



A SEASON OF NEW BEGINNINGS

Greetings friends!



Spring is my favourite season. It fills me with joy and hope as I watch signs of new life emerge – the trees bring forth new shoots and plants and shrubs erupt with glorious splashes of colour.

On a recent walk at the botanical garden in Lausanne, I came upon this flame-coloured azalea bush. Not unlike Moses in front of the burning bush, I was drawn to pause and notice.

According to an ancient Jewish *midrash*, not until Moses paused long enough to notice that the bush was not consumed, could he hear God speak to him.

For in the grind of the daily shepherding duties in the desert, who would expect God to show up in such an unusual place and call you to something new?

Similarly, in the Gospel of Luke, the women at the tomb are puzzled when the angel nudges them to remember Jesus' words and invites them to look for new life that may come in ways that counters what we have known to be true or what we have dreamed possible.

This Spring and Easter season feels especially significant for our congregations in Geneva and Lausanne. This is truly a season of new beginnings for us, for we celebrate the Easter season together for the first time as linked charges with a new ministry team, with our ordained local minister Christine Colliar, and me, the new minister of our linkage. We are moving forward into a new season of ministry, building a new model of shared ministry through linking two congregations in the presbytery of international charges and seeking to complete our ministry team with an associate minister.

As the stories of Moses, the women, and countless other characters from the Bible remind us, new beginnings can be simultaneously exciting and unsettling. “How can this be?” asks Mary. “Who am I to lead my people to freedom?” goes Moses.

The promise of God across the ages, for each generation, including ours, is “Do not be afraid, for I will be with you.” Just as the angels exclaimed to the women, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? Jesus is not here but has risen” (*Luke 24:5*).

Friends, we may not have a clear blueprint of what shared ministry looks like across cantonal borders, or where new life can arise in the midst of the unsettling realities of our world. Yet, we have the promise that Easter – new life springs forth in our midst, even now. As the body of Christ – people called into community in Christ’s name, we are challenged to remember to that the Spirit empowers us to partner with Christ in looking out for and nurturing even the smallest fledgling shoots of new life into fullness.



Yesterday, after attending a gathering of Protestant clergy to plan a joint Reformation service in the Cathédrale St. Pierre in November, Christine and I stopped at Calvin’s grave for a moment of reflection in the cemetery next door.

It was moving to stand at this simple grave with no ornate decoration, just green shoots flowing out of it across the rails of the fence. What a powerful symbol of the new life that keeps emerging from his life and effort to help people experience God’s love and life-renewing power by having access to scripture!

For in our clergy meeting alone we could witness to the breadth and richness of Protestant communion that grew from those fledgling seeds across the past 500 years. The body of Christ, gathered from Swiss Reformed to Swedish and Danish Lutheran and Presbyterian of Scottish, Malagasy and Cameroonian traditions, to seek what may it look like for us to be the living word of God today.

Friends, this is my invitation to our community as we continue our journey in this Easter season – can we be on the lookout for seedlings of new life in our personal and communal lives? Can we travel with openness to notice the new things God is doing in surprising places, inspiring, liberating, and transforming us to build community in ways we did not imagine possible?

How is God calling us and our linked congregations to be the living word for others? What are we called to nurture this season? Where in our life and ministry do we need liberation?

I love that the “burning bush that is not consumed” at the head of this newsletter is the symbol of our denomination, the Church of Scotland.

It is a symbol of endurance and persistence, and it reminds us of the promise of Easter – that new life springs out of small efforts of a community empowered by the Spirit of the One whose love and life-giving power is relentless even in the face of death.

May this new season of ministry be one of nurture and growth, of finding freedom and tasting the joy of life in fullness with neighbours near and far.

*Grace and peace,
Reverend Enikő*

WHAT THE INTERNATIONAL PRESBYTERY HAS JOINED TOGETHER...



Enikő with Graham Austin (interim moderator), Thijs Polstra (moderator) and Scott McSween (clerk)

On Friday January 23, the presbytery of international charges met in the Scots Kirk Lausanne formally to link our two congregations and to “introduce” the Reverend Dr Enikő Ferenczy as minister of our newly linked charge.

In his sermon, Thijs, who is an elder in Amsterdam and treasurer of the presbytery, said this:

“I have a dream”, a man once said. When I first heard the hymn we just sang, it made me think, “Oh, *that’s* where Martin Luther King Jr must have got the idea for his speech in 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington in front of 250.000 people. “I have a dream” is probably from an old spiritual, I thought. Turns out, “I have a dream” does not predate the 1960s. The hymn in its opening line *refers* to King. He is the man who had a dream.

The hymn was first published in 2005. The author was Pamela Pettit, a Methodist minister in the south of England. She passed away, at a relatively young age, later in 2005. It is wonderful that she left us the hymn and that it could be [included in CH4 \(710, to the tune Repton\)](#). To have in our hymnal these words:

*Lord, give us vision, make us strong,
help us to do your will;
don’t let us rest until we see
your love throughout humanity,
uniting us in peace.*

Those words tie in with today's readings, from [Isaiah 58:6–11](#) and [Ephesians 4:1–13](#). These are from [the ecumenical liturgy](#) for this year's week of prayer for Christian unity, which runs through this week.

This liturgy was drafted by the Armenian Apostolic Church and finalized jointly by the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and the World Council of Churches. The notes to the liturgy say (p 8):

Throughout the Holy Scriptures, God's call to unity resonates from the earliest times. Starting with the Old Testament, Abram's plea to Lot highlights the divine desire for peace and harmony among the faithful: "Let there be no strife between you and me and between your herders and my herders; for we are kindred" (Genesis 13:8).

The core of the readings, and the theme of the liturgy, is in *Ephesians 4:4* where Paul states that all Christians are called to the "one hope" of salvation and eternal life. This "one hope" means that all believers strive towards the same goal – eternal life with Christ. This is the ultimate goal and motivation for Christian living, providing a common vision and purpose for all believers and uniting us in our faith journey and daily lives. This shared vision bridges confessional and cultural divides, encouraging Christians to work together in every way we can. Making "shared hope" the objective of our calling as Christians defines our membership in the Church in terms of worldwide fellowship in the hope of salvation and eternal life.

In a world with diverse and often divided traditions and expressions of Christian faith, *Ephesians 4:4* reminds us that all believers are part of the "one body" of Christ. This unity is not about uniformity but a common commitment to the core truths of the Christian faith. When Christians of varied backgrounds come together with a shared goal and vision, with authenticity and sincerity, it serves as a powerful witness to the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.

Unity – including accepting one another, and not necessarily as a clear expression of Christian faith – can be witnessed in multiple ways, from the sophisticated to the mundane, from higher grade to small things. We all have our examples, and they can be heartwarming.

I grew up in a farming village in the north of the Netherlands. From about age 12, two friends and I received training to start playing in one of the two local brass bands where our fathers were members.

Our band was partially sponsored by the churches, the other was not. Our name was *Excelsior* – ever higher, and theirs was *Crescendo* – ever louder. You may smirk, but that is how I learned my first Latin words.

The bands had their own position in the village and their own repertoire. But on Christmas Eve they both went to the old canal lock where villagers gathered to sing carols. With fervour we then played ever higher, and *they* ever louder. It made quite an impression on me back then, that "they" – our rivals, so to speak - wholeheartedly helped us make Christmas Eve work for the whole village.

And here we are in Lausanne, where the Church of Scotland congregations of Geneva and Lausanne are now formally linked and are together embarking on a combined future with a shared minister.

To continue with this nautical language, I read what it says on the Geneva website: that the linking will not see us passing as ships in the night, but instead doing together things that are better done in common.

The liturgy for the week of prayer for Christian unity contains many elements, one of which is prayers and reflections for each day. In closing I would like to read the short prayer for the sixth day – which is today – a prayer attributed to St Gregory of Narek, an Armenian Apostolic monk and theologian, who lived at the end of the first millennium.



*We confess with faith and worship you, Loving Father,
for you are in heaven beyond words, and on earth beyond understanding, through your Son, Jesus Christ.
In your tender care, you are the beginning and fulfilment of everything.
Glory forever to you, Father,
with the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.*

A TIME OF CHANGE IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND...

In March 2013, when the presbytery of international charges met in Geneva, Rev Jim Sharp (OLM) of this congregation was elected presbytery clerk: he was playing “on home turf”.

On that occasion, Rev Derek Lawson, not long retired from Scotland, where he had already been a presbytery clerk, was one of the “also rans”. But he was quickly involved in presbytery planning, where he proved himself a wise counsellor and a safe pair of hands.

In March 2015, when presbytery met in Fuengirola on the Costa del Sol, it appointed him as depute clerk to Jim. And in October 2021, following Jim’s untimely death, he stepped up to the clerkship, a post from which he retired at the end of last year.

Here, he reflects on the wider context of change in which we find ourselves.

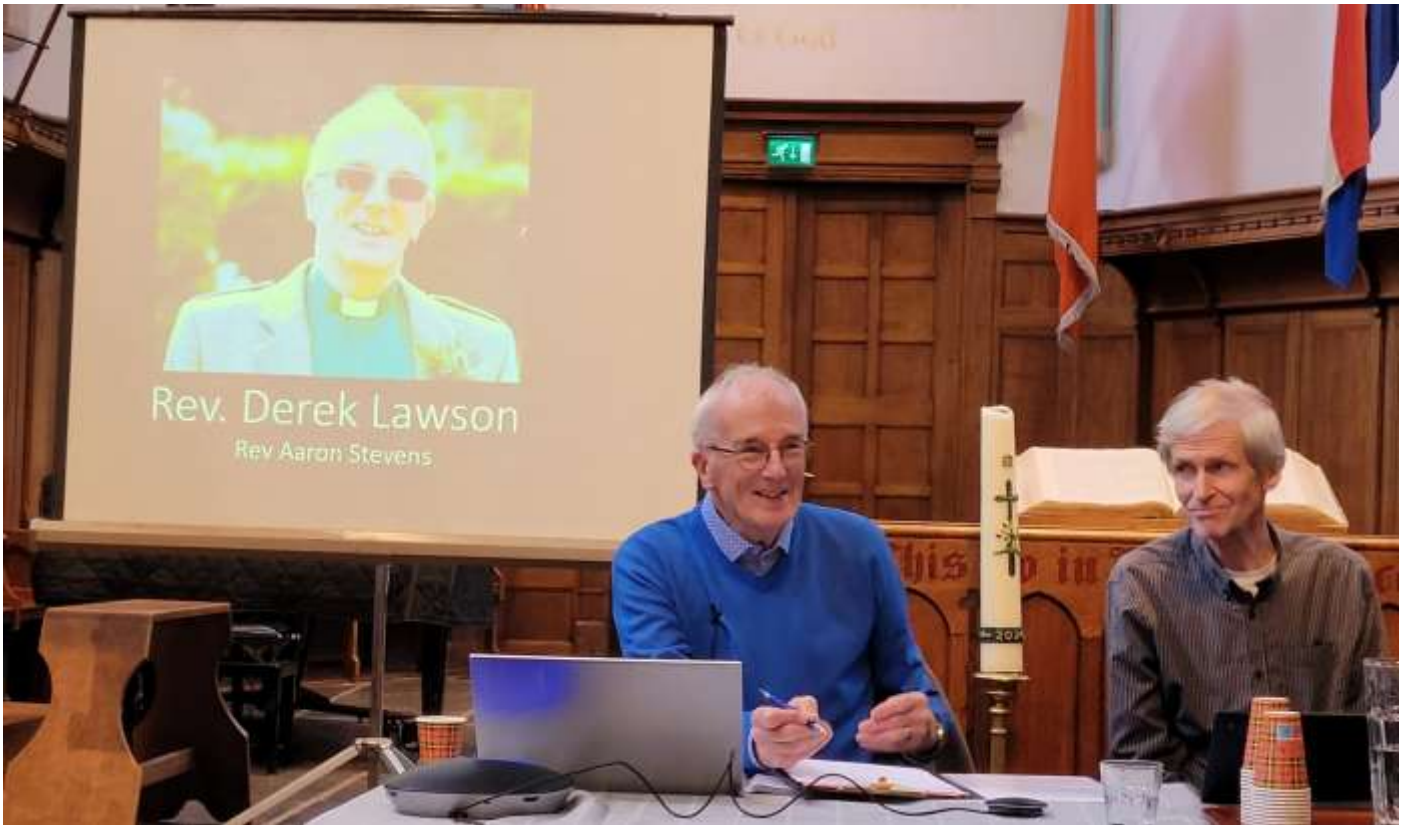
The Church of Scotland is going through a period of dramatic change – something you will be well aware of locally. Clearly, this has presented all sorts of challenges for congregations and presbyteries as well as the national church. But it’s only through rising to challenges that our faith grows and strengthens.

Indeed, one of the tenets of the Reformation was *Ecclesia reformata sed semper reformanda* – the Reformed church must always be reforming.

This “reforming” is not to be seen as conforming to the cultural milieu of the time but rather to be seeking to bring the Christian faith to the people of the time. And that brings us to another tenet of the Reformation: the ministry of all believers. Ministry is not the sole province of ordained ministers but lies with all who profess belief in Jesus Christ and in that lies the power of the church. We need to be seen to be people of faith in both our words and actions and in that way the church will relate to the people in whose midst God has placed us.

We cannot therefore hide ourselves away within the walls of our church buildings but need actively (though not aggressively) to take God’s word to the people of our time – and that requires the church to change. Not in its message, but in how it conveys that message in the 21st century. We need to

think not about how we get people into church, but rather how we take the Christian faith out into our communities. In that, there is no little challenge, but I'm confident that the Church can rise to that challenge.



Enduring the nice things presbytery said about him. Amsterdam, October 2025

Indeed, there are already signs that the Church in Scotland is rising to the challenge – as evidenced in the congregation Moira and I have joined in Kirkcaldy. It's a union of four congregations and, although the journey to union was stormy, now that it's a reality there seems a real willingness to make it work.

At present we have an Interim Minister, but the plan is that we shall have 2.5 full-time equivalent ministries (FTEs): a full-time minister of word & sacrament; a full-time deacon; and another 0.5 post, yet to be determined. Challenging, yes; but full of potential!

Yes, there will still be challenges to be addressed, but I sense there's a genuine willingness to make the union succeed and to secure the role of the Christian faith in our new community.

May your future as a linked charge in Geneva and Lausanne offer that same challenge and potential as you negotiate what is a new reality for you all. May your faith sustain you and empower your shared ministry as you move forward together, always seeking to take the good news to the communities around you.

Derek Lawson

... AND IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND, GENEVA

Our biggest challenge is to grow our numbers and (consequently) our income so that we continue to support ourselves as a congregation and, therefore, to be of use to others. Last autumn, our kirk session began to discuss how to run in a lighter, more agile, and more effective way.

A congregation our size doesn't need both a kirk session and a congregational committee to manage its affairs. So we propose to move to a single governing body: one kirk session to oversee everything.

If the session is to do that, it needs the help of a set of dedicated committees that can look at the various aspects of our life and work in between session meetings and bring reports, circulated in advance, with definite proposals for action.

It also needs serving elders who don't feel they've been condemned to a life of servitude. Elders who do too much for too long are like candles: they burn out! In our Reformed and presbyterian system, we ordain elders for life – just like ministers. We don't propose to change that. But we do propose to move to a system of term appointments, with elders serving on the session for one or two terms of, say, four years, and then stepping down in favour of others, with the possibility of returning later.

Our minister explains further – and asks for committee volunteers!

Last year our kirk session approved that we should ask the congregation to move from our current system of two governing bodies: kirk session plus congregational committee, to the older and more traditional unitary constitution – one kirk session.

This move has now been discussed with the congregational committee, who also agreed to go ahead with the move. The final decision is for the congregation to make, in a duly convened and constitutional congregational meeting like the next ACM on June 7 2026.

Presbyterian governance is collective governance, with courts and committees exercising authority together. We now believe that most of the work governing our congregation should be done in dedicated committees, reporting (beforehand) to the kirk session – or for the moment, the congregational committee.

However, we can already start to rejig and expand our committee structures. The session proposes the following committees to begin with.

- *Christian education*
- *Communications*
- *Fabric*
- *Finance*
- *Fundraising*
- *Mission and Outreach*
- *Worship*

Each committee will have an elder as a member who will provide the link between committee and session, giving regular updates on activities and seeking approval on matters, if necessary.

The session also suggested names of people who could be likely members of the different committees. But firstly, before we approach individually those suggested, we are looking for volunteers to become members.

We plan to organise a Zoom meeting shortly, to which you are all invited, to learn more in detail about the different committees, and to ask any questions you may have. Below I include the link to a survey for you to complete and sign up for a specific committee(s) should you wish to be involved.

Each committee will work out how it wishes to work (in agreement with the kirk session) and will establish their own terms of reference.

Christian Education

The committee is responsible for overseeing and promoting Christian education throughout the congregation (not just Sunday school)

Communication

The committee is responsible for maintaining the church website and social media accounts, as well as promoting the Church of Scotland in Geneva, to give wider visibility among the international community. This includes the order of service and congregational newsletter.

Fabric

The committee is responsible for the care, maintenance, and development of the church, hall and manse. It ensures that buildings are safe, welcoming, and well maintained for worship and fellowship. Since we rent all three properties, the work covers liaison with the EPG for the church and the regie for the manse.

Finance

The committee is responsible for formulating and recommending the financial policy of the church, adherence to said financial policy and proper management of all financial matters. Reviews and recommends the budget proposed by the Treasurer as well as the final accounts.

Fundraising

St. Andrew's Fair, Burns Supper, Concerts and ad hoc events

Mission / Outreach

The committee is responsible for all the mission and outreach activities of the congregation (not just Nepal and Ekwendeni), but also Partage, Christmas projects, the international presbytery mission project, and any other worthy causes. It also covers local ecumenical events and associations like TEAG (Témoigner ensemble à Genève)

Worship

The committee is responsible for worship planning and all the practicalities of worship: welcoming elders and ushers, readers, refreshments, congregational lunches, Advent wreaths, Christmas tree etc.

Is this something you would like to be involved with, contributing to the smooth running of our church?

If so, please fill out this survey by June 5: <https://forms.gle/dx5qxBnyFDYhYjxy5>.

You don't need to be an elder or a congregational committee member to serve on a committee. We want to expand the number of those actively involved in running our congregation.

The Zoom information meeting will be scheduled for the second half of May.

*Rev Dr Enikő Ferenczy
Minister, Geneva l/w Lausanne*

THE INTERNATIONAL PRESBYTERY MET IN GENEVA IN MARCH

Over the weekend of March 6-8 2026, the Church of Scotland Geneva welcomed 36 visitors from our sister congregations in the international presbytery. We hosted a dinner for 45 in the salle on Friday evening. An enjoyable evening, once again thanks to the dream team in the kitchen! The weekend entailed much organisation, booking hotels, restaurants, catering and organising a spouse's programme and much more. Judging by the comments contained in the email below from Scott, our efforts were much appreciated!

Christine Buhler, Geneva coordinator



On behalf of Presbytery, I wanted to say a very big THANK YOU for the wonderful hosting of the Presbytery Meeting last weekend.

I realize the circumstances were unusually challenging for you – the vacancy, the new linkage, the late change of restaurant, the newly-introduced minister (and the equally new Presbytery Clerk!)

Hosting such an event is a significant undertaking even for a congregation in normal conditions. Yet yet despite all of these factors you managed to put together a really successful and memorable weekend.

Please pass on my sincere thanks and the thanks of all of us who attended to your whole team. I realize many people were involved in the preparations and the meals, many of them behind the scenes. Some of the (many) positive comments I've received from those taking part in the meeting include the following:

- *Geneva congregation is very welcoming and hard working*
- *The meal on the Friday evening - aside from the excellent food, it was super to have it within the meeting venue and for there to be good interaction amongst those present.*

- *The worship on Saturday morning was beautiful, thoughtful and inspiring - a great start to the day.*
- *The Friday evening dinner in the upstairs hall: much work for the Geneva cong, but so well done and tasty!*
- *Wonderful hospitality from the Geneva community- thank you!*
- *Dinners, hotel and all practical arrangements worked well from my perspective. It created the right atmosphere for a good meeting.*
- *Very good spouses programme*
- *The hotel, perfect location close to the airport and convenient travel from hotel to church.*
- *The food was very good and well organised.*
- *The Saturday dinner was extremely good, with good service, and hot food, for a reasonable price.*

Scott MacSween, presbytery clerk

LOCUMS IN 2026

Scott McCarthy



Scott was our locum from January to March. Before he arrived, he sent us this introduction:

It all started in Dundee, Scotland in 1959, when I was born in Maryfield Hospital on Hogmanay. I was brought up in nearby Carnoustie and went to the local primary and secondary schools before reading law at Dundee University.

After twenty-five years in the insurance industry in Scotland and England, I returned to university, this time to read divinity at Edinburgh.

I retired from full-time ministry in December, at the end of a two-year contract as associate minister, Corby Church of Scotland in Northamptonshire, England.

Prior to Corby, I was minister at Langholm, Eskdalemuir, Ewes and Westerkirk in Dumfriesshire, then Garthamlock and Craighend in Greater Easterhouse, Glasgow.

My wife, Jane, is a Londoner. We have three sons and eight grandchildren, in Hertfordshire and Essex.

I'm passionate about ending poverty and its effects on the deprived members of our society. I have a particular interest in liturgy and remain an active member of the Church Service Society, having previously been president. I am a member of the Church of Scotland's ecumenical relations committee.

Away from the church, I enjoy cycling (I've done the [Cyclotour du Léman](#)), watching football, cricket, rugby and horse racing and going to opera, concerts and the theatre. I'm a Lord's Taverner and a member of Middlesex County Cricket Club. I'm hoping to pick up my golf clubs again, in retirement.

I support Dundee United FC and West Ham United FC – but I've already bought a match ticket for Servette!



Derek Munn

Derek was our locum in April. He wrote beforehand:

I was ordained and introduced as an OLM to Dalmeny and Queensferry parish church on September 8 September 2022. At present, I am the locum minister at Drylaw parish church in Edinburgh.

I grew up in Clarkston in Glasgow and attended Williamwood parish church. When Fiona and I married we lived in Edinburgh for over 20 years, where we attended St Ninian's in Corstorphine. We moved to Fife in 2014 and there attended Dollar parish church, before moving back to Edinburgh in 2021, while I was finishing my studies for ministry.

I originally trained as a graphic designer, working for the last

20 years for Fife Council.

I'm now in my sixties and have been married to Fiona for 39 years. We have one grown-up son, Alexander, who lives in Glasgow, and a not so grown-up cocker spaniel, Fanta (named thus because he's orange, fizzy and full of E-numbers!)

In my spare time I love reading, bingeing on box sets, and walking (usually at the end of a stretched lead behind Fanta!) I also have ambitions to build a model railway - in my head I have this amazing model - I do have bits and bobs in the attic - so maybe one day!

You may also notice over the coming weeks that I enjoy collecting shoes - I love a bargain and can't resist - the more colourful the better. I do have a big section of the wardrobe to keep them in, so maybe time to call a halt (Fiona is running out of space!) - after all, the collection "will see me out" as they say!



Gillean MacLean

Gillean MacLean, minister of the Scots Kirk Lausanne from 2019 to 2023, is our locum in May.

Gillean comes from the west of Scotland and has been married to James for just over 50 years. They have three daughters and four grandchildren and now live in Inverness, the highland capital of Scotland, near to family.

They have adopted a wee dog called Banjo who helps to keep them fit with daily walks in the wonderful highland countryside. Banjo doesn't speak any French, so he is staying with family while Gillean is locum in Geneva.

Gillean's career began in nursing and social work and then in her thirties she studied for ministry in the Church of Scotland, beginning in Cardiff and then in Aberdeen, answering a call that she had felt since the age of 16.



She began her ministry serving in university chaplaincy and a variety of parishes over 30 years until her retirement from the Scots Kirk in Lausanne in 2023. From time to time she worked on independent radio and the BBC, most recently in March of this year. Something she has really enjoyed.

Now in retirement, she likes helping her own parish minister from time to time to allow him some time off. She has also been involved with preaching in a vacant parish in Beaulieu on the Black Isle, formerly served by Rev Ian Manson, well known to many in Geneva!

After four busy and very happy years (despite a pandemic and a war) in Lausanne and working within the international presbytery, James and Gillean have loved getting back in touch with friends and family and being able to help out from time to time. The occasional long lie is also a bonus!

CONGREGATIONAL FINANCE

Our congregational accounts for 2025 were submitted for independent examination at the end of February. An informal validation was carried out by the international presbytery. The independent examination was finalized shortly after the end of March and submitted to the international presbytery and to the cantonal authorities as part of the annual tax declaration.

Assistance from the international presbytery enabled submission of cash accounts including mission, but with mission disaggregated for reporting purposes to local authorities and international presbytery assessments.

At the annual congregational meeting on June 7, a revised budget for 2026 and a provisional budget for 2027 will be presented for approval.

In brief

Total income, less mission (and the minister's farewell), was CHF 150k.

Total expenditure, less mission (and the minister's farewell), was CHF 145k.

Total mission income was CHF 21k, and expenditure was CHF 24k. (Under cash accounting, mission income and expenditure are no longer identical.)

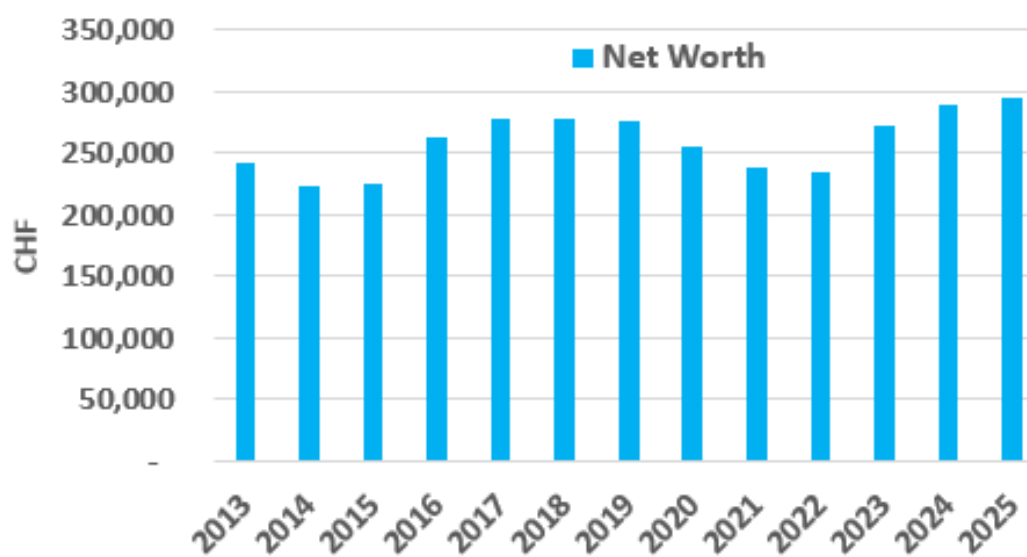
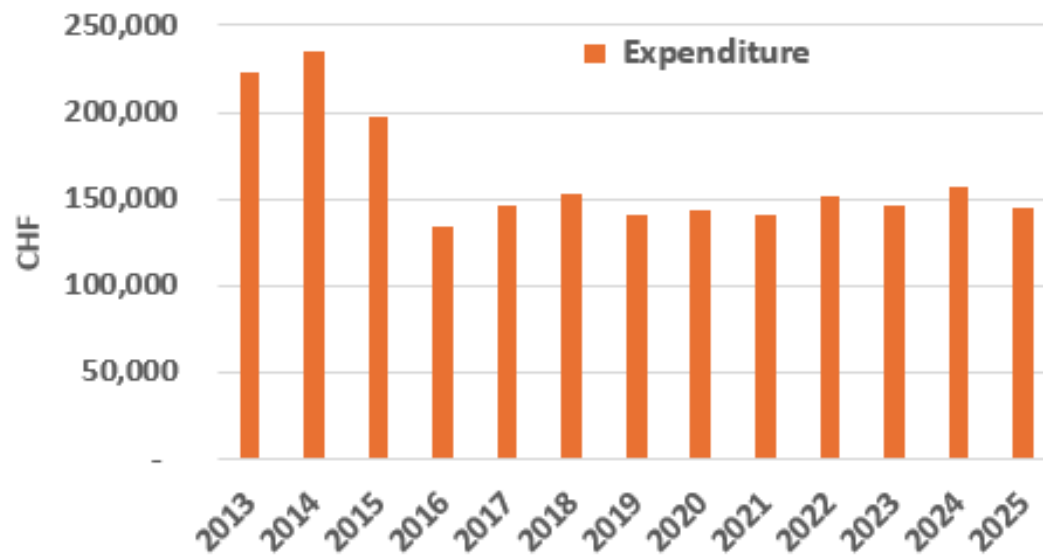
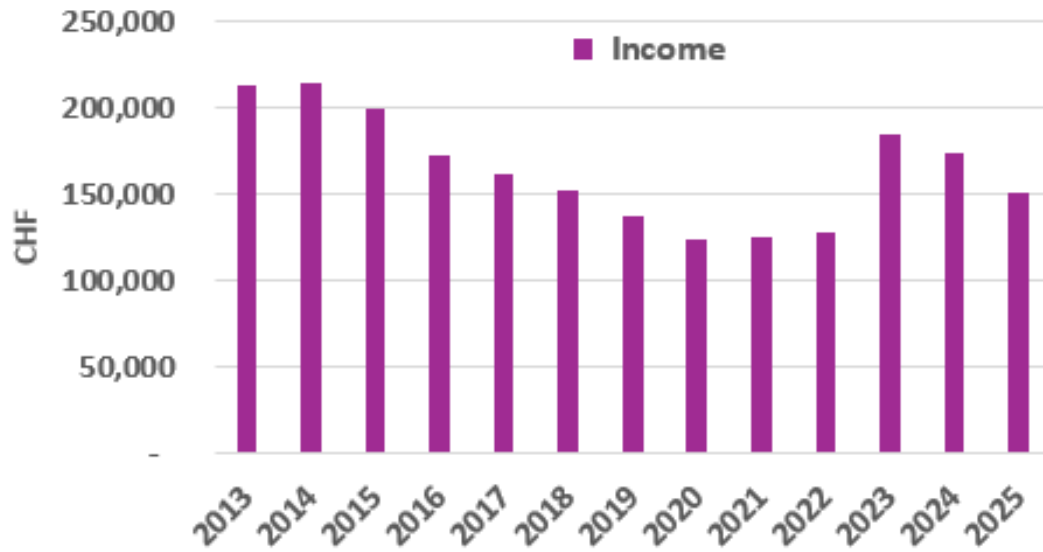
Relative to 2024, income was lower by CHF 24k. This was driven mainly by decreases in all forms of offering. The only increase was some CHF 1.5k from special events and fundraising.

Expenditure declined by CHF 11.8k from 2024 although this decrease may be effectively considered more in the region of CHF 26k to CHF 27k whenever reimbursements of employment costs are received.

Mission declined by CHF 5.7k: CHF 3.6k in donations for Malawi and CHF 2.1k in donations for Nepal.

Total surplus = CHF 5.2k as at 31 Dec 2025 (higher, in principle, up to around an estimated CHF 20k due to employment cost refunds not yet received).

Retrospect



Mission finances as of March 31

	Combined	Nepal	Malawi	Total
Opening Balance	-	12,431	13,907	26,338
Income to Date	1,020	540	560	2,120
Expenditure to Date	-	5,500	6,563	12,063
Balance	1,020	7,471	7,904	16,395
Balance (90%)	918	6,724	7,114	14,756

Lessons learned for 2026

- Income and expenditure were more or less balanced
- Sustainable in the short-term but no shock resistance
- Needs more to sustain the future, especially with a new associate minister in the offing

Need to plan

- 2025 driven by unforeseen employment circumstances
- Need for a clear vision of future direction and proactive plans to achieve it
- Good news is that there is enough of a basis to permit an expansion

Risk mitigation

- Contingency planning currently non-existent
- Key roles would also be hard to fill in an emergency
- Need to resolve underlying issues before they become problems

Ewart Mackenzie, treasurer

GONE... BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Claire de Reynier



Claire died peacefully on December 17 last year. She was 86. I was privileged to lead a quiet funeral for close family and friends in the Chapelle de l'Ange de la Consolation at St Georges cemetery. In lieu of flowers, donations were requested for the [Elisa-Asylum association](#) in Geneva, which has been standing with refugees and asylum seekers for almost 40 years. Here is part of what I said:

To be human is to be a mystery. Each of us is a mystery, because we are made in the image of God and God remains beyond our understanding.

But each of us is also a mystery in a more banal sense. However well we think we know each other, we don't know each other very well.

I have known Claire for ever as a member of our Scottish congregation. When we were much younger, I thought of her as the most elegant, the best-dressed woman in our church.

When I preached a sermon, Claire would often ask for the text. I wasn't sure why. Wasn't I speaking loud enough? Only when Jean-Pierre Briot was kind enough to send me her *parcours de vie* did I realize how much I didn't know, how much I had missed. At the heart of Claire's life was a passion for fairness, a passion for justice, that never left her.

Let me take just one example. Claire was a supporter of Women in Black, which works for peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs, Israelis and Palestinians in the Holy Land.

Women in Black originated in Jerusalem in January, 1988, in response to the first Palestinian Intifada. They organized vigils throughout the Holy Land with the message "Stop the Occupation" on the image of a hand signalling "stop". Still today there are three regular vigils with signs saying "STOP THE OCCUPATION." After the genocide in Gaza, the work of Women in Black is even more important

Claire leaves us an example of altruism, devotion, loyalty and faith. Let us remember her by following her example.

Páraic Réamonn

Tributes

Claire was born on July 16 1939, in Neuchâtel. Her father was Gaston de Reynier and her mother Helen Hunter. She was one of three children, with a brother, Jean, and a sister, Christiane, both deceased. Her father, originally from Neuchâtel, was a businessman – a Suchard representative. Her mother was of Scottish origin. After the deaths of her sister, and then her father and brother, Claire cared for her mother until her death.

Claire lived with her family in Algeria, where she attended primary school, and then in Neuchâtel for secondary school and her studies during her youth.

Claire completed her initial nursing training at *La Source* school in Lausanne (class of 1959). She worked in a hospital setting for roughly eight years. In 1970, driven by her interest in helping others, she trained as a social worker at the *HES-SO* in Geneva. This training enabled her to practice until her retirement.

Claire's life was primarily focused on others, characterized by empathy. This began with her nursing training and continued with her social work training. She worked as a social worker at *Pro Infirmis*, where she provided care for people with disabilities.

Throughout her life, Claire volunteered with various organizations, including ELISA (advocacy for asylum seekers) and Women in Black (peaceful reconciliation between Palestinian and Israeli women).

Claire remained single and had no children. Enjoying a vibrant social life with other couples, she had several godchildren with whom she developed deep and lasting emotional bonds (she liked to say they were her family).

In 1998, she met Claude Bernard, with whom she shared a life of almost 30 years until his death. They lived initially in Grand-Saconnex before moving to Ville-la-Grand, near Annemasse. Claude, her partner, has a daughter and two grandchildren. Her chosen family and extended family grew, much to Claire's delight. She became their "Granny" and devoted herself to her grandchildren, sharing all the family celebrations and key moments of their childhood and adolescence.

As a couple and in retirement, she and Claude enjoyed life by travelling extensively in Europe, Asia, South America, and beyond.

Claire was a determined, independent, and generous woman, always thinking of others and possessing a strong sense of fairness. Claire was a loyal and reliable friend, someone we could count on: a pleasant friend with a great sense of humour (dry wit) and a cheerful disposition.

Through her mother, she received a strong Anglo-Saxon upbringing, which led her to attend the Scottish Church in Geneva, where she became a faithful member. Claire had a deep and vibrant faith that guided her commitments throughout her life (according to Claire's humour, she wasn't a "church mouse") and, nevertheless, a person of prayer. She believed that God is faithful and good (Psalm 23).

Following the loss of her partner in early March 2023, Claire's health deteriorated. She was forced to leave her apartment in France and move to Geneva, to an assisted living residence in Petit-Saconnex.

She lived for a year and a half in this new home, where her health declined quite rapidly, requiring several hospitalizations and ultimately forcing her to move to the Petit-Saconnex nursing home in late December 2024.

She was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease and her health deteriorated rapidly, making her increasingly dependent on others for everyday activities. Her cognitive abilities quickly declined.

She leaves a great void, but also and above all an example of altruism, devotion, loyalty and faith.

Jean-Pierre and Marie-Claire Briot

Claire, you were my godmother. One day, my parents suggested to my brother and me that we choose a godfather and godmother from among our friends and family. I chose you, and I didn't know at the time what it would mean.

You were my godmother, and I spent many weekends with you during my childhood. You welcomed me into your apartment in Geneva, at Rue Blanche 4. What a change of scenery for me, a country child! It was a unique experience, a whole new world. You took me to parks and museums, to shows and exhibitions, to friends' houses, and even to see the fireworks. I felt privileged to discover the city and your life.

At your place, I remember the elegant furniture, a basket from which I could choose a small, colourful, flower-shaped soap, and the jewellery catalogues you gave me to make collages with. The driver's seat of your little car was covered with a mat of wooden beads.

I loved your expression when you said, "*Chameau d'cham... !*" You watched me grow up, and I always felt your loving gaze upon me. How lucky I was to have you in my life!

I remember when you met Claude and introduced us. I was already older, and I continued to see you both, most of the time without my parents.

As adults, we continued this beautiful relationship, and I am particularly grateful to have been able to share my joys and my difficulties with you, to find a listening ear and support from you, and to feel safe and secure. I am happy to have known you and been close to you. I will remember you as an independent, well-travelled, open-minded, positive, determined, and committed woman.

Today, I am sad to lose you, and at the same time, I am relieved that you are free from your suffering. Thank you for what we shared, my dear godmother, these memories will remain a treasure in my heart.

Chloé Quinto

Suzanne Murray-Jones

“To all who knew her, she was a force of nature,” said her husband, Dougie. “Loud, joyful and larger than life, yet endlessly kind, generous and steadfast. She was my soulmate for 50 years, and I miss her deeply.”

“She leaves behind an extended family and community held together by her love, her laughter...and her refusal to let life be small,” said her daughter, Iona.

“Perhaps best put,” said her son Ross, “she didn’t just enter a room. She filled it...and occasionally shook the windows too.”

Suzanne died suddenly on March 9. A crowded Auditoire on March 24 celebrated her life in a service led by our minister Enikő.

Here is part of what two of her children said:

Tributes from Iona and Ross



Mum was born in Stratford-upon-Avon in 1953 to Jo and Ron, a colourful young couple. The family soon moved to Ashford as hoteliers, with a holiday home in Hythe, Number 36, that became the centre of family life and still is today 60 years on. Hythe beach was the soundtrack of Mum’s youth. Sailing fast Scorpions, racing through sea mist, chasing boys at barbecues, or joining households with Jonny Bush for family roasts. As her sister Penny said, “every opportunity was a party. And Sue WAS a party.”

Ashford School for Girls tried to turn Mum into a LADY. They failed. And, to no one’s surprise, she was eventually expelled. That was Mum. A little rebellious.

These years gave Mum plenty of stories, and some lifelong friends, many of whom are here today from around the world.

After studying business in Folkestone, she managed the family County hotel and later Debenhams in Eastbourne, but staying still was never going to be her path. She took off on an adventure across Europe and eventually landed in Rome. In Italy, she lived the best years of her life. From winters skiing in Campo Felice to long summers at the Crabbs’ beach house, it all sounds rather idyllic.

Somewhere along the way, in Rome, in 1976, Mum met a handsome young Scotsman. He had tracked down where the British crowd gathered, the Falcon Bar, and it was there that he first noticed this stunning Marilyn-Monroe-esque lady.

Not long after, Mum asked him for a lift to Nino and Janet's restaurant just outside Rome, in his bright yellow TR7 convertible. The rest, as they say, is history.

Mum and dad married in 1981 at the Church of Scotland in Rome, and soon after moved to Sudan. Mum arrived laden like a pack donkey and threw herself fully into Sudanese life. From men's hairdressing to butchering pigs, it was JUST the next adventure.

Mum was always sporty. Tennis, riding, sailing, scuba diving, even polo in Khartoum, where she was the only woman in the club, and showed the men EXACTLY what she was made of.

But skiing was her greatest love. Her passion began on wooden skis and leather boots at the age of six: Jo and Ron would bundle all the kids into the car and set off for Klosters. She adored skiing and, 22 years ago, bought a chalet in Villars that became a second home to many.

She kept skiing right up to the end, leaving us on March 9, as one friend said, "doing something she absolutely loved." BUT, it was more than that. She was with her big sister AV in Villars. So...Mum was in a place she loved, doing what she loved, AND, most importantly, with someone she loved. We should all be so lucky.

In 1983 I arrived. Sudan wasn't the place to give birth, so Mum flew home, delivered me, then calmly flew back to Khartoum, alone, with a three-week-old newborn. Me! She took it all in her stride.

And within a year, we'd moved to Curaçao where Ross was born in 1986. Mum raised us full-time. Sea, sunshine, scuba diving, bridge, the tennis club. And, of course, sailing. Mum and dad sailed their 38-foot yacht around the Caribbean islands for many years with us.

In 2014, Mum and Dad bought their dream retirement home in Umbria, coming back full circle to Italy. BUT...Mum never really slowed down after retirement. She took up weightlifting, cold-water swimming, running, and even completed her first triathlon at 64. She walked the Camino de Santiago, and decided the best way to tackle a long pilgrimage was "bar-to-bar," i.e. one glass of wine at a time. And, she celebrated by getting her first tattoo, the Camino cross, which you can all see on your order of service today. That rebel schoolgirl obviously never really left her.

Family always remained central. She helped me raise Andrew and showed me, sometimes bossily, how to be a mum. She doted on her grandson.

After years of quietly searching, Mum finally reconnected with her firstborn, Jason. I believe getting to know Jason, Helen, Eliza and Henry was the greatest joy of her later life. She thought she had one grandchild, and then discovered she had two. And then Henry quickly followed in 2019. Thank you, Jason, for reaching out and helping make all of our family lives truly complete.

As Dad's health declined, Mum became his full-time carer. She turned herself into a devoted and wonderfully attentive wife. But we weren't always sure whether to congratulate or commiserate with Dad for having her as his bossy nurse.

It's not easy to condense Mum's career into just a few minutes. I mean, who else here has tribal chieftains on speed dial?

She lived so many lives in one: hotelier's daughter, rebel schoolgirl, expat adventurer, humanitarian, devoted Christian, triathlete grandma, and a universal right hand to many.

As a humanitarian, Mum was strong, capable and determined, but also warm, generous and deeply, deeply human. In her 40s, she studied management and technology at the Open University, turning that degree into a remarkable second career, spanning 24 years at the UNHCR. She somehow went from a receptionist in Kent to a sisterhood of Philadelphia nuns in Rome to working some of the most complex refugee operations globally.

But what she loved most was clearly the field. In Georgia, she was affectionately known as the “English tank,” – able to roll anyone over, including her boss. She never shied away from telling people exactly what she thought, regardless of their rank.

In Afghanistan, she crafted regional strategies for refugees. Her boss, Peter, said she was a “born manager” with superb analytical skills and political awareness. Mum was someone he would trust to run any UNHCR office.

Fahim especially remembers the small acts of care, like the time in Abu Dhabi when he was in severe tooth pain and she immediately found a dentist, and stayed until he was treated. He says many colleagues felt she looked after them like a mother.

Of course, there was always time for mischief. From riding helicopters in war-torn regions and hitchhiking through the glaciers of northern Pakistan, to digging UN planes out of the mud, she treated even the most unlikely situations as part of the adventure called LIFE. I remember fondly our skiing road trip through Georgia’s Caucasus mountains in a “borrowed” UN truck where we rescued a small puppy, and fed it Kash-puri.



At 54, she befriended two CIA agents and convinced them to let her tag along on a 90km bike ride through Eastern Chad, bribing checkpoints with cigarettes along the way. At 56, her official performance review described Mum as the “joker” of the office, which will unlikely come as much of a surprise to anyone here. At 58, she was close enough to hear the US Apache helicopters overhead the night Osama bin Laden was killed. That was Mum. Always at the centre of things, and with plenty of stories we will sadly get to hear less with the passage of time.

Dad and I agree that neither of us would have had half the careers or a fraction of the adventures without Mum. She was the engine, the instigator, the one saying “go for it” when no one else believed, pushing us, with love, towards the next thing. Our “not-so-quiet” cheerleader.

And yet, through all the movement and adventure, one thing remained constant: her faith and community-building.

She was deeply involved in the Church of Scotland for over 40 years. She sang in choirs, taught Sunday school, led Cursillo retreats, and organised the St Andrews Fair.

Church friends recall her as the one who introduced them around and made sure they belonged. They remember that wonderfully Scottish “aye” she picked up from Dad. How she said “aye” to life, to faith, to people, and to God.

Wherever Mum was, a network formed around her, from Fabro and Veigy to Villars, Hythe, and Rome. She had a gift for bringing people together and turning acquaintances into friends.

While her absence leaves a space that cannot be replaced, her spirit remains in the people she brought together and the lives she helped shape.

As the book of her life closes, a new one begins for each of us, without her physically in it. But we know how to write it well, because she gave us the pen.

Miller Donaldson



Miller Donaldson, a long-serving elder and active member of our congregation, died on Sunday May 3. He had been suffering from dementia for several years.

An intimate family funeral will be followed by a celebration of his life at a later date for all his friends; and we shall have more (much more) to say about Miller in our next newsletter.

PRAYER POEMS IN LENT

Irene Bom, the international presbytery’s worship and prayer promoter. was ordained as a local minister in 2008 and now serves the Rotterdam congregation. Originally from South Africa, she moved to the Netherlands in her thirties “for a year” and has made her home there ever since.

Creativity is central to her ministry. A songwriter since her teenage years, she continues to write, especially for congregational singing. More recently, she has found joy in analogue collage, both in her own work and in hosting community events that bring people together through making.

In 2017, Irene created the Prayer Matters blog, a space to reflect on and share prayer in ways that are thoughtful, accessible, and rooted in everyday life: https://www.irenebom.com/prayer_matters/

In the run-up to Easter this year, Irene led a project in which participants worked with the psalms assigned for each Sunday in the Revised Common Lectionary. Each psalm or psalm portion became the starting point for a prayer-poem, and participants shared both their creative process and their finished work with one another by email.

Reading each other's work was a particularly valuable part of the experience. It was interesting to see how differently each person approached the same texts, and how those differences were shaped by the varied countries and contexts we each brought. I learned a great deal from that shared exploration. Here is some background followed by the prayer poem I wrote for Psalm 23 in the fourth week of Lent.

Psalm 23, verse 1, 'The Lord is the one who is shepherding me; I lack nothing' (International Standard Version), expresses a deep trust in God's care and provision. The psalm invites us to continue living, even in the face of danger, misfortune, and the shadows that surround us, with the confidence that we will be sustained. It is, at its heart, a song of trust.

In Scotland or Switzerland, sheep are often guided by sheepdogs that nip and nudge them along the path. In the Ancient Near East, however, the relationship between shepherd and sheep was different. The sheep followed the shepherd willingly, recognizing his voice and trusting him, not through coercion but through relationship.

The One who shepherds me

The Lord is the One who shepherds me –
I don't need a thing!

Evil in the world is a lack of You.

You remind me
that I was always made in Your image.
I do not lack goodness,
though sometimes it feels like I do.

Sometimes,
it's like I have to walk deep
into the valley
to remember
the God-ness
that links me to You.

You don't send dogs or angels to nudge me back.
You trust me to know Your voice
and follow.

And it's when I remember,
when I let down my guard
and just be me,
that Your goodness,

alive in me
helps me catch up
to where You lead me
and drop the *stuff*
that holds me back
from running after You
and being with You
in the garden by the river.

You lead me
to where thirst is met.

You lead me
to rest beneath the tree,
to take and eat the fruit.
Part of the banquet
You prepare.

All that You give
is good.

You care for me always.

The Lord is the One who shepherds me –
I don't need a thing!

Christine Colliar (OLM)

SUNDAY WORSHIP AND BOOK SALE ON MAY 31

Our Sunday worship is at 11h, except when it isn't.

Once a year, over a weekend in May, the *Église protestante de Genève* holds an *assemblée générale*, with Sunday morning worship in the cathedral; and it asks us nicely to give it back the Auditoire for a parallel children's programme.

So our service on Sunday May 31 will be *in the afternoon at 16h*.

Also: we have come to the sad conclusion that our bookstall in the Salle Théodore de Bèze has reached the end of its shelf-life.

So we shall have a massive clearout book sale – everything must go! – both before and after the service, beginning at 15h.

Anything that *doesn't* go on the day will be donated to Nourishing Minds to assist in their fundraising efforts.

Many hands have worked on the bookstall over the years – we think in particular of the late Ritchie Panetti. More recently, the bulk and eventually the entirety of the work has fallen on the shoulders of Lily Geissbuhler. We are extremely grateful to her!



ST ANDREW'S FAIR & CÈILIDH

Saturday November 7, 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

Coordinator(s) needed

We are looking for one or more eager and willing volunteers to coordinate this year's Fair and Cèilidh – a wonderful day in the life of our church. Former coordinators Christine Buhler and Jason Leger have extensive documentation and experience to pass on to anyone or any group willing to take on this role. Inquiries or signs of interest to Nan Braunschweiger: ntbraunsch@bluemail.ch We look forward to hearing from you!

LOOKING FOR AN ASSOCIATE MINISTER

The nominating committee, with seven members from Geneva and six from Lausanne, has formally begun the search for an associate minister in our linked charge, to be based in the Geneva manse and to serve primarily our Geneva congregation. Closing date for applications is

Details on our website: <https://churchofscotlandgeneva.ch/>,
<https://churchofscotlandgeneva.ch/who-we-are/vacancy/>

STILL NEEDING HELP!

Our kirk session is considering the ordination of new elders, as part of the process of change we reported on above. If you would like the session to consider your name for the eldership or to propose another name or names for consideration, please speak to [Enikő](#), to Gillean, or to any of the elders currently serving on the session:

Lyndsey Bochaton, Alex Craeye, Jane Broere, Laurent Djamen, Mark Jeffrey, Mak Ikeda, Rebecca MacDonald, Jane McKenzie, Jenny Rietbergen, Cornis Van Der Lugt (clerk), Rosaleen Walker

There are, of course, many other ways in which you can contribute to the life and work of our congregation. For example:

- Reading in worship
- Leading prayers in worship (a new idea that is slowly 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 (both women and men)
- Serving on the coffee and tea rota after worship
- Helping with the monthly congregational lunches
- Serving on one or more of the new committees we are forming (see above)

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 vibrant congregation.

Minister Enikő Ferenczy
EFerenczy@churchofscotland.org.uk

Session clerk Cornis van der Lugt
churchofscotlandgeneva@gmail.com

Website: churchofscotlandgeneva.ch

Bank Account: Church of Scotland, GE
Account No. 279-C7114389.0
IBAN: CH13 0027 9279 C711 4389 0



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GENEVA

