

## Guild partners unveiled

Projects in Scotland, Egypt and Bulgaria chosen for 2024-27 cycle



THE Church of Scotland Guild will support projects providing bibles to toddlers and supporting young people and families in Scotland, and support for Christians in Bulgaria and Egypt, over the next three years.

The Guild last week announced its four partner projects which it will support by raising awareness and funds over the next three-year cycle.

The first Project Partner for 2025-27 is the Scottish Bible Society, supporting Bibles for Bairns, providing bibles and other reading materials to children born in Scotland. Children who are signed up will receive the Share a Story Bible on their first birthday, birthday cards and resources on the next three birthdays, and, on their fifth birthday, a children's Bible to start to read themselves.

The second Scotland-based partner organisation is CrossReach, the social care provider of the Church of Scotland. The

Guild will support two projects, both working with young people: Daisy Chain in Govanhill, Glasgow, and Sunflower Garden in Edinburgh

There are also two projects based overseas. The first is Operation Hope, Release International's work to support Christians living in Upper Egypt. Operation Hope provides families with basic living needs, helps them to establish micro-businesses, and provides spiritual care through regular visits and discipleship programmes.

The final project is Bear Necessities for Bulgaria, a Scottish-based fundraising group that is aiming to support a church plant in the town of Sliven, providing services, training, a soup lunch and medical outreach.

Over £425,000 was raised for the six projects chosen for the Guild's 2021-24 cycle, despite a year lost to Covid restrictions.

**Welcome** to the Life and Work monthly newsletter, a free resource helping Church of Scotland members stay up-to-date with everything going on in the Church and its partners.

Each month there will be exclusive features, news and updates from Church organisations.

The newsletter is free to download from [www.lifeandwork.org/newsletter](http://www.lifeandwork.org/newsletter). Feel free to share with church members, friends and family, and get in touch if you have any comments or suggestions.

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# Transformative change

Jo Elliot explains how Christian Aid support and mobile phone banking are empowering women in Sierra Leone



SIERRA Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world. I first went there in 1973 as a volunteer teacher of physics with VSO. At that point I knew nothing of sub-Saharan Africa but I wanted to see some more of the world, and Sierra Leone was where they sent me.

That was just 12 years after the country gained independence from the UK. Since then, Sierra Leone has not had its troubles to seek. Between 1991 and 2002 there was a terrible civil war, and the deadly fever Ebola took hold between 2014 and 2016.

Against that background foreign aid has been crucial to improving living standards. There are over 700 non-governmental organisations from the UK alone operating in the country, among them Christian Aid. Recently I joined a brief visit to Sierra Leone organised by Christian Aid for a few supporters. It was very exciting to be back in the country 50 years on.

The stereotypical form of foreign aid provision has been to provide equipment and services based on the donor's perception of what was needed. My own efforts as a volunteer teacher probably fell into this trap. But things have moved on. When Jesus meets the blind beggar Bartimaeus in Mark 10 He says to him, 'what do you want me to do for you?' And only when Bartimaeus responds that he wants to see again does Jesus restore his sight.

There is a practical as well as a theological insight here, that interventions intended to improve people's lives have to be respectful of their agency. And it was inspiring to see Christian Aid putting that insight into practice in their development of microfinance projects.

People in rural areas cannot usually reach formal banking services. For women this problem is exacerbated by traditional norms which stymie their access to household money. So the projects are trialling a new way of bringing mobile financial services to women in outlying villages, enabling them to grow businesses that will increase their income and transform their status in the community.

At its simplest, the key piece of technology for microfinance is a strong box with multiple padlocks. Each member of the group has the key to her padlock and all must be present for the box to be opened. But the advantage of aggregating them like this is that they can be loaned out to members of the group. The rate of default is very low, because each borrower knows that she must repay so as not to risk her neighbours' savings. This arrangement is known as a Village Saving and Loan Association, or VSLA.


But the project that we saw takes this to a new level, with the innovation of mobile money. Even in quite remote rural areas there is now mobile phone

coverage and this allows electronic money transfer.

The difference mobile money makes to the VSLA is that the funds can be held in a bank or credit union, giving access to larger loans and interest on deposits. So the project strengthens women's savings and credit unions, by using mobile money to connect members to banking services and offering them a faster and safer way to send and receive payments, save money and access loans. Not only does the extra money help lift families out of poverty, it also increases these women's influence within their families and communities.

When we visited there was no mistaking people's appreciation of each project and their commitment to making it work.

This project is part of Christian Aid's In Their Lifetime programme, which is underpinned by the idea that we need to push beyond tried and tested approaches and work with local partners to achieve transformative change. Over 13 years, the programme has enabled many thousands of people to transform their lives and communities.

If you or your church would like to support work like this, or learn more, visit Christian Aid's website and search for '[In Their Lifetime](#)' or email [FShakespeare@christian-aid.org](mailto:FShakespeare@christian-aid.org) 

*Jo Elliot is the Session Clerk of Greyfriars Kirk, Edinburgh*

### Holy Land Film Screening

The Church of Scotland, Christian Aid and Friends of St Andrew Jerusalem and Tiberias are to jointly host a screening of The Tinderbox, a rare and thought-provoking examination of injustice and conflict in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory.

The film presents a wide variety of contemporary voices as well as exploring how history continues to play out in the daily lives of people on either side of the divide. It is directed by Gillian Mosely, who will take part in a Q&A after the screening.

Join in person at Augustine United Church, Edinburgh at 6.30pm on June 24, or watch online. For more info visit [www.christianaid.org.uk/events/screening-tinderbox-and-qa](http://www.christianaid.org.uk/events/screening-tinderbox-and-qa)

### Game Brings Cathedral History to Life

The 900-year history of St Giles' Cathedral in Edinburgh has been recreated in a historical video game. In a collaboration between the iconic High Kirk, the University of Glasgow's Games and Gaming Lab and game studio Education Evolved, the free game will transport visitors through the Cathedral's architectural evolution. Play at [www.educationevolved.com/stgilescathedral](http://www.educationevolved.com/stgilescathedral)

### Sanctuary Sunday Resource

Scottish Faiths Action for Refugees has launched Stand up for Sanctuary, a worship resource for Sanctuary Sunday based on the lectionary readings for June 23. It contains Biblical reflections, prayers and practical next steps for how to support refugees. It can be accessed at [www.sfar.org.uk/sanctuary-sunday-2024/](http://www.sfar.org.uk/sanctuary-sunday-2024/)

### Church of Scotland Learning

Church of Scotland Learning, launched a year ago, is open to anyone with a Church connection to help them explore their faith, and to support office holders in their roles. It can be accessed via [www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/church-of-scotland-learning](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/church-of-scotland-learning)

A webinar will be held on Wednesday June 26 at 1.30pm touring the site, giving insights into the modules available and highlighting the opportunities it offers. Register at <https://shorturl.at/XMv58>

### CrossReach Chair

The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland has appointed Dr Mike Cantlay OBE as Convener of its Social Care Council.

Mike will chair the Board of CrossReach, one of Scotland's largest third-sector care providers. Mike became an admirer of CrossReach when his own mother entered care in 2018 and joined the Board in 2020.

He said: "I am honoured to take on this new role and work alongside the dedicated teams at CrossReach. I have witnessed first hand the incredible impact of CrossReach's services when they cared for my mother, and I am truly passionate about supporting and enhancing social care across Scotland."

### General Assembly Supplement

Life and Work has a special supplement to the key moments of this year's General Assembly, available from [www.lifeandwork.org/resources/general-assembly-2024-special-supplement](http://www.lifeandwork.org/resources/general-assembly-2024-special-supplement)

## What's On

### Growth Fund Webinars

Wednesday June 19, 7pm  
Monday September 2, 7pm  
Zoom

Free webinars are to be held to help people wishing to apply to the Church of Scotland's Seeds for Growth fund. Seeds for Growth supports projects aimed at church growth. Project ideas must be based around new church communities, young people or 'fostering discipleship and revitalisation within established congregations'. The webinars will help guide anyone interested through the application process.

To register email [grants@churchofscotland.org.uk](mailto:grants@churchofscotland.org.uk) stating which session you wish to attend.

### SU Scotland Holiday Clubs

[www.suscotland.org.uk/events/](http://www.suscotland.org.uk/events/)

#### Leith Churches

July 1-5  
Newhaven Church, Edinburgh

#### Bannockburn

July 1-5  
Ladywell Church, Bannockburn

#### Friary Holiday Club, Dundee

July 8-12

The Friary

#### St John's Colinton Mains and Craiglockhart

July 29-August 2  
St John's Colinton Mains Church, Edinburgh

#### Ferguslie Park

July 29-August 2  
Tannahill Centre, Paisley

#### Eyemouth

August 5-9  
Eyemouth Parish Church

**Contact local churches for details of holiday clubs in your area**

## In July's Life and Work

### Beyond Chariots of Fire

The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Eric Liddell's Olympic gold.

### Assembly 2024

Six pages of reports and pictures. John Williams' 50 years of service to the Assembly.

### The Scottish Parliament's First Home

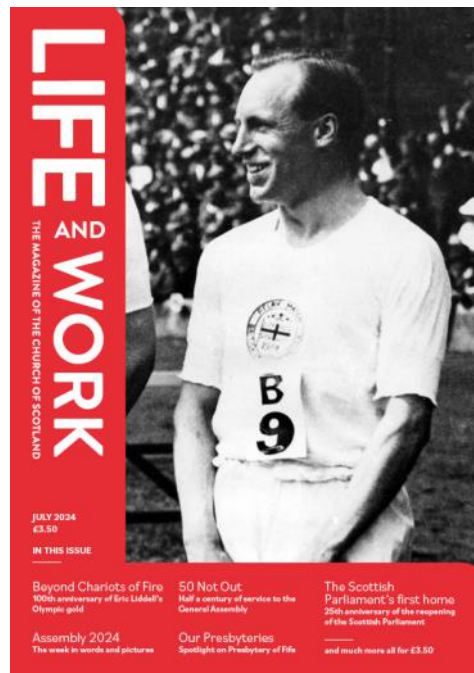
25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the reopening in the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall.

### Uncomfortable Truths

Confronting the legacy of slavery on a pilgrimage to Jamaica.

### Our Presbyteries

Presbytery of Fife.



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## The Big Picture

Blossom, Portobello High Street, by Joanne Baird



**Editor:** Lynne McNeil. **Deputy Editor:** Thomas Baldwin. **Features Writer:** Jackie Macadam

**Business Manager:** Dianne Sanderson. **Administrator:** Melissa Grimley

Life and Work, Church of Scotland, 121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN. Scottish charity number SC011353