

Newtownbreda (St John's) Presbyterian Church



Engaged: in Christ with our congregation

Congregational Mission Plan 2010 - 2015

Introduction to the Progress Report on the Mission Plan - August 2012

As a Kirk Session we have reviewed what elements of our Mission Plan have been achieved to date. This has entailed considering all elements of the Plan including those where progress has been limited to any degree. While we are encouraged by the achievements over the last 2½ years, we are taking the opportunity to learn from our experiences and modify the implementation of the Plan so as to meet our original objectives. We are convinced that the original objectives, which are set out again below, remain valid.

Saddleback's Purpose Statement*: *"To bring people to Jesus and membership in his family, develop them to Christ-like maturity, and equip them for their ministry in the church and life mission in the world, in order to magnify God's name"*

God has placed us in Newtownbreda to be a community in which we can mature in faith, love and committed service to the world around us. We should therefore seek, where possible, to demonstrate the love of God in mission to the community around us and to share with neighbouring churches in setting an example of shared Christian life in a divided community.

This Progress Report follows the format of the Mission Plan with its key themes of;

Growing In Spirituality

Building a Future Together

Developing Partnership

In essence, we reaffirm that we must continue to develop the congregation for mission by a deepening of our spiritual life, and a strengthening of our corporate life - our relationship with others in the Church of Christ and life in the community.

Mission Development Group

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Rev Jane Nelson

Bruce Robinson
Denis Guiler

Lynn Orr
Simon Doherty

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* from *'The Purpose Driven Life'*, Rick Warren (link: www.saddleback.com)

Theme 1: Growing in Spirituality

Introduction

We consider we have made progress in developing the prayer life of the congregation. A series of services on prayer was led by Rev Tom Wilson at the outset. In addition, the Kirk Session attended a retreat day with the Benedictine monks at Rostrevor. A Prayer Group for the entire congregation has been established; the group is meeting fortnightly and is developing prayer material as well as links to enable those who are unable to meet to participate fully. Prayer is fundamental to the Christian life and regular prayer as individuals and in groups is key to growing in spirituality.

We also believe that there should be increased emphasis on Bible Study taking place on a regular basis. There is room for greater participation by the congregation in the group Bible Studies. Over the last 2 years, Morning Worship (including the sermons) has been used to provide in-depth study of particular books of the Bible and the Commandments; this has been beneficial and it is planned that this be continued.

Praise continues to be at the heart of worship in Newtownbreda and it has contributed much to both the development and nurturing of our spirituality. We recognise the importance of continuing to support our Director of Music, his team and all the members of our choirs and all our instrumentalists as they enrich our worship. Furthermore, we will be open to innovation in our worship, praise and music.

The Kirk Session will adopt, provide leadership and encourage the implementation of the following actions (2012 onwards):

- Achieve greater involvement of the congregation in the development of a personal prayer life and participation in the Prayer Group.
- Further teaching on the discipline and importance of prayer.
- Achieve greater participation in group Bible study.
- Continued use of Morning Worship for in-depth studies of individual books of the Bible.

As the plan develops further, the Kirk Session will promote additional elements relating to *Growing in Spirituality* to include:

- Elders will promote through personal contact with the congregation eg in their district visitations, through their liaison with Church organisations and personal friendships actions relating to an increased emphasis on prayer and teaching on specific books of the Bible.
- Kirk Session recognises that members of the congregation are often uncomfortable praying as part of a group. People feel pressure to contribute to what is said. The Prayer Group will encourage members of the congregation to participate in such a way that they are comfortable by using a range of techniques to suit different personalities and needs.
- Kirk Session will encourage the congregation to make prayer requests to the Prayer Group; these will be brought to Morning Worship where appropriate.
- Asking members of the congregation to select their favourite Biblical passage and explain why this is special to them.
- Promote greater participation in the Bible Study groups.

Theme 2: Building a Future Together

Introduction

The emphasis in this theme is on providing opportunities for the congregation to get to know each other better so as to grow in fellowship. A second element in this theme is the need to work towards a sustainable lifestyle that shows we care for and are stewards of God's creation. The third element is the need to care for and develop our children and young people to be full members of our Christian community.

We are building up our fellowship. Some of the activities introduced have been particularly effective; the numbers coming together for tea, coffee and conversation after Morning Worship has grown substantially and continues to grow, while the Harvest Lunch was a significant success. Other proposed activities, such as meeting by districts, has not worked. Our young musical talent has contributed under the guidance of our Director of Music to several memorable services of worship. This greater fellowship has been evident with the increased engagement in the Summer Scheme: greater numbers of volunteers helping and young people attending.

We have registered as an Eco-Congregation and are implementing the initial recommendations of our Eco-Committee, which focus on recycling. In recent years we have significantly reduced our energy usage both in the Church building and in the Halls suite. We have engaged our young people in this important work of "Caring for God's Creation".

We see the opportunity to further embed our achievements in building our fellowship as a family of God's people by developing the next generation of volunteer leaders; by ensuring the members of our congregation and its organisations are linked directly to the development of the Mission Plan as we move forwards; and by continuing to protect God's creation by considering our impact on it as a congregation.

The Kirk Session will adopt, provide leadership and encourage the implementation of the following actions (2012 onwards):

- Look for further opportunities to bring groups within the congregation or the congregation as a whole to social activities where there are opportunities for fellowship to flourish and, in particular, across age groups.
- Assist members of the congregation to examine under guidance and with assistance the skills and abilities that they possess with a view to putting themselves forward as leaders and helpers in our congregation and organisations.
- To implement the recommendations of the Eco-Committee on leading a more sustainable lifestyle.

As the plan develops further, the Kirk Session will promote additional elements relating to *Building a Future Together* to include:

- Investigate fully the opportunities to bring interest Groups together or members of an Elders District with a view to developing relationships.
- Investigate the use of the PCI course which seeks to help congregational members to identify their strengths and talents.
- Actively encourage members and organisations in the congregation to examine how their organisation is contributing to the Mission Plan and how this might be used to take forward the 3 themes.
- Focus on how young people see their contribution to the Mission Plan and how they see the plan developing.

Theme 3: Developing partnerships

Introduction

The Kirk Session considers that the links between the various religious denominations on the Ormeau Road have continued to strengthen due to the progress being made by Ormeau Churches Together (OCT), in support of the Ballynafeigh Clergy Fellowship (BCF). This progress is in keeping with the South Belfast Presbytery Mission Strategy as it applies to our congregation.*

Among a significant number of successful inter-church initiatives has been a celebration of Easter through music in our Church building entitled 'Celtic Passion', and a concert by the McPeake Family in association with the Sullivan Upper School Folk Group in our Halls (which raised £1,000 for Arklow Presbyterian Church Building Fund). The diverse array of events also included an evening with Dr John Bell of the Iona Community entitled 'Old Songs and Interesting People', and the community engaging in a discussion of the work of Philip Orr examining the impact of the signing of the Ulster Covenant, 100 years on.

Additionally, the God Loves You (GLU) Summer Scheme continues to be very successful at drawing all the churches into working closely together to show our Christian love to the community by helping old people and improving the neighbourhood. GLU also hosted an all-ages fun-day for the community in Cherryvale Park.

We have also developed closer links with charities working locally, such as Mencap, the L'Arche Community and the National Childbirth Trust.

The Kirk Session will adopt, provide leadership and encourage the implementation of the following actions (2012 onwards):

- We will develop closer inter-church relations through contributing to the leadership and work of the Ballynafeigh Clergy Fellowship (BCF) and Ormeau Churches Together (OCT).
- We will seek to develop opportunities to work in the community and provide facilities for organisations such as Mencap, the L'Arche Community and the National Childbirth Trust.

As the plan develops further, the Kirk Session will promote additional elements relating to *Developing Partnerships* to include:

- Continued support for Traidcraft and Christian Aid.
- Continuing our links with the local schools, particularly through the work of our Youth Worker.
- Advertising on the Foyer Noticeboard and have links on the website to community based events.
- Working with other Churches in the locality on ethnic minorities issues.
- Supporting the work of Presbyterian Church projects, including considering a mission trip.
- Providing volunteers and leadership for interchurch initiatives, such as God Loves You (GLU).
- Continuing to develop initiatives which strengthen community links, such as the Autumn Fair and the Carers and Tots Group.

* BCF is comprised of the clergy from Newtownbreda (St John's) Presbyterian Church, Cooke Centenary Presbyterian Church, Ballynafeigh Methodist Church, St Jude's Parish Church and the Church of the Good Shepherd. OCT is comprised of lay members from the same congregations.