

St. Mark's Unitarian Church, Unitarians in Edinburgh

Trustees' Annual Report for the year ended 31 December 2025



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**St Mark's Unitarian Church
Trustees' Annual Report
for the year from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025**

CHARITY CONTACT INFORMATION

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

Address	St. Mark's Unitarian Church, 7 Castle Terrace, Edinburgh EH1 2DP
Telephone number	0131 659 7600
Email address	enquire@edinburgh-unitarians.org.uk
Website	www.unitarians-edinburgh.org.uk
Facebook	facebook.com/unitariansinedinburgh

CHARITY TRUSTEES

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

Julie Finneran	Convenor
Joan Cook	
Elyse Jacks	Secretary
Ann Sinclair	
Gillian Woolman	Treasurer
Bridget Cook	Co-opted from April 2025

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

Mandy Orr, until 8 May 2025

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.

Minister	Rev Janine Sim, from 1 September 2025
Student minister	Janine Sim, until 20 May 2025
Celebrant	Joan Cook

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

2025 was a successful year for St Mark's. We were able to start enjoying the refurbished roof and windows of the Upper Hall and we were surprised how much light came in through the new glass. It was also a pleasure not to have to put buckets out when it rained. We were grateful to our Treasury and Management Teams for taking us through this very significant and demanding period of work, in the previous year, which allowed us to start using the Hall again and to continue letting our building for events.

Building on our well-attended discussion workshop of the previous year and the results of the electronic survey of members and friends, we again started considering the future of St Mark's. As well as practical questions, we had asked more whimsically, 'If anything was possible, what transformation would you like to see?'

In 2024, Unitarian College had asked if we might be interested in hosting a final year Ministry Student for their second placement. Much Council time had been given to whether we could afford the costs associated with this and practicalities such as where the student could live and how would we provide appropriate mentorship. Council had concluded that this would be a good opportunity to see how it might feel having a Minister again and in Autumn 2024 we had welcomed Janine Sim on placement for 6 months.

In 2025, with the support of the Ministry Team and Unitarian College, Janine's time with us as a student went very well and as we moved through 2025 towards the end of Janine's placement in May, Council became aware that there was a strong feeling in the congregation that, if possible, we would like to keep Janine as our Minister. Much discussion took place on Council as to whether it would be a sensible decision to dip into our financial reserves to fund this. The conclusion was that a bold step was required to invigorate our community and so Council provisionally offered Janine the post of full-time Minister of St Mark's.

Janine accepted and in a Special General Meeting, the congregation overwhelmingly endorsed this decision. In September 2025, Janine took up the post of Minister of St Mark's and joined the Register of Unitarian Ministers.

Janine's ministry was warmly received. However, we were pleased to continue to welcome less experienced members of the congregation to lead services, as well as utilising our more experienced leaders and visiting Ministers.

Over her first few months as Minister, Janine, along with a colleague from Dundee, facilitated several 'Soul Deep' discussion groups, she made plans for yoga workshops and other small groups, and ran events such as a Christmas wreath making workshop. Janine also conducted weddings in St Mark's and engaged in pastoral work both within St Mark's and in the wider community such as the Edinburgh Interfaith Association and at Edinburgh University.

Throughout the year we continued to hold a weekly Sunday morning service in St Mark's that was also broadcast on Zoom, and we thank our technical volunteers for their

considerable help. We were very pleased that our congregation, both in St Mark's and on Zoom, was growing.

In August, as usual, we became a Festival Fringe venue and had a successful three weeks of shows with good audience numbers. Long-standing and new volunteers stepped up to assist our professional Front of House Manager in acting as Ushers and Box Office staff and we were grateful for this. This is always a good opportunity to showcase our building, and we printed and made available more of our specially designed leaflet on 'Unitarians in Edinburgh' detailing our ethos, what to expect at services, etc.

The Trustees on Council remained unchanged this year other than one Trustee standing down and a new Trustee joining Council. 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.

The St Mark's e-bulletin continued to be virtually delivered to more than 280 people each week. As well as advertising upcoming services and events, Council announcements and so on, members and friends were encouraged to send in articles and photos and regularly do so.

We were pleased to hold several successful social events during 2025, such as pot luck lunches, a trip to a nearby castle and a meal at the Mosque Kitchen.

However, on a much sadder note, we were sorry to learn of the deaths of several longstanding and valued members and friends of St Mark's community, and we extend sympathy to their families and friends.

To conclude, having ended the previous year with the building in better shape, we ended 2025 with the spiritual life of the community much improved. There was a welcome feeling of renewed optimism about the sustainability and longevity of our community

As always, the strength of St Mark's really 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.

Julie Finneran
Church Convenor

MINISTRY AND WORSHIP

Services of worship are held on Sundays at St Mark's, both in person and on line. This year has been one of growing community, creativity and connection, as we continue to explore what liberal spiritual community can look like in the heart of Edinburgh. Services have drawn from Unitarian, interfaith, secular and earth-centred traditions, creating spaces for reflection, challenge, joy and belonging.

We are deeply grateful to all those who contribute to worship life at St Marks – including musicians, readers, volunteers, tech support, worship leaders, visiting speakers and members of our congregation who help create welcoming and meaningful services week by week.

Alongside Sunday worship, St Mark's has continued to offer opportunities for spiritual exploration, pastoral connection and community gathering throughout the week. The following groups have met regularly during 2025:

Bereavement and Support Group
Mindfulness @ Lunchtime
Poetry for Pleasure
Pregnancy and Postnatal Yoga
Meditation and contemplative gatherings
Spiritual exploration courses, including *Soul Deep*

The church has continued to grow its role as a place of welcome, ceremony and pastoral support within the wider community. During the year St Mark's hosted weddings, funerals, memorial services and baby blessings, offering inclusive and compassionate ministry to people of many backgrounds and beliefs.

We are also delighted that Rev. Janine Sim has become part of the Honorary Chaplaincy Team at the University of Edinburgh, helping to strengthen links between St Mark's and the wider university and student community.

Raising our Profile & Outreach

St Mark's continues to maintain an active presence both within Edinburgh and online. Through social media, our website, Zoom services and weekly e-bulletins, we seek to share the life of the congregation more widely and invite people into a liberal, open-hearted spiritual community.

This year has included the development of a new website and expanded social media presence, including Facebook and Instagram, helping St Mark's connect with a wider and more diverse audience.

The congregation was also pleased to receive a scoping grant to explore innovative approaches to outreach and community engagement, supporting ongoing work around accessibility, visibility and future growth.

Particular emphasis has been placed on creating spaces that are welcoming, trauma-aware, inclusive and community-centred, whilst continuing to honour the rich heritage and values of the congregation.

St Mark's continues to support and collaborate with a range of organisations and community initiatives, including:

- The General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches
- The Scottish Unitarian Association
- Edinburgh Interfaith Association.

The congregation also continues to support charitable and community causes through donations, partnerships and shared events where possible.

As we move forward, we remain committed to nurturing a compassionate, creative and courageous spiritual community – one rooted not only in belief, but in relationship, service and love in action.

VENUE AND FABRIC

Venue lettings continued in 2025 and are an important source of income. The number of Fringe performances and audiences increased, and income has increased strongly relative to 2024, and is back at the level we enjoyed in 2023.

Significant items of expenditure during 2025 included the replacement of two boilers (£12,453), and the updating of certain electrical requirements (£5,057) to meet the increased standards of the Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR).

The Management Team continues to remain vigilant, routinely assessing the building for fire protection, health and safety, building protection, maintenance and areas of general risk.

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, in general, provide a resource for major projects and repairs. However, members took a decision in Spring 2025 that the recruitment of a permanent and full-time minister *was* a strategic investment, and that it had sufficient reserves to embark on that course.

It is the policy of Council 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 2025, are useful for understanding where money comes from and how it is applied.

We ended the year with a significant surplus of £30,969 (2024: deficit of £694). However without the two legacies and anonymous donation, we would be reporting a deficit of £28,199.

Income

Our primary source of income is giving by our congregation, on which we claim Gift Aid whenever possible. We were delighted to note an increase in the number of monthly donors in 2025, although the average monthly donation is lower. Included within total donations of £36,667 is gift aid of £5,978 (2024: £5,798) and an anonymous donation of £5,000, for which we are immensely grateful. Service collection is increasing, reflecting higher church attendance and the introduction of contactless payments.

We benefited from two legacies in 2025: £49,168, from the estate of Mr Michael West and £5,000 from the estate of Mr Bryan Wade. We are so very grateful to have been remembered in the wills of two lifelong church members.

Speed Trust income (see page 14 of this report) was lower this year at £10,809 (2024: £14,098). This is due to a combination of factors: in 2024 there was a catch up for an

underpayment in 2023, and the amount distributed is a function of the performance of the market on the endowment.

Expenditure

In 2025 we commenced exploring development of the lower church hall. This incurred professional fees and the cost of a Noise Impact Assessment, as requested by City of Edinburgh Council. The retention fee on the extensive hall roof project was paid in 2025: £2,291 (2024: £23,924).

In line with budget, we incurred the cost of a minister (including national insurance and pension contributions) and associated accommodation costs (in lieu of a manse) in 2025.

Utility bills have almost trebled over the last three years, 2025: £13,074 (2024: £8,312, 2023: £4,616). This is due to our fixed price contract ending in 2024 and fuel prices increasing steeply, globally.

The independent examination of the 2025 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.

As reported earlier in this annual report, we recruited a permanent full-time minister in September 2025; the Council had examined the financial health of the church and made the recommendation to members to apply its reserves strategically to support this decision. The costs in 2026 will be considerably higher, to reflect the full-year costs of having a minister and providing accommodation. 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, as reflected in the 2025 accounts. The Council is exploring maximising the use of all aspects of our building and currently the focus is on the lower church hall.

We continue to liaise with our investment managers to make best use of our endowment funds. The outlook within the UK and over the rest of the world remains uncertain. Two of our bank accounts are now generating bank interest.

DECLARATION

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

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees:

Signature[s]	<i>J Finneran</i>	<i>Gillian F Woolman</i>
Full name[s]	Julie Ann Finneran	Gillian Frances Woolman
Position [eg chair]	Convenor	Treasurer
Date	21 June 2026	21 June 2026

Statement of Receipts and Payments

	Year ended 31/12/2025 Total funds	Year ended 31/12/2024 Total funds
Receipts		
Donations	36667	31501
Grants	10809	14098
Bank interest	2531	0
Legacies	54168	4272
Gross trading receipts	25965	21730
Total Receipts	130140	71601
Payments		
Hall roof project	2291	23924
Lower hall project	4068	0
Cost of charitable activities	89917	44449
Grants and donations	233	2565
Governance costs	444	78
Gross trading payments (venue)	2218	1259
Independent examination	0	0
Total Payments	99171	72275
Surplus/(deficit) for year	30969	(674)

Statement of Balances

	Total 2025	Total 2024
Bank balances at start of year	157,347	158,021
Surplus/(deficit) for the year	30,969	(674)
Bank balances at end of year	188,316	157,347

Of the closing bank balance the following balances are held with the Bank of Scotland: £31,663 is held in a fixed term deposit account, £50,868 is held in a 95 Day Account, and £104,873 is held in the current account. In addition £912 is held on balance with Paypal.

Investments

Fund	Market valuation at 31.12.25 (£)	Market valuation at 31.12.24 (£)
Geddie Fund	444,531	408,472
Shared Interest	1,139	1,139
Total	445,670	409,611

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 31.12.25	Additions	Cost or valuation at 31.12.24
Improvements to property	711,861	0	711,861
Furniture & equipment	30,616	0	30,616
Total	742,477	0	742,477

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 two trustees on behalf of all trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
<i>J Finneran</i>	Julie Ann Finneran	21 June 2026
<i>Gillian F Woolman</i>	Gillian Frances Woolman	21 June 2026

Notes to the Accounts

St Mark's Investments

St Mark's has 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 1st January 2025 the fund had a value of £408,472; on 31st December 2025 its value, after all income and costs, was £444,531. Brewin Dolphin management fees, dealing charges and VAT charged totalled £5,989 (2024: £7,634).

St Mark's also has a holding with Shared Interest which was valued at £1,139 on 31 December 2025.

The Speed 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 2025, the audited Annual Report and Accounts of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches shows a balance of £1,030,143 for the Speed Fund. This growth in the capital amount can be properly regarded as 'unrealised income', not as 'capital' per se.

Payments and expenses paid to trustees

No payments or expenses were paid to trustees in 2025.

Related party transaction

In 2025 £1,225 was paid to Studio Groove Ltd, a firm of architects, to draw up plans for submission to City of Edinburgh Council for the conversion of the lower church hall into residential accommodation. One of the directors of Studio Groove Ltd is Andrew Chavet, the son of Council member and Treasurer, Gillian Woolman.

Receipts 2025 details

	2025		2024	
Donations				
Standing orders and other donations	23522		21832	
Service collections	2167		1207	
Other donations	5000		2664	
Gift aid recovered	5978		5798	
Subtotal		36667		31501
Legacies		54168		4272
Speed Trust		10809		14098
Gross trading receipts: venue		25965		21730
Bank interest		2531		0
Total		130140		71601

Payments 2025 details

	2025	Totals	2024	Totals
Hall roof project	2291	2291	23924	23924
Lower hall project	4068	4068	0	0
Gross trading payments - venue expenses	2218	2218	1259	1259
Charitable activities				
Cost of minister/student minister	17414		5314	
Boiler replacement/repairs	12453		7063	
Visiting service leaders	459		633	
Pianist	3245		3480	
Outreach	78		1168	
Consumables	330		127	
Manse costs	15866		0	
Equipment	175		324	
Utilities	13074		8312	
Upkeep of premises	6889		5882	
Building Maintenance	12044		4892	
Insurance	7829		7254	
		89857		44449
Grants and donations				
GA Quota	0		2415	
Subscriptions & donations	233		150	
		233		2565
Governance costs				
Admin expenses	503		78	
Professional fees	0		0	
		503		78
Totals		99170		72275

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 2025 which are set out on pages 3 to 17.

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.

Signed	<i>S Urquhart</i>	Date 14/8/2026
Name	Susanne Urquhart	
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):	Member of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)	