



# Edinburgh Churches Together

## Annual Report 2020

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### **1. 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. The purpose of ECT 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/events as a witness to the presence of Christ

**Membership** Open to any Trinitarian Christian Church working within the area covered by the City of Edinburgh Council, members are currently made up from:

- The Church of Scotland
- Methodist Church
- Religious Society of Friends
- Roman Catholic Church
- Salvation Army
- Scottish Episcopal Church
- United Free Church
- United Reformed Church

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**2. Current Representatives** Each member church is invited to send one member of clergy and one lay person to meetings of the Council.

Church of Scotland	Rev Marjory McPherson, <i>Vacancy</i>
Methodist Church	Rev James Patron Bell, Mr. Iain Hampson
Religious Society of Friends	Mr. David Clarke
Roman Catholic Church	Fr William Pearsall, Mr. Paddy Ferry
Salvation Army	Major Steven Turner, Mr. David Cavanagh
Scottish Episcopal Church	Revd. Dr Stephen Holmes, Mrs. Judith Scott,
United Free Church	Rev Duncan Whitty, <i>Vacancy</i>
United Reformed Church	Rev Steven Manders, Mrs. Doris Caldwell
Convener:	Rev Marjory McPherson
Vice Convener:	<i>Vacancy</i>
Treasurer:	Mrs. Sandra Endicott
Communications and Admin:	Imogen Gibson

**Representatives' Update** In 2020 we said farewell to Tim Martin, lay rep for the Methodist Church, and Dr David Holton, lay rep for the Church of Scotland. We warmly welcomed Mr Iain Hampson, Methodist Church lay rep, Rev James Patron Bell, clerical rep for the Methodist Church, Rev Dr Stephen Holmes, clerical rep for Scottish Episcopal Church, Major Steven Turner and Mr David Cavanagh, both reps for the Salvation Army.

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**3. ECT during Covid 19 lockdowns** A few days after our 2020 AGM, the country went into lockdown due to the on-going Covid 19 pandemic emergency. As a result, any social gatherings were abruptly halted. However, ECT business continued on-line with quarterly meetings switching to Zoom, the newsletter continuing to be published four times a year and social media engagement flourishing.

**Website Update** Normally, Christmas and Easter church services are added to the 'Find a service in Edinburgh' page of the ECT website. However, church services for most of the year were cancelled but hopefully this can be re-instated in time for Christmas 2021.

Duncan Whitty introduced the idea of an inter-church website based on Network Norwich, (<https://www.networknorwich.co.uk/>) This resulted in Keith Morris, founder and editor-in-chief of Network Norwich joining the December 2020 quarterly meeting to give a talk about his work. As a consequence, the ECT council decided to look at how we could adopt this idea. A subcommittee to discuss the next step was formed with Major Steven Turner, David Clarke and Duncan Whitty.

**Social Media** With much of the world having to operate on-line, social media took on a more prominent role for ECT. Our existing Twitter and Facebook accounts were ideal for publicising local initiatives, information and contact details for local community hubs, food banks and a host of other services that sprang up due to lockdown. The number of followers continues to increase with 648 for Twitter and 271 for Facebook. Many churches switched to filming services or reflections on line using Facebook and You Tube and social media was an ideal way to keep in touch with people no longer able to visit places of worship.

**Churches as rest centres** City of Edinburgh Council has the list of these updated from 2019. It is assumed that after restrictions end, we can continue to add venues to it.

**City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) Parking** Despite assurances from representatives from CEC, a meeting to decide on Sunday parking restrictions went ahead without ECT or other church representatives being informed and therefore unable to have their say. Sunday parking restrictions are now planned to start ‘in the Spring’ but there have been no further details on this. In addition, measures to enable social distancing on Edinburgh’s streets and to encourage cycling have resulted in some churches having no accessible parking areas nearby.

**Court Listening Service** Margaret Walker, Chair of the Listening Service, sent Imogen the following update:

*The Listening Service is still suspended on the advice of the Sheriff Court. The Board maintains contact with the Volunteers and the Court.*

*It is hoped to begin the recruitment of new volunteers again as soon as Corona Virus restrictions allow and there will be a planned safe return to the Court as soon as possible.*

**Newsletter** As the newsletter is an on-line publication, it continued to be circulated. The Summer 2020 edition included contributions from council members on how clergy and pastoral networks had embraced all forms of technology to continue to bring people together despite the anxiety, restrictions and uncertainty brought upon us by Covid-19. The 2020 newsletters describe how services continue to be held in living rooms and gardens while Zoom coffee mornings and telephone calls replace face-to-face meetings and people continue to help and comfort others with extraordinary acts of charity and kindness. In addition, the newsletter is an opportunity to publicise a variety of local charities and organisations helping out the community. The newsletter content tried to reflect both local initiatives and also local engagement with global events such as Black Lives Matter and the climate crisis.

**Events** the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (WoPCU) service hosted by ECT has now become a regular and successful feature of the Edinburgh ecumenical calendar. Despite being unable to conduct a face-to-face service, ECT organised a very successful on-line service in January with over 75 participants. Thanks are due in particular to Maureen Bruce and Paddy Ferry who helped organise the event.

ECT had been involved in 2019 with plans for the 2020 Edinburgh’s Christmas service. This was unable to go ahead but the short video released by the Lord Provost and clergy representatives next to the Nativity scene was publicised on our social media. We also featured an article written especially for the Winter newsletter by Tim Chalk who created the Nativity scene sculpture which had its final outing in 2020.

The planned climate change panel discussion was unable to go ahead but it is hoped this can be organised for later in 2020 in advance of COP Glasgow.

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