



# **Edinburgh Churches Together**

**Annual Report 2015**

**About Us:**

Edinburgh Churches Together (ECT) was formed in the early 1990s as a local response to the establishment of Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS). ECT is an ecumenical group of churches working in partnership across Edinburgh City.

The purpose of Edinburgh Churches Together is to help member churches work together so as to:

- jointly address issues of concern and interest within our city and beyond
- support each other in times of challenge and celebration
- provide a meeting point between the Christian Church and the City
- encourage local congregations to work together
- share resources, ideas, insights and best practice
- create city scale projects and events as a witness to the presence of Christ in Edinburgh

Membership is open to any Trinitarian Christian Church working within the area covered by the City of Edinburgh Council.

It is made up of members from the Church of Scotland, Methodist Church, Roman Catholic Church, Salvation Army, Scottish Episcopal Church, United Free Church and United Reformed Church.

## Current Representatives

Each member church is invited to send 1 member of clergy and 1 lay person to meetings of the Council.

### **Church of Scotland**

Rev Dr George Whyte, Vacancy

### **Methodist Church**

Rev Andrew Letby, Vacancy

### **Roman Catholic Church,**

Mgr Philip Kerr, Mr Paddy Ferry

### **Salvation Army**

Major Kathy Betteridge (2015), Lieut-Colonel Carol Bailey (2016), Ian French

### **Scottish Episcopal Church**

Bishop John Armes, Mrs Judith Scott

### **United Free Church**

Rev Duncan Whitty, Vacancy

### **United Reformed Church**

Rev Fiona Bennett, Mr Jim Maguire

### **Officers**

Communications and Administration Officer: Dr Nicola Robinson

Treasurer: Rev Andrew Letby

Convenor: Rev Fiona Bennett,

Secretary: Mr Jim Maguire

**Mgr Michael Regan, 1955-2015**

We offer thanksgiving for Mgr Michael Regan, founding member of ECT, and remember his wisdom, solidarity and creativity in his work with ECT.

## **2015 Goals**

The purpose of ECT shall be to help member churches to work together so as to:

- jointly address issues of concern and interest within our city and beyond
- support each other in times of challenge and celebration
- provide a meeting point between the Christian Church and the City
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## **Communications and Organisational Life**

An administrative system has been developed which helps ECT to run smoothly and efficiently and encourage participation from all partner churches.

The system entails the following:

- creating and maintaining a register of all partner churches including all the different systems of contact (representatives from local churches, dioceses etc.)
- preparing a meeting Agenda
- issuing Call and Agenda to ECT Council members prior to the date of meetings
- preparing meeting Minutes and distributing them timeously to members.

### Accounts

Invoices were issued to member churches for their annual contribution (subscriptions run for the financial year) and all were subsequently received. Andrew Letby, as Treasurer, set up an ECT bank account, created the annual budget, received annual contributions and set up Internet banking.

### Newsletter

Items and contributions for an electronic newsletter are collated from partner churches every two months. The newsletter is sent round an ever-expanding mailing list and provides details of exciting ecumenical events, courses, training and volunteering opportunities taking place across the city. This type of advertising enables the inter-church sharing of news and encourages each denomination or local church to support one another and think about the type of events, volunteering and training that they could open up to others as a shared resource. For example, previous newsletters have included information about SafeTalk Training, Fresh Start volunteering and spirituality retreats.

**2015 goal addressed: share resources, ideas, insights and best practice.**

The newsletter also includes relevant Edinburgh City Council consultations. On a semi regular basis the Council releases consultations about how the city should be "run". For example, this year ECT recognised the need for churches in the city centre to participate in the Consultation about proposed parking changes. (More details in **City Centre Parking** section below.)

**2015 goals addressed:**

**provide a meeting point between the Christian Church and the City  
jointly address issues of concern and interest within our city and beyond**

Social Media

Following a consultation process with well-established organisations, we recognised that the creation and maintenance of a Facebook page and Twitter account were the best mediums for building community and raising the profile of ECT.

At present, we are followed by more than 60 people on Facebook and Twitter with efforts being taken to increase that number.



Edinburgh Churches Together



@ECTEdinburgh

Logo

We engaged in a consultation process about images, colours and strapline, a design brief was compiled and a number of designers approached . Tim Griffiths was commissioned and a logo was created.



### Relationship Building

In order to raise the profile of ECT and establish positive working relationships Nicola has met with representatives from Actions for Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS), Glasgow Churches Together, Edinburgh Inter-faith Association, Edinburgh City Centre Churches, Workplace Chaplaincy Scotland, Eco-congregation Scotland, Adventures in Faith, the Quakers' Clerk, Bethany Trust, Fresh Start and Christian Aid.

These meetings have led to an increased awareness of ECT across the city and has begun to usefully inform ECT of potential opportunities for our future role.

### **2015 goals addressed:**

**share resources, ideas, insights and best practice**

**provide a meeting point between the Christian Church and the City**

### Membership



We are delighted to be members of Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association.



## 2015 Funeral Poverty Event



# Funeral Poverty Discussion Panel

Monday 23 November 2015 | 7.30pm-9:00pm

### Speakers:

<b>John Birrell</b>	Chair, Scottish Working Group on Funeral Poverty
<b>Fraser Sutherland</b>	Policy Officer, Citizens Advice Scotland
<b>Sandy Young</b>	Head NHS Chaplain for Lothian
<b>James Morris</b>	Deputy Chair, National Association of Funeral Directors
<b>Charlie Holt</b>	Bereavement Services Manager, Edinburgh City Council

**Augustine United Church, 41-43 George IV Bridge  
Edinburgh EH1 1EL**

For further information, contact:  
Nicola Robinson, [nicola.robinson.ect@gmail.com](mailto:nicola.robinson.ect@gmail.com)

This year we recognised that deep distress was being caused by soaring funeral costs. Figures released in the Royal London's National Funeral Cost Index found that funeral costs in Scotland averaged at £3,481 compared to £1,815 in 2005 which is a 92 per cent increase. According to a Citizens Advice Scotland report, published in 2014, there has been a 35 per cent increase in the number of clients faced with serious and long-term funeral debt.

In response to soaring funeral costs and debt, we organised a Funeral Poverty discussion panel. We secured key speakers from a pertinent cross-section of bodies and organisations. These speakers included John Birrell, Chair of the Scottish Working Group on Funeral Poverty; Fraser Sutherland, Policy Officer, Citizens Advice Scotland; Sandy Young, Head NHS Chaplain for Lothian; James Morris, Deputy Chair, National Association of Funeral Directors and Charlie Holt, Bereavement Services Manager, Edinburgh City Council.

In particular, John Birrell and Fraser Sutherland had been commissioned by Social Justice Secretary Alex Neil MSP to come up with a series of recommendations to address the rising costs of funerals. The evening was chaired by the Reverend Carol Ford, Convener of Social and Community Interests in Edinburgh Presbytery.

In the weeks before the event, flyers and information about the event were sent and posted in emails, newsletters and websites from most of the denominations ECT represent as well as organisations such as: Actions of Churches Together Scotland (ACTS), Inclusive Church, NHS Bereavement Coordinators Association of Bereavement Service Coordinators, Association of Hospice and Palliative Care Chaplains, Money Advice Scotland, Citizens Advice Scotland, Good Life Good Death Good Grief, Dying Matters.

In terms of publicity, we press released widely across printed media, broadcast media and social media. On the evening of the event, BBC Radio Scotland interviewed the Chair of ECT, Fiona Bennett, about funeral poverty and our event. Additionally, the Scottish Catholic Observer published our press release.

On the night of the event, 45 folk attended, representing a cross-section of society from across the city. The perspectives and insights from the speakers were highly informative and the subsequent questions and discussion from the floor were very thoughtful and probing which demonstrated this issue is a broad concern for many.

### Next Steps

We have been in further communication with John Birrell following on from the event and publication of the Funeral Poverty in Scotland report in January 2016. John Birrell identified that the main thing is about keeping the discussion going, and encouraging church members to think about and talk about their funerals and to ask questions about funeral poverty. Articles in church magazines would be useful. Then if, as a group, we were to respond to things in the press about funeral poverty, and in social media.

Locally we might want to make enquiries about prices from local crematoria and cemeteries - council and private, and try to forestall increases, if not encourage justification of the prices.



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**provide a meeting point between the Christian Church and the City**

**share resources, ideas, insights and best practice**

**create city scale projects and events as a witness to the presence of Christ  
in Edinburgh**

## **Emergency Planning**

ECT identified a need for churches to engage with emergency planning in the city. In the event of an emergency incident scenario, the head of the command chain is the Police. They will call together the Local Resilience Partnership (or the Regional Resilience Partnership if the incident is wider than the city) which is made up of identified partners. The Salvation Army are already one of these partners and in the event of an emergency incident provide emergency pastoral support by opening up rest centres in their churches and providing care vans.

In October, Fiona Bennett and Nicola Robinson attended a Table Top Exercise at the City Chambers about the City Council's Edinburgh Major Incident Evacuation Plan. The meeting was also attended by representatives from the Emergency Services, the City Council, large businesses based in Edinburgh, the Met Office and Salvation Army.

Following on from this exercise the ECT Council considered how serious we are about offering our buildings and facilities as assets to be used as recovery and rest centres as well as trained volunteers when there is an emergency incident. We agreed that we could propose a database of churches to Edinburgh City Council.

At a further meeting with Edinburgh Council in February of this year, we agreed that ECT setting up a database of church buildings (including keyholders, kitchen and capacity information, pastoral resources) would be of benefit to Edinburgh City Council in the event of an emergency incident.

The Salvation Army are also happy to open up some of their emergency training to suitable volunteers.

### **2015 goals addressed:**

**jointly address issues of concern and interest within our city and beyond**  
**provide a meeting point between the Christian Church and the City**  
**share resources, ideas, insights and best practice**

## Parking in Edinburgh – A need for change?



**Web:** [www.edinburgh.gov.uk/parkingconsultation](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/parkingconsultation)  
**Email:** [parkingactionplan@edinburgh.gov.uk](mailto:parkingactionplan@edinburgh.gov.uk)



ECT recognised the need for churches in the city centre to participate in Edinburgh City Council's Parking Consultation. The consultation was released for a period between August and October. The proposals included the extension of parking charges from 8:30 in the morning until 9:30 at night from Monday to Sunday. The basis of ECT's protest against this proposal is introducing charges on a Sunday morning and weekday evenings will have an adverse effect on churches and community. In particular, the proposed changes would not only have a negative impact for services on a Sunday, but also the group meetings, education classes etc. churches provide or let rooms to organisations in the evening which all contributes significantly to social capital, health and well-being of the city.

Members of the ECT Council attended the focus groups and reported that all the participant groups were opposed to parking charges due to the reasons mentioned above.

A meeting of city centre churches took place on 13 December at Sacred Heart Church and subsequently a stakeholder group was established which included representatives from the Episcopal Church, Church of Scotland, United Reformed Church, Methodist Church, Orthodox Church, Roman Catholic Church, independent churches and Central Mosque. This group collated information about the impact of proposals and met with councillors to negotiate a fairer deal. The negotiation entailed: parking charges only until 7:00 in the evening and between 1:00 and 6:00 on a Sunday. The decision from Edinburgh City Council was due in January but has been postponed due to the volume of responses received.

**2015 goals addressed:**

**jointly address issues of concern and interest within our city and beyond**

**support each other in times of challenge and celebration**

**provide a meeting point between the Christian Church and the City**

**encourage local congregations to work together**

## **Priorities for the year ahead (taken from our 2015 goals)**

Jointly address issues of concern and interest within our city and beyond AND  
Create city scale projects and events as a witness to the presence of Christ in  
Edinburgh

Organise and host events to address city wide issues and raise the profile of ECT.

In the run up to the Scottish Election and Referendum, circulate a prayer and collate and disseminate Edinburgh hustings information taking place within various churches.

Continue to engage with the recommendations from the Funeral Poverty in Scotland Report.

Provide a meeting point between the Christian Church and the City

Continue to engage with emergency planning in the city by providing a database for Edinburgh City Council.

Encourage local congregations to work together

Continue to build up local relationships by developing a strategy for engaging with Local Churches Together groups and explore ways of working together.

Share resources, ideas, insights and best practice

Continue to use the newsletter and social media to publicise exciting ecumenical events, courses, training and volunteering taking place across the city.

Participate in and share the emergency training that the Salvation Army are providing for suitable volunteers.