

Blackhall St Columba's Local Church Review Report

There's a sense of excitement at Blackhall St Columba's moving forward with extensive plans for the future. These include developments along twin tracks, in Church premises, the Sanctuary and Halls (Stages 1 & 2) and in ministry/personnel – appointing a Youth & Community/Family Worker (Stage 3). Architects have been commissioned and the Sanctuary is to be transformed into a friendly space with greater flexibility, movable seating and a café area. Blackhall Church is a busy Community Hub in an area where there are few other venues for community groups to gather. The renovations will go hand in hand with strengthening existing relationships and the development of new ones. The vision for the refurbishment recognises a) that 'modern worship requires a more flexible space and more welcoming entrances and atmosphere' - an approach which reflects the theme of the recent Presbytery Seminar about 'The Place of Space in the Mission of the Church'- and b) community outreach and mission. Reflecting the parish demographics, families and young people are coming around and there's a wish to offer support to children, parents and young people.

A Stewardship programme began 18 months ago with a review of the talents members of the congregation bring to the life of the Church. Funds are tight with such a large capital project and other sources of support such as the *Go For It Fund* are also being considered.

There are 9 Committees of Session stemming from the move to the Unitary Constitution. Session Clerk Eddie Thorn and Elders support the Minister, Revd Benjamin Abeledo, and part-time pastoral assistance is provided by Revd Gordon Farquharson. A Project Manager has been appointed to co-ordinate the renovation works. With the array of activities, strategic thinking and major developments being undertaken the importance of a manageable ministerial work-load cannot be underestimated. The proposed Youth & Community/Family Worker is not seen as feasible yet and Blackhall St Columba's is exploring ways of re-allocating funds to help support it.

Worship

Blackhall St Columba's Mission Statement is "to glorify God, proclaim Christ and serve others." "Praise" is described as "the heartbeat of our life." 11.00am Sunday Worship is supported by 225 people with 45 attending a 9.30am first Sunday of the month Service which changes to every Sunday during July and August to let families have the rest of the day for their own activities. There is also a regular midweek service. Worship is primarily led by the Minister, members of the congregation participate in reading lessons and share in leading worship; there is a Worship Committee which, with the Minister, oversees developments. A developing music ministry is supported by a Church Choir and a recently formed praise band. Worship continues to evolve; a variety of forms of Services aims to "enable people to come to Church when it suits them".

Discipleship

An active prayer life includes 3 home prayer groups, a weekly prayer meeting and an intercessory prayer chain. There are Christianity Explored, and other Bible study groups, including preparation for baptism, confirmation and marriage. An Alpha course is planned for February 2019. The Sunday Club provides for children and young people and Primary School Scripture Union groups are supported.

Service

A wide range of activities from pastoral visits to Fresh Start to Christmas gifts for prisoners' children, support 3 aims: to meet the spiritual and practical needs of the congregation, to meet the needs of

the wider community, and to support the practicalities of running the Church and Halls, which comprise the primary community resource in Blackhall. The Bible Society's Trauma Healing Course is to be offered in the community.

Evangelism

'Evangelism and service go hand in hand' so that in the many points of contact and activities, including faith specific ones, there are opportunities to reach out and communicate. A welcome letter is sent to new residents in the area with an info pack about Church and Community. The Church also sends a quarterly Blackhall Bulletin to the community and a monthly Kirk News to the congregation. There are a website and church Twitter account. A Summer Holiday Club takes place each year as does Carol Singing at Sainsbury's.

Fellowship

A large array of activities from 'Knit & Natter' to Movie Nights to Toddler Teas provides many opportunities to develop relationships. All groups using the halls are visited by elders and an effort is made to make connections with the life and worship of the Church.

Blackhall St Columba's describes its Next Steps as:

1. Building Worship

- a) By expanding participation and involving more of the Congregation in vital support ministries e.g. the welcome team, sound desk, beadle team.
- b) Offering a menu of Worship choices to grow the intergenerational appeal of the Church.

2. Building Depth and Strength

- a) Increase involvement of members, offering opportunities to volunteer and participate.
- b) Strengthen skills, ensuring opportunities for training and development.
- c) Making more of Kirk Session meetings and offering Elders' Conferences ('Building for Change' was the theme of the recent first KS Conference).
- d) Building relevance and opportunities to respond.
- e) Focus on young members enabling them to grow into leadership roles.

3. Building Breadth

- a) Develop further understanding of, and engagement with, the community, with a focus on young families and youth.
- b) Seek to appoint a Communities and Families Worker (**Phase 3** or earlier).
- c) Conduct a survey within the Parish to identify need and opportunity.
- d) Use the work and fund-raising involved in the building programme to build community spirit within the Church and hall-user groups.

4. Building for the Future through Church buildings Refurbishment

- a) Ambitious project to provide more flexible and welcoming space.
- b) Architects engaged, fund-raising underway, necessary permissions from Presbytery and CARTA will be sought and the hope is work could begin in Spring 2019.
Phase 1 – Sanctuary: including removal of pews, new heating & lighting, new entrance and vestibule, chancel extension, office and vestry upgrade; 100% funds realised.
- c) **Phase 2** – Halls, fit for purpose as a Community Hub.

The papers completed by the Working Group may, in the opinion of the LCR Team, be regarded as model documents, providing clear and succinct information.