

# Tributes to Lodging House Mission manager Stephen Mitchell who dedicated life to helping homeless

Stephen Mitchell, who worked tirelessly over three decades to improve the lives of Glasgow's homeless, passed away earlier this month.

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BY

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**Stephen was integral to supporting those in need during the coronavirus pandemic.** (Image: Contributed)

Tributes have been paid to a man who dedicated his life to helping Glasgow's homeless and marginalised population.

Stephen Mitchell, manager of Lodging House Mission, passed away on February 7 aged 60.

A two-minute silence will be held this afternoon to remember Stephen, who has been described as a 'dedicated and caring champion for the homeless and marginalised people of Glasgow'.

For over thirty years, Stephen worked tirelessly to help those most in need firstly through the Wayside Day Centre (later known as The Marie Trust) and then the Lodging House Mission, where he became manager in 2018.

Through his work, he created a caring environment for the city's homeless men and women, helping them with everything from welfare benefits to food and emotional support. He was known to go above and beyond to make anyone with who he came into to contact feel welcome.

Martin Johnstone, who worked alongside Stephen at the Wayside Day Centre and Marie Trust, said: "I remember one client, whose recovery Stephen had supported, would call him unfailingly each week for many years from Canada where he had gone on to resettle. Stephen had left his mark. And I'm sure the client had too. Stephen remembered people. He let them in and didn't forget them."



**Stephen and the Lodging House Mission team** (Image: Contributed)

He added: "He developed relationships where it became possible for some to begin to trust who couldn't before, assured as they were of his care, his warmth and his acceptance of them. He did all of this with a lightness and a humour that encouraged and bolstered spirits that had been crushed.

"That his work in homelessness was his life is true but only in part. Having been his colleague, and I hope friend, of many years, it was evident Stephen's priorities were firstly to his family and to his faith. His work pattern was one of always starting early.

This was no accident. His aim was to make it home and to have as much time with his family as he could. So that, while a social being who enjoyed a gathering where he would be quicker than anyone with a pun or a punchline and where he wouldn't be shy of singing with gusto, he was forever guarded of his time with his family and his church. Stephen spoke openly of his faith and his family. 'God bless you!' would commonly be his words on parting. I was blessed to know him."

As the [coronavirus](#) pandemic began in early 2020, Stephen adapted the working of Lodging House Mission quickly to shift the focus of their efforts to where they were most needed and could have the greatest impact.

It was thanks to his work that other agencies across the city were able to provide essentials including emergency clothing and hot meals to those experiencing [homelessness](#) during the crisis.

Deacon Claire Herbert said: "When [Lodging House Mission](#) had to close down due to Covid-19 in March 2020 Stephen himself had been unwell. Within a few weeks, he was back to work and making sure the resources (of space and donations) at LHM were able to support the whole homeless sector.

"He reached out to our partner agencies and was able then to multiply the effect of the impact we were able to have. Stephen was generous with the provisions he had at his disposal, never losing sight that what was given was, for the benefit of others and not to promote ourselves.

"Our staff team remained on furlough until November and during these months Stephen worked with a small team of dedicated volunteers to continue to meet the Missions aim to - reduce the harm caused by the experience of homelessness and poverty. He completely reorganised the ways of working and serving, to best assist the most vulnerable in the city.

"Partner agencies were given office space to continue their support, food provisions were donated to Marie Trust and Glasgow Overnight Welcome Centre, a meal voucher scheme was set up with a local take away restaurant to ensure a hot meal was available, emergency clothing, toiletries and kettle foods packs were packed by volunteers from donations delivered by churches across Glasgow. These items were delivered to groups such as Red Cross, Ubuntu, Street Soccer Scotland, Turning Point, Fares for Free and Simon Community to assist their clients."



**Stephen celebrated his 60th birthday last summer** (Image: Contributed)

She added: "It was Stephen's investment of time and his personal touch throughout the continued challenges and changes of 2020 which made this vast range of work possible. Through it all he remained dedicated to the people, calling volunteers and staff who were unwell or at home, meeting clients at the door or talking with them over the phone and even arranging a socially distanced get together to celebrate the long service of our Chef, Mark, in November.

"Stephen was just 60 years young having celebrated his birthday with the team at LHM in the Summer. Despite his brief time at LHM everyone here has felt his loss. It was a great frustration to him that lockdown had meant he could not enjoy the great outdoors as much as he would have liked as a keen hillwalker."

Since 1988, Sister Marie has worked closely with Stephen at the Wayside Day Centre, Marie Trust and Lodging House Mission and described him as 'tirelessly working to improve the lives of those he came into contact with'.

She added: "My experience of him as a colleague at The Wayside and latterly when I volunteered both in The Marie Trust and The Lodging House Mission was that he constantly looked for new opportunities to make life better for those, who turned to him for help. Stephen my prayer for you now is may you be reaping the rewards of your labour in Heaven."

Vicent O'Donnell who worked with Stephen at the Wayside Day Centre said his energy and personality were instrumental in creating a safe environment where people were offered practical help with their difficulties. He added: "He was content to simply spend time with those who came to the centre, befriending them and making them feel welcome and special. He was warm and very good company. Always ready with the daft joke or witty aside; always looking to lighten the load of those who came his way. Always looking for the opportunity to make life a little better for other people. And many were the people whose lives were better for having met him. I count myself as one and am greatly saddened by his sudden passing from us."

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Among the organisations touched by the work of Stephen is Social Bite, who described him as a 'kind-hearted gentleman who dedicated his life to supporting people experiencing homelessness in Glasgow'.

They said: "Stephen went above and beyond with efforts surrounding the emergency response to Covid and has helped many other key partners with their distribution of food and essential items. He was especially kind to help cook and prepare hundreds of Christmas dinners across the Glasgow area to support those most in need. We are honoured to have known such an incredible person, may he rest in peace."

A two-minute silence will be held for Stephen at 12pm today. Lodging House Mission is inviting people to pause where ever they are to remember his loved ones and their own memories of him.