

St. Paul's Parish Church

Future Focus Session 3 (8/07/2017) Facilitator's Report

Introduction

A total of 23 people as well as the Minister attended the session which was once again in the Church Hall. This final session took place from 10am until 2pm.

Thinking of Newcomers

The session's first exercise was to discuss what each group felt had been the church's most significant development over the last two years. Once that had been agreed upon, the groups were then invited to reflect on how that may have helped to develop the congregation's "health".

The groups then had to address the questions of how this development might help or hinder a newcomer from engaging with the congregation, as well as identify what might be a step towards addressing the hindrances noted. This was followed by a feedback session, led by Robbie, in which everyone was able to hear each group's responses.

Please see below results from each group during this exercise:

Group 1 Most Significant Development: Community Coordinator/ Planet Earth, New Minister and new Session Clerk

In what ways has this helped us to become a healthier church?

- Planet Earth involves school children and parents
- Events organized by church are supported by local community

How might this help/hinder a newcomer to engage with our church?

Helps

- Morning worship is friendly and welcoming
- Information available on the order of service

Hindrances

- Elder should visit new person, even if not a member
- Information cards with church details and events could be made available to help others get connected

Group 2 Most Significant Development: Initially having David in the role of locum during the vacancy holding the church together. Then Elspeth being called to Forth, Karen and Plant Earth

In what ways has this helped us to become a healthier church?

- David and Edith's involvement in wider church events, i.e. Church shop, Guild etc. showed the member that they were still valued even though we were in vacancy
- Elspeth redeveloping the links with BPS and APS and further strengthening the links forged by Karen with FPS

- Planet Earth club bringing more children into the church family, which is slowly feeding into other church groups
- The most important thing is the continuation of the Gospel being preached

How might this help/hinder a newcomer to engage with our church?

Helps

- The Gospel is more accessible on a wide scale from the “young” and “old” whatever their capability
- We are a very welcoming church

Hindrances

- With the number of young people within the wider family, more flexible seating would help as the current pews make them feel singled out because of the feeling of rigidity they bring
- The current layout doesn't allow for easy access when using the puppets, hindering the puppet ministry

Group 3 Most Significant Development: New Minister, Parish Co-ordinator, Planet Earth, Locum – Rev. Easton

In what ways has this helped us to become a healthier church?

- Pastoral care a priority
- Friendly
- Bringing in children/Easter/Christmas
- Kept church together
- Visiting members
- Daily readings
- Text and thought for the week

How might this help/hinder a newcomer to engage with our church?

Helps

- Welcoming Church
- Involving – promoting activities
- Inviting participation

Hindrances

- Overwhelming – are we “too pushy?!”

Action Steps to address hindrances

- Be aware of different approaches

Group 4 Most Significant Development: New Minister – answer to everything, especially prayer – leading to new Alpha course, renewed sense of worship, emphasis on prayer. Planet Earth

In what ways has this helped us to become a healthier church?

- Leading to new Alpha course, renewed sense of worship
- Lent course
- Minister is open and approachable, sermons easy to understand and to the point

How might this help/hinder a newcomer to engage with our church?

Helps

- Welcoming atmosphere
- Service is easy to participate in and understand
- Coffee and prayer after service

Hindrances

- Newcomer might not know where to sit

Action Steps to address hindrances

- If people don't come, it's a societal problem – according to statistics 58% in Scotland are atheists.
- Continue to be friendly, welcoming and inclusive as well as preaching the Gospel
- Balancing act required

Group 5 Most Significant Development: We have a new minister and are doing Future Focus. Karen's work has also been very significant

In what ways has this helped us to become a healthier church?

- Enthusiasm, forward looking
- Planet Earth Club is engaging young people
- New ideas
- People come forward to help

How might this help/hinder a newcomer to engage with our church?

Helps

- Welcoming Church
- Tea and Coffee helpful for connection
- Sound system
- Space for wheelchairs

Hindrances

- Tea and Coffee could be confusing – need a sign
- Hard if people wanted silence before worship began
- Pews – limited space
- Sung Amen not to everyone's liking
- If they don't like children/noise in the church may find it hard
- Prefer tradition

Action Steps to address hindrances

- Remove some pews
- Enlarge entrance/Belfry
- Ensure a mix of children/not tradition/modern

We then had a time of sharing with the entire group, and it was interesting to see the similarities between each group.

Dreams for the future

After much looking back and also looking at present issues, it was at last, time to look forward! The timelines (from the first session) were placed back on the tables and without initial discussion; everyone was invited to write on individual post-it notes their hopes, visions and dreams for 2017/18 (and beyond). People were able to write as many as they wished and stick them down on their respective timelines. Afterwards, there was a time for discussion at their tables and each group “clustered” the post-it notes, according to common themes, such as outreach, worship, desires for more young people in the congregation, etc. There were however, occasional clusters of just one or two post-it notes, but all were to be treated equally.

Once this exercise was completed, each group was asked to look at the clusters and agree on three priority dreams and then to write these on the ends of the lining paper sheets, under the written heading of “Hopes, Vision and Dreams”.

Robbie then invited each group to read out their dreams, which he then recorded them on the flipchart, noting any common themes between the groups.

The groups’ dreams were as follows:

Group 1

1. Fix the physical (building and people)
2. Embrace the spiritual
3. Spread the word to the community

Group 2

1. Church to flourish
2. Developing the church building, refurbish the halls and the church
3. Parish outreach and pastoral care

Group 3

1. Renovating and modernizing buildings
2. Develop an outreach to community and wider church showing how accessible we are to everyone
3. Develop youth and intergenerational by being open to modern worship while respectful of traditional worship

Group 4

1. Develop all forms of worship – choir, bible study, prayer, groups etc.
2. Develop facilities to encourage all forms of worship and community participation and spiritual development
3. Develop all forms of communication for the church

Group 5

1. Varied and inclusive prayer and worship
2. Reaching out to the community with love and openness
3. Re-designing buildings to become more welcoming and efficient

It was interesting to note the similarities between each group’s dreams and visions for the future, with many dreams overlapping between groups.

Although for the time being, only the top 3 dreams will be focused on, it should be noted that each group came up with a number of other dreams, which have been recorded below for future reference.

- Doors open through the week
- Developing a choir
- Ecumenical services
- Prayer being varied and central to church
- 24/7 prayer
- Walking/Reading/Male/Female/Bible Study groups
- Mainly Music group for mums/dads and wee ones
- Godly Play for all ages
- Christian meditation group
- Café church
- Church away days – or weekend retreats
- Group for teenagers to meet – “Youth Club” with Bible study
- Hub for teenagers/Church services for teenagers
- Cinema hall
- AA and help for drug addicts and their families
- Transport to and from hospitals for visiting and appointments
- Advice and help with finance, loans, budgeting etc.
- Bereavement advice/group
- Closer ties with the Haven
- New heating system in the church & WIFI in the church
- Autism friendly
- Sensory room and sensory garden
- Disability and dementia friendly church
- Engage more with the wider national church
- Large print Bibles
- Parish support network to help each other
- Soft play area – bean bags (Child Friendly)

Stepping out towards the dreams

The same five groups were then invited to agree and outline the very first two steps they would take towards each of their dreams. Please see results below.

Group 1 – 1. “Fix the Physical aspects of the church”

1. Agree through Session what needs to be done
2. Try to negotiate/arrange funding for agreed renovations
3. Explore tithing/One off donations to help raise necessary funds

2. “Embrace the Spiritual”

1. Encourage and continue courses, mid-week worship, prayer, links with other communities like Braehead, etc.
2. Try, on occasion, different styles of worship, music, prayer, etc.

3. "Spread the Word"

1. Church community – better coffee/meeting area in the church
2. Local community – open a café, make ourselves available for giving time and space for prayer and healing

Group 2 – 1. "Church to Flourish"

1. Reach out to the village
2. Notice board and newsletter with new and old events
3. Come back to Church Sunday – bring a friend to church

2. "Developing the church building, halls..."

1. Prioritise what is needed from the buildings
2. Fund raising

3. "Parish Outreach and Pastoral Care"

1. Newsletters and for those who have access to Social Media
2. Welcoming card and recorded CD's of Sunday services

Group 3 – 1. "Renovating and modernizing the buildings"

1. Develop a plan for the buildings and present it to the membership
2. Hold a period of consultation where reasonable alterations to the initial plan can give members ownership of the future building

2. "Welcoming community outreach showing accessibility to all"

1. Develop a monthly publication which can be picked up from public places i.e. library, community flat, sports centre.
2. Looking at the needs of the community to see where we can help (New Committee?)

3. "Youth and intergenerational work through alternative and traditional worship"

1. Hold a consultation with church groups to see what worship ideas they have
2. Hold taster sessions for everyone to try new forms of worship

Group 4: 1. "Develop all forms of worship"

1. Different forms of worship
2. Prayer space in vestry

2. "Develop facilities to encourage all forms of worship and community participation and spiritual development"

1. Buildings groups set up to look at options and ideas
2. Source funding required

3. "Development all forms of Communication for the church"

1. Design a new website and train a group to administer the site
2. Provide training for using the sound system
3. Develop Facebook page

Group 5. 1. “ Varied and inclusive prayer and worship.”

1. Gather team, led by Rev. Elspeth
2. Set dates to Taize service – Choir? Prayer spaces in schools, Pet Blessing service

2. “Reaching out to the community with love and openness”

1. Start a youth group – 1 year at a time post PEC – Look into “God Question” Resource
2. Transport to hospitals – ask for volunteers
3. Advice and help on money issues – ask CAP

3.”Re-Designing buildings to make them more friendly and efficient”

1. Building project team start afresh
2. Survey of congregation – community – cost what has been spent on hall in recent years

These steps were then shared with each other in a short, plenary session.

What next?

There was a short time for questions and any further comments. Robbie then intimated that in due course, he would complete and send his third and final report, and encouraged the group to keep momentum with this project and to communicate clearly with the congregation all that has been identified through this process, setting a further date to meet and discuss how best to move things forward.

Robbie Morrison Facilitator