

Christmas dinner for 100 on Sunday

The Parish Church of St Cuthbert is hosting a traditional Christmas dinner for 100 homeless people tomorrow, Sunday.

The free three course feast will include turkey, ham or chicken with all the trimmings and it is being prepared in the kitchen by staff and volunteers from a charity called [Steps to Hope](#), which is dedicated to caring for the homeless and those suffering with addiction.

Rev Peter Sutton, minister of what is known as The Mother Kirk of Edinburgh and the Kirk at the foot of the Castle Rock, said: "We are delighted to be able to serve our friends Christmas dinner. Jesus welcomed the stranger and provided hospitality and that is what we do too."

Carol singers will perform and volunteers wearing Christmas hats, which include members of the Princes Street Gardens congregation, will serve each guest a mince pie and a gift wrapped chocolate selection box.

Tea, coffee, hot chocolate and soft drinks will be served and guests are welcome to bring their pets.

Steps to Hope was founded by Ritchie Roncero who says he has been registered homeless all his life and clean and sober for the last five years.

He is a trained counsellor and plans to hold one-on-one sessions with guests, listen to their stories and offer them guidance to help them change their lives.

Mr Sutton said: "St Cuthbert's has a long history of outreach

work with the homeless in the west end of Edinburgh, going back to St Cuthbert's poorhouse which was located opposite the Caledonian Railway Station which is now the Caledonian Hotel.

"We are continuing this work and it is nice to be able to bring together those who have no permanent home of their own for Christmas dinner.

"Gathering in a safe and secure environment and surrounded by people who genuinely care provides them with a sense of hope.

"Advent is often the time to open the windows and it's really rewarding to open your doors too to those who need you most."

After the meal, some rough sleepers will have the option of being taken to the Diadem care shelter, housed in the former Stenhouse St Aidan's Parish Church building on Chesser Avenue.

The emergency accommodation project, which has 75 beds for men and women, is run by Bethany Christian Trust out of a building owned by Gorgie, Dalry, Stenhouse Church of Scotland.

The Parish Church of St Cuthbert's and Steps to Hope have been providing twice weekly dinners for homeless people for the last three months.

Mr Roncero said: "We are blessed to be working alongside Peter and his colleagues at St Cuthbert's.

"There are people suffering on the streets of Edinburgh and the meals we have provided have proved very popular.

"It will be nice for people to come into a warm, welcoming place for a proper Christmas dinner."

