



Highlights

2023 has been a very encouraging year for us at John Knox. We have seen work to refurbish the church sanctuary completed, our Presbytery pioneer ministry, Thrive, going from strength to strength and Christina Ritchie, our new youth worker, settling in extremely well. Below are just some of the highlights of 2023 in the life of our church family in this past year.

For the **Worship** Special Interest Group (SIG) the transition to Sunday morning services in our newly refurbished sanctuary was the major highlight. This wonderful, flexible space for the life and ministry of the church has also coincided with an encouraging increase in attendance at services by youth and Thrive contacts. The youth band, led by Helen Hunter and Aileen Muir, continue to contribute to services and worship events at John Knox and beyond. John Strathdee with the support of Mary Watson, have provided excellent cover on the organ in the absence of Amy Young. We wish her a speedy recovery. Livestream services continue to reach around 60 people each week: roughly 20 watch live, another 20 later that day and another 20 during the week.

It's been lovely to see the fruit of the **Prayer** SIG's efforts in the number of new people now helping lead the prayers on a Sunday and in the numbers attending the monthly prayer meeting.



The **Thrive** team's Renew wellbeing drop-in has 51 guests attending regularly of which 31 are not JK churchgoers. We have had many introductions from the GP surgery, folk inviting friends with others walking in off the street. We were delighted for Mags, Susan and Camelia as they joined JK. A partnership with Stewarston Table Tennis club has people mixing between the spaces. There are monthly health checks,

advice on housing and benefits. We have added a baby corner for parents/carers and wee ones. Our monthly Saturday FunZone mornings continue and we have started weekly Baby Beats music classes with 18 mums/carers and babies loving the sessions. A key focus of the **Community** SIG has been to support Thrive this year.



In the **Children & Youth** SIG we were delighted to recruit Christina Ritchie as our new part-time youth worker. Christina has settled in really well and has been hard at work. More from Christina herself later. We give thanks for our Trailblazer leaders preparing fun and engaging materials every week for our church children, not knowing from week to week whether they will have ten, three or no children. We had another successful

holiday club this year with a lovely group of very enthusiastic children led by a great team. This team included a large number of youth who took on significant roles including upfront responsibilities. Our Bubble Gum 'n' Fluff (Christmas) and Easter Code events for primary 6 and 7 respectively are now well-established as part of our schools' ministry, to go alongside existing assemblies in our primaries and secondary school. In December the Big ADVENTure saw a group of P1-7 kids hearing the Christmas story in a holiday club style event, followed by a successful family community lunch. This year JK again sent children to SU primary and secondary weekends.



The **Adult Education** SIG ran two Alpha courses this year and it was a joy to hear the testimonies of some who went on the course, in a morning service by the organiser, Peter Anderson. Two house groups continue to run during the week exploring a variety of Bible passages and topics. After 15 years faithful service as

president of the Guild May Smith stepped down in 2023 and we welcomed Susan Quinn as the new president.

The **Pastoral** SIG continues to serve the congregation meeting weekly to pray for members and their friends and families who are in any kind of need. Through visits, telephone calls and cards we bring the love of Christ and His people to encourage those struggling. The generous donations of flowers on Sunday continue to inspire our worship on Sundays and to bring great encouragement to those who the Pastoral SIG deliver them too.

2023 was a mixed year for **World Mission** SIG. Some of our World Horizons mission partners faced challenging times: the Tate family were arbitrarily expelled from Turkey; the Rothons (currently in the USA) faced financial challenges; in Cyprus Ryan Keating received a settlement and an apology from the newspaper which had published a defamatory article about him. Amidst our support of these missionaries we were able to enjoy a visit from a speaker from UFM on our annual Mission Sunday in November and also continue to support both financially and in prayer other mission partners and charities.

The **Communications** SIG upgraded the wifi throughout our premises creating public and private networks. It also produced graphics highlighting activities for welcome area and Cottage screens

Last year saw a transformation in the sanctuary where the **Property** SIG removed all downstairs pews in order to provide a more flexible worship area. This has been a

great success with various groups and organisations now using it. We also installed an accessible toilet in the vestibule.

As a SIG group, **Compliance & Facilitation** is mostly reactive. When there are events, the group needs to make sure that any rules and regulations are followed and liaise with other SIG groups. There is a lot of crossover with Ian Campbell in Property group. A practical example is making sure that anyone wishing to bake for any events is reminded of the rules and regulations that are mandatory and they are signposted to them.

We held a Gift Day in August and once again the **Finance SIG** was delighted with the congregation's support for this. £8,305 was raised and Gift Aid claims will be added to this.

Through all these activities and more we continue as a church to be committed to knowing God better, reaching out to others and sharing God's generosity to us with others, and all God's people said "Amen".

Youth Review 2023 and Plans for 2024 (Christina Ritchie)

2023 has been a busy year for the youth work at John Knox. It has been so encouraging and fun to see our young people grow and develop over this year.



We held a fundraising coffee morning which raised just over £500 which helped our young people go to Magnitude. We have been attending youth events such as worship nights and SU Equip which have been great in growing the faith of our young people. We have created a youth programme within the Ayrshire churches with worship nights, games nights, socials and a ceilidh. It has been

really encouraging seeing the young people connect with other Christians from the same area. In June we held a quiz night and stay awake fundraiser which raised around £2000 to go towards the sanctuary renovations. Most of our young people got involved in holiday club helping in groups, leading crafts and games, doing music, puppets and drama and just did a great job at getting alongside the children. Following Holiday club 14 of us went along to Magnitude in the summer which was a fantastic week worshipping and being together. One of our young people made the decision to follow Jesus which is really special. The youth band has grown this year and they held a youth worship night back in August, the worship was led by our own youth band and we had a testimony from another of the youth. We've been along to events such as GO Conference and weekend residenceals with SU and it has been so encouraging to see just how much they've grown and been supported. The youth have been getting more actively involved in church life, helping on the sound desk, at Trailblazers, on teas and coffees and in band and it has been great seeing them step up to fill these different roles and seeing them serve the church and each other. Pick up our newsletter and read more of what we have been doing. It truly has been an encouraging and growth-filled year.

2024 Plans

Here are just some of our plans for 2024:

Adult Education:

- Run Alpha in Spring and Autumn
- Work closely with Thrive to seek the mutual flourishing of Thrive and the church in our ministry to 20s and 40s

Children & Youth

- Increase the role of our youth worker to 20 hours per week
- Continue to invest in the Ayrshire, SU and community events.
- Prepare the young people who are moving on from youth for uni or college
- Grow our leadership team (volunteers coming along to help)

Compliance & Facilitation:

- Run a Food Hygiene course, coordinated by Peter Anderson.

Communications:

- Create new church promotional video for social media and website
- Create new church guide booklet for parish distribution updating 2017 edition

Community

- Continue to support the development of Thrive in our community

Pastoral

- Carry out a review of our pastoral care provision
- Build the pastoral team

Prayerty

- Build a new ramp for Church front door
- Build a storage and workshop facility adjacent to the Cottage car park on our neighbour's garden
- Install a fire alarm system in all buildings to meet current legislation.

Thrive

- Explore increasing the hours of our Renew drop-in with additional activities such as a free mobile hairdressing service in the church carpark through EACHa
- Consider further employing a part time family worker.
- A new Shed will include DIY and other activities led by church members and sessional workers to bring folk together to aid wellbeing and employability.
- Continue our Forest Church afternoons and introduce another worship opportunity.

Worship:

- Explore new ways to use our recently renovated, flexible sanctuary
- Continue to encourage and mentor our existing youth band

World Mission

- Keep a link with Malawi by establishing a connection with Africa Vision (Malawi) and the Sam's Village project.
- Explore a partnerships in another continents, such as Venezuela or Colombia in South America.

