



We came, we saw, we elected!

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

In September, Dee and I spent a memorable time among you – most notably during the nomination of Rev Dr Enikő Ferenczy as the new minister of our linked charge. I was personally delighted by the turnout, especially given the change in service times. The adjustment was necessary to allow Enikő to preach in both congregations on the same Sunday, and I want to thank you all for your flexibility in making that possible.

A special word of thanks also goes to Dee, my wife, for helping me with the voting process (though truth be told, I was probably helping her!)



Dee counting our ballots, with a little help from her friend

We must also acknowledge the hard work of the nomination committee under the excellent leadership of Hannelize van Zyl. The committee of 13 found a working relationship and harmony that enabled them to find Enikő and present her to you. We give them our heartfelt thanks.

Now we move to the next stage in the life of our linkage – the search for an associate minister. In preparation, the two kirk sessions met to discuss how a search committee should be formed.

After a thoughtful and lively discussion, we agreed that we would follow the same process used in calling Enikő. The sessions desired that the position of associate minister carry the same *gravitas* as that of the minister.

Official announcements, or “edicts”, will be read (if they haven’t been already), informing you that on Sunday, November 9, following the service, congregational meetings will be held. The purpose of these meetings is to form a new nominating committee – this time, seven members from Geneva and six from Lausanne. Their task will be to advertise, interview, and ultimately nominate a candidate to preach for the post of associate minister for the linked charge. And then, as before, we get to vote!

I would like to make this important point. Their titles do not imply a hierarchy but rather reflect the roles within a collaborative team. Together, they will discern how best to share responsibilities, to work with others in both places who are qualified to lead or share in leading worship, and serve our two congregations. In fact, we all have a part to play in our fellowships. It is, after all, one of the ideals of our Presbyterian tradition – the belief in the “priesthood of all believers”, where every member, ordained or not, plays a vital role in the life and mission of the church.

Finally, I ask you to pray for the new nominating committee, as you did for the old, that they may be strengthened and guided by the Holy Spirit as they begin this important work.

Rev Graham Austin, Interim Moderator, Geneva with Lausanne

GENEVA with LAUSANNE

Rev Dr Enikő Ferenczy

Enikő will join the Scots Kirk Lausanne and the Church of Scotland, Geneva, as our pastor in January 2026. An ordained Presbyterian Church (USA) minister, she is excited to return to Europe and serve in the Church of Scotland as well as be closer to her family in Transylvania, Romania. Enikő loves bringing creativity into worship and nurturing community across generations. She has a heart for exploring the intersection of faith and public life by interpreting cultures through preaching, teaching, fellowship, and mission partnerships.

Enikő is joining us from across the Atlantic, moving from Wooster, OH, where she has been the head of staff of Westminster Presbyterian Church for over five years—a congregation deeply committed to immigration justice and walking alongside the vulnerable in society. Prior to Westminster, she served as assistant pastor at Southminster Presbyterian Church in Richmond, VA, where she facilitated the mission and outreach work of the congregation and its justice ministry within the interfaith grassroots network Richmonders Involved in Strengthening Communities (RISC).

Enikő has also worked as programme coordinator for an MA in Missiology programme at the Protestant Institute for Mission Studies, as well as set up and coordinated a refugee integration programme within the Reformed Church in Hungary, based in Budapest. Having spent significant time in Israel/Palestine as a PC(USA) young adult volunteer, and later as a participant in WCC's ecumenical accompaniment programme for Palestine and Israel (EAPPI), she is a passionate advocate for peace and a just reconciliation in the region and is happy to engage in conversation about these challenging topics.



She holds a chemical engineering degree from the University of Babes-Bolyai in Cluj, Romania, and earned her PhD. and MDiv. degrees from Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, VA, where she also served as the international student advisor.

Outside of church commitments, you will find Enikő enjoying many loves: hiking in all seasons, cooking international cuisines, gardening, sewing liturgical banners and clothes, exploring art and cultural events, and the company of her two gentle giant cats, Tiger and Luna.

Being new to Lausanne/Geneva area, she welcomes suggestions about fun places and things to do!

FIRST STEPS TOGETHER

FIRST JOINT NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Our two congregations will each meet after worship on Sunday November 9 to elect a second nominating committee to seek an associate minister for our linked charge, to be based in the manse at Chemin de Taverney 6, Grand-Saconnex. This time, the committee of 13 will be 7 from Geneva and 6 from Lausanne. Here, Hannelize van Zyl reports the work of its predecessor.

The purpose of a nominating committee is to propose one person as a minister or associate minister. Ideally, its members reflect the congregation or, in our case, congregations for which they act.

From the Church of Scotland, Geneva

Nan Braunschweiger
Jane Broere
Christine Buhler (our HR specialist)
Mary Couper
Makota Ikeda
Cornis van der Lugt

From the Scots Kirk, Lausanne

Ian Colliar (vice-convener)
Morven McLean
Erica Martin (clerk)
Carolyn Meduski
Xoeseko Nyomi
Hannelize van Zyl (convener)
Neil Wallace

Geneva and Lausanne have their similarities but are also different in origin, in tradition, in how we conduct worship. Although we realized that the traditions we hold most dear in Lausanne are only six years old!

At the end of June 2024, when we first met, Lausanne had already been without a minister for a year, and Geneva would be without a minister before the end of 2025. Lausanne had had so many different locums by then that we had become quite flexible in Sunday worship.

With seven representatives from Lausanne and six from Geneva, the first job was to introduce ourselves, as many of us did not know our counterparts from the other congregation, still less the congregation itself. I quietly wondered how on earth we were going to figure it all out! The Geneva team graciously let us volunteer for convener, vice-convener and clerk; and off we went at quite a pace, meeting as an entire team every two weeks. There were all the tasks lined out in the guidance for nominating committees and the act, but there were also other things to be done. As this was our first post-Brexit-transition-phase nominating committee and we had no idea where our minister would be from, we had to follow the Swiss *Service de la population* (SPOP) requirements meticulously. This meant many spreadsheets to keep track of every application, every decision, and every reason. We had to advertise in job centres in Switzerland and all the EU countries, as well as LinkedIn and Indeed. It made for some interesting applications!

Some decisions were made early on. We had to decide if we would advertise for Church of Scotland ministers only or cast the net wider. Considering the recent history of international presbytery nominating committees, as well as the shortage of ministers in Scotland, we decided to cast the net wide from the start. We also had to decide *how* we would make decisions. We decided to work by consensus, with ideally a unanimous decision on the sole nominee. If we failed to achieve that, we would vote but would require a two-thirds majority.

To make sure we got everything done fast, we split into cross-congregational sub-teams who met more regularly, ending up with rather a lot of meetings; but the side effect was a crash-course in getting to know each other. We had a congregational profile team to make one profile from two, which had to be approved by both sessions before we could start advertising. There was also an advertising team to decide where and how we were going to advertise and to make the ad itself. We achieved all this in two months, and the advertisement was out by the end of August, along with two new pages on our two congregations' websites where all information could be found.



Our sister church: scotskirklausanne.ch

We then discussed how to arrive at a short list (this involved spreadsheets with criteria and formula) and how we would interview those on the list. Part of the screening process was to chain watch online serviced. A side effect of Covid was that we found as many online services as we needed to form an opinion. (I was known to watch a few of them while on my cross-trainer in the mornings.)

To cover all our points, and to give as many committee members as possible a chance to take part in interviews, we decided to follow a panel interview format. We split into different cross-congregational teams, one responsible for asking questions about the person and the other for asking about their ministry. A list of questions was developed for five categories of topics.

This meant that each applicant was interviewed by two groups of people for at least an hour each. We recorded all interviews (with everyone's consent, of course) so that the whole committee could watch them and form a complete view. Another spreadsheet and another list of criteria!

At the end of October 2024, we had 19 applicants of varying levels of interest to us. A month later, we had assessed the applications and arrived at our short list. The first interviews happened in December and more followed in January. We were all rather happy with the speed of our progress, as were others who were advising us.

Pride comes before a fall

The seven interviews we had had by then presented us with theological views that made some of us uncomfortable, or confused, or both. Graham, while not knowing who the applicants were, stepped in to provide clarification and guidance.

It was at this point that we knew, however disappointed we were, and our congregations would be, that we needed to start again. We let the congregations know that we would be re-advertising. Our carefully planned timeline was a thing of the past!

The second round followed the same pattern as the first. Just after Easter 2025, we had another list of applications, made into a short list after more chain watching of services, and we followed the same interview process to shorten the list further. In the next step, we showed our churches and the Lausanne manse, met the ministers in person in small groups for more in-depth discussions and difficult questions and, to learn more about them, had lunch together.

Discernment goes both ways. Not only did the nominating committee have to discern who was the right minister for us, but the ministers also had to discern whether we were the right congregations for them! I believe that while God calls a minister for us, God also calls congregations for a minister.

Success!

At the end of June 2025, we decided on our sole nominee and happily she accepted. In the intervening period, at the general assembly in Edinburgh, it was decided that the responsibility for granting certificates of restricted eligibility for congregations in the international presbytery now lay with presbytery. Derek Lawson was very helpful in completing the required steps. Only then could we share Enikő's name with the two kirk sessions.

The rest, as they say, is history. Nominating committees are always nervous about the outcome of the vote. We were therefore extremely pleased with and grateful for the overwhelmingly positive response from the two congregations.

Thanks and reflection

We very much appreciate the guidance of Graham Austin and Derek Lawson, who were both supportive and helpful throughout. We had many questions, all of which got answered, and many requests for support when something got stuck somewhere in the system. We also appreciate the guidance and support of presbytery's vacancy advisors: Ruud Witte, Irene Bom, and Eric Foggitt. We appreciate the patience of both congregations and all your prayers, public and private, throughout the process.

For me as the convener of this committee, the most challenging bit was praying in public. I'm not good at that, and so it took some effort to construct two prayers that focused on what we needed to achieve that week to open and close every meeting. As it turns out, parts of my day job are project management and moderating discussions to achieve consensus, so at least I had some transferable skills.

The clerk of a nominating committee probably has the biggest job of all, and this was made even bigger by the SPOP requirements and the first step of the process required for restricted certificates of eligibility. We were very fortunate to have our own HR specialist, because there are always tricky situations and difficult letters that must be worded just so.

I am very thankful for every person on the committee. Everyone has a different life story which forms our different views and expectations, and everyone has different skills and strong points. Everyone made immensely valuable contributions throughout the process.

I believe our committee was indeed a microcosm of our two congregations. It took us a while to understand everyone's deal-breakers, but it was an important part of the process. We did not always agree on everything along the way, but we compromised and made sure that everyone was heard, and that everyone had the chance to see and hear what they needed to see and hear to be sure. In the end, when it came to the most important decision, we did all agree and it was unanimous.

Along the way friendships were made, but the one thing we failed to achieve was to meet all together in person. But then, it is always nice to leave something for another time!

FIRST SHARED CONGREGATIONAL AWAYDAY

Our first ever joint awayday was a lot of fun! Thirty-six people, almost equal numbers from Geneva and Lausanne, met in the gym hall of the *Centre communal et scolaire* in Arzier-Le Muids to worship together, get to know each other a little, and think about our future as a linked charge. Rev Robert

Simpson guided our discussions; we were also glad to have his wife, Susan, with us throughout the day, and her warm support and presence were much appreciated.

Awayday. *noun* [C] mainly UK

A day you spend somewhere that is not your home or usual place of work

We began with praise, setting a warm and prayerful tone for the day. Through small-group conversations and plenary reflections, we mixed freely and got to know people we had only just met. A central focus was to name what has worked well in our congregations in recent years and to consider how we can carry these strengths into the future, including clearer communication, regular joint gatherings, and opportunities to serve together.



At lunchtime, we picnicked, continuing conversations in an informal setting. The relaxed meal gave space for deeper connections and fresh ideas, with many commenting that the simple act of eating together helped us listen well and learn from one another.



We drew the day together in praise once more and concluded with communion in a large circle, a moving sign of our unity in Christ. We left having made new friends, encouraged by the sense of

common purpose, and hopeful that this awayday will become an annual event that continues to strengthen our life and witness as a linked charge.

In interesting times

An ancient Chinese curse allegedly says, “May you live in interesting times!” On the face of it, the curse is curious: Who wants to live in boring times?

And some suspect that it’s neither ancient nor Chinese but was invented out of whole cloth in the 1960s by Robert F Kennedy (the idealist father, not the idiot son).

But if we compare the war of the three kingdoms (220–260 CE) with the periods of stable imperial rule that followed it, or China in the 1920s and 30s, ruled by warlords, rent by civil war, and raped by Japan, with the current stable rule of Xi Jinping, we may get the point. “Interesting” isn’t always good!

Our two congregations, however, seem fated to live in interesting times. In Enikő Ferenczy, we have elected a new minister who is likely to prove a new broom. She won’t settle for idle chatter about justice, peace and the integrity of creation or easy talk about the kingdom of God. She will want us to put our bodies where our mouths are. And we may hope that the associate minister for whom we are about to search will shake us up in like manner.



And our congregation is fated to live in interesting times. There’s not just the challenge of making a reality of our linkage with Lausanne. Leadership in Geneva is going through a generational change. The triumvirate of Christine Buhler, Jane Broere, and Mary Couper capably filled the shoes of Alice Tulloch when she had to step down as session clerk (admittedly, it was a bit of a squeeze). But Mary has already stepped down, and Christine and Jane will do likewise at the end of this year.

Those who hitherto may have taken a back seat, or served in lesser roles, need to consider whether it is now their turn to lead. Interesting times!

Páraic Réamonn

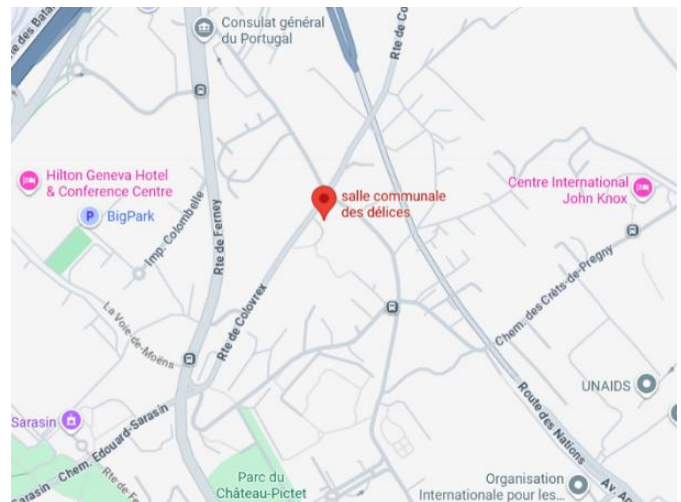


ST ANDREW'S FAIR & CÈILIDH

Preparations for our annual Fair and Cèilidh are coming along nicely. We are still looking for help with lunch preparation & service and the dinner service for the Ceilidh. If you would like to help in either of these areas, please reach out to Jason Leger (Leger_74@hotmail.com or +41 79 392 0778).

Saturday November 22, 9h30 to 15h
Salle Communale des Delices
route de Colovrex 20
1218 Le Grand-Saconnex

Scottish Pipes & Drums
 Scottish gifts & specialities
 Homemade cakes, biscuits & jams
 Christmas goodies | Toys | Haggis
 Coffee, Irish coffee, bacon rolls, smoked salmon & champagne
 Delicious African food
 Hearty Scottish cuisine for lunch ...and much more



CÈILIDH, 19h-22h. Doors open 18h30

Adults CHF35. Children under age 12 free
 Tickets must be booked in advance:
ceilidhchurchofscotlandgeneva@gmail.com
 Food and drink will be on sale



www.tympanon.ch

Please let everyone you know – friends, family, or acquaintances – about the Fair and Cèilidh!

CELEBRATING SIMON RIETBERGEN

Family and friends from many walks of life filled the Auditoire de Calvin on September 20 for a service in memory of Simon Rietbergen (June 14 1960–September 7 2025). The congregation sang “What a wonderful world” and, augmented by many of Simon’s singer friends, the choir, in which he sang until he could sing no longer, sang Marty Haugen’s version of Psalm 23, “Shepherd me, O God”. We print the tributes from his wife, Jenny, and their children, Emma, Sam and Lilly.

An inveterate hoarder

You know, Simon would have really loved to be here today. He’d have been very chuffed to see so many of his friends and family members gathered together for him. And in this place which he knew and loved so well.

One of Simon’s favourite audio books for family car journeys was Terry Pratchett’s *Wintersmith*. He was particularly tickled by the bit in the story where a 113-year-old witch, called Miss Treason, decides to organise her own funeral wake for the day before the day that she knows she will die. She doesn’t want to miss out on the gathering of her friends. Simon loved to quote the Glaswegian goblin who was very impressed by Miss Treason’s thinking. He’d find any occasion to use his best Scottish accent to announce: “That’s the kind of sensible detail people usually fail to consider.”



We will be forever grateful that in his own way, Simon managed to pull off Miss Treason’s trick. When his health declined sharply, the doctors were able to give him one last treatment that significantly eased his symptoms. So he had a good month during which he received many visits from family and friends. He so enjoyed those mini-gatherings, and all the messages and phone calls he got during that time.

I’m sure others will be speaking about Simon’s positivity and optimism – that man did always look on the bright side of life. I’d like to mention an aspect of Simon’s character that was less well known but a good example of how he could flip any negative into a positive. In this case he turned what might have been a character flaw into a real superpower.

The fact is, Simon was an inveterate hoarder. By which I mean he was a collector who took collecting to a whole other level.

What did he hoard? Absolutely everything. Old newspapers (years and years of them), shop receipts (shoe boxes of them), slightly used napkins (pockets full of them), stamps (suitcases of the things), and many more potentially useful or interesting objects.

But Simon’s most valuable stashes were intangibles, hoarded in his head. Music for one. He seemed to have an infinite juke box permanently playing in his mind. His head was full of tunes (mostly jazz) that would leak out as humming or whistling or snippets of song lines. He also accumulated languages. He worked in seven different languages, he had smatterings of at least another half dozen, and he’d find every excuse to use them all as often as possible.

Another stockpile that Simon built up was knowledge. He had a huge curiosity about the world and a crazy range of specialist subjects. From wild orchids in France and forests in Africa, to the origins of obscure words and the latest theories on prehistory.

But most of all, Simon collected connections. Connections with people he met. And as the ultimate extrovert, he met and engaged with many people. Strangers on a train or in a lift, taxi drivers, hotel staff, shop assistants, fellow hikers. He would strike up meaningful conversations and create real connections wherever he went. He made everyone feel seen and feel heard.

So yes, Simon was a hoarder. He may have gone a bit overboard with collecting. But he never hoarded to keep things for himself. He hoarded to share, to share his knowledge, his friendship, his love, and his love of life. And he shared these all very generously.

Jennifer Rietbergen-McCracken

The fun one

When we were young kids, our dad was “the fun one”. This is no slight on our mum. She was more than capable of being the fun one. Unfortunately for her, one of them had to be “the strict one”, and since our dad didn’t have a strict bone in his body, their roles were allocated by default. This meant that he was often the one we would approach first with requests we knew were slightly pushing it, more often than not met with the dreaded words, “Ask your mum”.

Lily would confide her illicit schemes in him, trusting him to keep a secret, like the time when she proudly told him she had crawled through an underground tunnel and emerged in the grounds of a nearby castle. The words “trespassing” or “private property” never came to our dad’s mind – or if they did, he was kind enough not to bring them up.



Our dad took his fun role seriously. He would return from work trips bearing gifts from far-flung countries. He dutifully led games of Simon Says at each of our birthday parties. He came into our schools to give talks about rainforests to rooms full of awestruck children, cementing his position as a “cool” dad, as well as a fun one.

Unfortunately for our dad, the time came, as it does for every dad, when his children hit puberty and suddenly found everything he did agonisingly embarrassing. On walks, we would groan when he stopped and talked to every passing human and dog. We could scarcely believe his breakfast of choice of pickled herrings in cream sauce. When he graduated to the fashion combination of two bum bags, shorts, support stockings, socks and open-toed sandals, we were convinced he was doing it on purpose.

But, as we grew older and wiser, our perspective shifted. His individuality was no longer something to tolerate, it was a trait to champion. He was unapologetically himself, no matter the context, and became something of an icon in each of our friendship groups because of it. His openness and willingness to talk to anyone and everyone was not something to feel awkward about, it was something to be admired. Perhaps most impressive was his infallible optimism and good humour, which to our amazement he maintained throughout his cruel illness, making friends with doctors,

nurses and patients alike. Two days after his second operation he found a piano in the hospital and treated everyone to a rendition of *All Blues* by Miles Davis. Despite everything, he was still happy.

The way we saw our dad changed a lot over the years. But judging by how many people are here today, and by the number of people who have reached out to us to let us know how much our dad touched their lives and how much he meant to them, one thing is abundantly clear. He lived a great life, and he lived it right.

As always happens in families, pockets of our personalities have developed into reflections of him over the years. We all take a very liberal approach to food expiry dates, for example. We would each much rather be in the great outdoors than a crowded city. Emma has taken up the mantle of enjoying weird and wonderful food combinations and always being outside on the move. She, like him, fully immersed herself in living abroad, making local languages and customs her own. I share his passion for music and have inherited his Pythonesque sense of humour. My support of the Netherlands football team and of our beloved Arsenal will now have to be loud enough for the both of us. Lily embodies his calm, laid-back demeanour and, like him, takes great pleasure in the simple things in life. Those long walks that she used to begrudgingly join our dad on have unwittingly become her happy place.

We have all learned a great deal from our dad, as, we are sure, have many of you. His generosity in sharing his time, energy and conversation has enriched all of our lives and will continue to inspire us. Those aspects of our character that reflect his values and beliefs we will hold onto and cultivate. We miss him so much, but in this way he will live on through us. He may have left, but his spirit endures.

Emma Sarcol, Sam and Lily Rietbergen

LOOCUMS

Robert Simpson

Robert, the first of our “outside” locums, led us through October.



Robert was born and grew up in Edinburgh, attending school and university in another country just to the south. Returning to Edinburgh with a degree in physics and a Certificate in Education, Robert instead chose to work in engineering with Ferranti. After 15 years developing a laser instrument for navigation, he must have had a mid-life crisis and ended up, via New College, in parish ministry. Sixteen years in Prestonpans and four in Callander culminated with retirement in 2014, and a move to Gorebridge with his wife Susan. Since then, he has been active in local ministry, especially among children and young people, and been privileged to undertake several locum terms with congregations in Europe.

Chris Levison

Chris will be with us in late November and early December.

Chris writes: “Attended Universities of St Andrews and Edinburgh. I’ve had a varied ministry, all based in Scotland. Beginning with two year’s assistantship in South Leith Church, then my own first parish in Newmains, Lanarkshire. Then did a five-year contract as a university chaplain in Aberdeen before fifteen years as parish minister in the High Church Paisley. During that time, we managed a voluntary and successful union of four congregations becoming Oakshaw Trinity. This union which included a Congregational congregation as well as three Church of Scotland congregations was enabled through working together on a lively street level centre involving a cafe, counselling service, contact centre for split families and a community resource. I became a whole time healthcare chaplain at the Victoria Infirmary in Glasgow from where I was seconded by NHS Scotland to develop more professional training for chaplains. Alongside this work I was tasked with advising on spiritual care with the Scottish Health Boards, which involved working with different faith and belief communities and much involvement with the Scottish Interfaith Council. Since retiring I have moved to a small village in the Pentland Hills outside Edinburgh and am involved in our local congregation where I serve on a rota of worship leaders.



“I have two daughters, both with families and working in Edinburgh. My wife Rosie died in 2010 and in 2012 I married Mary who had also been widowed. I’m interested in current affairs, my lifetime hobby has been sailing, and Mary and I enjoy the west coast of Scotland by caravan and campervan.”

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Jesus calls us now to follow him, just as he did with his first disciples. Church of Scotland Learning encourages us in doing that - activating our faith, living out all that God teaches and grows in us and encouraging each other to follow with faith and courage.

Learn more: Click on the picture on the left **Register** to use the platform

Advent Bible study

The international presbytery is hosting three online Bible studies for folk in our 12 congregations in Europe and beyond.

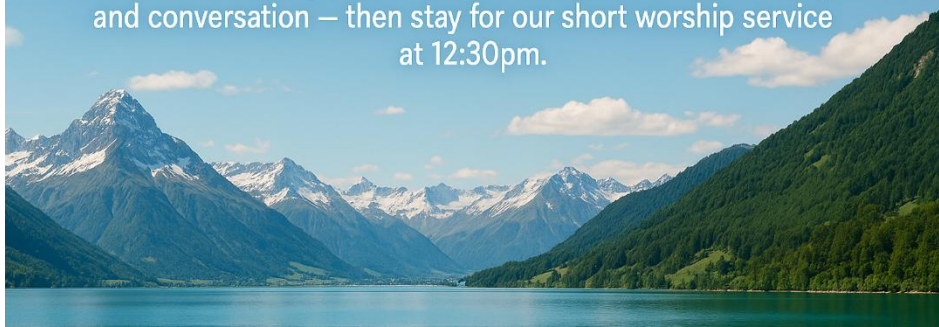
We will meet on Mondays November 24 and December 1 and 8, from 19h30 to 20h.30 for an hour of reflection, conversation, and fellowship as we prepare for Christmas together.

Sign up: Christine Colliar ccolliar@churchofscotland.org.uk
Bring your curiosity, faith, and good humour!



Wonderful Wednesday Worship!

Join us online every Wednesday at noon for warm fellowship and conversation – then stay for our short worship service at 12:30pm.



You too can learn to lead worship!

Two six-session online courses led by Rev Dr Ken Jeffrey (Aberdeen University) will run in early 2026, offering course materials, recorded lectures, and live classes.



More than a song is designed to equip people to serve their local churches in leading worship. *Voices for the kingdom* introduces how to prepare and deliver sermons.

Participants need the support of our kirk session. Each course costs £250, of which the session will pay half. For more information: Christine Colliar ccolliar@churchofscotland.org.uk

Leukemia research

On September 22, the kirk session agreed to donate CHF 500 from our congregation to leukemia research in the UK in memory of David Manson, a child of our congregation, who died in May.

See [our July newsletter](#) for more.



Finance. Nothing to see here?

“What of note has been happening in terms of financial trends this year?”

The response appears to be, “Not very much.”

As at the end of October, congregational expenditure amounted to CHF 141,052, representing more than the CHF 114,291 income, but this pre-dates the St Andrew's Fair, while including such large-ticket items as the annual Auditoire rent and manse refurbishment costs. There is also an artificial inflation due to ongoing employment costs which should have ceased in May 2025 with the departure of the former minister, but which, due to persistent bureaucracy, have yet to do so. When they do, we would expect to see refunds in the area of CHF 10,000 (this could vary up or down at this point). Overall, it appears that 2025 is running on an even keel. The following table shows the situation at the same point in each year over the past decade.

Income and expenditure (excluding mission) as at end October, 2016–2025

Year	Income (CHF)	Expenditure (CHF)
2016	128,426	84,085
2017	125,165	118,981
2018	111,117	124,968
2019	99,282	116,546
2020	92,405	121,144
2021	110,018	113,254
2022	90,374	108,722
2023	111,707	123,494
2024	119,364	130,127
2025	114,291	141,052

1. Expenditure tends to be constant – the main exceptions seen usually come from variations in the timing of the payment of large items of expenditure such as Auditoire rent and Church of Scotland contributions
2. The only deviation for serious consideration is the increase in expenditure levels in 2023 and 2024 which arose from increased employment costs – these were the result of a weakness in longer-term benefits planning in 2017, which is being addressed at present for future reference
3. The seemingly higher expenditure at October 2025 is due mainly to earlier payment of Church of Scotland dues and expected reimbursements, not yet received, of additional employment costs
4. Both income and expenditure in 2025 are inflated artificially by around CHF3,500 because of the Minister's farewell in May
5. Income has been hovering around a base level for the best part of a decade, with additional amounts arising from one-off large donations and some increase in Freewill Offerings (although the latter has been offset to a degree by a decrease in cash donations)
6. Almost none of the above includes income from the Fair
7. The effects of the special financial appeal at the end of 2023 do not show here because they were recorded mainly in November and December of that year

Employment costs are the main driver of our expenses. If the current efforts to manage and control these more effectively in future are successful, then the main risks arising from increased expenditure would be if we take on an associate minister with increased allowances for dependants and pension costs.

Regarding income, the picture is more nuanced. There seems to be a level beneath which the congregation doesn't sink. However, that amount is not enough to cover all our costs. The additional resources of one-off donations and the Fair are what make the difference. This leaves two considerable risks.

First, it shows a degree of complacency. We were already caught short in 2020 when the COVID lockdown prevented any services from taking place in the Auditoire for a year, and the income from visitors simply disappeared. There had not been effective contingency planning. *Second*, the more we rely on a small number of large donors, the higher the risk we run. We have seen this before when some larger donors have left Geneva or, sadly, passed away.

At the international presbytery meeting in October, we discussed where the whole Church of Scotland would, could, and should be going in coming years, and where presbytery and its charges fit into this broader picture. As a jumping-off point for forward thinking and planning, it was very helpful.

As our own congregation approaches the end of the year, it might be good to start thinking about the longer-term future and what *our* strategy should be. Given that work is already commencing to recruit a new associate minister and to strengthen our linkage with Lausanne, we really don't have the luxury of waiting until the end of the year or the next ACM to put in place where we should be heading.

There is enough financial data there already, and the historical trends provide a lot to be going from as well. We need to start talking at every level – from the kirk session and the congregational committee to members in the Salle after worship – to put together what we want to achieve and how we should manage our resources to achieve it. Recent history demonstrates that this is always better done sooner rather than later. Let's not just wait for the next big thing!

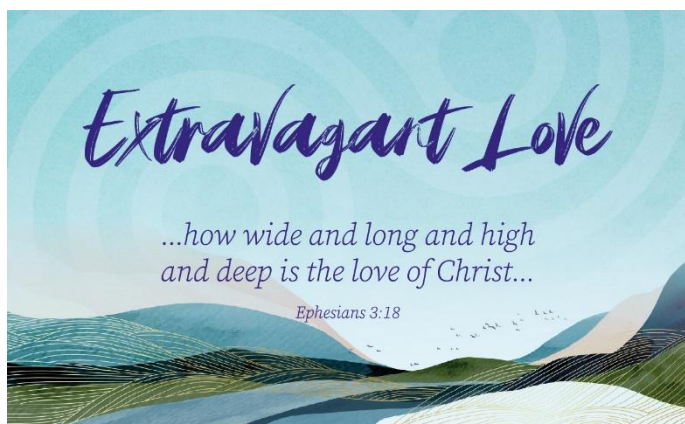
CofS Mission Finances Summary as at 31 October 2025 (CHF)

	Combined	Nepal	Malawi	Total
Opening Balance	-	13,684	16,042	29,726
Income to Date	2,505	2,420	2,710	7,635
Expenditure to Date	-	12,000	12,182	24,182
Balance Remaining	2,505	4,104	6,570	13,179
Balance Remaining (90%)	2,255	3,694	5,913	11,861

Ewart Mackenzie, treasurer

CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

General assembly 2025



In the middle of May, I was one of 500 commissioners attending the general assembly of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh.

Commissioners come from every presbytery for worship, prayer, decision-making, and reflection on how we're called to be Christ's church today.

History was made when a Roman Catholic, Lady Elish Angiolini, was appointed as representative of the British king.

She spoke on overcoming sectarianism, which she had known growing up in Glasgow.

Extravagant Love said the cover of the volume of reports, and the new moderator, Rev Rosie Frew, has chosen “the extravagant love of Christ” as her theme for 2025–2026.

There were over 30 reports, and commissioners were expected to come prepared to debate and vote. One of the most emotive discussions was about assisted dying. The committee report suggested recognizing a range of views as sincere and theologically sound. A counter-motion reaffirmed the church’s traditional opposition, passing by only four votes. The debate showed how the church can navigate difficult issues with respect, research, and faith.

Other topics included prayers for world leaders, the climate crisis, and the legacy of slavery. Rev Muriel Pearson shared her experience from Israel/Palestine and especially Gaza, while a probationer (minister in the final year of training) spoke about the challenges faced by those entering ministry from working-class backgrounds, supporting a new apprenticeship scheme that opens alternative paths into ministry.



I helped serve communion to the gathered commissioners, and I could feel our connectedness despite disagreements in debate – we are all God’s children, striving to take Christ’s extravagant love into a world in need.

Jesus’ great commission to his disciples is, ‘Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’ (*Matthew 28:19-20*)

At the assembly, that commission was very much alive. We’re all part of that calling. We are all loved with a love that is “wide and long and high and deep” – and all called to do the same.

Christine Colliar

Presbytery of international charges

New clerk on the block



At its meeting in Amsterdam, October 10-12, presbytery elected Scott McSween as clerk, to overlap with Derek Lawson until the end of 2025 and to assume full responsibility in the new year. Below, Scott introduces himself.

I am married to Sasha; we have 2 children Alex (21) and Penny (18) both at university in the UK: Alex in his last year at Edinburgh, Penny in her first year at Newcastle. We have lived in many countries as a family, but Alex and Penny consider themselves Scottish/South African.

I work full-time in a global humanitarian organization, having started working life in the private sector. My work sits at the overlap of human resources, IT and strategy, helping to plan the people-side of how NGOs can be ready to respond to disasters. I spent 11 years with World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization, of which six were in Kenya, with deployments to Senegal, Nepal and India along the way.

For the last few years, I've been a consultant, since 2022 helping the International Rescue Committee, and before that, the ICRC and WIPO, familiar names to many of you in Geneva.

Since returning from India, we have lived in Aix-en-Provence, which means that Geneva is my closest congregation. Indeed, Geneva holds a special place in my heart. My journey to ordained ministry (OLM) began in Geneva, with a dinner conversation with Rev Jim Sharp; and at one stage, I had hoped to complete some of my training with you in the Auditoire. Sadly, the practical arrangements turned out to be too complicated.

I grew up in the Reformed tradition and attended churches in Edinburgh and Aberdeen during my student years. When we moved to the Netherlands, my wife and I attended the English Reformed Church in Amsterdam, and then later the Scots Kirk Paris, which became my own church. In March this year, I was ordained by presbytery in Paris, which was a lovely way to close the circle. (Along the way I completed training placements in Aix/Marseille with an Anglican chaplaincy, then at St George's Tron in Glasgow city centre.) The highlight of my probation year in Paris was the participation of five-year old Nnanna from Nigeria, who would run out each week to lead the congregation enthusiastically in singing "May the Lord bless you, may the Lord keep you..." at the end of worship.

I am excited about the future of our presbytery. We inherit a wonderful history, especially in Geneva, and we must be faithful to those who have gone before us, in the 16th century and since. But we also need to realize the challenges ahead. The reasons my children attend church are very different from why my parents did (maybe I am somewhere in between), which can make for some fascinating inter-generational conversations.

In Geneva and Lausanne, you are now on the cusp of something new and set an example far beyond Lac Léman. Our Presbyterian governance and our Reformed style of worship permit – indeed, require – us to adapt and reform, while remaining faithful to our core beliefs. The international presbytery should be there to guide and support you through this. As presbytery clerk, and with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, I will do my best to support you too.

I encourage you to support Enikő when she arrives. I look forward to meeting many of you on January 23, when she will be "introduced" to the linked charge.

And more still, when presbytery meets in Geneva from March 6 to 8!

Scott McSween, presbytery clerk-elect

New minister on the block

On Sunday October 12 in Amsterdam, presbytery ordained Christine Colliar as a local minister (OLM). On Sunday November 2, Christine presided at her first communion in Geneva. Below, she reflects on the long and winding road that led her to this point.

After 36 years in the Auditoire, I think it's fair to say I didn't *rush* into ministry. I seem to have taken the scenic route, complete with a few detours and rest stops.

From leading the choir, teaching Sunday School, and running Bible studies, I always seemed to end up in something that involved learning and sharing faith. Do you remember the nine-metre rainbow that traversed the Auditoire, or the 66 banners with the names of the books of the Bible strung up around

the church? Those were from services I wrote for the Sunday School to lead. Looking back, I suspect God was very patiently preparing me through those moments.



Ordination by immersion

The call to ministry was always there, whispering since my teenage years. I remember hearing the gangster-turned-evangelist, Nicky Cruz, speak on the Doulos ship in Glasgow, a moment that stayed with me. Yet life carried on: study, family, and all the ordinary blessings and busyness that fill the years. I home-schooled my son until he set off for university, and with the house suddenly quieter, that old niggles about ministry grew louder.

It was then that Rev Alan Falconer, whom many will remember from his time at the World Council of Churches, became a mentor. With his encouragement, I contacted the church offices at 121 and found myself in discernment at the Scots Kirk Lausanne with Rev Gillean McLean. From there, I began the path towards readership, with placements at the Scots Kirk and at the American Episcopal Church in Geneva, with Rev Michael Risk.

Apparently, it didn't take them long to realize I should really be doing sacramental ministry. It took me slightly longer, but I got there eventually. God's call doesn't always come with a clear timetable; sometimes it's more of a long conversation than a sudden announcement.

Since 2020, I've also been part of Sanctuary First, a digital ministry that became a lifeline for many during lockdown. I now lead morning prayers there on Tuesdays, joining a scattered but faithful online community who, like the rest of us, have discovered that church doesn't always need walls.



Bread and wine. Christ comes to us in the simplest things of life

When I look back, I see a long line of people who have shaped this journey. Some I've mentioned by name, but many others have nudged me forward in quiet ways – a teacher who led the Scripture Union group at school, strangers on aeroplanes who spoke about faith (or the lack of it), fellow worshippers who shared the journey. And my ever-patient husband, Ian, who apparently first noticed "something in

my eyes” when we met at university, something that spoke before I ever found the words myself. They were all, in their own ways, signposts along the scenic route.

It has taken a while, but the slow journeys are the richest ones. God doesn’t measure time quite the way we do. And I suspect God has been smiling patiently, waiting for me to catch up.

Christine Colliar, OLM



*Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back.
Lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes. (Isaiah 54:2)*

Christine wrote this poem for her ordination. We can read it as a job description for a minister. Or for a congregation. Or, in our case, two congregations.

Enlarge the place of your tent

I am the voice
you heard before you had words,
the One who stirred
when your spirit first leaned towards love.

So, listen –
Enlarge the place of your tent
make room
for more than you expect,
for wonders you can’t yet imagine.
For Grief, yes.
For Joy, certainly.
For my Presence, undoubtedly.
But do not try to contain me within the rigid walls of a house!
I am a God who is wild with life –
So, stretch what you think you can carry,
loosen your fear,
lengthen what connects you
to others,
to me.
Then strengthen the stakes of your tent.

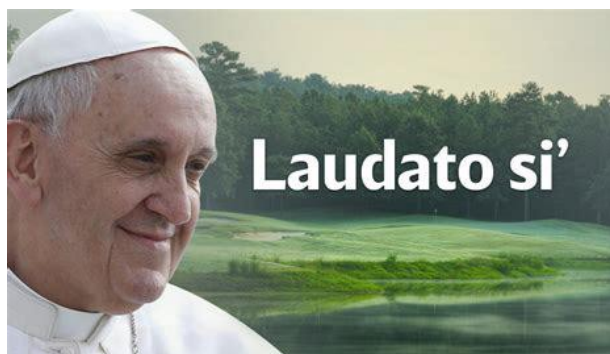
Be rooted,
deeply,
in sacred soil,
so your tent is kept ready,
wide enough for Delight,
sturdy enough for Sorrow,
open enough for the Stranger
who forgot they were welcome.

Do not hold back.
Be bold.
Welcome generously,
and let your space become
a harbour where Others find
Rest,
Laughter,
Shelter,
Hope.

Go on –
Enlarge the place of your tent.
I will fill it.

THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL

Ten years later



L'ECR-GENÈVE VOUS INVITE À UNE SOIRÉE D'ÉCHANGES SUR

Laudato si' 10 ans après

Regards genevois

Le jeudi 2 octobre 2025 de 19h00 à 21h00

Salle des fêtes du Sacré-Coeur, Boulevard Georges-Favon 25 bis

Ten years ago, the late Pope Francis (1936–2025) issued an “encyclical” – a kind of pastoral letter concerning Christian doctrine – entitled *Laudato si'* (Praise be to you). Its subtitle was "care for our common home". Drafted over two years, it was published on the eve of three UN summits on financial aid, sustainable development and climate change. It focuses on our duty of stewardship and responsible use of the resources of our planetary oikos.

Taking stock of our world, *Laudato si'* links the crisis of the environment to the social problems of poverty, unsustainable resource use, and the consumer habits of modern societies. It speaks of “integral ecology” and calls for an integrated approach to environmental and social problems. It draws our attention to the “ethical and spiritual roots of environmental problems, which require that we look for solutions not only in technology but in a change of humanity; otherwise we would be dealing merely with symptoms”.

Pope Francis calls for humanity “to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat global warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it”. Today, it is evident that we are significantly behind schedule in seeking to keep global warming within safe limits. While the [Paris Agreement](#), adopted in 2015 and signed in 2016, sought to keep global warming ideally to 1.5°C to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, current policies and trends will likely take us to 2.7°C warming by the end of the century.

The consequences of climate change are visible in regular disaster events, such as summer fires that destroy the homes of people in the Mediterranean, California and elsewhere. In the business world, more reference is being made to concepts such as the “resilience” of the business and “assets at risk” in the face of climate change. This signals growing attention to climate mitigation (prevention) but also climate adaptation (responding to its impacts). For some, hearing such news may feel like reading the book of Revelation in the Bible. Does all of this signal the end of humanity as [Extinction Rebellion](#) has since 2018 been warning may happen if we fail to avoid tipping points in the climate system?

Here are two pieces of good news to keep in mind: First, experience has shown that nature can be surprisingly resilient in recovering from damage. This doesn't mean we can simply continue with destructive practices, including our addiction to fossil fuels. But it is a good reminder of the wonder and power of creation. Second, the technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and pursue climate-friendly growth paths already exist. The only thing that prevents all countries from collaborating and societies from implementing these is lack of political will and the complexities of human organization. Making it happen is really up to us, including us ordinary consumers and citizens.

What solutions does the encyclical offer? It reminds us that the book of Genesis suggests “that human life is grounded in three fundamental and closely intertwined relationships: with God, with our neighbour and with the earth itself”. It warns of a distorted anthropocentrism (it's not “all about us”!) and our responsibility to direct the use of technology for the common good.

Pope Francis asks for transparent dialogue, education, different lifestyles, and *an ecological conversion* where the effects of our encounter with Jesus Christ becomes evident in our relationship with the world around us – “living our vocation to be protectors of God's handiwork is essential to a life of virtue”. He calls for leadership and leading by example, starting with small gestures in our daily lives – such as saying a prayer with our family at the dinner table.

On October 2, the Protestant Church of Geneva (EPG) and the Roman Catholic Church of Geneva (ECR) got together with other engaged organizations to host an evening discussion on the the impact of the *Laudato si'* ten years later.

Speakers included Guillermo Kerber, Ecumenical and Francophone Society for the Theology of Ecology (SOFTE) on the keys to understanding *Laudato si'* and its later extensions; Loraine d'Andiran, EcoÉglise ambassador, on a Protestant and spiritual perspective on ecology; and Daniel Chambaz, former Director-General of the Geneva cantonal office for the environment, on implementing Pope Francis's call in a Geneva parish.

We can read the encyclical online – [papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html](#) – where it can also be downloaded as a pdf.

Cornis Van der Lugt, EcoCongregation focal point

You're never too old!



Dr Isabel Apawo Phiri worshipped with us for 10 years and served as an elder in our congregation, while working as associate and deputy general secretary of the World Council of Churches. She writes here of her life and ministry back in Malawi.

My ordination on August 24 2025 was truly a long-awaited moment. Looking back, I can hardly believe the road that has led me here.

In 1995, I was almost excommunicated for helping church women resist patriarchy in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, Blantyre Synod. By God's grace, the then World Alliance of Reformed Churches sent representatives to Malawi on a fact-finding mission. That intervention became a turning point. In fact, the synod had already resolved in 1990 to begin ordaining women. Today, more than thirty women have been ordained, and I rejoice in seeing the doors that are now open.

My case is different. I am the only one ordained *after* the official retirement age. I believe the synod has recognized the contribution I have made at an international level and the long journey I have travelled to reach this day.

Along with my ordination, I have been made vice-chancellor of the University of Blantyre Synod. I have also been given a congregation on the outskirts of Zomba city. The church building is just four walls, and the congregation is poor. The university, meanwhile, is housed in buildings at the Blantyre Mission that badly need renovation, but there is no budget for the work.

Despite these challenges, I feel ready. I want to give back to the country that educated me. God has planted unshakable joy in my heart for this work, and I believe that with God on my side, I can do it.



The weapons of faith, courage, and goodwill

Since October 10, there has apparently been a ceasefire in the Gaza genocide. In practice, this seems to mean that Israel now kills Gazans just some of the time instead of all the time. We reproduce below a statement, in English translation, the Protestant Church of Geneva issued on May 22.

Regrettably, it has lost none of its relevance.

In the aftermath of the Hamas-led attack on October 7 2023, the conflict between Israel and Palestine degenerated into total war, sowing desolation and death in a land where the people are cousins if not siblings.

Christians everywhere have our spiritual roots in the Levant, the land of the dove and the olive branch. Here, where everything began for us, death is destroying life every day with a stubborn determination that leaves us paralysed with trepidation.

In addition to the bombings, causing tens of thousands of civilian casualties, the destruction of homes and vital infrastructure, the detention of prisoners and hostages, murders, and other crimes, there is now the blocking of humanitarian aid and the threat of deportation of the population of Gaza.

From Geneva, the headquarters of the International Committee of the Red Cross, where the Geneva conventions and their protocols were drafted, thus codifying international humanitarian law, we call for every effort to be made to ensure that humanitarian aid is unconditionally authorized in Gaza and that the protection of civilians is ensured.

Between Easter, which speaks of the powers of life at work in the very heart of death, and Pentecost, where the fire of the Spirit opens onto universal communion, we affirm our solidarity with all the victims of this conflict. We also affirm our admiration and support for those in Israel, Palestine, and throughout the world who, armed only with goodwill, faith, hope, and love, work courageously toward the justice and peace to which the God of Abraham calls all the children of the earth across space and time.

*Bernard Pagella, vice-president of the consistory council,
Emmanuel Rolland, deputy secretary-general for mission*

The spirit of reform – even of the Reformation!

The November edition of *EPG Info*, the newsletter of the Protestant Church of Geneva, announces an ecumenical celebration on Saturday November 15, moving from the Sacré-Cœur to the Cathédrale Saint-Pierre, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the close of the Second Vatican Council.

Rather cheekily, Emmanuel Rolland speaks in an editorial of “the spirit of the Reformation at the heart of the 20th century”. Rightly, he points to four of the significant changes made by the council:

1. simplifying the liturgy and abandoning Latin to allow for greater participation of the faithful
2. affirming the equality of the members of the “people of God”
3. recognizing “the element of truth” found in other Christian churches
4. affirming religious freedom and freedom of conscience

Vatican II fostered connections between our different Christian churches and opened the way to lasting ecumenical cooperation.

Sixty years later, we may feel that the reforms it set in motion have yet to be fully carried through. But Francis made some progress during his papacy, and Leo XIV seems set to continue on the same path.

The celebration on November 15 begins with a conference at 14h in the Sacré-Cœur in Plain-Palais on the life of the churches in Switzerland before Vatican II, the reasons for the council, and its impact in Geneva. This is followed by ecumenical celebration in the cathedral at 19h, presided over by Alexandre Winter, pastor and moderator of the company of pastors, deacons, and ministry leaders, and Bishop Charles Morerod.

STILL NEEDING HELP!

We have an interim moderator to keep us in order and locum ministers to carry on the most essential ministerial tasks during the vacancy: organizing worship, offering pastoral care. For the rest, we are thrown on our own resources. And here we could still do with help!

Most of the work of the congregation is done by a relatively small group of members, who are involved in absolutely everything. But much could easily be shared by other members, who might even enjoy it!

So we ask each and all of our members to take a moment. Consider which of the following activities in our congregational life *you* could lend a hand with:

- Reading in worship
- Leading prayers in worship (a new idea that is beginning to take off)
- Ushering on Sundays (greeting worshippers as they enter the church and seeing them out later)
- Helping with the printed order of service (we are still very short-handed!)
- Singing in the choir
- Serving on the coffee and tea rota after worship
- Helping with the monthly congregational lunches
- Serving on working groups to oversee and strengthen different aspects of our work

No one has to do *all* of these things (although some of us are daft enough to try). But if more of us join in doing *some* of them – according to our ability and availability, of course – we shall go forward into the future a stronger and more confident congregation.

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