

## St. Mark's Unitarian Church, Unitarians in Edinburgh

### Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2024



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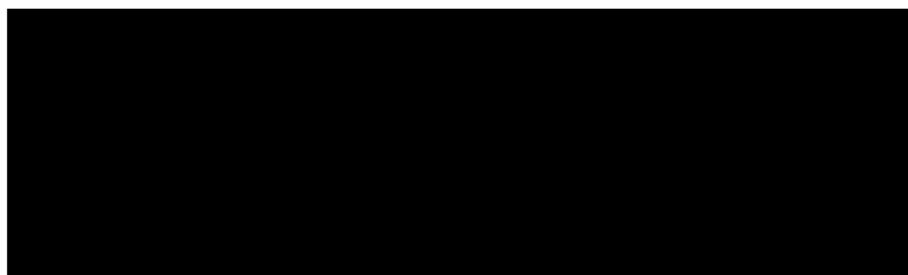
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**St Mark's Unitarian Church  
Trustees' Annual Report  
for the year from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024**

**CHARITY CONTACT INFORMATION**

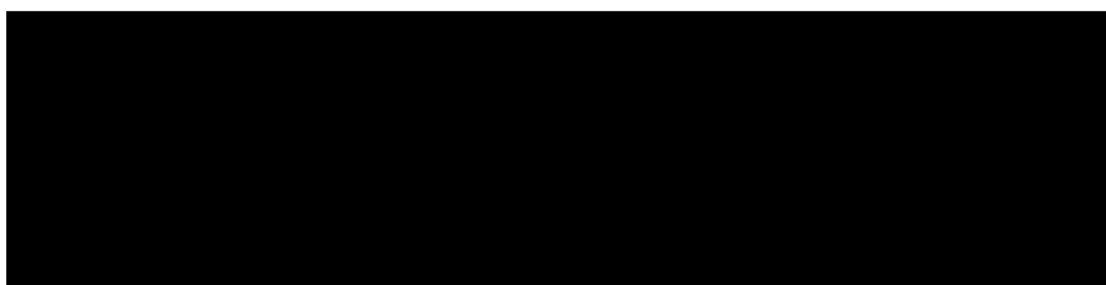
St. Mark's Unitarian Church  
Also known as: Unitarians in Edinburgh  
Registered Charity Number: SC014167

Address  
Telephone number  
Email address  
Website  
Facebook



**CHARITY TRUSTEES**

The Elected Trustees and Council Members on the date of approval of Trustees' Annual Report were as follows:



Names of all other Council Members during the period covered by this report:

Nil

Our Constitution states that we should have a maximum of 7 trustees, a minimum of 5; the quorum is 4. The Council has the power to appoint any willing and eligible member to be a Trustee.



## **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **Governing structure**

St. Mark's Unitarian Church is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), Scottish Charity Number SC014167.

Its governing document is the Constitution adopted in 2013 and revised in 2021 and 2023.

The Society is an autonomous body which is voluntarily affiliated to the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches and to the Scottish Unitarian Association.

### **Trustee recruitment and appointment**

The members of Council (maximum 7, minimum 5) are the charity trustees. The trustees are elected from amongst the members, by the members at the Annual General Meeting. If a vacancy arises, an additional member of Council may be co-opted. Officers are appointed by the Council subsequent to the Annual General Meeting.

Final authority in the Society is vested in the members acting in a general meeting at which only members may vote.

### **Objectives and activities**

St. Mark's Unitarian Church has the following aims:

- To encourage spiritual and personal growth.
- To encourage the development and spread of Unitarian principles.
- To promote Unitarian ideals and Unitarianism by working with other Unitarian groups.
- To provide fellowship and spiritual support.
- To further grow our community, spiritually and numerically.
- To maintain, preserve and enhance the church premises and to optimise the use of our premises and material resources for the furtherance of the Society's aims.
- To liaise with the Scottish Unitarian Association and General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches in furthering our mutual aims.

Our main activities in relation to these aims are:

- Provision of services of worship, and other services e.g. rites of passage, services to mark special events.
- Rites of passage services are available to all, not only members of our community.
- Provision of spiritual and social activities outwith regular Sunday services.
- Encouraging involvement and representation with other groups, both Unitarian and other like-minded organisations.
- Encouraging the involvement of members in Church activities.
- Financial assistance to support lay ministry and outreach; sponsorship of delegates attending national Unitarian events.
- Charitable donations to Unitarian and other causes.

## Achievements and Performance

2024 was another busy year for St Mark's. We had taken the decision in the previous year to repair our Upper Hall roof, rather than attempt to sell our building and early this year, work was finally completed. This allowed us to start using the hall again and to continue letting our building for events. We thank our Treasury and Management Teams for taking us through this very significant and demanding period of work.

In Spring, Council decided to sound out our members and friends about what they hoped for the future of St Mark's and we ran a well-attended discussion workshop. We also designed an electronic survey with a short number of questions ranging from the practical to the more whimsical 'If anything was possible, what transformation would you like to see?'

Throughout the year we have held a weekly Sunday morning service that is always on Zoom and mostly also in St Mark's and have been pleased to welcome less experienced members of the congregation to lead services, as well as utilising our more experienced leaders and visiting Ministers. In months where there was a fifth Sunday, a more meditative service was often held 'in the round' in the Upper Hall, with a Zoom option and those services were well attended and generally judged to be very successful. We thank our technical volunteers for their considerable help.

We are very pleased that new people continued to start attending St Mark's and that visitors were coming back, as well as the number of people accessing our service via Zoom being fairly stable.

In August, as usual, we became a Festival Fringe venue and had a successful three weeks of shows with good footfall. Volunteers stepped up to assist our professional Front of House Manager in acting as ushers and Box Office staff and we are grateful for this.

A sub-group on Council designed and arranged for the printing of an attractive leaflet on 'Unitarians in Edinburgh' detailing our ethos, what to expect at services, etc. and this was available for Festival audiences to take if interested.

The Trustees on Council remained unchanged this year. Teams such as the Ministry Team, Management Team, Treasury Team and Communications Team all continued to work together to ensure that St Mark's affairs ran smoothly and are all thanked for their often unseen efforts. We also thank our caretaker and our cleaner for their work and our professional pianist who continues to delight us with her musical offerings during our services.

In Autumn, we were pleased to have the chance to consider hosting a final year Ministry Student. Council carefully considered the desirability and affordability of this option and towards the end of the year we welcomed our Student Minister. Our student successfully ran key services for us such as Remembrance Sunday, a baby naming ceremony and our Christmas Celebration service and remained with us, as a student, until May 2025.

The St Mark's e-bulletin continued to be virtually delivered to in excess of 260 people each week. As well as this being a bulletin for upcoming services, Council announcements and so on, members and friends are encouraged to send in articles and photos and do so.

We were delighted to hold several successful social events during 2024, such as pot luck lunches.

We also noted the timely closing down of the Chennai Fund with the surplus money being passed on to an excellent charity who will continue the good work.

On a sad note however, we were sorry to learn of the deaths of several longstanding and valued members and friends of St Mark's.

To conclude, St Mark's ended 2024 with the fabric of the building much improved and with a feeling of optimism about the sustainability of our community. As always, the strength of St Mark's lies in the commitment of its members and friends who give generously through financial contributions and volunteering, or by simply being part of our community.



Church Convenor

## **MINISTRY AND WORSHIP**

Services of worship are held on Sundays, usually in church and also streamed on Zoom. We are grateful to our student minister, our lay celebrant, visiting preachers and to all members of our community who have contributed to our services.

The following groups have met regularly during 2024:

Bereavement and Support Group  
Mindfulness @ Lunchtime  
Poetry for Pleasure

In 2024, one baby blessing, one marriage and four funerals were conducted by our Celebrant & Lay Preacher, and one funeral by the Minister of Dundee Unitarian Church.

## **Raising our Profile & Outreach**

St Mark's has a dedicated Communications Team and employs various means of communicating with its members, friends and the wider community by use of social media, its website and via the weekly e-Bulletin updates.

For over 30 years the Edinburgh and Glasgow congregations have supported the Chennai Unitarian Christian Church. The Trustees of this separate charity took a decision to wind-up the charity and pass the remaining assets on to an organisation with similar objectives. After conducting a due diligence review, the Venkat Trust was selected. The closing assets of approximately £64,000 were transferred across. By year end we were heartened to see photographs of a new school science laboratory, named The Scotland Room, which has been supported by those funds.

St Mark's continues to support Edinburgh Interfaith Association on a regular basis.

St Mark's is also able to support other charitable concerns by way of one-off donations.

St Mark's maintained the following affiliations in 2024:

General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches  
Scottish Unitarian Association  
Edinburgh Inter-Faith Association.

## **VENUE AND FABRIC**

Venue lettings continued in 2024 and are an important source of income. Whilst the number of Fringe performances and audiences increased, there was an overall decrease in income relative to 2023.

During 2024 we had a brighter, newly glazed and re-decorated hall. The repair to the roof of the upper hall was project managed by Hardies (Property & Construction Consultants) and undertaken by The Roof Company. Unseasonal winds and rain hampered progress so re-entry to the upper hall was delayed until the beginning of February 2024. In 2024 the cost of repair, and project management thereon, was £23,942 (2023: £61,090). This figure takes account of a significant VAT rebate of £16,867.

A significant item of expenditure during 2024 was the replacement of a faulty control unit on the boiler (£7,063).

An assessor for our insurance company visited in February to survey the property and to provide a valuation to the insurers. In preparation we completed a questionnaire providing details about the building, fire protection, health and safety, building protection, valuable items and areas of general risk. The assessor commented that our premises were well-maintained.

## **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

### **Our policy on reserves**

Members adopt a cautious and prudent approach to reserves. The view of Members is that the reserves, excluding tangible fixed assets and investments, should provide a resource for major projects and repairs, and that they should not be used to finance routine expenditure. However, it is recognised that the Church may require some of the income generated by investments to assist the funding of Church activities, and in particular when a decision is taken to invest strategically, looking for a return in the long run.

Council have concluded that it will be the policy to retain one year's operating expenditure in reserve.

### **Comments on the accounts**

The layout of the accounts follows the format advised by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). Pages towards the end, which detail receipts and payments during 2024, are useful for understanding where money comes from and how it is applied.

Our primary source of income is giving by our congregation, on which we claim Gift Aid whenever possible. During 2024 the number of monthly donors decreased again, and overall 'live' giving was comparable to 2023 but down on 2022. We gratefully received a number of one-off donations. We benefited from a further legacy of £4,272 from the estate of Hilary Davies (2023: £30,000 from the estate of Hilary Davies). Speed Trust income (see page 12 of this report) was up, £14,098 (2023: £10,622). It was used towards the cost of the roof repairs.



We ended the year with a slight deficit, despite expenditure on the upper hall roof, partly because we had anticipated the outlay by application of the Capital Reserve Fund (see page 13 of this report) in 2023, which yielded £46,089.

As well as further costs associated with the hall roof project, £23,924 (2023: £61,090), which is net of a VAT rebate of £16,867 from HMRC, significant cost was incurred in replacing a faulty boiler control, £7,063. The cost of charitable activities increased as we incurred a payment to Unitarian College in respect of the student minister, and we bore the associated accommodation costs, £5314 in total (2023: nil). Our three year contract for fixed price gas and electricity came to an end and the new tariffs are considerably higher, £8,312 (2023: £4,616). Building and contents insurance also saw a significant rise, £7,254 (2023: £6,488). Due to the timing of payments, two years' worth of GA quota fees have been incurred in 2024: £2,415 (2023: £1,435).

The independent examination of the 2024 accounts was undertaken pro bono by a friend of the congregation who is a chartered certified accountant. We are very grateful for her advice and expertise.

### **Looking to the future**

Venue activity is a valuable supplement to our income; we provide a useful service to hirers and have good relations with them. The facilitation of lettings does, however, require significant support, if we are to maintain this aspect of our activity in the coming years.

Legacies provide a welcome boost to our finances. We would urge all members and friends, who are able to do so, to remember St Mark's in their wills.

Having enjoyed the spiritual leadership of a student minister on a part-time basis in the latter part of 2024, and following a workshop hosted in 2024, the congregation has expressed a desire for a permanent minister. The Council has examined the financial health of the church and taken a strategic decision to invest from its reserves to support the recruitment of a full-time permanent minister from the GA Roll. Members, friends and supporters are reminded that live financial giving is essential to the life and work of the church and community.


A major refurbishment of our beautiful Grade 2 listed premises was completed in 2015, but our building still requires continuing upkeep, in addition to routine maintenance. Whilst the cost of the hall roof project was substantially borne in 2023, a further £29,924 of expenditure fell into the new financial year.

Although stock markets rallied in the fourth quarter of the year, the outlook within the UK and over the rest of the world remains uncertain.

**DECLARATION**

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signature[s]		
Full name[s]		
Position [eg chair]	Convenor	Treasurer
Date	8 June 2025	8 June 2025

**St Mark's Unitarian Church****Charity Number SC014167****Statement of Receipts and Payments****1 January 2024 - 31 December 2024**

			<b>Year ended</b>	<b>Restated</b>
			<b>31/12/2024</b>	<b>Year ended</b>
<b>Receipts</b>	<b>Unrestricted</b>	<b>Restricted</b>	<b>Total funds</b>	<b>31/12/2023</b>
	<b>Funds</b>	<b>Funds</b>		<b>Total funds</b>
Donations	31501		31501	31261
Legacies	4272		4272	30000
Grants	0	14098	14098	13622
Fund-raising	0		0	0
Gross trading receipts	21730		21730	25803
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>57503</b>	<b>14098</b>	<b>71601</b>	<b>100686</b>
<b>Payments</b>				
Hall roof project	9826	14098	23924	61090
Repair of boiler controller	7063		7063	0
Cost of charitable activities	37386		37386	28271
Grants and donations	2565		2565	1520
Governance costs	78		78	111
Gross trading payments (venue)	1259		1259	1258
Independent examination	0		0	0
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>58177</b>	<b>14098</b>	<b>72275</b>	<b>92250</b>
<b>(Deficit)/surplus for year</b>	<b>(674)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(674)</b>	<b>8436</b>

**Statement of balances as at 31st December**

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Restated</b>
	<b>2024</b>	<b>Total</b>
		<b>2023</b>
Bank balances at start of year	158021	103496
Transfer in from Capital Reserve	0	46290
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	(674)	8235
Bank balances at end of year	157347	158021

Of the closing bank balance £30,000 is held in a fixed term deposit account with Bank of Scotland, £990 is held on balance with Paypal, and £126,357 is held on current account with Bank of Scotland.

### Investments

Fund	Market valuation at 31.12.24 (£)	Market valuation at 31.12.23 (£)
Geddie Fund	408472	381235
Shared Interest	1139	1139
Total	409611	382374

### Other assets

The Society owns the property at 7 Castle Terrace and its furniture and equipment. It undertook significant improvements to the property over the period 2009 to 2014. The upper hall roof was refurbished over the two years 2023 and 2024.

The original value of the property is not available. Assessors appointed by our insurance company estimated the replacement value of the property as £8,385,922 in 2024.

	Cost or valuation at 31.12.24	Additions	Cost or valuation at 31.12.23
Improvements to property	711861	23924	687937
Furniture & equipment	30616	0	30616
Total	742477	23924	718553

### Liabilities

There were no significant liabilities at the year end.

### Contingent Liabilities

The maintenance of our Grade B listed building will continue to present an ongoing challenge.

### Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
		8 June 2025
		8 June 2025

## Notes to the Accounts

### St Mark's Investments

At the start of 2024, St Mark's had one portfolio, the Geddie Fund, which is managed by RBC Brewin Dolphin. Investment objectives and a risk classification have been discussed and agreed with the Trustees and communicated to the wealth managers.

The portfolio is self-contained, in that all dividends, management fees and dealing fees are accounted for within the portfolio. The value of the portfolio rises and falls with the value of its constituent holdings, the income received, and the fees deducted. The profits and losses derived from sales and purchases of holdings are also contained within the overall value of the portfolio.

The Geddie Fund derives from a legacy received from the estate of Miss Mary Geddie. On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2024 the fund had a value of £381,235; on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 its value, after all income and costs, was £408,472. Brewin Dolphin management fees, dealing charges and VAT charged totalled £7,634 (2023: £5,632).

St Mark's also has a holding with Shared Interest which was valued at £1139 on 31 December 2024.

### Restricted Fund

The Speed Trust is managed by the British & Foreign Unitarian Association which operates from Unitarian Headquarters in London. During 2022 we learned that, as allowed under the terms of Mr Speed's will and in consultation with the auditors of the Trust, the proper use of Speed income has been re-defined such that it is to be used to 'support Unitarianism' in the Edinburgh and Dundee Unitarian churches.

The original Speed bequest totalled £278k in 1984. Over time, there has been a growth in the value of the capital. As at 30 September 2024, it stood at £1,030,143. This growth in the capital amount can be properly regarded as 'unrealised income', not as 'capital' per se.

### Payments and expenses paid to trustees

With the exception of a 50% travel reimbursement paid to one trustee attending the GA Annual Conference in their capacity as delegate on behalf of the church (£230), no payments or expenses were paid to trustees.

### Restatement of prior year figures

In preparing the 2024 accounts, to enable appropriate comparable figures, the Treasurer has taken the decision to reclassify the movement in the Capital Reserve Fund. In 2023, in the Statement of Receipts and Payments, it was treated as in-coming income, to the current account. In the comparable figures in the 2024 accounts it has been treated as a transfer between bank accounts in the Statement of Balances. There is no impact on the closing balances as at 31 December 2024.

**Receipts 2024 details**

	<b>2024</b>	<b>Restated 2023</b>
<b>Donations</b>		
Congregational standing orders	21832	22918
Service collections	1207	639
Other donations	2664	1127
Gift Aid tax reclaimed	5798	6577
Sub-totals	31501	31261
<b>Legacies</b>	4272	30000
<b>Grants: Speed Trust</b>		
Speed Trust	14098	10622
Benefact	0	3000
Sub-totals	14098	13622
<b>Fund-raising activities</b>	0	0
<b>Gross trading receipts:</b>		
<b>Venue</b>	21730	25803
<b>Transfer in from capital reserve fund</b>	0	0
<b>Other charitable activities</b>	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>71601</b>	<b>100686</b>

**Payments 2024 details**

	<b>2024</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Hall roof project</b>	23924	23924	61090	61090
<b>Gross trading payments - venue expenses</b>	1259	1259	1258	1258
<b>Charitable activities</b>				
Cost of student minister	5314		0	
Repair of boiler controller	7063		0	
Visiting service leaders	633		1158	
Pianist	3480		3792	
Outreach	1168		1035	
Consumables	127		285	
Congregational expenses	0		301	
Equipment	324		391	
Utilities	8312		4616	
Upkeep of premises	5882		5105	
Building Maintenance	4892		5100	
Insurance	7254		6488	
		44449		28271
<b>Grants and donations</b>				
GA Quota	2415		1435	
Subscriptions & donations	150		85	
		2565		1520
<b>Governance costs</b>				
Admin expenses	78		111	
Professional fees	0		0	
Miscellaneous			0	
		78		111
<b>Totals</b>		<b>72275</b>		<b>92250</b>

## INDEPENDENT EXAMINER'S REPORT ON THE ACCOUNTS

to the trustees of St Mark's Unitarian Church, Edinburgh

**Registered charity number SC014167**

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2024 which are set out on pages 3 to 15.

### Respective responsibilities of trustees and independent examiner

The charity's Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 (the Act) and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1)(d) of the Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1)(c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

### Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the Charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

### Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
  - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 44(1)(a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and
  - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations

have not been met, or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

<b>Signed</b>	Susanne Urquhart	Date 8 June 2025
<b>Name</b>		
<b>Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):</b>		
<b>Address</b>		