

The Chronicle

April 2026



Crown Court Church of Scotland
Covent Garden, London

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Dear Readers,

I write this editorial bright and early on Palm Sunday in the church hall, sipping tea from a Crown Court Church mug! The sun is out, and Spring seems to be finally on its way, and with it new beginnings. We are now looking forward with hope to the advent of a new minister. The Nominating Committee has selected Reverend Tara Porr Granados as sole nominee for our vacant charge, and she will preach to the congregation on Sunday 26th April.



In this issue, you can enjoy the usual updates from the Kirk Session and church groups, as well as a thought-provoking sermon from our Interim Moderator, Rev Alistair Cumming. Are you a thermometer or a thermostat? There's a spotlight on the work of the Finance Committee, a reflection on events for World Gaelic Week, an interview with our two choral scholars, and much more.

Over the past few weeks, our architect has started to get into the nitty-gritty of our Futures project plans (see page 16 for a full update). A fundraising working group has now been created, which will undertake the challenge of raising the remaining £500,000 required to meet the total project cost. There will be many, varied tasks involved: preparing and reviewing materials for grant applications; keeping financial records; planning fundraising events, and, of course, networking & marketing. We will certainly need all hands on deck in the coming months!

As ever, the Chronicle team, Naima, Elaine, Val and Sheena-Jane, have been invaluable in putting together this issue - thank-you! And many thanks to those of you who have donated towards the printing of *The Chronicle*; we receive so many lovely messages from those who enjoy hearing our news. We now need further donations to cover production of the remaining issues in 2026. Any contribution is always gratefully received; just contact me or a member of the Chronicle team. And, finally, remember, we are always looking for articles! Get in touch with any idea you have - the deadline for our next issue is Sunday 14th June.

Mary-Jannet Leith, *Chronicle* Editor

Dear Friends,

As we continue our shared life of faith at Crown Court Church of Scotland, I have been reflecting on the quiet but profound ways in which God calls each of us to live, through the offering of our time, the nurturing of our gifts, and the shaping of our hearts toward peace. These are not separate concerns. Rather, they are threads which are being woven on the same loom, the calling to live as stewards of God's grace in all circumstances.



In the familiar parable of the talents, we are gently reminded that each of us has been entrusted with something of value. These gifts may not always seem remarkable to us, but in God's hands, even the smallest offering can bear fruit. The invitation is not to compare ourselves with others, but simply to be faithful with what we have been given.

Developing our talents is often less about grand gestures and more about steady, faithful steps, giving time to serve, to listen, to encourage, and to grow. In the life of our congregation, we see this lived out in so many quiet ways: acts of kindness, shared responsibilities, and the willingness to be present for one another. These are the threads that weave us together as a community.

At the same time, our hearts are drawn beyond our own fellowship to the wider world. The ongoing conflict in the Middle East weighs heavily on many of us. We witness suffering that can feel both overwhelming and distant, and we may wonder what difference we can possibly make.

Yet our faith reminds us that no act of compassion is ever wasted. We are called first to pray, not as a last resort, but as a faithful response. In prayer, we hold before God those who are living with fear, loss, and uncertainty, and we entrust them to God's care. We also allow our own hearts to be softened and shaped by that same compassion.

Alongside prayer comes a gentle but real call to commitment. Each of us, in our own way, can be a bearer of peace, through our words, our attitudes, and our actions. Whether it is through thoughtful conversation, generosity, or simply refusing to give way to despair or division, these small acts matter.

Perhaps this is where these two callings meet. As we grow into the gifts God has given us, we become more able to respond to the needs of the world. Our time, our care, our willingness to act, these are all part of how God's peace is made known, even in small and quiet ways.

So let us continue, as a congregation, to encourage one another: to use what we have been given, to give our time with generosity, and to hold fast to the hope of peace. We may not see the full fruits of our efforts, but we trust that God is at work in and through all that is offered in faith.

May we be a people marked by gentleness, faithfulness, and a quiet commitment to peace.

Alistair Cumming
Interim Moderator



The Kirk Session held its regular meeting in February. Tributes were paid to James (Jimmy) Anderson and Paul Bumstead, both of whom died recently. Jimmy was 103, had been deputy Session Clerk and served on several committees over the years he was a member of the Kirk Session. His funeral, at which Rev Alistair Cumming officiated, was held in February.



Paul had been unwell; however, his death was sudden. Paul had been an elder for 18 months and was a member of the Fabric committee and a friend to many. There will be a service to remember Paul in Tain on 29 August, and details will be posted nearer the time.

The Futures committee continues to work diligently in the background on the building project. They have been working with a fundraising consultant, and will soon move into the active fundraising phase. **A working fundraising group** is now being created, so if you could offer relevant experience or skills, and could spare a couple of hours a week, please do get in touch with me, M-J (Futures convener), or Val (Stewardship and Finance convener).

The Worship Committee, in conjunction with the Choir, have interviewed and appointed **a new Organist/Choral Director – Robin Walker**. The Kirk Session approved this decision and Robin took up his post at the end of March.

Finally, we are delighted to announce that the Nominating Committee has now reached the end of its recruitment process. **The Reverend Tara Porr Granados will preach as sole nominee for the charge of Crown Court Church of Scotland on the morning of Sunday 26th April**. Do make every effort to come to church that morning, as members will be invited to vote to confirm the committee's selection. Subject to her election, our new minister will be inducted in a special service on **Saturday 20th June**.

Sheena-Jane Clark
Session Clerk

A Sermon preached by Reverend Alistair Cumming 8th February 2026: Salt and Light

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5: 13-20

A few years ago a member of the Church of Scotland won over £65 million in the Lottery. He bought a large parcel of land, built himself a large house with outbuildings and homes for family and friends, and within the grounds he built two churches. When someone came to visit, they admired the first church and asked him, “Why did you build two churches?”

“Oh,” he replied, pointing to the second one, “that is the one we don’t go to.”

It is a humorous story — but it cuts closer to the truth than we might like to admit. Many communities have a church that becomes the one we don’t go to. Sometimes it is the building down the street; sometimes it is simply the part of discipleship we quietly avoid — the uncomfortable calling, the inconvenient compassion, the public witness that feels risky.

And that is where today’s Gospel begins to challenge us.

Jesus speaks about salt.



Salt preserves — but it also transforms. It alters flavour. It draws out what is hidden. And perhaps one of the deepest temptations facing the Church today is that we have confused preservation with faithfulness. We have worked hard to preserve structures, traditions, and ways of being church — and some of that work has been necessary and faithful. But preservation alone is not the Gospel.

A few weeks ago, I listened to thought for the day by the Rev John Bell, who was suggesting that we should stop looking at Jesus as the baby so gentle meek and mild, if we are to be relevant in today's society and to remain relevant for future generations. What does Jesus' story of salt and light tell us about the relevance of Christ, and Christians in what is an increasingly broken world?

For the past 3 years I have been the Vice Convener of the Church of Scotland Faith Action Programme. Much of that time has been spent trying to work through the pain of Mission Planning, of church closures, of Minister number reductions and so on. We as a Church have been occupied by looking inward.

Jesus does not say, "You are the keepers of what was." He says, "You are the salt of the earth." Salt is not stored away in a cupboard for admiration. It is scattered. It dissolves. It gives itself away so that something else might live more fully.

And then Jesus says something even more striking: "You are the light of the world."

Not, "You might be." Not, "You will become." But "You are."

Before he gives us a task, Jesus gives us an identity.

It is time for the Church of Scotland, and, I would argue, the Church of other denominations too, and the people who claim to be Christians, to stop being a thermometer and start being a thermostat. For many of us, the past few years of church life have felt like living inside a thermometer. We have measured decline. We have counted numbers. We have watched buildings close and ministries change. We have read reports and statistics, trying to understand the climate around us.

Thermometers are not useless. They tell the truth about the environment. They help us see reality clearly. But a thermometer only reflects the temperature; it does not change it. A thermostat changes the atmosphere.

And Jesus' words today are not descriptive — they are missional. He speaks to a small group of followers who have no power, no influence, no cultural dominance, and he tells them that their presence will shape the world. That is extraordinary. Many Christians today feel unsure of their place in society. We live in a culture that often treats faith as private, optional, even irrelevant. It is easy to believe that our voice no longer matters — that the Church has become a relic rather than a living witness.

But Jesus does not speak to us as if we are irrelevant. He speaks as if we are essential: “You are the salt of the earth.” “You are the light of the world.”

He does not say, “You are the rulers of the world.” He does not say, “You are the loudest voices in the world.”

Salt works quietly. Light shines steadily. Both transform without dominating. And perhaps that is the word the Church needs to hear in 2026.

Across our country and across our city, the Church is already changing the atmosphere — often in ways that go unnoticed. When church halls open their doors on cold evenings so neighbours can stay warm, that is salt. When volunteers pack food parcels week after week, not as charity but as an act of dignity, that is light. When someone sits with a person who is lonely, listens to grief that has no easy answers, or welcomes a stranger into a community that could easily turn inward — that is the Gospel becoming visible.

These actions do not trend online. They do not dominate headlines. But they change the moral climate of a neighbourhood. And that is what thermostats do. A thermostat does not shout about the temperature. It simply alters it.

But here is the challenge. It does not take much to be a thermometer. All you have to do is blend in. All you have to do is stay agreeable. All you have to do is avoid discomfort. When others mock or dismiss faith, you stay silent. When someone is excluded, you look away. When injustice feels complicated, you tell yourself it is not your place to speak. That is how light becomes hidden. And yet Jesus warns us: a light hidden under a basket cannot fulfil its purpose. Light is meant to be seen — not for our glory, but so that others might glimpse God's compassion through us.

We live in a time marked by anxiety. Economic pressure weighs heavily on many families. Public conversations about migration and identity can grow tense. Loneliness has become one of the great unspoken realities of modern life, especially in cities where people live close together yet feel deeply isolated. In that kind of environment, the temptation for the Church is to retreat — to become smaller, quieter, safer. Jesus does not call us to safety; he calls us to faithfulness.

Salt sometimes stings before it heals. Light sometimes exposes what darkness would prefer to keep hidden. Being a thermostat means choosing courage over comfort. It means refusing to let fear dictate who we welcome. It means speaking hope when cynicism feels easier. It means trusting that even small acts of faithfulness matter.

Here is the truth: the Gospel has never depended on size or status. Jesus speaks these words not to an established institution but to a small, uncertain gathering standing on a hillside. They were not powerful people. They were not culturally influential. And yet he tells them that their lives will shape the world. Why?

Because the Kingdom of God does not advance through dominance; it advances through presence. The Church is not called to win arguments. The Church is called to embody a different way of being human — a way marked by generosity, courage, and radical hospitality. And perhaps that is the deepest challenge in Jesus' words today. Do we believe that ordinary faithfulness still matters?

Because the world often tells us that influence must be loud and visible to count. Social media amplifies outrage. Public discourse rewards certainty and division. Quiet compassion can feel insignificant in comparison. But Jesus chooses metaphors that are almost invisible. Salt disappears into food. Light simply shines where it is placed. Yet both are indispensable. Without salt, flavour fades. Without light, direction is lost. So when Jesus calls us salt and light, he is telling us that our calling is not optional. It is integral to the life of the world. That changes how we see ourselves. We are not a community trying to preserve a fading past. We are a people sent into the present as a sign of God's future. And that means asking a different question. Not, "How do we return to what we once were?" But, "What kind of presence is God shaping us to become now?"

Perhaps God is forming a Church that is smaller but braver. Less concerned with influence, more concerned with integrity. Less focused on survival, more focused on witness.

The Gospel we proclaim is not merely a viewpoint among many. It is a living truth that refuses to act out of fear. It refuses to silence the vulnerable. It refuses to build barriers where God has already extended welcome. It challenges systems that diminish human dignity. It calls us beyond comfort into compassion. It reminds us that every person carries the image of God.

That is why Jesus' words today are both comforting and unsettling. Comforting — because they affirm who we already are. Unsettling — because they leave no room for passive faith. It's time to be thermostats. Not louder, but clearer. Not defensive, but courageous. Not nostalgic, but hopeful.

Salt and light are metaphors of vigilance. They remind us that God's Kingdom is not postponed to some distant future but breaks into the present through ordinary lives. Christians today need a renewed imagination of church — not as a fortress protecting the past, but as a community shaping the moral climate of its surroundings.

Perhaps this part of the Sermon on the Mount needs to become our shared refrain: 'You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. If your light feels dim, ask what has covered it. If your salt feels dull, ask what has numbed its taste'. Because Jesus looks at ordinary people — people who feel uncertain, people who feel small — and he tells them that they already carry what the world needs.

In a city that can feel crowded and lonely at the same time, in a world that feels weary and divided, in a Church that sometimes wonders what comes next, Christ does not say, "Wait until you are stronger." He says, "Shine."

So let us be people who change the atmosphere around us. When fear rises, let us offer welcome. When loneliness deepens, let us offer presence. When injustice grows louder, let us offer truth spoken in love.

Be the salt of the earth. Let your light shine brightly. Be a thermostat — not a thermometer.

Amen.



As many of you know, the Nominating Committee has been working for the past few months to choose a new minister.

We are delighted to announce that the **Reverend Tara Porr Granados** has been selected as Sole Nominee for the vacant charge of London, Crown Court. Tara's most recent charge was Ibrox Parish Church in Glasgow, where she was minister for seven years.

Rev Granados will conduct morning worship at Crown Court Church **on Sunday 26th April**, at which she will preach as sole nominee.

After the service, members and adherents on the Electoral Register will be invited to vote as to whether she should be appointed as our new minister.

Church of Scotland law dictates that only members and adherents listed on the Electoral Register are eligible to vote. If you are not sure whether you are eligible, please do contact the Session Clerk.

Even if you are not on the Electoral Register, or are visiting the church, you are most warmly encouraged to come to church on Sunday 26th April to participate in this important moment for our church community.

Hosting events at church continues to be challenging, as we remain without full disabled access and kitchen facilities. Despite this, the Outreach & Heritage committee has been working hard to bring our community together this year, and to continue our local Mission in Covent Garden and beyond.

This Easter, as always, we have invited donations for the purchase of Easter eggs for the young people at **Bruce House**, the Centrepoin facility just round the corner from our church. Thank-you to the volunteers who purchase and deliver all the eggs! They are much appreciated.

On **Saturday 30th May**, Crown Court Church Choir will host a 'Come and Sing' event in the Sanctuary, with our new Choir Director Robin Walker directing alongside Thomas Allery on organ. Our first event last year was a huge success, with many attendees asking for a repeat.

We also look forward to taking part once more in **Open House Festival** in September. Last year, across five days of opening, and during Open Church across the summer months, we welcomed over 1,250 visitors to our church!

We now have two representatives (myself and Geordie Fergusson) on the **Scots in London** forum, which promotes the activities of its many Scottish diaspora members, including ourselves, St Columba's Church, the Burns Club of London, the Caledonian Club, and more!

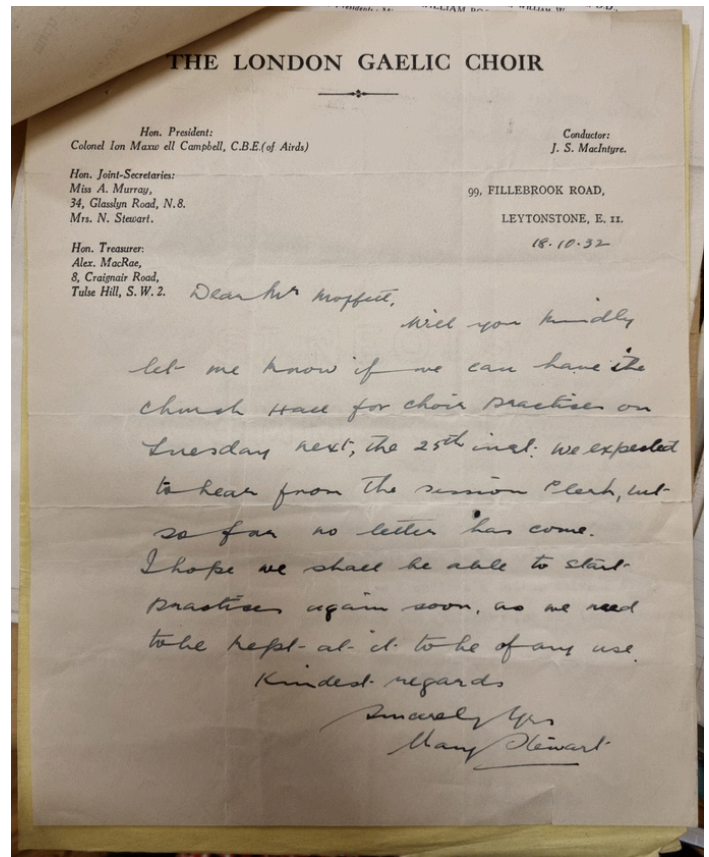
This year, your Outreach Convener is part of the organising team for the **Scots in London Ceilidh on Saturday 9th May** at St Columba's. This will be a fantastic evening, with award-winning band Licence to Ceilidh, and an appearance from the London Scottish Pipes and Drums - watch this space!

Mary-Jannet Leith
Outreach & Heritage Convener



Crown Court Church has a long and proud history of partnership with the Gaelic-speaking community of London. On Sunday 1st March, we celebrated World Gaelic Week for the second year running with a service in Gaelic and English.

Once again, we welcomed members of Còisir Lunnainn (the London Gaelic Choir), which was established in 1891. Our records show that the choir has rehearsed in our church hall for over a century, and we recently found correspondence relating to their bookings in 1932!



Presenting the psalm: in rehearsal

During this special service, the words of the Communion service, prayers, and readings were read in English and Gaelic, and the whole congregation sang Psalm 121 twice - first unaccompanied in Gaelic, to the tune 'Stornoway' in the Gaelic tradition, and then in English to 'Dundee'. Many of us enjoyed the freedom of adding ornaments to the melody line!

The combined choir of Còisir Lunnainn and our own church choir sang two special anthems: 'Athchuinge', arr. Iain MacDonald, and John Rutter's 'Gaelic Blessing'. Our choir members were extremely grateful to Fergus and Rachel, who kept us on the straight and narrow when it came to pronunciation and style!

Seinn Spioradail: The Sacred Sounds of Hebridean Communities

On Sunday 8th March, we were delighted to welcome Dr Frances Wilkins and Kristine Kennedy to Crown Court to do a presentation about Frances' Seinn Spioradail project, with examples of Gaelic spiritual songs performed by Kristine.

Together they spoke about Gaelic spiritual song across the Catholic and Reformed traditions. They began with the Catholic hymns of the southern islands of the Outer Hebrides, including Mass commentaries by Father Allan MacDonald and the wealth of hymns produced in Gaelic for Catholic congregations adapting to new styles of worship after Vatican II.



The second part of the presentation focused on the tradition of Gaelic Psalmody. Kristine spoke movingly about how this style of worship and song has been a central part of her life since her earliest memories, both in the home and in the community. Together, Kristine and Frances described the origins of this unique style of heterophonic call-and-response psalm singing, led by a precentor. Kristine led those present in Psalm 21:3–4 to the tune Kilmarnock. The presentation concluded with an overview of the rich tradition of Gaelic evangelical songs, and a few gorgeous examples sung by Kristine of these songs.

At the Gaelic service which followed the presentation, it was a great pleasure to have Kristine presenting two of the psalms.

Gaelic services are held at Crown Court on a quarterly basis. The next one will be held on Sun 10 May. All are very welcome to attend.

Fergus Reoch, Còisir Lunnainn (London Gaelic Choir)

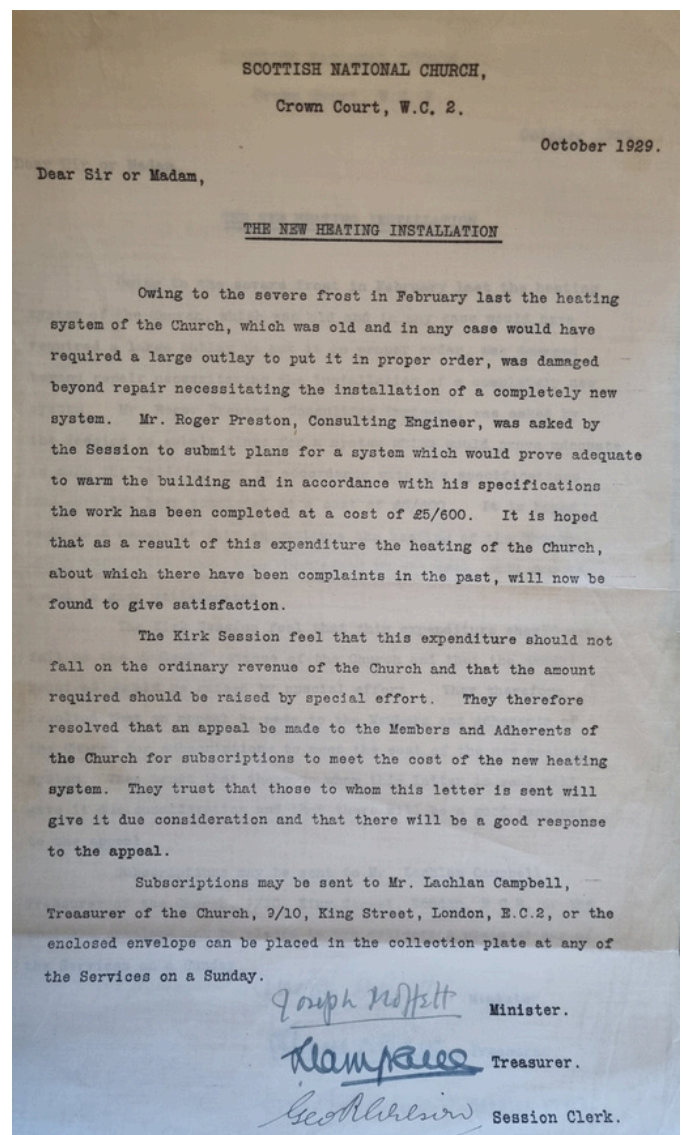
Regular attenders at Crown Court Church will be familiar with the work of the Futures Committee over the past 3 years, and the development of the Futures Project. 'A Kirk for Tomorrow', anticipated to begin towards the end of this year, will restore our building to full disabled access and kitchen facilities, allowing us to continue our church's long history of worship and mission in Covent Garden.

Project Progress

Since we last wrote, our Futures committee have been continuing to work hard with our architect, Roger Mears, on RIBA Stage 3, or the 'Spatial Coordination' phase of the project, in which the initial concept design evolves into detailed architectural, structural, and services drawings. We are nearing the end of this stage now, and it has been quite enlightening - one finds oneself searching for surprising information in unexpected places!

For example, as part of their work, our Mechanical Engineer consultant asked us for information on the **layout of our heating system**. The core of the system was installed in the 1920s, and we weren't altogether hopeful, until we came across the full correspondence from 1929, complete with specification, in our church archive!

In February, eagle-eyed worshippers may have noticed a series of small holes (and a couple of larger ones!) in the church hall, during a short period of **opening up works**, required by our architectural design team in order to test materials and take measurements. Only a few of us saw the steel core of one of the church hall beams (quite unsettling!) before it was made as good as new by our friendly and efficient builder Nerijus.



As we are a Grade II listed building, an essential part of RIBA Stage 3 is the application for **relevant planning permissions** to Westminster Council. Although we have ecclesiastical exemption for internal changes (the legislation features a special clause covering Church of Scotland churches in London!), any external changes must be approved before we progress. Many grant funders will also require us to have these permissions in place when applying, and our architect submitted our application at the beginning of the year. We had, however, not bargained for the cyber attack which took place at Westminster Council towards the end of 2025! For a couple of months, our application was stuck in a queue of thousands, but, finally, as we write, the Council is on the point of validating our application, and we are once again on the move.

The changes to the exterior of our church building have been driven largely by our need to increase visibility from Russell Street, to clean and repair the stonework, and and to install lighting more appropriate to our heritage status. Guided by Roger Mears and the Church of Scotland design team, we have asked permission to install **two tall, slim blue banners** - see indicative mock-up (right).

Next Steps

When Stage 3 is complete, the project will move to the “Technical Design” phase, RIBA Stage 4, at the end of which the project can go to tender. In the meantime, our **new Fundraising Working Group** will be hard at work preparing materials for the upcoming grant applications and public campaign.



Our first meeting in January is always a very select group of three! We returned to Colossians 3, which tells us that to be 'living stones' we should strip off the old life and have a new wardrobe. Words like Jewish and non-Jewish, insider and outsider, slave and free, mean nothing. Everyone is included in Christ. We then had a form of the game Pictionary, which involved taking it in turns to take a card with a vocation and attempting to draw a picture for the others to guess correctly. Enjoyment is definitely part of the programme.

Our February meeting began with the sad news that Paul Bumstead had died. He was a regular member and joined in with stories of his wife and the Highlands. We used the World Day of Prayer service sheet which was written by the women of Nigeria. The background information on Nigeria came in very useful, as most of us knew little about the country, except for one of our members, who was born there! The country's natural resources are vast and varied, with many ethnic communities and religions in the various regions.

Through the stories of four Nigerian women we learnt more. Chioma was told by teachers that she was hopeless but was supported by friends who taught her a prayer. She was precious to God and could learn and grow. This she used often in her life and shared it with others. Beatrice lost her husband and was left to bring up three children, trying to feed and provide school fees for them. A local church organised a support programme for widows, expecting fifty to attend. In fact, hundreds turned up and they all realised that they were not alone in their struggles. One widow encouraged people to donate clothes, rice and cash to help them, others joined, and together, they are stronger. Their burden is heavy but by laying it at Jesus' feet, find rest in his promise.

Jato and her daughter Amina say a prayer before she leaves for school. As Christians in northern Nigeria, they live in fear of religious persecution. Only a few hours away in Chibok, 110 girls were kidnapped by the militant group Boko Haram. Jato prays that Amina will have the love of God and stand firm in her faith.

Blessing lives in Lagos where, if not rich, the salary is barely enough to live on. Young people, even full of potential, cannot find work. Having dreamed of progress and a better life, the government now seems focused on itself, so Blessing was losing hope. However, her neighbour, who lost her job and

husband, started a small soap making business, earning enough for food and school fees! 'We are not just coping, we are living by faith' she says.

On Friday 6th March, some members were able to attend a Guild service for the World Day of Prayer in churches local to them. At our March meeting, we took it in turns to read a verse of 'Let's build a house' but sang the chorus. We felt the words had more meaning when spoken. We shared out a pack of cards and attempted to build a house of cards. Well, we kept trying and then used a crumpled serviette without really being successful. We then had a go with dominoes. At least they did not fall down, and made a wall!

The worksheet we were following took us back to the story of the stone mason who trimmed the stone to fit in the wall perfectly. God helps us to be the people He wants us to be, carefully shaping us to fit His masterplan. We then worked individually, making 'stones' for a dry stone wall. Looking for paper at home to stick the 'stones' on I found the perfect answer - sheets headed 'Cornerstone' Estate Agents! How appropriate.

Do come along on the 1st Wednesday of the month and join us. There will be a warm welcome, discussion and laughter!

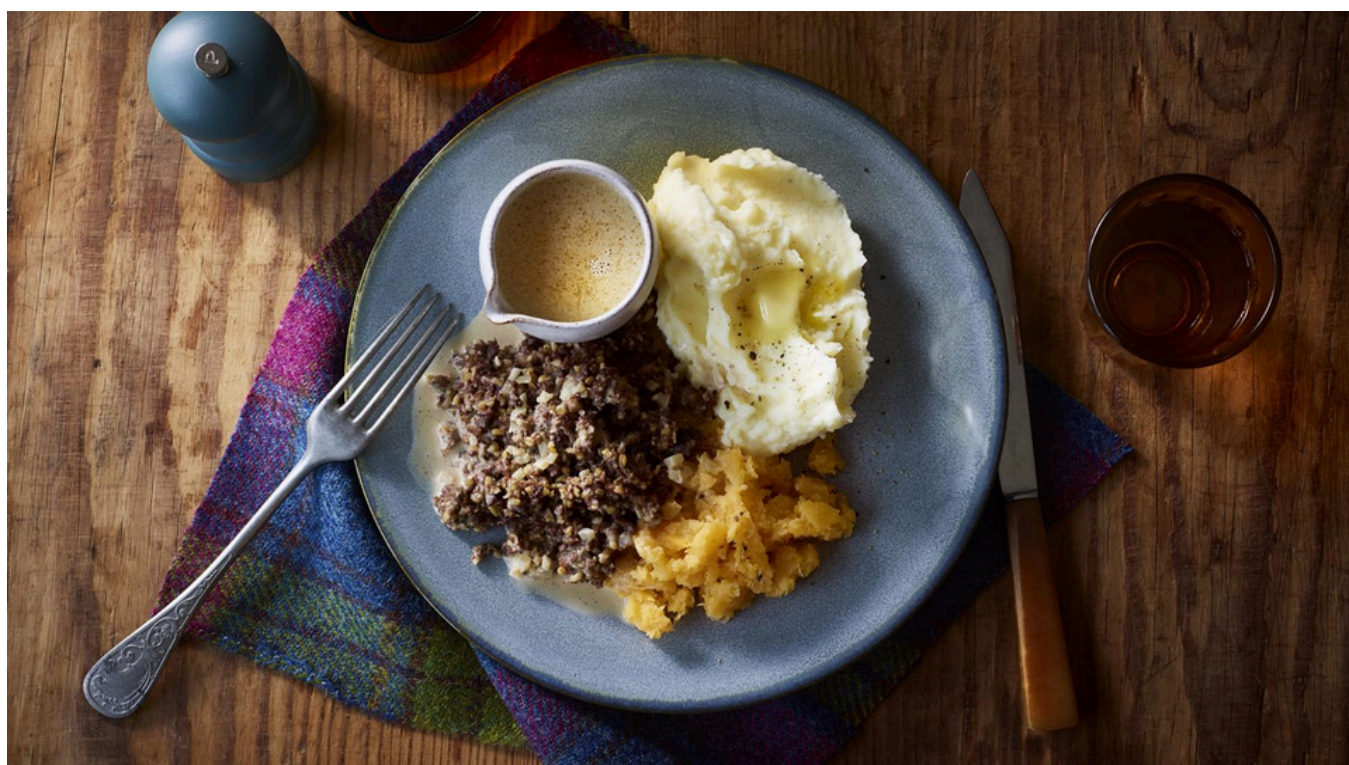
Jennifer Laird



2026 began as usual with the welcome New Year Social on Saturday 10th January, when everyone was delighted to get back into the old routine and meet up with their friends once again. After a tea featuring Scottish fare, we all reminisced on how New Year traditions, like first footing and fire festivals, used to be celebrated. Although perhaps less common nowadays, they are still practised in some places in Scotland.

Some members travel north to spend the festive period with their family, so it's always interesting to hear who they have met up with whilst there, and get updates on former church and club members who have retired back north of the border. We have a wide network of former members and long-standing friends, and interesting news always travels fast across the country and sometimes they are unsurprisingly ahead of the game, and relay news back to us!

On the 24th January, several members attended the Burns Supper held at Bloomsbury Baptist Church, to which our congregation was generously invited, as we remain without kitchen facilities at present. It made quite a change for us to be waited on instead of being the organisers at Crown Court, which made for a more relaxing evening for us all.



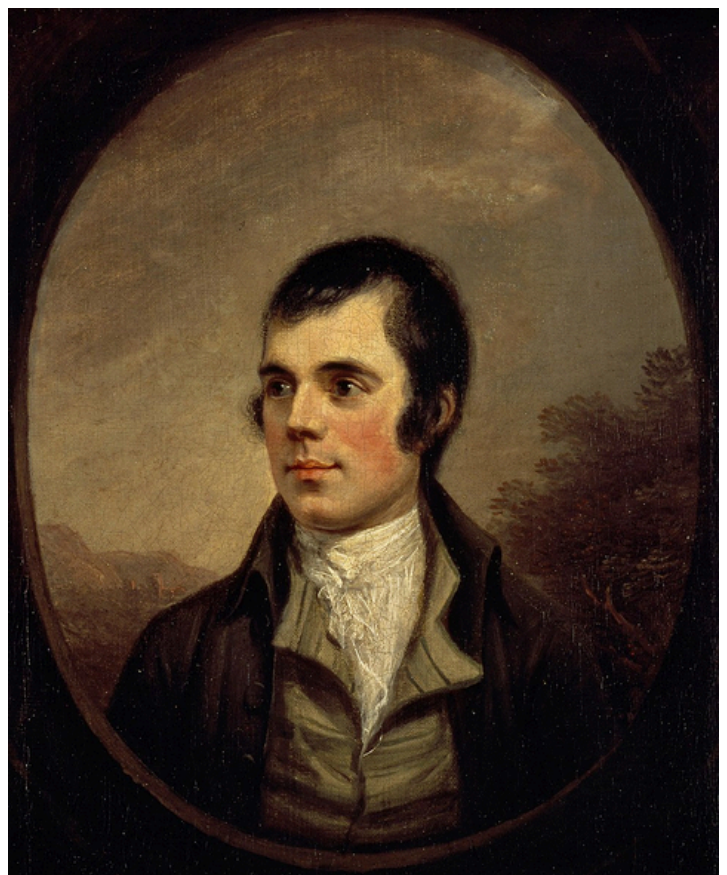
Things were done rather less formally than we are used to at Crown Court, but a young lady named Fifi, from the very north of Scotland, introduced Bloomsbury's congregation members to the ways of Robert Burns and how he is celebrated all over the world. After the Toast to the Haggis, we enjoyed a lovely self-service meal of haggis, baked potatoes, mashed neeps and carrots served with a rather potent whisky gravy!

Following the meal, one or two Burns poems were read to everyone, and then followed a short Ceilidh in which visitors were invited to join in dancing the Gay Gordons, the Dashing White Sergeant and Strip the Willow. As many folk were beginners, we were able to help with the instructions, and they all managed to circulate the room several times - a success! It was a lovely evening, and it was certainly good to meet and chat with our long-time neighbours.

Although several of us had celebrated a Burns Supper elsewhere, members requested that we still had one of our own, so on Saturday 14th February, we held our own belated mini celebration of Robert Burns. Haggis, neeps and tatties were once again on the menu, and it was a very homely affair with good company.

After the meal, we were tested with a quiz on our knowledge of the life and times and poetry of our national bard, and so a good evening was had by all - and of course we had dutifully honoured our famous forebear.

Alison Dartnell & Margaret Ross



*Portrait of Robert Burns by
Alexander Nasmyth, 1787*

Val Lowe, the Stewardship and Finance Committee Convenor at Crown Court Church, explores what the committee does, and the benefits the members gain.

Who is on the committee?

We have a small but active committee. The membership size has fluctuated over the last couple of years but we now comprise Alistair, our Interim Moderator, Sheena-Jane Clark as Session Clerk, Lucy Nutley as Treasurer, Elaine Close, David Kiltie, Moira McEwen, Colin Somerville and me.

We have previously had a mix of elders and other members of the congregation. I am keen to have a balance again in the near future as it's important to have a range of views.



What does the committee do?

While the Kirk Session has ultimate responsibility for the church's finances, the committee does the more detailed work and analysis informing decision-making. We have a fairly cyclical year, from reviewing accounts prepared by the Treasurer at the start of the year to reviewing the budget towards the end of the year.

We also have projects which sometimes require a sub-committee. A recent example of this is the stewardship campaign we ran in 2024. We are also looking into changing our bank account provider soon, a task that always ends up being somewhat Herculean!

Having a strong financial foundation is fundamental to everything we do at Crown Court Church - from our ability to support a Minister and staff, to maintaining the heritage of our building, to managing investments to allow future generations of our church community to benefit from the same opportunities as we have. We are fortunate to be blessed with resources, but with this blessing comes the responsibility to ensure we use our funds wisely for our Mission.

Are you involved in the Futures work?

Yes. Lucy Nutley sits on the Futures Committee in her capacity as Treasurer and I have been involved with the fundraising analysis conducted by external consultants. A number of our committee will be part of the working group which will be responsible to submitting grant applications and running the upcoming public fundraising campaign. It is obviously going to be a very important part of the viability of the project, and we will need to work hard to make it a success, allowing us to proceed with the execution of the project.

Do you need to be an accountant?

Absolutely not, and I am certainly not one! I would say the only qualifications are an eye for detail and a passion for serving our church. The time commitment isn't too onerous - we normally meet online around eight times a year on an evening at a mutually convenient time.

What do you gain from being a member of the Stewardship and Finance Committee?

Service comes in many forms and for me, it is a privilege to serve Crown Court, our community and God in the Stewardship and Finance Committee. Everything we have comes from God and we must use the gifts we have received wisely. We have a collegiate committee who are thoughtful and enthusiastic. While we are able to express a range of views openly, we tend to reach a shared consensus which is very satisfying. A real highlight was during the stewardship campaign when a member of the congregation told me that she had set up a Direct Debit. A small act but it spoke volumes about why the focus on stewardship mattered.

Is there a Bible verse which stands out for you related to your committee work?

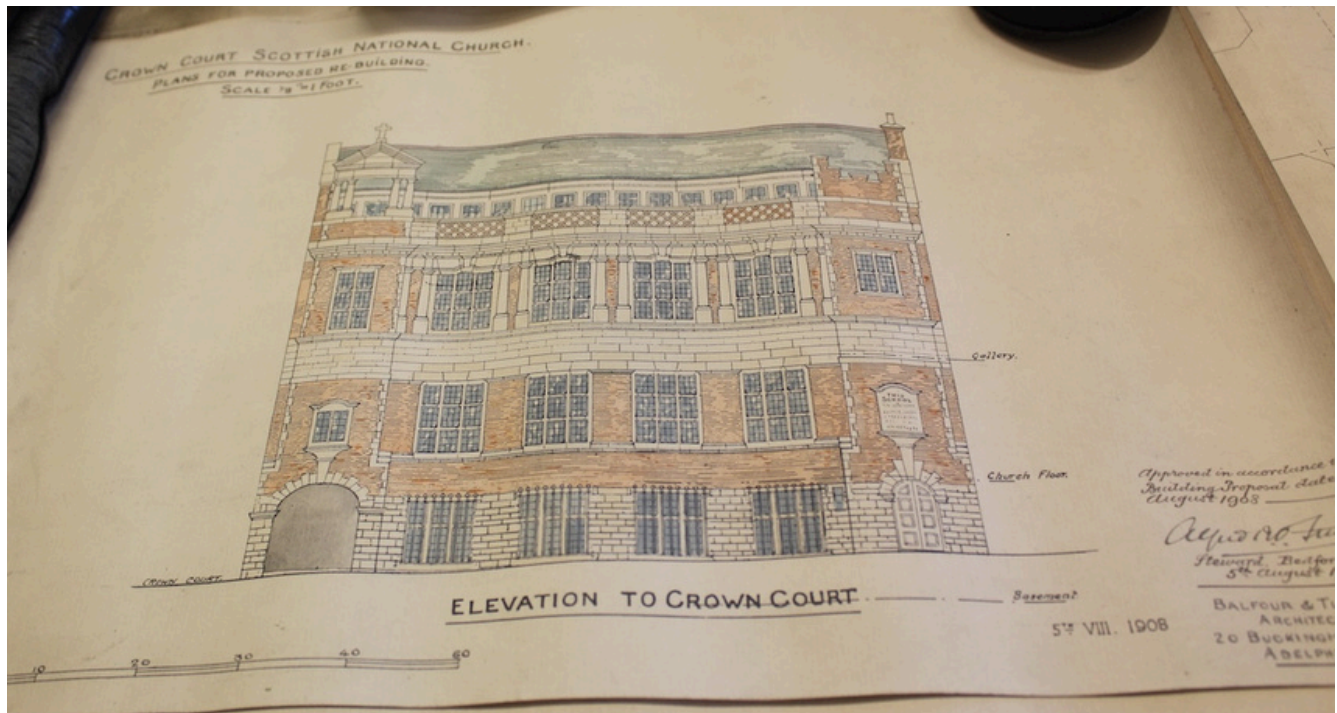
Luke 6:38

“Give, and it will be given to you.”

When we arrive at church on a Sunday morning, many of us may not realise that we are entering not just a place of worship, but also a building that is 'listed' by Historic England for its special architectural and historic interest. After all, we come to church to praise God, to seek fellowship, and carry out mission, rather than for an architectural experience! Yet it is our church building that holds us, offers us a space for our prayers, our music. Above all, it is the place to which we can welcome others, friends and strangers.

As we approach a period of change for our church building, zooming out a little helps me, at least, to establish a sense of perspective. We are only the most recent members of a community of believers that stretches back all the way to 1711. Our eighteenth-century forebears would not recognise our church building, nor we theirs, but we are part of an unbroken community of faith that has flourished in Covent Garden for over three hundred years. As we prepare to make adaptations to our building, to support full, inclusive access, and to restore the facilities we need, it is reassuring to remember that we, the congregation and community of Crown Court, *are* the Church.





Of course, this does not mean that we should not also seek to cherish our church building and its unique history. From the very start of the Futures project, the team at Roger Mears, our appointed architectural firm, have sought to achieve what we need as a community while respecting the spirit and intention of the building's architect, Eustace Balfour. We are incredibly fortunate that records still survive from the beginning of the 20th century, and so we have been able to provide the design team with access to the original plans for the building as the project progresses. In the last issue, I shared a photo of an invoice from the 1776 rebuild, but we have so much more material available to us, including the minutes of the Renovation Committee of the early 1900s - fascinating reading, and a reminder that there is nothing new under the sun!

Recently, as part of our preparations for our application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and to other heritage-focused grant-funders, an archive specialist assessed the condition and extent of our church archive. I was able to show him some of our most fragile items, including two eighteenth-century subscription lists - the first, those who contributed to the cost of building our first church building in 1719, and the second, those who supported its rebuild half a century later. Without them, Crown Court Church would not stand today.

Mary-Jannet Leith - Heritage Convener



Where did your love of singing come from?

Grace: I first started singing when I was 6 years old, keeping back the order of service booklets from carol services so I could sing along at home. It was at that time that I started singing lessons. I was also a huge fan of the Sound of Music and it was this combination of carols and songs from the musicals that awoke in me a love of singing and music in general.

Martha: I started singing in primary school really! There was a really strong musical angle and we went to all sorts of choral events and competitions. After that I never really stopped! I started learning the piano and the cello around the same time; although I still play, choral and ensemble singing is the thing that I enjoy the most.

How long have you lived in London?

Grace: I moved to London in 2017 for university.

Martha: I've lived here all my life! It's a wonderful place to grow up, especially in a musical sense. I was exposed to such a variety of styles and genres, and there are so many opportunities to see music live! I ended up staying here for university, in part because I felt like there was so much of the city I was yet to explore.

What have you enjoyed about singing with the Crown Court Church choir so far?

Grace: At the time of joining Crown Court, I was looking for a church choir because, having spent many years in a Chapel Choir, I wanted to return to singing to support congregational worship. I love the sense of community and togetherness singing with the choir at Crown Court has given me.

Martha: The community is really lovely; it's especially nice to have one outside of university! Before I came to Crown Court, I had only sung in Anglican churches, so I'm used to singing a lot of different material. It's really nice to learn a new liturgy.

What other singing or hobbies do you enjoy?

Grace: I have been in several choirs since I came to London, including 6 years with the University of London Chamber Choir.

Martha: Quite a lot! I do a lot of folk music; I'm in a folk band and I play in sessions all over London (both on guitar). I also play in the King's College London Symphony Orchestra (off and on!); we're going on tour in June which will be fun! I'm also in a Polish folk dance group; it's an opportunity not to be sedentary!

Do you have a favourite piece of music?

Grace: A particular highlight last year was the Carol Service where we sang my all-time favourite descant to 'O Little Town of Bethlehem' by David Willcocks.

Martha: I've spent quite a lot of time doing early music, lute songs, that sort of thing. So I really love that. I also do a lot of folk singing; one I'm singing a lot at the moment is 'Let No Man Steal Your Thyme'. Choral-wise, my favourite piece is probably Bainton's 'And I Saw A New Heaven', to sing and to listen to!

What are your musical ambitions for the future?

Grace: In the future, I want to continue to sing in church, as I find the repertoire and the routine a peaceful reset ahead of the week. I would also love to expand on my love of opera and musicals in the singing that I do.

Martha: I'm doing quite a few gigs these days performing my own songs, so it would be nice to carry on doing that as long as I can! I am currently hoping to sustain a career in choral and folk music, in some capacity!

Admission by Profession of Faith

8th March: John Brooks

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. 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 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.

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.



Friday 3 rd April	11.15am: Good Friday Service with Rev Alistair Cumming
Sunday 5 th April	11.15am: Easter Sunday Service with Rev Alistair Cumming, with celebration of Holy Communion
Sunday 12 th April	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Sheena-Jane Clark
Sunday 19 th April	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Matthew Gutteridge
Sunday 26th April	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Sole Nominee Rev Tara Porr Granados, followed by formal congregational vote and the Annual Business Meeting
Sunday 3 rd May	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Rev Canon Professor Paul Middleton, with celebration of Holy Communion
Saturday 9 th May	7pm: Scots in London Ceilidh at St Columba's, Pont Street
Sunday 10 th May	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Alistair Cumming
Sunday 17 th May	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Matthew Gutteridge
Sunday 24 th May	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Rev Canon Professor Paul Middleton
Saturday 30 th May	1pm: Come and Sing Event - open to all
Sunday 31 st May	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Sheena-Jane Clark
Sunday 7 th June	11.15am: Sunday Morning Worship with Rev Alistair Cumming, with celebration of Holy Communion
Saturday 20 th June	TBC: Induction Service for Rev Tara Porr Granados



Contributions

The Chronicle is published four times a year, and the next issue will be published on 1st July, with a copy deadline of **Sunday 14th June**.

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.

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.

Any 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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