



HOLY CROSS ANNUAL MEETING 2022

RECTOR'S REPORT

This has been another busy and exciting year at Holy Cross. We have emerged from the pandemic which marked so much of our recent life as a Christian community, but in February Europe was torn by the evil Russian invasion of Ukraine and at the end of the year we are faced by a financial crisis. These new challenges have affected us. We have supported Ukraine and have the blessing of a Ukrainian refugee family worshipping with us. There will be more on the financial challenges later. Throughout all this, we have continued to be open to where the Holy Spirit is leading us and continued to grow and develop as a Church. Part of this development is that we now share a clergy team with St Salvador's, Stenhouse.

Death and Resurrection are at the heart of our faith and in the past year we have lost Nicholas Dawson, the son of Celia, Katrine Townhill, Sylvia Vass, Ron Lyne and Isobel Winnington-Ingram, as well as Joyce Fyvie who lived near the Rectory. We also had the long-delayed memorial service for Helen Allan. They and all our departed loved ones were remembered in a moving Requiem Eucharist on All Souls Day. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

In the past year our **congregation** has grown with 13 new members. We celebrated the wedding of and Beatriz Sanchez Val and Mervyn Loveridge (who has done much work on our buildings and trees). We also rejoiced in the baptism of Josie Storar, the daughter of Stuart and Alison Storar who got married here last year. I celebrated the baptism at Stuart's family church, St Margaret's, Easter Road. There have been a number of congregational social events during the year in addition to the regular Sunday coffee. These include the Platinum Jubilee lunch, barbecue, garden day bacon rolls and the harvest lunch. We thank Sarah, Janette, Nicole, Alan, Brian and all the others involved in organising these.

Worship is the heart of our life. While church attendance post-covid has declined by up to 50% in some Edinburgh churches, we have maintained the growth we saw during the pandemic. 100 people attended the services for our patronal feast in September and we had a number of special services during the year such as the Latin Mass for the Epiphany, the Carmelite Mass at South Queensferry and the Holy Cross Cathedral Day, which included a picnic lunch and a tour of the cathedral. Our experimental services have now become regular features of our life and each has a distinctive new congregation: 9am Sunday Eucharist with the 1970 Scottish Liturgy, Healing Eucharist on the first Friday in the month, and Toddler Church on Fridays. 'Holy Cross people' are not just those who attend the 10.30am Sung Eucharist on Sundays. Thanks to our sacristy team of Jean Williams and Neville Long who ensure all runs smoothly and to our servers, readers, welcomers and all others who take part. Thanks also to Sarah Millée and others who make our church beautiful by cleaning and arranging flowers.

Music remains important to us, as it has since the foundation of our church. David Townhill is now our organist but Vaughan Townhill remains part of our music team which also includes Izzy Holmes. We thank Vaughan for many years of playing at Holy Cross and are glad he has not retired. The past year saw the formation of our new occasional choir, the *Cantores Sanctae Crucis* directed by David Coney, a lay clerk at the Cathedral and doctoral student at Edinburgh University Music Department. They are professional singers, many are lay clerks at the cathedral, and they sing at special services such as Tenebrae in Holy Week, Scottish Evensong and the Latin Vigil Mass for Holy Cross Day. Music is also a vital part of our children's ministry, presented in the report by our Children's Minister, Izzy Holmes. We are continuing our partnership with the charity *Live Music Now Scotland* and are grateful to the Diocese for a grant to support Izzy's work.

Helping people get to know God through **prayer and faith formation** is an essential part of our mission. We had two well-received study groups in Lent and November and our new website, which has about 2000 visits a month, contains Christian teaching and recent sermons. In June we had the Holy Cross pilgrimage to St Andrews where we were based at All Saints Church and explored some of the holy sites of the city. Most **pastoral** work is not public but the Rector now helps lead services at the Lyle Court residential complex where a number of Holy Cross members live. The formation of a group of lay pastoral visitors has been postponed until next year but members are already involved in informal visiting and distributing our magazine. Here I would like to thank Margaret Deas for her sterling work in producing our magazine each month, encouraging the Rector and others to produce their articles on time. The magazine is now read by many online as well as in paper copy.

A major event in the life of our congregation was the link with **St Salvador's**, Stenhouse and the formation of a joint clergy team. We welcomed the Revd Dr Ross Jesmont as Curate, our first since 1994, and the Anglican Franciscan, Brother Joseph Emmanuel as Assistant Priest. They are already enriching the life of our congregation by their presence and preaching and we are providing regular support to the St Salvador's Food Bank which is responding to a rapidly increasing need.

Support for the Food Bank is not our only involvement in our local **Community** in West and North Edinburgh. Closer to home, I was at the opening of the dementia garden at Lauriston Castle and the Children's Minister's report records our involvement in the Davidson's Mains Children's Gala and Christmas Market and Christmas Lights which we host at Holy Cross. Last year's Holy Cross Community Christmas Carol Service saw our local MSP and leaders of community groups taking an active part. I have had regular meetings with local clergy colleagues from St Margaret's RC Church, Cramond Kirk and Davidson's Mains Parish Church, we share leadership of the community Remembrance Day Parade and Holy Cross has had joint events in Holy Week and for children with Cramond Kirk. We share our church with an Indian congregation of the Knanaya Syrian Orthodox Church and I was pleased to be invited to preach at their patronal festival in October and join them for a curry afterwards.

It is expected that a Scottish Episcopal priest contributes, according to their ability, to the wider Church. I teach at the Scottish Episcopal Institute which trains our clergy, sit on the General Synod and diocesan Finance and Management Committee and am Scottish Chaplain to the Royal Martyr Church Union. All these help my work at Holy Cross.

Many people give of their time and skills to Holy Cross and I would like first of all to thank Colin Mair for keeping our finances in order as **Treasurer** and for running the letting of the hall. We still need a hall manager. Thanks also to all who serve on **Vestry** including Nicole Elvin, the Vestry Secretary, who efficiently keeps us organised; you can see her report elsewhere. We had a Vestry 'away day' at South Queensferry looking at aspects of our church life. Vestry has been a great support to me in the running of Holy Cross, as have our two Churchwardens, Alan and Sally. Thanks to Jean Williams who has stood down as our PVG (safeguarding) coordinator. The new PVG coordinators are Alan Kirkpatrick and Izzy Armstrong-Holmes, who both have experience of this rapidly developing area.

Care of our **buildings** is a prime responsibility of Vestry and much has been done in the past year. Details of the projects are in the Secretary's report and this year we received the architect's report from our quinquennial inspection which pointed out many jobs that need doing, some of which we have already started, but did not require any major projects. I am grateful to Brian Wright for taking on the role of property convener for the past year but increased work commitments means he can not continue with this. Colin and I, supported by Brian, the diocesan property committee and other members of the congregation are currently taking this forward. If you would like to be involved in our property team, let me know. Vestry has approved the setting up of a project group and a fundraising group to work on upgrading our hall next year. We have already completed the external decoration of the hall and made sure its electrical wiring is compliant with regulations.

Thanks to all who keep our **grounds** in good condition, especially Ian and Anne. We had two enjoyably social garden days this year, one of which involved giving a hedge a radical 'haircut' following a warning from the Council. Thanks to all who took part and provided refreshments. This year we had an arborist's inspection of our trees done by Oaktree Scotland and we await the report. Anne Williams is our Sexton (person responsible for the churchyard) and digs the small holes for the burial of ashes in our memorial garden. She has indicated that this is getting too much for her and we are looking for someone else to take on this job. Thanks to Anne for this and we look forward to continuing to enjoy the fruits of her work in the garden behind the hall.

At the end of this Church Year, as we turn our eyes again to the birth of Jesus, we can again give thanks for many good things in difficult times. The coming year brings financial challenges, noted in the Treasurer's Report, and we will need to concentrate on our hall as a community resource and income source. This is a good opportunity for all of us to look at how we support our Church, both in terms of financial giving and the time we give to church and those in need. I have written more about Christian giving in the November magazine and on the 'giving and joining' page of our website. Our friends in the Church of Scotland are closing many churches and Holy Cross will only survive if we all give our

support. An essential part of this is prayer. I suspect that it is the hidden prayer of many of you which has kept Holy Cross going through difficult times. Keep it going!

In this, as in all we do, let us step forward in hope, trusting in Christ.

God bless,

Stephen