013. This excludes mission income and expenditure since they are not budgeted but simply raised and expensed as far as is possible each year.

Expenditure dropped between 2016 and 2017, when there was no full-time minister for a spell, and income fell particularly between early 2020 and the second half of 2021, due to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

The overall figures can be seen in the charts below. A few things are worth noting:

- Income was higher than budgeted in 6 years and lower in 6 years
- Expenditure was always lower than budgeted except in 2 years
- Exceptionally good performance has almost always been driven by extraordinary events, such as the huge savings on employment costs in 2016-2017, one-off donations, and the special appeal in 2023
- There has been an overall decline in annual income levels both budgeted and actual until the special appeal of 2023, the effect of which started to fall already in 2024
- The annual expenditure level, both budgeted and actual, has been generally rising since 2016, although at a modest rate

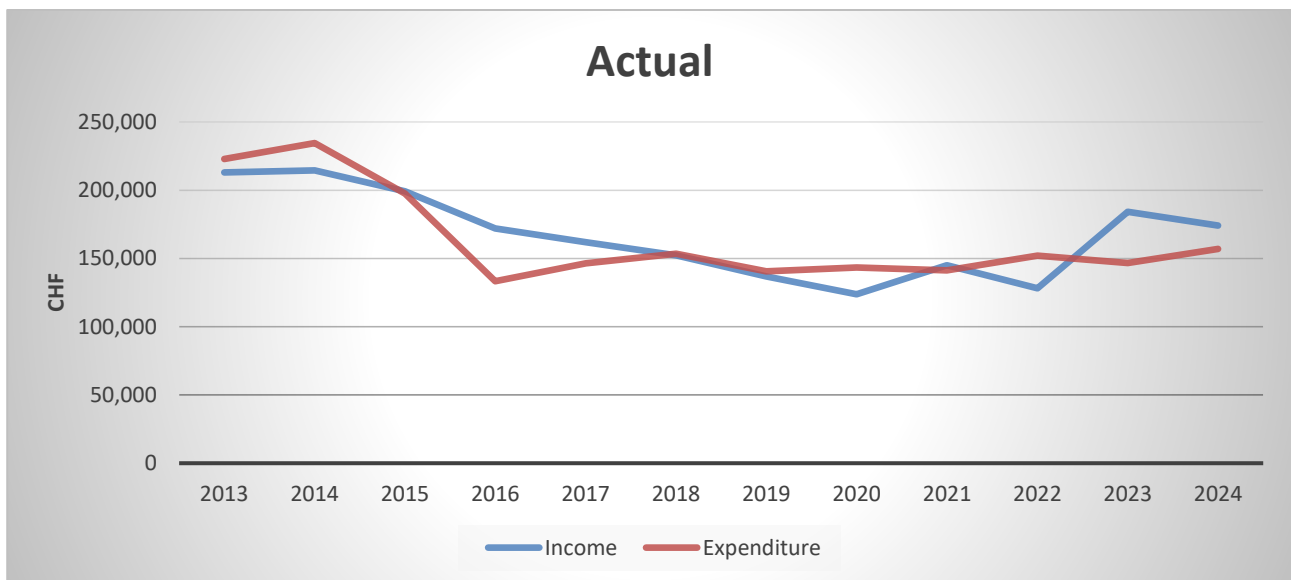
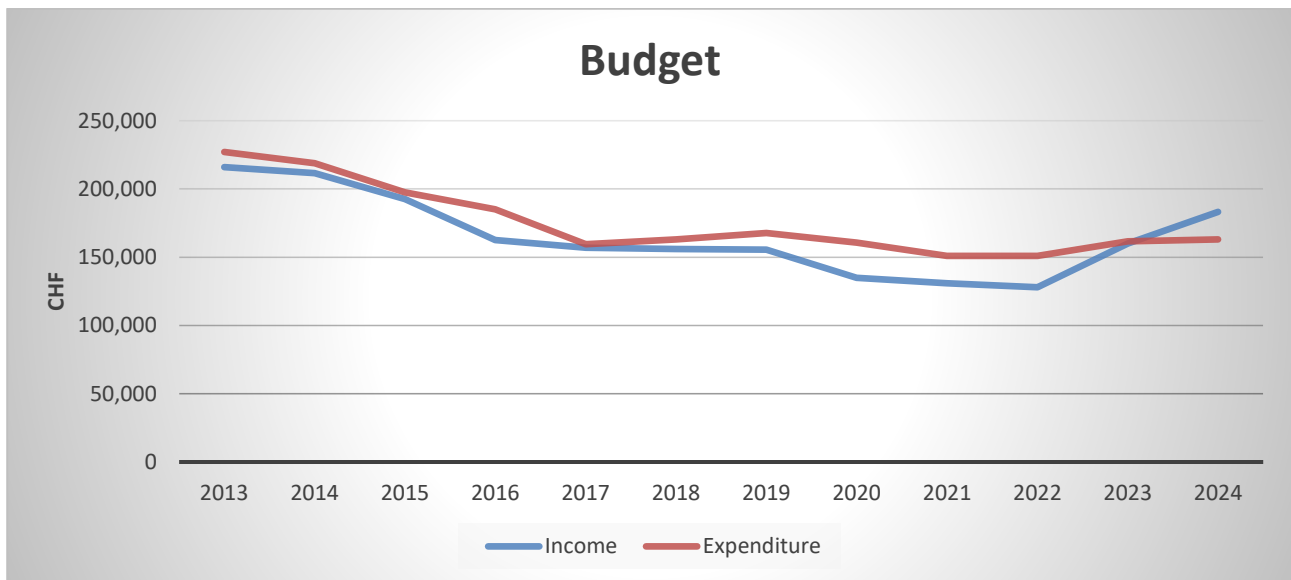


All of the above means that we are fairly strong at planning ahead in terms of expenditure. We have quite a good handle on what we plan to be spending, and we keep it under control. Our income tends to fall a bit short of our ambitions, although this is often offset by “windfalls” in terms of special donations and appeals. This has proven to be sufficient over the past decade, no more so than at the end of 2023 with the special appeal that turned a budgeted deficit of CHF1,675 into a surplus of CHF37,635. On top of a deficit in 2022 of CHF23,783, this was a timely upturn. The question in 2024 and beyond was and remains how to sustain it.

The story of our budget offers various lessons, of which two stand out. First, we have to plan ahead for increased expenditures. Our outlays will not get less. (Perhaps temporarily, as the gap between full-time ministers from June 1 2025 cuts down on employment costs. But that is no basis for long-term planning.) Our robust control in that area will help us.

Second, as we come out of the first year of the *Future Focus* initiative, we need to get to grips with our income. Relative to budget, we see ourselves driven by external trends and rescued by special events we cannot reasonably control. We need to plan ahead in a way that lets us determine our own course.

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2024 – A short summary

	2024 Budget	2024	2023	2024 vs 2023
Income	183,300	173,987	184,186	- 13,704
Expenditure	162,965	157,045	146,551	6,990
Surplus	20,335	16,942	37,635	- 20,694
Mission	N/A	26,522	30,027	- 3,505
NET ASSETS	292,840	289,447	272,505	16,942

- FWO very strong (CHF106,660), giving decent income performance
- Cash and donations down by CHF9,501 relative to budget and by CHF25,855 relative to 2023

- Expenditure higher due mainly to Church of Scotland fees, utilities and taxation-related costs
- Net assets reflect financial worth of the congregation and increase whenever there is a surplus
- Adjusted for inflation, net assets decreased by around CHF50k from 2017 to 2022 but recovered by around CHF40k over 2023 and 2024

What can we see from 2024?

2024 was encouraging in general, although it did reveal one serious failing on the income side. The 2024 budget was very ambitious in terms of income, and the cash and donations figures predictably enough fell a little short of target. However, Freewill Offering exceeded its CHF100,000 target by CHF6,660, an excellent performance. The St Andrew's Fair also performed strongly, bringing in CHF13,819 even when timing and weather conspired against it.

Special fund-raising, however, raised only one third of what was planned. This figure had been largely based on the anticipated progress of the *Future Focus* initiative. As reported elsewhere, this was an initiative where the congregation tried to take full ownership of something it could drive forward. To be sure, its principal aim is to boost our congregation and congregational life. Its impact on finances is not the main objective, although it may well go on to generate significant financial results.

Nonetheless, the income level was certainly better than in 2023 prior to the special appeal. That is encouraging: the warning of income levels descending past a sustainable point has clearly taken effect. However, income levels have to keep climbing if expenditure levels do so. The increase in Freewill Offering is the best encouragement for that, but the main concern is that there is no real oversight or planning. We have no fundraising or marketing committee and proactive income generation does not really feature on the agendas of either the kirk session or the congregational committee. We need to plan ahead and take our future in our own hands.

By contrast, expenditure went very much as planned in 2024. Employment and facilities (manse, Auditoire and Salle) costs were closely aligned with what had been approved by the congregation. The main savings were from other expenses on Church of Scotland fees (*Giving to Grow* payments to the Church of Scotland national office, plus International Presbytery dues), and on contingency funding (which is always planned, although not intended to be used except where essential). Other expenses were still higher than in 2023 when the Church of Scotland deliberately kept fee levels artificially low to help with post-lockdown recovery. That era seems past now.

The main questions regarding expenditure will be how far the Congregation can plan to expand Church life in addition to simply surviving, and what the impact of a new minister will be. The latter depends very much on the personal circumstances of any candidate. Obviously, the choice of minister should not be driven by finances. The congregation needs the best minister for the job. The question is rather how best to ensure that we can have the finances we need to recruit that minister. That is where advance planning is critical. We can look at what has happened in 2024, and soon in 2025 as well, and use that as the basis to determine what we will need in 2026 and beyond. Then we can plan our ambitions in our income and our critical needs in our expenditure. If we get those right and use them as part of the set of tools we have to manage our congregation, then budget and financing will play the role they should in our life.

Acknowledgements

The thanks of the congregation, and my own personal thanks, are due to:

- Makota Ikeda, who looks after our Freewill Offering scheme (see his report below)
- the ushers who collect and record the offerings every Sunday, and particularly Arthur, Nicola and Han who pay the funds raised into our congregational accounts
- Andrew McCallum and Robert Walker, who provide invaluable services in carrying out the independent examination of the Church's accounts, a legal requirement that ensures that what is submitted for approval by the congregation is trustworthy and correct
- SOFAD SA, for the *pro bono* services generously provided in tax advice and employment costs management. This has been of immense help in 2024 and recent years.

If there is anyone I've forgotten to mention, please accept my apologies in advance.

Ewart MacKenzie (mackenzieje@hotmail.com)

Freewill offering scheme

The Freewill Offering scheme (FWO) helps us to predict our income for each year based on information from pledges and from past donations. Membership in the scheme has held steady with 50 members. As last year, 39 members contribute by bank transfer while 11 members donate using envelopes. This year we have started using a new supplier of envelopes to optimize on costs.

While our membership numbers hold steady, the very good news is that this year there has been a 20% increase compared to last year in donations to the general fund, totalling nearly CHF107,000. There was a slight dip in mission donations at CHF2,7000. In response to this, we have sent out a special message to the FWO members in our yearly letter.

At the end of each year, tax attestations are provided for those members who live in a canton that accepts such donations as deductions to income to be included in their cantonal tax declaration. Tax attestations were issued to 29 members for their 2024 donations.

We are truly blessed with such generous and supportive members.

Makoto Ikeda (fw.treasurer.cos.geneva@gmail.com)

Keep in touch!

Our kirk session maintains a confidential *roll* of members and others connected to our congregation: name, address, telephone, email. This also serves as an *electoral register* on those occasions when the congregation needs to voice its opinion by voting. If any of your contact details have changed recently, please update them by emailing Christine Buhler (buhlerchristine@hotmail.com)

Minister (until May 31)

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