

# The Chronicle

## January 2026



Crown Court Church of Scotland  
Covent Garden, London

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Dear Readers,

We begin a brand New Year at Crown Court Church in hope. In October last year, we received permission to call a new minister, and our Nominating Committee, supported by our prayers, is now working to that end. Transitional times like these can be unsettling, but we know that God is always with us on the way. This is the theme of this issue's sermon, by our own Session Clerk, Sheena-Jane.



As well as the usual updates from our Interim Moderator, Session Clerk, and church groups, we reflect on a joyful Christmas season at Crown Court, including our Carol Singing at Trafalgar Square, Carols by Candlelight and Christingle Services, and our Christmas Appeal for Bruce House. There's an interview with new attender Rebekah O'Reilly, who has fascinating family connections to Crown Court, an extended spotlight on the work of Scotscare, and a delicious recipe for leek and potato soup!

Don't miss page 14, where you'll find the first of a regular series of updates from our Futures Project conveners. The upcoming renovation project is progressing at pace, and, in just a few weeks' time, we will be launching a public fundraising campaign to raise £500,000 towards the total project cost.

I'm so grateful to the Chronicle team, Naima, Elaine, Val and Sheena-Jane, for all their support in preparing this issue. And, as always, many thanks to those of you who have donated towards the printing of *The Chronicle*; your support has meant that we have been able to pause our call for donations over the past months. Now, however, we do need to call upon your generosity again, to make sure that we can continue to bring Crown Court news to the whole community. Any contribution, no matter how small, is always gratefully received; just contact [outreach@crowncourtchurch.org.uk](mailto:outreach@crowncourtchurch.org.uk).

And, finally, don't forget that anyone can contribute to the church magazine! Would you like to write about your church volunteer role? Perhaps you are an avid reader, and you might like to review a faith-related book you have enjoyed? Just drop us a line with your ideas; the deadline for our next issue is Sunday 15 March.

Mary-Jannet Leith and the Editorial team

Friends,

As we step into a new year, many of us do so with a mix of hope, gratitude, and honest questions about what lies ahead. A new calendar does not suddenly change everything, but it does offer us a natural moment to pause, reflect, and ask where God is leading us next - both as individuals and as a church, locally at Crown Court and nationally as The Church of Scotland.



This season often brings talk of New Year's resolutions. We think about what we hope to change or do differently. In our faith, however, renewal is not just about trying harder; it is about trusting God to do new work in us. Each day is another opportunity to begin again, leaning on God's grace rather than our own strength.

This year is also an important one in the life of our church as we continue the search for and hopefully conclude the process of finding and inducting a new minister. Times of transition can feel uncertain, and it is natural to have questions, hopes, and even anxieties. Yet transitions are often the very moments when God is most clearly at work - preparing hearts, opening doors, and shaping what comes next.

As we move through this process, I invite you to stay prayerful, patient, and hopeful. Pray for the nominating committee, for the applicants who may be discerning their own call, and for you our congregation as we listen together for God's guidance. We trust that, in God's time, we will welcome and introduce a new minister who will walk with us, serve among us, and help lead this church into its next chapter.

Throughout this journey, we are reminded that we do not walk alone. We move forward together as a church family, supporting one another, worshipping together, and continuing the ministries God has already placed in our hands.

When one of us feels uncertain, others can offer encouragement. When one feels weary, another can offer strength.

As we look ahead, let us commit not to being perfect, but to being faithful. Let us resolve to love more freely, forgive more readily, listen more carefully, and serve more generously. Let us make room in our lives for prayer and for the quiet ways God speaks to us each day.

Above all, let us step into this new year with trust. We may not know exactly what the year will hold, but we do know the One who holds us. God goes before us, walks beside us, and carries us when the road feels long.

May this new year be filled with fresh beginnings, renewed strength, and deep confidence in God's leading, for each of us and for our church as a whole. Let us move forward together in faith in hope and in love.

Reverend Alistair Cumming



The Kirk Session held its regular meeting in November.

The date for the Annual Business Meeting (ABM) of the church has been set for Sunday 22nd March at 12:45pm, following the morning service. All members of the congregation are invited to attend.

The dates for 2026 Kirk Session meetings are: 19th February, 16th April, 19th June, 17th September and 19th November.

At our November meeting, the Fabric Committee asked for, and was granted, permission to install a combination of double and secondary glazing in the manse. It is hoped that this will improve the energy rating of the property, a Grade II-listed townhouse, in line with Church of Scotland guidelines.

The Futures Committee continues to work diligently in the background on the building project. They have been working closely with a fundraising consultant over the past few months to prepare for applications to a range of charitable trusts to raise support for the project.

The Worship Committee asked for the salary for the role of Organist and Choir Director to be discussed and approved. This was set according to Musician Union rates, and the role was advertised with a closing date of 20th December 2025. Interviews will take place in January.

At the October meeting of the Presbytery of England and the Channel Islands, we were granted permission to call a minister. The congregation met on 23rd November to appoint a Nominating Committee to be responsible for the process moving forward. The committee comprises: Sheena-Jane Clark, Euan Foulis, Chris Grieve, Shona Gutteridge, Naima Heath, Mary-Jannet Leith, Lewis More, Moira McEwen, and Emily Mvula. Whilst the work of the committee is highly confidential, updates will be provided to the congregation when appropriate.

Sheena-Jane Clark, Session Clerk



**A Sermon preached by our Session Clerk, Sheena-Jane Clark, one of our leaders in worship training.**

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

## **God With Us: On the Road**

### **Scripture Readings:**

**Psalm 148; Hebrews 2: 10-18**

If you've ever taken a long car journey with children, you'll know the classic questions: "Are we nearly there yet?"; "How long till we stop?"; "Why does he get the bigger piece of tablet?" And that's before you get to "I need a wee" or "I'm going to be sick" - usually all asked just as you've joined the motorway with no hope of escape.

Journeys aren't always smooth. They're rarely predictable. And sometimes, as in our Gospel reading today, they come without warning. Matthew tells us of a journey no one planned - one that began with a dream, a warning, and an urgent departure. "Get up," the angel said to Joseph. "Take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt." No time to pack properly, no time to find someone to water the plants or feed the donkey, just get up and go.

Joseph doesn't speak a word in Scripture, but he acts with remarkable faith. God says "Go" and he goes. No fuss, no debate, and - as far as we know - no "But I've just sat down!" This part of the Christmas story is not wrapped in tinsel. It is not silent-night gentle. It's raw, urgent, messy, and painfully human. And that is precisely why it matters. Because God does not come to us only in the peaceful moments, but also in the trouble, in the upheaval, in the nights when sleep won't come, and in the mornings when worry wakes us early.

The story of the flight into Egypt tells us this truth: God is with us on the road - not just at the destination. We sometimes forget that Jesus' earliest experience of life was as a refugee child. The Son of God begins life not in a palace, but in a borrowed stable, and then in a foreign land for safety.

This is the Incarnation in all its depth: God doesn't watch suffering from far away. God enters into it. God walks with every family forced to flee, every parent who fears for their child, every person whose future feels uncertain or fragile. And maybe that's some of us today.

The days after Christmas can bring a mix of emotions - joy, tiredness, nostalgia, and yes, sometimes sorrow. Christmas highlights who is missing as much as who is present. Life is not neatly wrapped. But the Incarnation means this: God is not afraid of the mess. God steps into it, and stays there with us.

I rather like Joseph - the quiet, faithful, gentle man of Christmas. He gets no lines, no speeches, no stirring solos. He is the sort of man who would absolutely assemble the flat-pack stable on Christmas Eve without complaining - or at least not out loud. But Joseph listens. And when God speaks through a dream, he trusts. Most of us don't get angels appearing beside the bed, although we may occasionally get the cat jumping on us and giving us a fright reminiscent of one. But God does guide. Through Scripture, through prayer, through the wisdom of others, through moments when something "settles" in the heart or refuses to settle until we pay attention.

Faith is often less about dramatic visions and more about small, repeated acts of trust. Joseph teaches us: you don't need to be loud to be faithful. You just need to be willing to listen.

One of the beautiful threads running through Scripture is this: God is a travelling God. A God who leads people through valleys and deserts, across seas and foreign lands, through seasons of uncertainty and into moments of hope. When the Holy Family set out into Egypt, God was not behind them waving them off – He went with them. God does not send us on journeys alone. God accompanies. God guides. God protects. God strengthens. You may not know what the next chapter holds - most of us don't - but you do not go into it alone. Emmanuel - God with us - means God with you on your road.

Matthew doesn't shy away from the darkness. Herod's violence and cruelty are part of the world Jesus is born into. This story recognises the grief and injustice that many still face. And yet - God is at work even in the depths.

Jesus' presence brings hope, not by ignoring suffering but by entering into it and ultimately transforming it through resurrection life. For those carrying sorrow today, for those grieving an empty place at the table, for those feeling anxious about the year ahead, this story says: God sees you. God is with you. And God will not let darkness have the final word.

Joseph's obedience. Mary's courage. Jesus' vulnerability. God's protection. All of these threads weave a tapestry of grace. They remind us:

- Faith is lived step by step.
- God's guidance arrives in many forms.
- You don't have to understand the whole route to take the next faithful step.
- And even when life changes direction suddenly, God is already ahead, preparing the way.

Perhaps today we ask: Where is God inviting me to trust? To listen? To take the next step? As we look toward a new year, with its hopes, uncertainties, resolutions we may or may not keep, and calendars still strangely blank, we are reminded that God is already there.

Just as the angel guided Joseph, God guides us - not always loudly, not always dramatically, but faithfully. And so our prayer becomes: "Be Thou my vision. Be my guide. My focus. My centre. My strength." Not only when the path is clear, but especially when it is not.

The journey to Egypt was not easy, but God was in it. Every step, every mile, every unknown, every return.

And God is present in your journey too. Wherever you travel - physically, emotionally, spiritually - may you know this truth deep in your heart:

*God goes before you,  
God goes beside you,  
God goes behind you,  
and God goes within you.*

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

Christmas is always a special time at Crown Court. Our Christmas celebrations began on Friday 12th December with our annual carol singing in front of Trafalgar Square's Norwegian spruce. This year, members of our choir and congregation were joined by our friends at Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church and St Columba's Church. We sang a variety of traditional carols which narrate the Christmas story, bringing focus back to the heart and meaning of this festive period. It was wonderful to see so many members of the public happily singing along with us from spare copies of our song sheets.

We raised nearly £200 for Christian Aid's Christmas Appeal, which provides families fleeing conflict with key supplies.





We continued to celebrate the lead-up to Christmas with music in our annual service Carols by Candlelight, which took place on the evening of Sunday 14th December. The sanctuary was beautifully decorated, as always, by Alison Dartnell and her team, who created a truly festive atmosphere with candles and wreaths around the church.

Interspersed with Gospel readings, the service opened with “Once in Royal David’s City” and included a range of classic carols sung by our wonderful choir, and by the congregation: from the heart-breaking ‘Coventry Carol’ to the rousing ‘Hark the Herald Angels Sing’.

£406 was raised in a retiring offering taken for the choir’s chosen charity, Crisis, which provides help and support to those experiencing homelessness. The festive post-service refreshments were, as always, very warmly received.

On Christmas Eve, we celebrated the Light of Christ in the world with our annual Christingle service. We made our Christingles in the sanctuary this year before the service, filling the church with the smell of fresh oranges!

Thank you to our volunteers, who prepared all the juicy oranges, and showed the youngsters what to do.

Crown Court continued its annual tradition of raising funds to enable us to prepare small gift bags for the young residents of neighbouring Bruce House in Covent Garden, an accommodation facility run by Centrepoint for those aged 16-25 who are homeless or in need of housing.

Here are a couple of photos of the bags, which are filled in the church hall, then delivered straight to the staff at Bruce House.



Thanks go to Margaret Ross, Jennifer Laird, Alison Dartnell, Elizabeth Steel, Joyce Harley and Norma McGoldrick for all their work in continuing this important tradition - and of course to all those who donated to the appeal.

Naima Heath & Norma McGoldrick



**ENDING YOUTH  
HOMELESSNESS**



In October, we welcomed nearly 50 amateur singers to our church sanctuary for a Come and Sing workshop. The afternoon was led by congregation member and professional choral director Thomas Allery, with Ben Lewis-Smith, Director of Music at St Columba's, Pont Street, on the organ!

The afternoon was happily spent exploring the well-known Fauré *Requiem* in depth, and a beautiful piece by Scottish composer James Macmillan, *A New Song*, which was unfamiliar to most. The afternoon ended with an informal performance of both pieces.

It was brilliant to be able to see so many people making music together and discovering our church for the first time!



Regular attenders at Crown Court will be familiar with the work of the Futures Committee over the past three years, and the development of the “Futures Project”. This year, each issue of *The Chronicle* will update all those who are part of Crown Court’s community on the project’s progress, as we work hard to realise our vision for the church’s future.

Over the past few years, it has become sadly very evident that our church building is not fit for the future as it now stands. In particular, our lift has now become unusable despite many (costly) attempts to repair it over the past few years, and our kitchen, situated under the street in the basement of the church (originally a coal-hole!) has been condemned by the Church of Scotland’s Health and Safety officer. These two issues are fundamental to the health of our church and congregation: without a working lift, we cannot be a truly inclusive church; without a kitchen, we cannot offer our usual hospitality and fellowship to our own congregation - we all miss our weekly church lunches! It is also difficult to open our doors to community groups and visitors without full accessibility and catering facilities, meaning that much-needed income from the hire of our spaces is limited.

Several congregational meetings were held in 2023 and 2024, which formed the basis for “A Vision for Crown Court”. Congregation members had so much enthusiasm for the potential of our church building, and the many ideas they offered informed the way in which the Futures Project developed. In late 2024, the Kirk Session made the positive decision to embark upon a substantial renovation project, with the aim of renewing our church building for the long-term, addressing the two substantial issues - the lift and the kitchen - alongside a restoration of both the church hall and the exterior of the building.

In 2025, good progress was made with the architectural design for the project itself. Our architect, Rogers Mears, has worked on several London churches, including our neighbour St Giles-in-the-Fields. It has been fantastic to work with a firm who demonstrate such genuine interest in the history of our unusual church building, and care both for our heritage and for the spirit of Eustace Balfour’s original design. Early in the year, the architect’s outline plan was approved by Kirk Session, and the project as a whole was subsequently approved by the Presbytery of England and the Channel Islands in Spring. Final approval in principle for the project was received from the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland in August 2025.

Over the past few months, we have made excellent progress towards RIBA Stage 3, or the “Spatial Coordination” phase, in which the initial concept design evolves into detailed architectural, structural, and services drawings. This involves some necessary opening up works, which will take place over the coming weeks. After this, we move to the “Technical Design” phase, RIBA Stage 4, at the end of which the project will go to tender. The construction element of the project is scheduled to begin towards the end of 2026, and will last up to twelve months.

## Fundraising

The total budget for the Futures Project has been estimated at around £2.15 million. We are extremely fortunate as a congregation to have received several legacies over the past few years, which amount to just under £1.65 million. Naturally, this puts us in a strong position in terms of fundraising at the outset. We have set a fundraising target of £500,000, a figure which covers the remaining shortfall, and ensures financial stability for the church once the project is complete.

During the second part of 2025, the Futures and Stewardship and Finance committees started working with a Fundraising Consultant, Compton Fundraising, to give us the best chance of success in what can be a very competitive environment of grant funding. With their support and advice, we will be submitting applications to a range of trusts, including the National Heritage Lottery fund.



Over the next few weeks, we will be sharing the project design with everyone in the Crown Court community, alongside the launch of a public fundraising campaign.

We hope that all those who love Crown Court will contribute, as they are able, to “A Kirk for Tomorrow”, the renewal of our historic Scottish Church and its mission in Covent Garden.

Chris Grieve & Mary-Jannet Leith  
Futures Committee Conveners

Our opening meeting in October introduced the next theme of 'Let us Build a House: Living Stones', following on from 'Sure Foundations'. We are the living stones of God. Which window in church relates to this theme?

Members explored how stones were used in different ways in early times, for shelter, defence, weapons, markers, memorials and worship. Neolithic monuments dominate Scotland, and many were named and memories recalled. In the Bible, there are stories mentioning stones. Jacob's stone pillow immediately comes to mind, or Joshua 4 v1-9 when 12 stones were set up in the midst of Jordan. Lintels are the stone over a gap for windows and doors. So, to lighten the meeting we had a beetle drive but with a house rather than a beetle! We had 3 groups. One member tried cheating but was corrected (only one window at a time); another spent the whole time trying for a six to start. One game was sufficient and with time up the meeting closed with the Grace.

In November, we continued with stones and their uses. We were given the task of each making a stone from paper. The task was to cross the church hall using the stones. This involved working together, as the stones were passed along to the front enabling all to reach the other side.

We talked about the fact that The Guild and the Church of Scotland are being re-organised. Have we played our part over the years or left it to others? Not surprisingly our members have done and do their fair share. One started serving morning coffees after the service back in the 60s, others welcome visitors and chat in the hall, look after their district by visiting them at home, organise meetings for members, and are valued members of our church family at Crown Court.

What is the hardest stone used in the Scottish game of curling? We used milk bottle tops, which look like curling stones, with coloured stickers, and flicked them to see who could get nearest to the button. Time disappears during our meetings and we ended with a closing prayer.

At our December meeting we had a leisurely lunch and discussed the scams and overpaid CEOs of charities. Many already supported small local charities, with volunteers feeling that this was positive use of their money. The Guild project - Daisy Chain - run by Crossreach for the Church of Scotland in Glasgow, was well supported with donations in return for quiz sheets.

After an opening prayer, we returned to the theme Living Stones. We each imagined holding a stone/pebble, recalling the occasion when they were selected. Who does not pick up a stone when out because of the colour, perhaps an ideal shape for skimming, rough ones from garden and fields or mountain tops, or just to hold? God holds us in the palm of his hand, making us feel safe. This led on to writing on a stone! Short verses from the Bible were suggested by members such as 'Be still in the presence of the Lord' and 'I lift mine eyes unto the hills'. A stone torn from a sheet of paper with a verse written on it and decorated, occupied us all! A closing prayer ended the meeting, followed by a hot drink and food to finish.

Thank you to those who have already supported The Guild's chosen charity Daisy Chain, which cares for families with children under 12 who need special help. The red tin will be on the tea counter for donations in the New Year, when we resume our monthly meetings. Do come along if you are free and join us!

Jennifer Laird.

Answers: 1. *Window to David Livingstone*; 2. *Granite from Ailsa rock*.

## Rambling and Social Club Report

As the long hot summer of 2025 faded away, we looked towards Autumn and darker evenings again, and at our first meeting indoors on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September, the evening took the form of a Mini Quiz social and happily chatting about our lovely summer holidays. Two weeks later, on the 27<sup>th</sup> September, we turned our thoughts to the end of summer, remembering all the fruits of the field which we appreciate and enjoy. We celebrated with a Harvest Supper Evening, and enjoyed a simple meal: a welcome mug of vegetable soup alongside chunky farmhouse bread and a selection of cheeses and cold meats. This reminded us of the debt of gratitude we all owe to our farmers who work tirelessly throughout the seasons in all kinds of weather to provide for us as a nation.

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October was President's Night, which traditionally starts off the Club's winter session. With October comes the end of British Summer Time, or Daylight Saving Time, which we learnt was the brainchild of a builder from Kent named William Willett. One day on his way back from riding his horse in Petts Wood in the early 1900s, Willett noticed that many of the blinds and curtains in neighbouring

houses were still drawn, even though it was light. Willett campaigned vigorously, and used his own resources to finance a pamphlet, *The Waste of Daylight*, outlining his idea for adapting to daylight hours during the summer, which would mean longer daylight hours for recreation, while improving health and saving the country money in lighting costs. Despite support from MP Robert Pearce, Willett's suggestion was unsuccessful in the House of Commons at this time, but the idea resurfaced in 1914 during WW1 due to a greater need to conserve coal. Sadly, Willett did not live to see his idea come to fruition when the Summer Time Act was passed in May 1916. Today, you can find a fitting memorial to him in Petts Wood in Kent in the form of a sundial, set permanently to Daylight Saving Time.

Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October saw us recognising Halloween in traditional fashion with pumpkin flavoured iced cookies brought specially from America for us. Through an informative quiz, we learned that the tradition of carving vegetables for Halloween originated in Ireland and that the boy's name given to the lantern carved from pumpkins or turnips was Jack-o'-Lantern. We also discovered that a cake called Barmbrack usually baked around Halloween contained whisky and tea, and the old Halloween favourite Parkin, a ginger and oat cake, originated in Yorkshire. In the Middle Ages, trick and treaters would receive a soul cake in return for 'Praying for the Dead'. Interestingly, the Celtic name for Halloween is 'Samhain'.

On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November, we remembered Firework Night, and ventured outside into the courtyard, wrapped up warm, to light sparklers in memory of Guy Fawkes and his plot to blow up the Houses of Parliament. At the end of November, we celebrated our patron saint St Andrew. The hall and tables were tastefully decorated in blue and white to depict the Scottish flag, and a specially themed cake baked for us by our own master baker, Steve Burnett, was the centrepiece. We enjoyed a very sociable evening trying to guess the answers to the trivia quiz of famous Scottish inventors and their household innovations.

2025 was brought to a conclusion with our annual Christmas social on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December, at which we were treated to the usual lovely festive tea specialities - mince pies and jelly trifles - whilst listening to cheery Christmas music. Tabletop games followed and an enjoyable and happy evening was had by everyone.

Alison Dartnell.

For more than four centuries, ScotsCare has stood as a lifeline for Scots in London, offering practical, financial, and emotional support to those who need it most. Whether helping someone facing homelessness, providing assistance to low-income families, or supporting individuals who feel isolated, the charity aims to be a 'one stop shop' for the most vulnerable Scots in the capital. Scots in London have a strong sense of identity and community, and many do well, but ScotsCare is a place for those that fall on hard times, or just need a helping hand from time to time.

The charity's mission is to stop the cycle of deprivation experienced by some Scots through wraparound services based in compassion and community. Today, the charity continues to evolve, ensuring its services remain responsive, relevant and accessible.

Their services include family support, counselling, advocacy, financial support, sheltered housing, homelessness, social events and befriending. Homelessness support was added as a service when the charity Borderline and ScotsCare merged back in 2023. Clients can use as many services as needed, and return again and again.

## A New Chapter for ScotsCare

One of the most significant recent milestones has been the move to a new headquarters at Bermondsey Street, near London Bridge. The new space is larger and more welcoming, and designed to better serve clients and staff alike.

Southwark, where the office now sits, is the borough with the highest number of ScotsCare clients. While the charity's services remain available within a 35 mile radius of Charing Cross (which includes as far out as Luton), this new base strengthens its long term financial footing and positions ScotsCare to deliver even greater impact in the years ahead.



## Walking, Sleeping Out, and Giving Back

In September, six dedicated participants took on the Thames Trek, a 25km walk along the river, raising nearly £4,000 for the charity's vital services. November brought the [CEO Sleepout](#) at Lord's Cricket Ground. On a cold night, ScotsCare CEO Shona Fleming joined five others to sleep outside in solidarity with those experiencing homelessness. Their efforts raised awareness and an incredible £10,000 plus in donations.



## Stories That Inspire: The ScotsCare Podcast

For those who prefer stories told through sound, ScotsCare's Podcast Series three launched last autumn, featuring conversations with Scots such as novelist Sir Alexander McCall Smith, actor John Gordon Sinclair of Gregory's Girl fame, and broadcaster Ross King. Part two of series three has just begun, offering more engaging discussions about Scottish life and culture. You can listen on any podcast platform or at [scotscare.com/podcasts](https://scotscare.com/podcasts).

## Celebrating Tradition and Impact

November also saw ScotsCare host its **359th annual St. Andrew's Festival Dinner** at the Caledonian Club. The evening coincided with the release of ScotsCare's **2024/25 Impact Report**, which highlights achievements from the past financial year. To request a copy of this, or a short history booklet of the charity, please email [communications@scotscare.com](mailto:communications@scotscare.com).



## **Robyn's story - a Case Study**

Robyn's mother has been a ScotsCare client since 2020 and has received children's clothing and activity grants and regularly attends our children and family social events.

ScotsCare's Family Support Worker has been working with the family and helping Robyn to access learning support in school. Whilst Robyn's mother and teachers suspect dyslexia may be the cause, their local council do not fund dyslexia assessments. The school modified their teaching to accommodate Robyn, but without a diagnosis they are unable to determine the best way to teach, and so Robyn continues to struggle with reading, writing, and spelling. This has led to Robyn actively disliking lessons and significantly impacted her confidence.

Despite these difficulties, Robyn is thriving in the extra-curricular theatre classes she attends at weekends. The theatre company had originally approached the school to determine interested students, but their mother was unable to afford their places. Knowing what a great fit this would be for her children, she submitted a successful application for ScotsCare help to fund her three children, and Robyn and her two siblings have been attending the theatre school since 2023. So far, ScotsCare has paid a total of £2200 in fees, of which £882 was specifically for Robyn.

The theatre company holds a summer picnic and games event for the children and their families; giving the children an opportunity to see the friends they've made in a different context and to continue friendships. Additionally, the company produces an annual show complete with lighting, costumes and music in a local theatre. The children meet regularly to learn their lines and rehearse the play before performing in front of family and friends. Robyn's mother has told ScotsCare's Family Support Worker that she can clearly see the result of her children's hard work and is happy that they are participating in something they obviously love doing.

Robyn was initially hesitant and unsure, lacking confidence, but her mother reports she now 'skips into the classes'. Robyn has found an activity where she can make friends and express herself.

Although she continues to struggle with reading and writing, she finds acting immensely fun and happily puts the work in to learn lines and songs.

ScotsCare will continue to support Robyn by funding her theatre sessions. To further promote her progress, the charity has decided to fund the Dyslexia assessment, which is critical for the school to understand how to best support her learning and provide the best teaching environment for Robyn's academic endeavours and confidence.

## Looking Ahead

As ScotsCare moves forward, its commitment remains to support Scots in London who are homeless, on low incomes, or feeling isolated, in a way that makes a lasting impact, and improving life trajectories for the long term, whilst being an organisation that's an active participant in Scottish culture in the capital.

## How You Can Help

ScotsCare's work is only possible thanks to the generosity of its supporters. If you're keen to make a difference, here's how you can get involved:

**Donate:** Every contribution helps provide vital services to Scots in need. Please scan the QR code on the right to donate.



**Fundraise:** Take part in an event or create your own challenge—email [fundraising@scotscare.com](mailto:fundraising@scotscare.com) to get started!

**Spread the Word:** Share ScotsCare's story with friends, family, and colleagues or on social media.

**Stay Connected:** Listen to the [podcast](#), request the Impact Report, and follow ScotsCare online at [scotscare.com](http://scotscare.com).



For recipe corner this week, we are back home in Covent Garden at Crown Court. Of course, Covent Garden means vegetables, and vegetables mean soup - so here is a recipe for a warming leek and potato.

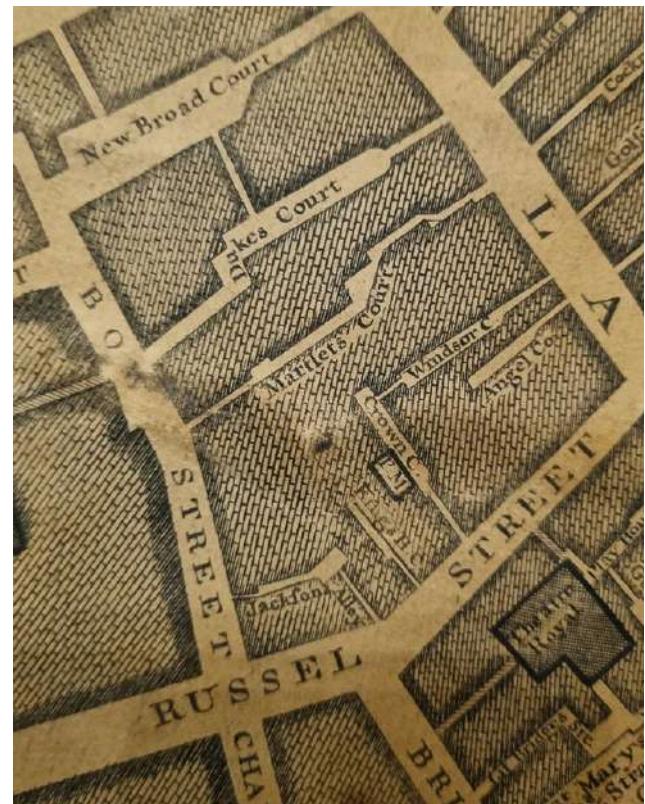
## Ingredients

- 2 leeks - finely sliced white part
- 1 sliced onion
- 250g new potatoes
- 500ml vegetable stock
- 1/2 teaspoon finely chopped tarragon
- 150ml single cream
- 25g butter

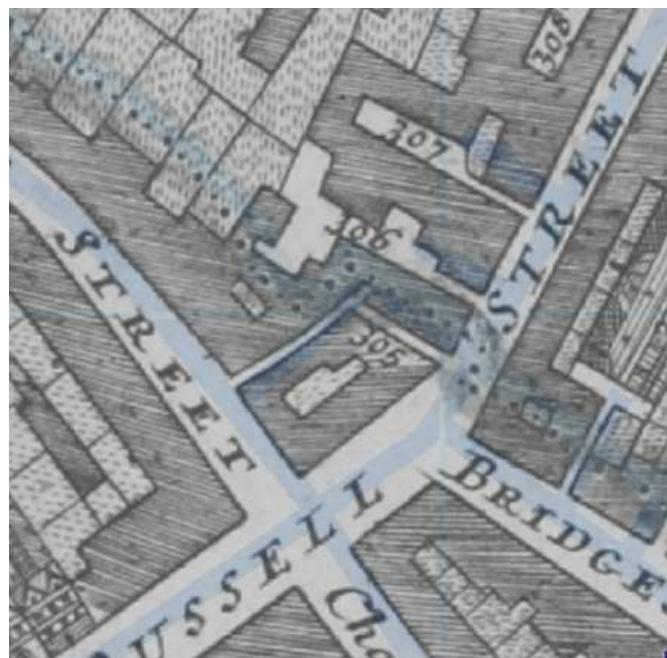
## Method

Melt butter, add leeks and onion then cook for 5 minutes till soft. Add potatoes and stock then boil. Cover and gently simmer for around 15 minutes till potatoes are nearly tender. Stir in tarragon and cook for another 5 minutes. Blend, stir in cream and season with salt and pepper. Reheat, then serve with warm crusty bread.

Over the past few months, the Outreach & Heritage committee has been exploring the Heritage side of its work! Ahead of fundraising for our upcoming building project, we have been thinking more deeply about our heritage, and the several church buildings that have stood on our little piece of Crown Court over the past 300 years. Our long history as a Scottish diaspora church in Covent Garden is something to be proud of, and is one of the many ways in which our church community is distinctive. Sharing our history of worship and mission with the wider public is an exciting prospect!

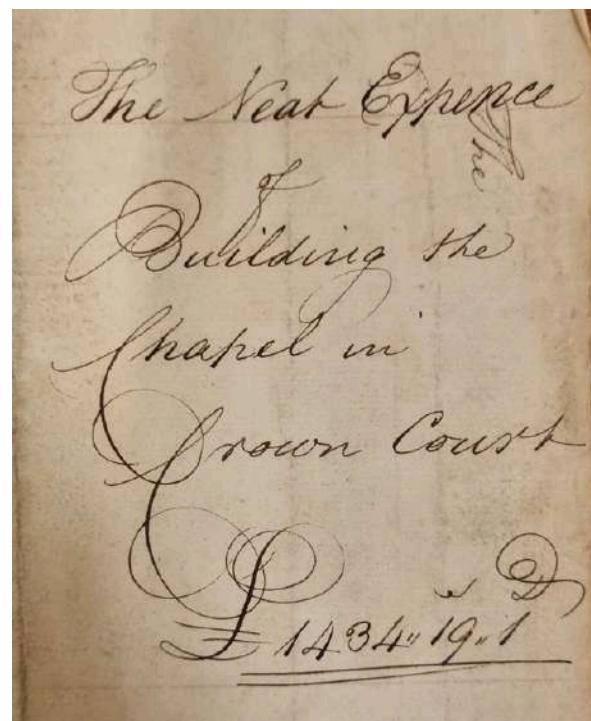


We are extremely lucky that our church archive survives unbroken from 1711, when the first congregation formally started to meet together in a meeting house on St Peter's Court in St Martin's Lane. We soon outgrew this small room, however, and within a few years had moved to our present site, opening our doors on 4<sup>th</sup> March 1719. One of the most special documents in our archive is the list of subscribers to the building of the first church, at a cost of £611, 10s, 11d.

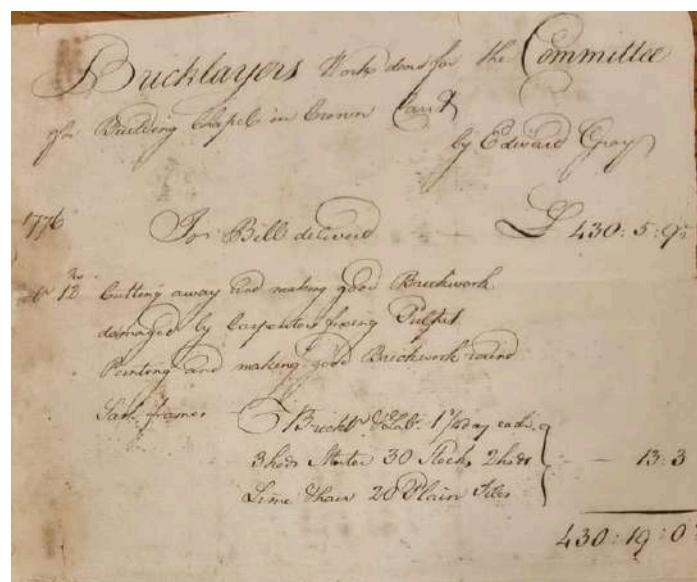


Why are we called “Crown Court Church”? It’s not a straightforward answer! As you can see on the 1746 John Rocque Map of London above, we appear as “P.M” (Presbyterian Meeting House) in Crown Court, the street, as today. The street itself bore the name of The Crown Inn, no. 306 on this 1682 map (left). Hatton’s *A new view of London* (1708) records the “Crown inn, on the north west side of Russell Street, Covent Garden, and just by it is Crown Court”.

Interestingly, for much of our early life as a church, we were referred to variously as the “Scotch meeting house/chapel”, or the “Scottish National Church”, and it wasn’t until later that the Crown Court element crept in to our title. Around the turn of the 20th century, during the ministry of Alexander Macrae (1890-1917), the tagline “The Kirk of the Crown of Scotland” came into use. By 1908, the architectural plans for our current building, now held at the London Metropolitan Archive, described us as “Crown Court Scottish National Church”.



Recently, I discovered that our church community has worshipped in three buildings on the Crown Court site across the centuries. Previously, I was aware of only two buildings (the first, built in 1718/9, and the present building, from 1908/9). However, when exploring some of the historic papers still held in the church, I found a large bundle of invoices detailing expenditure for every single element of the rebuilding of the church in the 1770s - around 50 years after the first church building. These 250-year-old documents are of huge historical value, and provide a fascinating insight into the construction world of the late eighteenth century - see a receipt below for payment of the bricklayers in 1776!



As we move into a rebuilding phase today, it is reassuring to remember that our church building has taken many forms over the centuries, and that our congregation and community have not only survived, but thrived, through many periods of change and renewal.

Mary-Jannet Leith  
Heritage Convener



*Meet Rebekah, who has recently started attending our Sunday morning services.*

## **Where are you from?**

I'm from Vancouver, Canada.

## **What brought you to London?**

My mum and aunt were both born and raised in London, and my grandparents lived and worked here, so British culture has always had a strong influence on my family. I've always seen London as a city full of opportunity, art, history, and culture, and from a young age I imagined myself living here one day - I just didn't know how it would happen.

I considered moving at various points in my life but never quite took the leap. More recently, a combination of close friends moving away from Vancouver and some other life changes prompted me to seek something new and experience life somewhere I'd never lived before. This isn't the first time I've moved cities — I lived in Toronto in my twenties for a work project — but I ultimately returned to Vancouver. I also have citizenship and family here which made the choice a lot easier!

## **Have you always been a Christian?**

The answer is both yes and no. My mum and her family are very religious and attend church weekly, while my dad was raised Catholic, as were my cousins on his side. I grew up going to church every week but stopped attending in high school and gradually drifted away. Some of my best friends were raised Christian and never left church, which kept faith in the back of my mind, although I also had friends who were not Christian. I began attending church again around 2017–2018, although I haven't always been able to go as regularly as I'd like.

## **How did you find out about Crown Court, and why do you like worshipping here?**

My maternal grandmother was from Scotland, and my mum attended Crown Court growing up. It's also the church where my aunt and uncle were married, so when I moved to London, it felt important to visit. Worshipping here makes me feel connected to my mum, aunt, and grandmother all at the same time while I'm away from home. It's also been really nice being welcomed by the congregation and I feel like I'm connecting with people who my family would have been friends with if they had remained in London.



## **What is your favourite hymn?**

I have a few favourites, but my all-time favourite is probably Amazing Grace, especially because of the story behind it. I also love Christmas hymns, particularly a candlelit rendition of Silent Night. A new hymn that I've discovered since coming to Crown Court that I like is "The Summons" or "Will you Come and Follow Me".



## Deaths

23<sup>rd</sup> December: Jimmy Anderson

## Pastoral Care

If you require pastoral support, please contact your Elder in the first instance. For longer term support, please contact the Pastoral Care Team either by phoning the church office on 020 7836 5643 (Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday 9.30am-2pm) or by e-mailing [clerk@crowncourtchurch.org.uk](mailto:clerk@crowncourtchurch.org.uk). All information is kept completely confidential.

## Donations

We are very grateful for all the financial support the Crown Court family receives. If you would like to donate, you can place an offering in the plate on a Sunday, use our card machine as you enter the sanctuary, or donate online at any time through our secure platform, Give a Little.

You can also obtain our bank details from [treasurer@crowncourtchurch.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@crowncourtchurch.org.uk) or by contacting the Church office.

We encourage anyone who is able to Gift Aid their donation to do so.

## Church Website and Social Media

For up-to-date information about Crown Court, and to sign up for our weekly newsletter, do visit our website at [www.crowncourtchurch.org.uk](http://www.crowncourtchurch.org.uk).

There's a calendar and a news section highlighting upcoming events, as well as a wealth of information about our church history, church groups, and wider community.

On our YouTube channel, you can watch live-streams of all our Sunday morning services, which remain available for catch-up.

We also have active social media pages on Facebook and Instagram, so do follow us if that's your cup of tea.



Do join us for our weekly services in the lead up to Easter Sunday. As always, we welcome everyone to join us for tea, coffee, biscuits and fellowship in the church hall after the morning service.

Sunday 4 <sup>th</sup> January	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Holy Communion
Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> January	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship
Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> January	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship
Sunday 25 <sup>th</sup> January	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> February	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Holy Communion
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> February	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> February	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> February	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship
Sunday 1 <sup>st</sup> March	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Holy Communion: Service for World Gaelic Week
Sunday 8 <sup>th</sup> March	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship
Sunday 15 <sup>th</sup> March	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship
Sunday 22 <sup>nd</sup> March	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship
Sunday 29 <sup>th</sup> March	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship for Palm Sunday
Friday 3 <sup>rd</sup> April	11.15am: Service for Good Friday
Sunday 5 <sup>th</sup> April	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship for Easter Day



## Contributions

*The Chronicle* is published four times a year, and the next issue will be published on 1st April, with a copy deadline of **Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> March**.

The Editorial Team welcomes contributions, suggestions, corrections and, of course, compliments. We will also be delighted to receive your news - please don't assume that we have already heard it!

Whilst we are always grateful to receive material, the Editorial Team cannot guarantee that it will be published and reserves the right to edit contributions before publication. You can contact the Editorial Team by emailing: [outreach@crowncourtchurch.org.uk](mailto:outreach@crowncourtchurch.org.uk).

## Donations

*The Chronicle* is available free of charge to all. Whilst we do encourage you to read your copy online, we also print a limited run of each issue for those who require a physical copy, and for visitors to Crown Court.

Donations to cover the cost of printing (£100 per issue) are always gratefully received; please contact the Editor if you would like to make a contribution.

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