



Scottish Church Theology Society Conference 2026

Conference Overview

Date: 12–15 January 2026

Venue: Stirling Court Hotel

The Scottish Church Theology Society Conference 2026 invites you to gather at Stirling Court Hotel for an inspiring exploration of the rich intersection between theology and music. This annual event brings together renowned speakers, scholars, musicians, and church leaders to share insights, experience, and creativity.

Across four days, participants will enjoy a vibrant program of keynote talks, interactive workshops, and lively discussions. Whether you are a theologian, musician, clergy, student, or layperson, the conference is designed to deepen your appreciation for the theological dimensions of music and to equip you with fresh ideas for worship and ministry.

- Keynote presentations by leading thinkers and practitioners
- Practical workshops for worship and music ministry
- Opportunities for discussion and networking

Speakers and topics

Richard Michael

Mistakes Are Cool - how to live dangerously as a church organist, reharmonising hymns, improvising on themes and sending the congregation out with a smile on their faces!

Dr Julie Taylor:

Music and Worship in World Perspective

Dr Jamie Reid-Baxter

Robert Carver and Sacred Music in 16th century Scotland

Canon Chris Chivers

Music as Revelation and Salvation - How God addresses us through music and how the journey to wholeness is thereby modelled for us – with musical examples

Rev. Professor Ian Bradley

Music of the Night: Religious Influences in Musical Theatre

Rev. Dr John L Bell

Hymn Singing - A Dangerous Theological Pursuit

Keynote Speakers

Richard Michael



Richard Michael, organist in the Church of Scotland for over 30 years, serves as Director of Music at Langtoun Church, Kirkcaldy. He advocates for improvisation in both jazz and baroque styles, believing they require a shared musical vocabulary. At the University of St Andrews, he teaches jazz to University Jazz Scholars and guides Organ Scholars in improvisation. Richard encourages all organists to develop improvisational skills for more dynamic worship leadership.

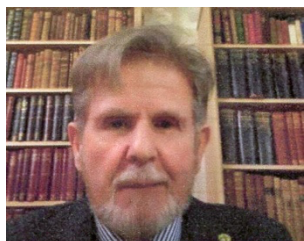
Dr Julie Taylor



Dr Julie Taylor works for SIL Global (formerly Summer Institute of Linguistics International), an organization devoted to researching and documenting languages—especially lesser-known ones—to promote literacy, translate the Bible, and support minority language development. Her 2002 University of Edinburgh dissertation focused on "The music of the Sabaot: Bridging traditional and Christian contexts." She also holds an M.A. in

Intercultural Studies and Ethnomusicology from Wheaton College, after a B.Mus. equivalent and Postgraduate Diploma from the Royal College of Music, London.

Dr Jamie Reid-Baxter



Dr Jamie Reid-Baxter, retired from the European Parliament translation service, has been an honorary research fellow in Scottish History at Glasgow University since 1996. He is dedicated to academic research and cultural projects, especially live performances of Renaissance Scottish music, poetry, and drama. Since 1993, Dr

Reid-Baxter has published extensively on Scottish history, music, literature, and religious life, with notable books on Elizabeth Melville, composer Jhone Angus, and Esther Inglis.

Canon Chris Chivers



Canon Chris Chivers, a graduate of Oxford and Cambridge, has served as parish priest, area dean, and precentor at St George's Cathedral (Cape Town) and Westminster Abbey, and as canon chancellor of Blackburn Cathedral. He founded the acclaimed inter-religious institute, exChange, and appointed the first Muslim dialogue development officer in a UK cathedral. A trustee of major Anglican charities, Chris is a published poet and composer, a regular BBC Radio 4 presenter, and author of *Letters to Jonny* (ISPCK 2016).

Rev. Professor Ian Bradley



Rev. Professor Ian Bradley is Emeritus Professor of Cultural and Spiritual History at the University of St Andrews, where he taught the world's only university course on the theology and spirituality of musical theatre for twenty years. Author of 48 books—including *You've Got to Have a Dream – The Message of the Musical* (SCM Press) and *Music of the Night: Religious Influences and Spiritual Resonances in Operetta and Musical Theatre* (OUP)—he is a frequent lecturer and

broadcaster on these subjects and teaches on musical theatre and hymnody in the St Andrews University masters' course on Sacred Music.

Rev. Dr John L. Bell



Rev. Dr John L. Bell (b. 1949) is a Scottish hymn-writer and minister in the Church of Scotland. As a member of the Iona Community, he is deeply involved in church and community life and is known as a broadcaster and former student activist. His international work includes lecturing in theological colleges in the UK, Canada, and the United States, yet his main focus remains the renewal of congregational worship at the grass roots level.

Conference Fees & Registration

Fees

- Resident (12–15 January): £130 (includes lunch; accommodation not included)
- Non-resident: £45/day (includes lunch)
- Online attendance: £40 (meals not provided)

Accommodation

Accommodation is available at the Stirling Court Hotel with promocode 307933:

- Single occupancy (DBB): £93.00/night, £279 for three nights
- Double occupancy (DBB): £136.00/night, £408 for three nights

The direct booking link will be provided by email when you register.

Students

- A small number of grants of £250 are available for students who wish to attend the conference, applications to the secretary.
- Students who wish to attend on a daily basis without accommodation may register and attend without cost. You will be asked to cover the hotel charges for meals.

How to Register

1. Email the Secretary, Rev. Dr John Cowie:
scottishchurchtheosoc@gmail.com
2. Pay the appropriate fee by bank transfer to confirm your registration:
Scottish Church Theology Society
Bank Account No.: 00320919, Sort Code: 80-12-88

For all conference details, visit the Society's Facebook page or email for further information.

We look forward to welcoming you to Stirling in 2026!