

## **Presbytery of Falkirk – Visit to Kirk of the Holy Rood - October 2011**

### Deliverances

That Presbytery:

1. Receive the report.
2. Give thanks to God for the life and witness of Kirk of the Holy Rood Parish Church and congratulate them on their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.
3. Commend the minister, Rev. David Smith, the office bearers and congregation in their ministry within this parish, and their faithful and prayerful outlook.
4. Congratulate the minister, office bearers and congregation in their efforts to reach out and bring in the community through a variety of events, links and occasions.
5. Applaud the congregation in their good management and repair of buildings and for making good use of the time and talents of members in assisting with the upkeep.
6. Encourage the congregation to continue to build on their stewardship endeavours.

### Report

The Presbytery visit to the Kirk of the Holy Rood took place on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> October, with worship there on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> October. The visiting team was Mrs Janice Guthrie (Leader), Rev. John Brown, and Mr Keith MacDonald.

### Meeting with the minister.

Discussions with the minister, Rev. David Smith, preceded our meeting with the office bearers within the Kirk. David has now been in post here for 8 years and appreciates an excellent working relationship and distribution of administrative tasks with the Session Clerk, Shaeron Clacher. David also has a good relationship with the Kirk Session and Congregational Board.

David does not take a specific day off per week but rationalises his days off at less busy periods. He has good support from his office-bearers and appreciates Presbytery Chaplaincy support from Donald Scott and also sessions with Neil Barclay on Spiritual Accompaniment. He generally takes study leave every four years and has used it to good purpose with worthwhile spells at Princeton and in Israel. There is a visit to Israel planned with some members of the congregation for next year. A recent visit to Bochum in Germany as part of the Presbytery visiting party was greatly valued by David. He also greatly values the support of his Session and Board in these visits.

### Meeting with the office bearers.

The visit continued by meeting with the Congregational Board and Kirk session jointly. A general enquiry regarding the new format approach of Superintendence was met with very positive responses. It was felt that by having the questions beforehand to respond to the answers could be discussed freely and then a considered response given.

### Finance and Stewardship

Regarding finance there were a couple of issues that the office bearers wished to raise.

Firstly, there was a query regarding a large sum of money as appearing on the financial statistics that the visiting team had to hand. The Board members felt strongly that this was an error and should not be appearing on this document, the team agreed that as this was a document that was related to the visit, further enquiries would be made on their behalf with Stewardship and finance. It was also agreed to raise the Office-bearers' disappointment over the matter regarding their Mission and Aid application to Presbytery. Generally, finance was in a reasonable condition, however, the lack of support with Mission and Aid will have a detrimental effect on the accounts this year.

Good Stewardship is encouraged in a number of ways including a specific 'Christian Giving Day' every year when a financial update is given and additional funding is encouraged as well as a 'special' uplift on that day. Using Gift Aid as a means of supplementing that already given is continually encouraged. Time and talents are put to good use by encouraging those to contribute as they can be it in the upkeep of buildings and grounds and in the use of talent in fundraising activities. Forthcoming events and encouraging participation as well as financial updates are placed in the quarterly magazine that goes out to each household in the congregation.

### Property

The fabric of the building is good although there have been some issues with the flat roof. They have recently undertaken a number of major works including upgrading of window units and the boiler, these have had a strong impact on fabric funds. However, along with the resurfacing of the car-park, which took place in the interval between our two visits, it is not anticipated that there should be any other major works required.

### Civil legislation

With regards to civil requirements, the team is happy to report that the Kirk of the Holy Rood is in compliance with regulations regarding the Disability Discrimination Act and its subsequent amendments. As regards to Health and Safety, there are three members fully trained in food handling, there is a fire officer and they were, at the time of the visit, in the process of organising a fire evacuation drill.

### Worship

The worshipping congregation per Sunday averages at around 150 with about 200 attending on a communion Sunday, there is also a communion service in the evenings at this time. Members of the congregation are encouraged and take an active part in worship leading by reading the lessons both within church and as part of the visiting 'worship team' at two local sheltered housing complexes. Hymns are selected from CH4 There is a strong ecumenical 'feel' about this church, demonstrated not only by 'linked' services during Easter, Pentecost and Christian unity week, but also by the excellent ecumenical fellowship that is shared, and extended by David in the Grangemouth churches together group.

### Organisations

There is evidence of a strong faith based congregation here at Kirk of the Holy Rood shown through their commitment to prayer via the weekly prayer group, to study through the Bible study group and to worship with a choir and previously a worship group. There are a healthy number of groups operating within the Kirk including Sunday School and Quest group, Girls Brigade, Craft Group, Drop-in/ Gardeners group, Parent and child groups and a walking group in addition to those already mentioned. Their women's association proudly boasts over 80 members and has been going strong for over 50 years. All aspects of safeguarding conform to the necessary documentation. The hall is also well used by the community for a

variety of groups

### Kirk Session and Congregational Board membership

With 47 Elders and 12 non Elder Congregational Board members, The Kirk of the Holy Rood seems to be well 'staffed'. A concern was voiced however regarding a Session membership that reflected the age and gender bias of the congregation itself, mainly female and with a very large percentage of members over fifty. In line with this, Elders duties are frequently matched to their health and abilities to carry out duties. Training is provided, although tends to be 'in-house'. Those present were reminded of the training that can be provided by Presbytery. Elders, where able, have districts and are also part of teams which carry out the necessary work of the church. – outreach, education etc.

### Outreach

Kirk of the Holy Rood has strong world mission with links to work in Belarus, Nepal and Jamaica. Mission at home concentrates on work in the local Primary School where David is sole chaplain and the secondary school where he is one of the chaplaincy team. It also involves responding to the needs of the elderly and infirm in local care homes. The well attended annual bereavement service provides additional contact for those in need at hard times. The probability of new housing in the area presents the challenge of reaching the un-churched in the new housing areas and is something that the Kirk Session is well aware of and taking into consideration.

### Vision for growth

Part of the vision for this church is about growth and they see that in the form of encouraging families. They have already had 'bring a friend to church' and in conjunction with outreach will try to encourage families moving into the area. The team suggested different types of worship eg. Messy church, changes to worship patterns may be an option, this was received positively. Building relationships at the local high school has also had a positive impact.

### Sunday Service

Worship took place on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> October, the service was led by the Rev. John Brown with readings and prayers from Keith MacDonald and Janice Guthrie who also brought the greetings of Presbytery to the congregation. Keith MacDonald met and was part of the prayer group prior to the service. The team shared in Christian fellowship with tea following the service and were greatly appreciative of the welcome and positive reinforcement received both there and at the door following the service.

The motto that was developed during their recent successful 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations is "Looking back with Pride – forward in Faith", an apt description for the faith and the commitment of this congregation, minister and office bearers.