



The Friends
of St Andrew's
Jerusalem & Tiberias

Annual Report
and Accounts
Year to 31 March 2026

www.friendsofstandrews.com

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We remain keen to cut down the cost of postage and printing and would be happy to add you to our emailing lists if you are receiving notices via post.

Please let us know – secretary@friendsofstandrews.com

Notice relating to the Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of The Friends of St Andrew's Jerusalem & Tiberias is to be held on **Wednesday, 13 May 2026 at 1.30pm at St Cuthbert's Church, Lothian Road, Edinburgh** (by kind permission of the Minister and Kirk Session). There is a large public car park in Castle Terrace / King's Stables Road, opposite the church.

The **agenda** is included (on page 4), together with the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Speaker: The Friends are delighted to be welcoming Mr Rifat Kassis, who will speak after the business of the AGM. Rifat is the coordinator for [Kairos Palestine](#), whose "A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering", is a call by a group of Palestinian Christians to Christians around the world to help support justice and end the illegal Israeli occupation. He is also a former staff member at WCC Middle East Desk, and former President of Defence for Children International. He co-founded the [Alternative Tourism Group](#) (ATG), a Palestinian NGO specializing in tours and pilgrimages.

13.00 Arrivals
13.30 AGM **
14.00 Kairos Palestine and what we can do - Mr Rifat Kassis **
15.30 Tea. Donations are welcome.

** Both events will be live streamed – please see our website for direct links.

Hadeel will hold a stall with Palestinian Fair Trade goods for sale.



Election of Committee

There will be several changes to the Committee – retirements, re-elections and elections (see pages 4 and 5 for details):

Subscription and Donations: Subscription levels remain the same – £20 for Annual and Associate members.

Many members have arranged a standing order and it is proposed that the subscription remains whilst we encourage more to commit to this financial arrangement.

Members are asked to encourage their friends to join The Friends, and to approach their churches to join as an Associate Member – also at £20. Of course, donations are always welcome too.

Financial Statement (page 6): If you have questions, please let us know in advance so that answers can be fully researched before the meeting. Questions from those attending in person are always welcome at the meeting.

Carol Miller (Secretary)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday 13th May 2026
at 13.30

at the Parish Church of
St Cuthbert's , Edinburgh

Agenda

1. Devotions
2. Welcome and Apologies
3. Minutes of the 2025 AGM
 - i. Approval
 - ii. Matters arising
4. Remarks from the Convener
5. Reports
 - i. St Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias
 - ii. Church of Scotland Faith Action Programme
 - iii. Membership
 - iv. Communications
6. Business
 - i. Presentation and Approval of the 2025/2026 Accounts
 - ii. Approval of Budget 2026/2027
 - iii. Annual Subscription
 - iv. Election of Committee Members
7. St Andrew's Day Service
 - i. Scotland
Monday 30th November at
14.00 in Melrose Parish
Church.
 - ii. Jerusalem
8. Vote of Thanks
9. Benediction

The Committee of The Friends
of St Andrew's Jerusalem &
Tiberias

2026-2027

Convener Ian Alexander (2028)
Vice-Convener Val Brown (2028)
Secretary Carol Miller (2027)
Treasurer Bill Stevenson (2029)

Members of the Committee:

Carol Finlay (2028)
Alison Jack (2027)
Calum MacSween (2027)
Tom Watson (tbc 2029)

Military Representative:

Stewart Mackay (tbc 2029)

Church of Scotland Representative:

Kenny Roger, Resource and Presence
Manager

Church of Scotland Finance Representative:

Elaine Macadie, Finance Manager

Committee

- **Retirals** Jacky Harkness (retired in October 2025), Douglas Simpson, Rev Trish Archibald, Maureen Jack
- **Election** Bill Stevenson has been nominated and is prepared to stand.
- Stewart Mackay is prepared to become the Military Representative.

Bill Stevenson

Bill lives in Stenton, East Lothian, and serves as Session Clerk at Traprain Parish. He is also on the Lothian & Borders Presbytery Mission Committee, helping coordinate twinning arrangements. Raised in Leith, he studied Accountancy and Finance at Heriot-Watt University. He later became a senior

manager at a software firm specialising in social housing. A committed member of The Boys' Brigade, he joined full-time in 2009, becoming Brigade Secretary and later UK CEO. Since 2021, he has been General Manager of the Global Fellowship of Christian Youth. Bill has travelled widely, building international church links, and enjoys walking and theatre. He joined The Friends in 2025.

Stewart Mackay

Stewart was one of our scholars in 2006 when he spent a month, based at the Guest House in Jerusalem, travelling, meeting learning, listening, and talking, both in Israel and Palestine. An award that he found truly fascinating and spiritually enriching. He is currently a Chaplain to the Forces.

Thanks

The Committee places on record their warm thanks to those members retiring:

Trish Archibald who joined the committee in 2024, following her successful time in Israel/occupied Palestine as a scholar. As Minister at Gorgie and Palmerston Place, we know that her strong connections with The Friends will continue.

Jacky Harkness, who, having joined the committee in 2016, became the Minutes Secretary shortly thereafter. Her imagination and enthusiasm were instrumental in the rebranding and relaunch of The Friends in 2011.

Maureen Jack has been a stalwart behind the Facebook page, having initiated it. Maureen's lived experience, imagination, dedication, and formidable network of interests and contacts, has kept it fresh and engaging.

Douglas Simpson, whose ideas about increasing the membership of The Friends bore fruit. He was also responsible for the vision and management behind the production of The Friends' promotional video.

Committee Meetings

The Committee met on 18th June 2025, 6 October 2025, 12th November 2025, 21st January 2026, and 18th March 2026. Members are welcome to read the Minutes – these can be read on the website, along with the minutes of the 2025 AGM.

Project 26

Carol Finlay

Bees for Peace (Sindyanna) and HIRN Education for girls

For the first time in 2025/26, The Friends decided to highlight two causes which we have encouraged support for. This has been branded **Project 26**. The chosen causes were HIRN (Hebron International Resource Network)'s Education for female students at University and Sindyanna's Bees for Peace project. We set a substantial target of £5,000 and decided anything raised would be split equally to the Projects. We are delighted that by March we had already reached the target, and we were able to send £2,500 to each project. Any further funds will be sent at the end of the project year.

It has been good to have feedback and already we have supported 5 women at University and Bees for Peace have been able to train a third cohort of women in Bee Keeping.

Please continue to follow us as we post updates on our [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS for Year Ended 31st March 2026

	ACTUAL		BUDGET		ACTUAL		BUDGET	
	Year ended 31 March		Year ended 31 March		Year ended 31 March		Year ended 31 March	
	2026	2026	2026	2026	2025	2025	2027	2027
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
Income								
Subscriptions	1,768		500		1,656		1,700	
Donations - General	3,232		1,500		3,494		2,000	
Donations - Project	5,540				1,168		1,500	
Service offering			500		1,333		500	
Investment Income	1,333		1,000		120		750	
Contributions	213		2,000		286			
Misc (AGM, Lunch, Book Sales)	40		-		-		-	
		12,126		5,500		8,057		6,450
Expenditure								
St. Andrew's Scholarship	-		4,000		-		-	
St Andrews Day Reception Jerusalem	1,005		1,000		1,000		1,000	
Administration	1,116		1,800		531		800	
Church of Scotland Fund Admin	1,354				1,349		1,400	
Publicity	36		150		115		150	
Website	552		1,600		427		600	
Events - Tinderbox film	-		-		237		-	
Events - Dunblane	-		-		123		-	
Events - C Aid	-				91			
Secretary's Honorarium	1,000		1,000		1,000		1,000	
St Andrews Day retiral offering	-		-		1,168		-	
St Andrews Jerusalem	3,500		-		2,235		-	
Expenses for St Andrews Day Service	125		150		202		150	
		8,688		9,700		8,478		5,100
Project support		5,000		500		2,000		1,500
Deficit for Year		(1,561)		(4,700)		(2,421)		(150)
Unrealised Gain/(Loss) on Growth								
Fund Units in period		5,532				691		
Realised gain on sale of investments		-						
Funds at 1 April 2025		60,541				62,270		
Funds at 31 March 2026		64,512				60,540		
Represented by:								
CofS Investors Trust Growth Fund Units (Mkt Vc		66,861				61,330		
Current Account with General Treasurer		- 2,349				(789)		
		64,512				60,541		

Notes relating to the accounts and budget:

- There has been a comforting uptake in Standing Orders; more are always welcome.
- There is no budget for a St Andrew's Scholarship until the situation changes.
- The charge for Church of Scotland is now being levied on all users of 121 Central Services
- The funds raised under Project 26 to date have been transferred. Project 26 will run until St Andrew's Day 2026 when the Project for 27 will be announced.

Tom Watson

Reports

The Convener

The Rev Dr Ian Alexander

Last year, The Friends AGM agreed some directions to focus our work and activities. We agreed we wanted to help raise awareness of how the realities on the ground impact the witness and service of the Church in Israel and Palestine, and how the ministers of St Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias practice their ministry today in the land of Christ's birth.

We have had many different opportunities over the year to engage and raise awareness, in our own right and with others. We rejoice in these collaborations, especially with Christian Aid. We plan to continue these throughout the year.

One part of that **strategy is social media**. The Friends is fortunate to have Maureen Jack posting on our Facebook page. As Maureen steps down from this task, we are keen to find someone or preferably a group of folk who would be willing to work on The Friends Facebook page. Maureen will be happy to share her knowledge and suggestions in handing over.

I received an email last week from the Rev Prof Martin Accad, President of the Near East School of Theology (NEST) in Beirut which I visited in October. Martin opened his email with: "My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long?" (Psalm 6:3). Martin was lamenting with the Psalmist as he looked at the desolate state of his country, the region, and the world at the present time. In Iran, civilians have been paying the highest price of Israeli and American bombings. The people of southern Lebanon are experiencing what was wrought on the people of Gaza, with villages – Christian and Muslim – being blown up and destroyed in the areas near the Israeli border. Sky news reports that around 40% of the casualties are children.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8wOgrw0L6g>).

In the West Bank, Israeli settlers are attacking villages, livestock, and people, while stealing and colonising Palestinian land. All with impunity, while Palestinian young people are locked up without crime or fair trial, often for years on end. Sabeel has helped a group highlight the plight of [Christian detainees](#), incarcerated by Israel, often for years, with no due process fair trial or transparency.

The Constitution of The Friends emphasises Christ's call to seek "the peace of Jerusalem" (Ps 122.6) – an holistic peace which offers love and justice for all. Dr. Cornell West, who delivered the Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh two years ago, teaches that tenderness is what love feels like in private, and justice is what love looks like in public. Justice is not passive; it is a way of life that demands taking action for the vulnerable, rejecting greed and double standards. There must be justice for the people of Iran and Lebanon and Palestine and Israel. Justice can only come alongside peace where all God's people can flourish. With the Pope visiting the land of St Augustine as I write, we can keep common cause with him in saying these conflicts are not of God, and we can express our love through speaking out and supporting the peacemakers. Your generous support for our two projects is part of that, so please keep supporting them; they make such a difference to peoples' lives.

In Autumn 2025, **Rev Muriel Pearson's** contract ended and she returned to Scotland. She has engaged deeply with the congregation, the local partners and The Friends over those years and we give thanks for her ministry and Muriel's ongoing involvement and commitment to justice for all. Stewart is also coming to the end of his time in Jerusalem this coming summer, and we can give thanks for his ministry in the congregation and in solidarity with the local Christian community, and the many partners seeking justice and peace with which he has sustained and developed relationships

May 7, 2027 will mark the **100th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone** of St Andrew's Scots Memorial Church, Jerusalem. Stewart has been working with Bethlehem Bible College on a series of podcasts to reflect on the past 100 years. Members ideas and suggestions of what might be done to mark these 100 years in 2027 would be welcome. The Committee has suggested that a 2027 project (to start from the St Andrew's Day service on 30 Nov 2026) could focus on themes of cornerstone and Living Stones. Do share your ideas!

Our annual service this year is changing location. The Committee wondered about moving around rather than being fixed in Edinburgh and thought it would be good to have it in the congregation of the preacher, who is the present Moderator, and whose congregation is Bowden and Melrose Parish Church. We look forward to old Friends and new being present.

Finally, as the Very Rev Dr Shaw Paterson commended in his St Andrew's Day sermon: "may we, as a church, continue to support St Andrew's Jerusalem & Tiberias – a visible sign that hospitality is stronger than hostility, that light is stronger than darkness, and that Christ still walks the road with us." Amen to that.

St Andrew's Jerusalem and Tiberias

The Rev Dr Stewart Gillan, Minister

Glasgow, 23 April 2026

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. John 14.27

Again we meet in time of war to pray for peace, and to consider our participation in and support for the life and work of St Andrew's Church of Scotland Jerusalem & Tiberias. Not one war, however, but a complication of wars – involving Israel, Hamas, Hezbollah, Houthis, Lebanon, the United States, and Iran, and affecting directly several of the Gulf States and neighbouring States. A set of wars that have, in their escalation and expansion, come at high human cost, driven up the world price of oil and gas, further destabilised diplomatic and trade relationships between and among the US, Israel, the UK, the EU, Canada, Japan, Russia and China, and weakening the standing of international negotiations as a means of achieving durable ceasefires and the end of wars.

Use of the terms 'forever wars' and 'permanent war' is neither proleptic nor hyperbolic. Wars that do not end threaten to take over the identity of nations and the ways in which they tell their stories. It is the difference between saying, for example, the wars of Israel, and Israel as war; the wars of Iran, and Iran as war; the wars of America, and America as war. In such a time, it is vital that we sustain our capacity in faith to envision and embody the peace that comes through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Within Israel, on the West Bank, and in Gaza, the twelve months since our last AGM have been severely damaging of human life and human rights – bombardment, blockade, multiple forced displacements, restricted food and medical aid, malnutrition, news blackouts, the violence of occupation, settler violence, legislation allowing Israelis to register land rights on the West Bank, the passing of a death penalty for Palestinians accused of the intended killing of Israelis, and rising attacks on Christians and Christian places of worship, symbols and holy sites – and of the prospects for a just and lasting peace. Indeed, to continue to use this form of words as a summary of our goals seems increasingly to be out of touch with reality. Palestinians continue to be shaken by loss of homes and loved ones, aggravated grief, injury, imprisonment, loss of income, and the daily toll taken by fear, hatred, anger, discrimination, propaganda, humiliation, and subjection.

That said, it is important to recognise two distinct kinds of shakiness at work: one brought on by the situation, and the other by a shaking in the Spirit, holy and life-affirming in the face of death and destruction, sought after in prayer and service. A source of spiritual

empowerment from the earliest days of the Church, such shakeness may be seen to be in continuity with the experience of the apostles and members of the first Christian community in Jerusalem, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles: 'When they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness' (Acts 4.31). We may also hear echoes of the call of the prophet Isaiah, in whose vision the pivots of the threshold of the 'high and lofty' temple of the Lord are shaken by the seraphs as they call to each other: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory,' (Isaiah 6.4).

Taken together, these two senses of shakeness lead us, in turn, to reflect on fellowship and partnership between and among people of faith in terms of a 'solidarity of the shaken,' to use the Czech philosopher Jan Patocka's powerful term. Co-founder of the Charter 77 human rights movement in Czechoslovakia under Soviet occupation, he writes of the 'frontline experience' of the shaken ones in resistance to forces deployed to make *permanent* the prosecution of war against an open society's commitment to inquiry and truth.¹ Of specific importance for our study here, Patocka writes of the need for *metanoia* (repentance, conversion), and the necessity of creating 'a spiritual power, a spiritual authority' in resistance, which he sees as part of 'care for the soul.' By this he means sustaining disciplines and practices that allow people to live in truth in the face of the lies and repression of a brutal state. Though not a theological assertion for him, Patocka knew what it was to want a power and authority that was not subject to destruction by the forces of such a state.

It is a core feature of our spiritual health that we sustain our capacity to reimagine the world, under the continual illumination of the Holy Spirit, guided by the written Word of God that bears witness to the Living Word of God, Jesus Christ. Together with partners, we extend our imagination and prayer life to the limits of thought and language, seeking revelation and the knowledge that comes from praying and working together in the fray of life and death at this time.

International pilgrimage and visitors from the world Church, including the UK, have been very few, but those who have come have been welcomed as witnesses and listen carefully and go home to impress on churches and governments that every day there are grave human rights violations.

St Andrew's Jerusalem & Tiberias

Our war-affected congregation has survived primarily through worship – in praise, study, personal sharing and prayer, in person and online – and ecumenical relationships with the Churches of Jerusalem, principally with our friends in the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

Regarding personnel, Muriel's farewell in October 2025 was a bright and shining moment of gratitude, storytelling, and good cheer around the tables on the terrace at St Andrew's, bringing together many of our church and human rights partners, while acknowledging many could not get permits to be with us from the West Bank. We continue to miss her, and wish her well in her ministry back home.



¹ See the sixth essay, 'Wars of the Twentieth Century and the Twentieth Century as War,' in Jan Patocka, *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History*, translated by Erazim Kohák, edited by James Dodd, Peru, Illinois: Open House, 1996, 119–37. Professor Patocka died following rigorous interrogations by the secret police of the communist state in Prague in May 1977, soon after the Charter was published.

Our Reader, Joanna Oakley Levstein, is now Locum in Tiberias. The Rev Dave Hardman, Methodist Church in Britain, is our sole remaining Ecumenical Partner. We are well served by both, and in great need of them, having bid a fond farewell to Doug Dicks (PSUSA, after 25 years in the Holy Land) and the Rev Jane Eesley (Methodist USA).

That said, the hiring of an Admin Assistant, in the person of Hana Zoughbi Kirreh, has proved a godsend with respect to concerts, comms, networking, and projects. Sincere thanks to Salvesen for the funding.

As for me, I was evacuated on 4 March – an experience of déjà vu – and have been working online from home in Glasgow since. God willing, I will return in late May, following General Assembly, for a fortnight to make my farewells and pack up, my time as Mission Partner Jerusalem coming to completion on 31 July.

St Andrew's Day saw us return to some of the features of traditional celebration, bringing together eighty-five partners, colleagues and friends in worship, fellowship and solidarity. Taking Andrew, his brother Peter, and the other disciples as our point of departure, we thanked God for their lives of costly discipleship and, many of them, martyrdom. We sought to hear God's call to us to put our bodies where our words are, here and now. I thank the Rev Sally Azar, Prof Salim Munayer, Rabbi Dana Sharon, Joanna Oakley Levstein, Mary Musallam, Mohammed Zatra, Pastor Inez Fischer, and the Rev Dave Hardman for their contributions, and Heads of Churches in Jerusalem, together with Helen Winterton, British Consul General, for joining with us, those who could. We are mindful that many colleagues and friends from the West Bank could not attend, because of restrictions imposed on their travel. The Hotel staff again excelled themselves in the hospitality for which St Andrew's is famous. Financial support from the Friends was much appreciated.

Christmas was brighter again, marked by a determined return to festivity. We joined with Christians throughout Palestine and Israel this year in open celebration of the birth of the Christ child, with lights shining again from the great Christmas tree in Manger Square in Bethlehem, not seen since December 2022. It is a victory of the spirit, pushing back on the darkness, an expression of resilience, enduringly faithful to the Christ who may be found among the bereaved, wounded, and blockaded, and those who continue to serve them, calling the global Church to be present where he himself is present. The lights of the Hotel's Christmas Market shone for the city to see from our hilltop for much of the season.

Easter. We were delighted to have with us our Moderator, the Rt Rev Rosie Frew – online in the event, the war preventing her planned visit to Jerusalem for Holy Week.

Concerts have continued, with a wide variety of choirs and ensembles, with full houses for some, half for others.

On matters related to plant, we are aiming at the installation of livestream capacity in June, thanking Salvesen again for the funding, and Marc Falconer for consulting on it. Efforts to progress the redecoration of the ceiling in the sanctuary have been frustrated by the non-appearance of the contracted party and by the war. Similarly, subsidence in the chancel awaits a contract to uplift tiles around the



Lord's Table to investigate the cause and quote on the work, this in liaison with the Municipal Office of Antiquities.

Concerning the garden: following a hearing on 10 February 2026, the Planning Committee of the Municipality on has made no decision as yet concerning an application to build a hotel on the site immediately adjacent to St Andrew's. Our interest was well served by our lawyer, Ramy Saba, and the UK Ambassador to Israel, Simon Walters, with the presence of Consul General Helen Winterton, our manager Lilian Lepejian, minister, and a number of Church partners in attendance, and the management of Kenny Roger ongoing.

Church Partners

Lutheran: The installation of new bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), the Rt Rev Imad Haddad, on 11 January 2026 brought together a great many bishops from the global Lutheran Church and local partners in a celebration of Christian faith and witness, including warm tributes to retiring Bishop Sani Azar. It was a joy and an honour to participate in so resolute an act of commitment to presence and service in Christ's name.

Episcopal: The Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem (EDOJ) continues to call for support of Al Ahli Hospital in Gaza City. Their Archbishop, Hosam Naoum, remains committed to developing further our partnership in spirit and work, following his visit to General Assembly last year. I give thanks for the collegiality and friendship of many at the St George's Cathedral and College, having continued to live in the tower flat.



Tent of Nations: Daoud Nasser reports (27.04.26) they have not heard from the Military Authority re: registration, no new court date, because there is no need for it. On settlers encroaching, there have been no new attacks, owing to the ongoing presence of internationals, of whom there are six just now from Holland, Germany and the US. Annexation is happening on the ground, not officially but advantage is being taken of the war. Palestine is forgotten now, no-one is listening or looking, and facts are being changed /

created on the ground. Settlers are protected and becoming more violent. Travel is more difficult than ever, with flying check points and closure of gates. They are uncertain now about 'the day after tomorrow.' He wishes to visit the UK again, when Parliament is in session, to advocate on the political level and sustain support from Churches in Scotland and England, that Tent of Nations, so clear a case, might achieve justice after 35 years of resistance.

A Weekly Bible Study led by Salim Munayer, founder of Musalaha, and Courtney has been meeting on Wednesday evenings in the library, engaged in a contextual study of the Gospel According to Mark. Completing the book at Easter, they have decided, by vote, to study the Book of Revelation, a sign of the times given the importance in Isarel and Palestine of the conflict of interpretations between Christian Zionists and liberation theologians concerning many of its texts.

The launch of a new Kairos Palestine document, 'A Moment of Truth: Faith in a Time of Genocide,' on 14 November 2025 at Bethlehem Bible College brought together Palestinian theologians and international solidarity partners in support of this 'living confession born from the heart of Palestinian Christian suffering.' A congregational study guide has been produced by Sabeel and

its partners in the USA, and is accessible at: <https://sabeel.org/a-congregational-study-guide-for-kairos-palestine-ii/>

On attacks against Christian sites, symbols and places of worship, I was saddened to see that, on the morning after one of our concerts, someone had taken numbers from the Hymn Board, three 6s, and placed them at the base of the cross on the Lord's Table at St Andrew's. Registering the offence, I chose not to give it 'the oxygen of publicity.'

EAPPI: Yakfie continues in high demand and is much appreciated by volunteers as a 'go to' place for respite. I am grateful for the support provided by Peter Issa and reception staff at the Hotel in a time of trial for them.

Interfaith and Organisational Partners

St Andrew's will again be one of the sponsors of the annual *Interfaith March for Human Rights in Jerusalem*, in May. Tree-planting in the Al-Makhrour valley outside Bethlehem brought interfaith partners together on 26 January for a half day of planting and networking.



Our partnership with *Rabbis for Human Rights* continues to be strong, with Rabbi Dana Sharon participating in the St Andrew's Day service, and engagement on settler violence, the new legislation on the registration of land rights for Israelis on the West Bank, and on the death penalty.

Praying Together in Jerusalem continues to be a key monthly gathering of people from the three Abrahamic faiths and many others, in person and online, at which I am invited to bring a Christian teaching or prayer. The *Rainbow Dialogue of Jews and Christians* is a related partner, at which I gave an address on Evil and Resisting Evil in April. A discussion among rabbis present concerning when, in their view, Israel's use of force is justified, and when it is not, was a valuable window into their own debates.



It was a joy to join Hadas Lahav and *Sindyanna* in the Scots Grove, south of Nazareth, for their olive picking event on Saturday, 1 November, together with the Rev Dave Hardman. It was an all-age family affair, drawing people from Haifa and central Galilee, celebrating Sindyanna's commitment to bring together Israelis and Palestinians, Druze and internationals, in their fairtrade non-profit business. Founded by Hadas nearly thirty years ago, it is led by a team of Arab and Jewish women working, 'to create social change from the ground up.' All profits are channelled into education for Arab-Israeli women.

Hotels and School

The Friends' support of staff in Jerusalem has been much appreciated. St Andrew's continues to play its part in gaining and renewing work permits and sustaining constructive relationships. I give thanks for the leadership of Lilian Lepejian regarding matters that touch on Church and Hotel. The Christmas Market was again a success.

Closures in Tiberias and Jerusalem during the war have hit the hotels hard, as have low rates of bookings since 7 October 2023. Hadeel Simaan and Lilian Lepejian, and their staffs, have

operated under duress exceptionally well. Kenny Roger, overall manager, has been tirelessly excellent.

Tabeetha School has successfully managed the 2025-26 school year with remarkable dedication and skill, a tribute to Mona Ashkar, the teaching staff, parents, and directors. Online learning was successful during the early weeks of the US-Israel war with Iran, with students applying themselves well throughout. Monthly visits to take assemblies and connect with senior staff continue to encourage and inform my participation in meetings of the Board.

St Andrew's Jerusalem Cornerstone Project



The project has been undertaken in preparation for the centenary of the laying of St Andrew's cornerstone in May 2027, and of its dedication and opening on St Andrew's Day in 2030.

Recast as a series of podcasts in the face of restrictions imposed by the current war, the first podcast, *Laying the Cornerstone*, was recorded in March with AK Miller, Salim Munayer, and Munther Issac participating, moderated by

John Munayer. Our producer is Shireen Hilal, of New Vision Media at the Bethlehem Bible College. The second podcast, *Our Changing Theology and Practice of Mission*, is scheduled for 8 May, with Ian Alexander, Carol Morton and Yusef Al Khoury (Dean, Bethlehem Bible College) on the panel. The third podcast, *The Future of St Andrew's in a New Kairos*, is projected to have Trish Archibald, the Rev Sally Azar, and Anton Goodman (of RHR) participate, date TBC. I give thanks to Salvesen for the funding, and for all who have been part of the journey so far.

In conclusion, may I thank The Friends for its prayerful, skilful, dedicated support of the life and work of St Andrew's Jerusalem & Tiberias in trying times for the Church, both in the Holy Land and in Scotland. On behalf of Muriel and I, a word of thanks for your friendship, encouragement and guidance over the course.

When Jesus addressed his disciples with the words, 'Peace I leave with you,' he made an emphatic distinction between his peace, given his way, and the peace the world gives, in its way. It was in *his* peace the disciples were to take heart, untroubled and unafraid. When I tire of using the word peace in prayer, I remember this distinction. We may well tire of hearing it in general discourse, gutted of meaning, suspected of treachery, bereft of intent as it is. The peace of Christ, a sacrificial giving, comes at great cost to him and to his followers, and so retains the power of accusation and of healing.

Church of Scotland

Kenny Roger, Resource and Presence Manager

This report sits alongside the reports of the Ministers and covers the period from May 2025 to date.

St Andrew's Jerusalem

Since October 2023, the war has impacted every part of the Church of Scotland's work in Palestine and Israel. In Jerusalem, there have been very few pilgrim groups throughout this period, and this has meant smaller in person services, with some joining regularly online. This has been amplified since the end of February, when the war on Iran began, with a state of emergency still being in

place at the time of writing, a month after the war began. With airports closed, and no end in sight, people are unsure as to when life will return 'to normal'.

In early March, Rev Dr Stewart Gillan returned to Scotland, and he has also intimated that he will not be renewing his contract. As this ends on 31 July 2026. It is hoped that, by the time you read this, a recruitment process will be under way although it is not expected to have anyone in place in Jerusalem until the end of the year at the earliest. In the meantime, we are looking for who can support the congregation in Jerusalem, drawing on our ties with our Church partners and with our Ecumenical Associate, Dave Hardman. This will put a strain on the congregation, and so please do keep them in your prayers at this time.

The painting of the roof is not yet completed, and the chancel requires work to ensure its stability.

St Andrew's Tiberias

Rev Muriel Pearson left Tiberias at the end of her contract in October 2025, to take up a new role in Scotland. Since then, Joanna Oakley-Levenstein has supported the congregation as a locum. As with Jerusalem, services are either online or small in person ones. We are grateful for Joanna's willingness to take on more in Tiberias at this time.

Currently we are unsure as to whether we will recruit to this post going forward. The General Assembly in 2026 will decide whether to retain the Scots Hotel, and should they choose not to, there will need to be a re-evaluation around the role of the Mission Partner in Tiberias.

Yakfie, the manse, has continued to provide a place of refuge and hospitality for Ecumenical Accompaniers and local Church leaders. This has always been well received and very much appreciated, and it is hoped that this will be able to continue in some form. Whilst we await decisions around Tiberias, no further work has taken place on the Galilee Garden proposal.

Partners

As Stewart and Muriel can clarify, our partners are finding life next to impossible. The war has made life much more difficult, and receiving funds from donors is increasingly problematic. Centrally, there is a focus on reducing expenditure, so the only likely support for partners is from congregations or members, and The Friends. An exception to this is EAPPI.

Each of our partners have a common aim – to oppose injustices and to end the Israeli occupation. We seek to support them, and I am sure that within the Ministers' report, there will be more updates on specific partners. Please continue to keep our partners in your prayers, as they oppose the injustices they see on the ground, and struggle for a just and lasting peace.

St Andrew's Scots House Hotel, Jerusalem

The situation facing the House Hotel is critical. With no uptick in tourism, the Church centrally has had to step in over the last year to provide cash support to enable operations to continue. Whilst there have been a good number of Israelis using the property, and a good number of events held, overall occupancy has been low. A Christmas market was again held in December. This was another successful event, with many people glad to have the chance to celebrate together.

The issues around the garden at the back of the property are now of key concern. A hearing has just been held to understand the objections to the planning application, and a response is now awaited from the planning committee. The lease for the garden runs out towards the end of this year, and so there is a push to understand our rights around that, and also to find out if there is common ground for any negotiation.

Scots Hotel, Tiberias

The Scots Hotel, like the House Hotel in Jerusalem, has had a very tough year. Once the evacuees left, business was very slow, and despite picking up over the summer, the lack of tourists has meant that occupancy over the 'shoulder' months has remained very low. Cash support has been required for the first time ever from the Church of Scotland to help operations continue, albeit at a very reduced level.

At the same time, the Assembly Trustees have moved forward with a proposal to lease the Hotel to a third party, and this will come to the General Assembly in 2026. This process has had an unsettling effect on the staff, and in fact also led to cancellations of local groups, who were unsure as to whether it would still be the Scots Hotel when they were due to come. It is hoped that should a lease happen, many of the staff will retain their roles.

Tabeetha School, Jaffa

Tabeetha continues to face challenges as would be expected, with online learning now in place due to the war. Financially, the loss of a number of international students has made things difficult, particularly with costs rising rapidly in Israel. Fee increases are problematic for parents, and so the school is trying to ease the burden as much as possible. It has been agreed to do a full report on the buildings, and to understand what sort of renovation may be required in the short to medium term, and how any renovation can enhance the schools' offering. The Israel Palestine Committee is working with the Board of Governors on this.

Faith Action Programme / Israel Palestine Committee

It remains the case that the reduction of staff working on the International work has damaged many of our relationships and has meant that there is little capacity to write statements or provide commentary on the work, despite our best attempts to do so. It has been difficult to sign statements, and difficult to find the best way to write effectively for the website and social media. Alongside that, the focus on the commercial establishments has meant less time to focus on the partnerships. The ongoing war also meant partner visiting from the Ministers was difficult. We continue to try and navigate our way through the challenges.

The Moderator of the General Assembly was due to visit Jerusalem at Easter, with Ian Alexander and me, but sadly that was cancelled. This would have been an excellent opportunity to show solidarity with our partners in the area, at a time of deep distress and difficulty for them. It is hoped that a visit may happen later this year, once the war ends. It will be vital to do so.

The 24th of the month events continue and have been a good resource for many wanting to find out more about the situation, and to pray into it. This has been a joint initiative with Christian Aid, and the Church is also regularly in touch with the URC and Methodist Church, to find ways of working better together around the work in Israel and Palestine.

The Israel Palestine Committee continues to develop, with the hope that in the coming year there will be more focus on the partnerships; there will be a group looking at Kairos Palestine 2..

Events with Christian Aid Scotland

Val Brown

Alongside other Churches in Scotland and Christian Aid, we continue to meet on the 24th of most months to hold the Holy Land in our prayers. Hearing from those who live, work, or have visited recently, gives us a chance to understand better what life is like for Palestinians and Israelis as conflict and displacement continue.

This year we have heard the powerful and humbling message of The Parents' Circle - the people who have paid the heaviest price of the conflict - that of losing a child - standing together across

communities and demanding that governments and leaders do likewise. Our own Stewart Gilan led a session framed around recent Palestinian readings of the Good Samaritan, and in April we were joined by Azar Ajaj - from Nazareth Evangelical College. Please do sign up to get the link for all future events.

[Prayers for Peace in the Middle East - Christian Aid](#) On 24th June we will be in person in Inverness, with an online livestream option, as we hear from the Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Bishop Mark Strange, and on 24th September, we will be in person in Stirling (livestreamed as well) to hear from the President of the Methodist Church, Rev Mark Slaney. And of course we will be delighted to hear from the Moderator, the Rt Rev Rosie Frew at our Friends' service later this year. Details of all of these events will be shared as they are known. Watch on the website / Facebook page.



Our St Andrew's Day Service in 2025 was held in St Cuthbert's Parish Church with around 70 attending and 50 online viewing during and following the service. The Very Rev Dr Shaw Paterson preached and musical accompaniment was provided by Morley Whitehead (organ). PROJECT 26 was launched by Rev Muriel Pearson, who outlined Bees for Peace (Sindyanna), and Maureen Jack who stressed the importance of the education programme run by Hebron International Resources Network (HIRN). Hadeel made over £500 through the sale of their Palestinian Fair Trade products. Thanks for all the support by the Minister and staff of St Cuthbert's Church are recorded here.

Membership

Douglas Simpson / Carol Miller

The main initiative this year was the production of a short promotional video showing the strategic locations of our two Holy Land churches and publicising the wonderful work they do while providing a Christian presence in that troubled land. The video was financed by members of the Committee and featured Andrew McLellan, Carol Miller and Liz Chalmers.

Membership of The Friends as at 28.04.26		<i>(2025 figures in brackets)</i>			
	Email	Non Email		Totals	
Life	122 (119) 72% (69%)	47 (53)	28% (31%)	169 (172)	
Annual	83 (79) 91% (91%)	8 (8)	9% (9%)	91 (86)	
Associate	20 (16) 83% (76%)	4 (5)	17% (24%)	23 (21)	
Totals	225 (213) 79% (76%)	59 (66)	21% (24%)	283 (279)	

Changes since May 2025

- We have welcomed 12 members to The Friends, including 4 Associate members.
- 42 (27) Members have set up standing orders.
- 7 members have died / "gone away".

Military Links

Thanks to Rev Nicol Frail (who participated in our St Andrew's Day Service in 2025), Padre Stewart Mackay has joined us as the Military Representative. We look forward to his input as we approach May 2027, the anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of St Andrew's Scots Memorial Church, Jerusalem.

Scholarship Programme

Prof Alison Jack

No awards have been made this year due to the situation in Israel and occupied Palestine, meaning a scholar cannot travel.

Communication and Publicity

Thanks to all contributors who, since the last AGM the committee have continued with regular communication with Friends – and beyond...

Promotion of The Friends

Thanks to Douglas Simpson, Andrew McLellan and Carol Miller, the short **promotional video** of The Friends became a reality and is on our website.

Val Brown's talk to the Howwood Parish Guild in November resulted in them becoming Associate members.

A short talk by The Friends Committee Member, **Douglas Simpson**, at his local church, Black Isle East, led to a £500 donation to The Friends from the church.

Carol Miller spoke to the Thursday Club of Kinnoull Parish Church about The Friends of St Andrew's and has two further engagements within Perth talking about the history of the Church of Scotland in I/OPT lined up. Thanks to Walter Dunlop for his assistance in providing the facts and images.

Do please let us know if you too would like **to invite a speaker**, to hear more about The Friends and the Church of Scotland in I/OPT. Our PP presentation, along with the video, are ready to be shared.

Facebook

Maureen Jack

The Friends' Facebook page was set up in November 2022. Since then it has acquired 416 followers and had 2.4k posts. There have been posts with news of the Church of Scotland ministers, presence and partners in Palestine and Israel; information on events in Scotland and online; shared posts about the situation on the ground; and news about members. The page has largely been managed by Maureen Jack, who is retiring at the AGM.

Newsletter

Calum MacSween

Over the past year we have produced four newsletters all of which have been well received thanks to a wide range of interesting contributors. A particular thanks goes to our convener, Rev Dr Ian Alexander, who provided our front page article in each issue and to our three other regular contributors, Rev Stewart Gillan, Rev Muriel Pearson and Maureen Jack - all four of them writing from personal experiences in Israel / OPT in the past year.

Normally, newsletters are 8-pagers with 6/7 pages having different authors to ensure variety. While our four regular contributors anchored each edition, we have also been blessed by a wide range of other contributors ensuring we meet our hope that anyone picking up the newsletter will find at least one page of interest. In practice, there are usually many more.

Offers of contributions for 2026 – 2027 newsletters, or suggestions for topics to be covered, will always be gratefully received. Finally, a special note of thanks to our tireless secretary, Carol Miller, who prints and distributes newsletters for those not online and ensures online members get their copies too. Really appreciated.

Website

Carol Miller

Closely linked with our Facebook page, we have continued to post news, blogs and images. Events are constantly updated, including those of Christian Aid and Hadeel. Of particular importance is the addition of PROJECT 26 which gives regular updates on our fund-raising for 2026. Please continue to follow us for information of what's going on.



Forthcoming Events

Wednesday 24th June 2026 – 18.30 tbc

Prayers for Peace in the Middle East

Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, Bishop Mark Strange

Inverness – Episcopal Cathedral

[Prayers for Peace in the Middle East – Christian Aid](#) to register for
livestream option

Thursday 24th September 2026 – 19.00

Prayers for Peace in the Middle East

President of the Methodist Church, Rev Mark Slaney.

Stirling – details to follow

[Prayers for Peace in the Middle East – Christian Aid](#) to register for
livestream option

Monday 30th November 2026 – 14.00

St Andrew's Day Service

Parish Church, Melrose

Preacher : The Very Rev Rosie Frew, Moderator of the General
Assembly 2025

All members of The Friends are invited to the Service and are
encouraged to bring anyone else who may wish to attend. Please
spread the word.



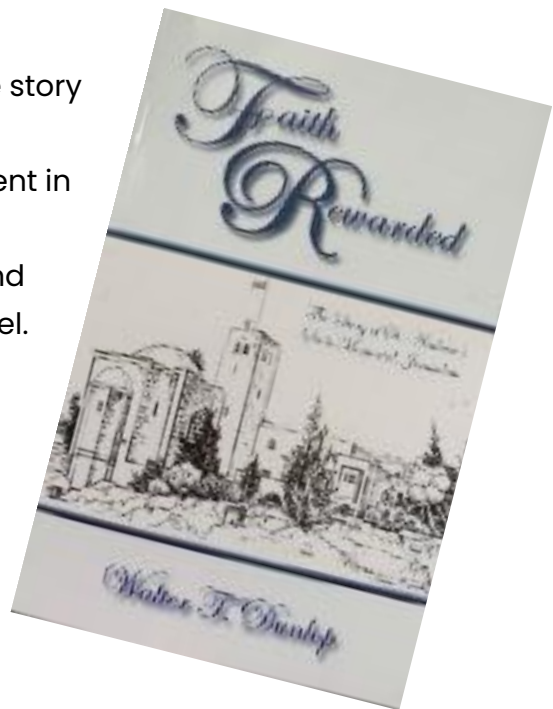
For Sale

Available from secretary@friendsofstandrews.com 07874 024309

Faith Rewarded, A History of St Andrew's, Jerusalem by Walter Dunlop

The story of one man's dream, a vision. It is the story of an enterprise unparalleled in the history of the Church of Scotland. It is the story of commitment in the face of danger and dogged persistence in facing up to immense obstacles in Scotland and the shifting political scene in Palestine and Israel. It is the story of a depth of faith that leaves you questioning your own.

£10.00 at events (£12 including postage)



Bookmarks

Already isolated in a village near Hebron, Surif Women's Cooperative depends on sales of their intricate work as they struggle to survive. As Friends we have undertaken to support them though their embroidered bookmarks, the funds from every purchase going directly to benefit the cooperative.

£5 each at events (£6.50 including postage)



Become a Friend

Name

Address

Email

I would like to join The Friends, as an Annual Member

Payment Options

I would like to make an annual subscription and will pay by Standing Order (*the SO form will be forwarded on receipt of your application*)

I enclose a cheque for £20 payable to The Church of Scotland

I will pay by BACS

Name The Church of Scotland
Account No 00134859
Sort Code 83-06-08
Ref FSAJSubs – *your surname*

Please return form and (if applicable) cheque to:

The Friends of St Andrew's Jerusalem & Tiberias c/o 121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN

Gift Aid

I am a UK Tax Payer and I would like The Church of Scotland to reclaim the tax on all qualifying donations I have made, as well as any future donations, until I notify them otherwise. I understand that if I pay less income/capital gains tax than the amount of the Gift Aid Claim on all my donations in the tax year in which they are received, it is my responsibility to pay any difference and that I must notify the charity of any changes to my tax status, including any changes to my name and address.

OR join online www.friendsofstandrews.com/get-involved

I agree to The Friends contacting me about their work and events.



Signature _____ Date _____

The Friends will respect your details, in accordance with The Data Protection Act 1998. For more information, please visit our website.