

Kirk Session Report

Church AGM - March 2017

Thank you everyone for taking the time to attend our Church's Annual Stated meeting. I regard this gathering and all its related parts, not just as something that must be carried out to comply with Church law but as time when we celebrate our 'wee kirk' and all that is good about it. I feel, as probably many others do, that being part of the Airdrie Clarkston family is special and value the fellowship and friendship that we share together as we gather to worship and serve God in our parish.

Almost three years ago, as everyone will remember, we were allowed to depart from the proposed linkage with Jackson and granted the right to call with a reviewable tenure of seven years commencing 10th December 2014 with a progress review 3 years after this date. This progress report was therefore due in December 2017, however, as a result of our Minister's formally intimating his intention to retire in September 2017 and Hamilton Presbytery having agreed to his demission from the charge of Airdrie:Clarkston, the review was brought forward to February this year when the Right of Call was considered by the LCR/Implementation Committee, this being a most vital first stage of the Church of Scotland Vacancy procedure.

As a congregation, we have worked diligently to achieve the benchmark goals that were set three years ago in terms of income, increasing numbers and our giving of a voluntary donation of £1000 per annum to Presbytery within this timescale. At the LCR Review meeting held on the same evening prior to the Right of Call meeting, the Vice-Convener of Hamilton Presbytery's LCR Committee praised us on the clear strengths highlighted in our Local Church Review paperwork and commended our vision and life as a congregation.

We are now awaiting the LCR/Implementation Committee deliverance regarding status/tenure and our right to call a minister and subsequently Presbytery's decision. This should occur at the May or June meetings of Presbytery.

We are hopeful that the process of filling the vacancy will then commence.

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The members of our Congregational Board and Session continue to serve the church well and are very aware of their duties and responsibilities.

Bill Hawthorne retired from the role of Clerk to the Board in June 2016. Bill, as in all the roles he has undertaken over the years, executed all aspects of this post in a professional, knowledgeable and consultative way. Janey Milligan after many years of dedicated service,

is retiring from the role of Church Treasurer. Janey is much-admired for the professional and knowledgeable manner in which she handled all aspects. Campbell Sefton, after many years on the Property Committee, stood down as Property Convenor. Campbell must be commended for the wide knowledge and experience he brought to this role.

On behalf of the Church I would like to express our grateful thanks and appreciation to Janey, Bill and Campbell for their commitment, diligence and expertise in these roles and for their continued support and faithful service.

In September, Margaret Brown was warmly welcomed as our new Clerk to the Congregational Board.

In January 2017, we were delighted to appoint Calum Brown as Treasurer Elect. In the interests of a smooth transition, Janey agreed to remain in post, working alongside Calum as Treasurer Elect, and taking responsibility for matters ongoing. This AGM was deemed an appropriate point for Janey to demit the post and for Calum to fully take over the role of Treasurer.

Our appreciation to both Margaret and Calum for agreeing to take on these vital Church duties.

A joint meeting of the Kirk Session and Board was held on Wednesday 16th March 2016 to review and discuss Session and Board organization, in particular, the roles and remits of working groups in the context of Church tasks and responsibilities. The outcomes of this meeting were tabulated and presented in draft form to the Session and Board at the next meeting. After much discussion and consideration by all members and the individual working groups over a period of months, a final version of Committee Structures and Remits was agreed in November 2016. The detail and information within the document provides a good structure and framework for our groups to work to.

Kate Adam carries out the duties of Safeguarding Coordinator most diligently and precisely and Joy Codona continues to be a dedicated and committed Presbytery Elder.

Clarkston Church fully supports the work of Hamilton Presbytery and actions all request from Presbytery timeously. The paperwork relating to the Local Church review process has been submitted to Presbytery in May 2016 and the Review group met with the Board and Session on Monday 20th February 2017 to discuss the contents and agree the way forward for the next five years.

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At the beginning of December we lost a much loved Elder and friend, Robert Craig. Robert worked tirelessly, humbly and with compassion and understanding in so many capacities within our Church and is greatly missed by us all.

Church Working Groups

Our Church working groups work diligently and accomplish a great deal each year. It is therefore only proper to highlight some of their 2016 achievements.

Finance - we are extremely fortunate to have our church's finances and budgets managed so professionally by our Finance team, in particular the two Treasurers (at this time of transition) Janey Milligan and Calum Brown and Assistant Treasurer Betty Kennedy. This is a most important remit and we are most grateful that it lies in such capable hands.

Worship - Monthly services at Wester Moffat Hospital continued throughout 2016.

Other special services have included:

- An Armed Forces Service held on Sunday 19th June. We appreciated the wonderful attendance of members from the Air, Army and Sea Cadets Corps as well as some members of the British Legion.
- Harvest Thanksgiving in September.
- Our annual Service of Hope in October was once again well-received and at that particular service a new Book of Remembrance, donated by Margaret Paterson, was dedicated.
- A Songs of Praise service in November was a great success.
- On Sunday 20th December, we enjoyed a Christmas Family Service where a combination of young people from the Sunday Club and Messy Church presented the Christmas message through drama and song. This was followed in the evening by a Carols by Torchlight service organised by the Worship and Mission / Stewardship groups. These two groups also worked together to plan and deliver the service of Nine Lessons and Carols on the Sunday following Christmas. All aspects of Christmas Worship were most meaningful and we are most grateful to all who contributed.

Ryan Hanlon, our organist, is a talented and extremely gifted musician and we are very fortunate to have his support and help with music matters within the church. I would like to thank him for all the time he gives to music for worship, choir and for willingly supporting many other groups and events within the Church.

Summer Services during the months of July and August continued to be held at 10.00 a.m. and this pattern will continue this year from Sunday 2nd July to Sunday 13th August.

Pastoral - The car rota continues to be well-used by older members of the congregation. We appreciate the way Robert Craig coordinated this resource for numerous years and also thank Colin McKay and Archie Easton for seamlessly taking over the management of the rota and volunteers since December.

Those on the Pastoral Group's Care list continue to be visited by members of the Pastoral Group. The group is also considering the introduction of pastoral visit pew cards.

Mission and Stewardship - This year our Mission and Stewardship group continued to raise awareness of our Church within the community by carrying out a leaflet drop in the Plains area of the parish. They have also been responsible for the purchase and display of Christmas, Easter and Church Birthday banners to highlight these events to the wider community. The group, along with the Social/Fellowship Committee, planned and delivered the wonderful 180th Birthday Celebration on Sunday 12th March. The Mission and Stewardship now plan to focus on a Time and Talents project involving all members of the congregation.

Property - various renewals, renovation and maintenance projects within the Church, halls and manse were completed during 2016. The church buildings and manse were inspected in February 2016 as part of the Presbytery Property Inspection. The survey findings and recommendations are now being considered and costed. We are most grateful to the group for the work the members undertake to keep our property to an appropriate standard.

Social and Fellowship - sincere thanks must go to this group who give so much to the whole life of our Church by organizing and delivering a variety of fellowship and fundraising events throughout the year. This year's activities included a fun-filled Family Quiz, a Musical Concert evening, and a mini Christmas Fayre and lunch on the 1st Sunday of Advent. The hospitality delivered by this group is always first class and many Church events such as the Armed Forces Church Service, Church Birthday celebrations and the Youth Group Film evening were enhanced by the catering organised by the Social and Fellowship group.

Dad's Army - we really appreciate the host of maintenance and renewal tasks undertaken around the church, halls and grounds by this group of men. Their support is outstanding! I don't know what we would do without them!

Communication - The Church newsletter is issued bi-monthly both in paper form and electronically. It is of a high quality and is very well-received by members. Our appreciation goes to the Communication Group for producing, editing and collating each edition. We also appreciate the work carried out by Graham MacFall in maintaining our Church Website.

As I recently said to the Messy Church team. Team work is the key to success and like the Messy Church team, our groups' successes are due to good teamwork. The following quote which I had hanging on the wall in my office in the school sums up this message.

‘SNOWFLAKES ARE ONE OF NATURE'S MOST FRAGILE THINGS,
BUT JUST LOOK WHAT THEY CAN DO WHEN THEY STICK TOGETHER.’

Thanks therefore to all group members for the generous giving of your time, talents and resources and for your vision, innovation and diligence.

Provision for Young People and the Community

Our youth organisations are slowly but steadily growing and we now have over 140 children and young people involved in the life of the Church.

We have around ten regular members attending Sunday Club and Creche each week. Whilst the under-five's go to play in the crèche for the whole block of time, the Sunday Club youngsters are occupied with a bible lesson and related craft work before joining the others in the creche.

Youth Group - Although small in number, the Youth Group continue to meet regularly and engage enthusiastically in all activities. The Youth Group's Christmas Film evening on Sunday 4th December was a great success with over fifty people of all ages attending.

Messy Church - Messy Church has now been running for over two years and from that initial meeting in December 2014 has grown and developed into a most effective church outreach which is really meeting a need within our community. The welcoming atmosphere and the fun and participation of all attendees is clear to all, as God's message is shared.

Youth Organisations

Our Rainbow and Brownie groups continue to be enjoyed by many girls and have steady numbers attending each week. Both groups have a very good relationship with the church.

Our Boys Brigade Company continues to be a popular and successful Church organization. Two long-standing leaders of the Anchor Boys retired in December. We commend the long service given by Kim Weir and Paul Murphy over the years. We also are very grateful to Ross Edgar and Scott Murphy for taking over the leadership of this group and wish them success as they nurture this youngest section of the BB's.

We are pleased to intimate that one of our former BB's, Jack Haugh, has been selected as Hamilton Presbytery's General Assembly 2017 Youth Representative .

Our appreciation is extended to all the, energetic and innovative leaders who give their time to make groups such as Sunday Club, Creche, Messy Church, Youth Group, BB's, Brownies, Rainbows and Toddlers appealing to the young people in our Church Community.

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Other Church Groups

The Guild, who meet every fortnight, continues to be very popular with around 22 members attending each meeting. This session's syllabus has been most entertaining and informative with talks from visitors on a wide variety of topics. One particular memorable presentation was led by Caldervale pupils on the WW2 Battlefields and the Holocaust. The Guild also organised a most successful, entertaining and well-attended Beetle Drive.

A special thank you must go to Mrs Pat Gunn for all she has done for the Guild in her role as Convener over the past two years.

The Tiddler Group, who meet every Wednesday in school term time, continues to provide a welcome resource for babies, toddlers and parents and carers in the wider community. The relationship between the group and the Church is most positive.

Carpet Bowls - the Carpet Bowls club has now been running for over a year and is well-attended each week by members of the church and wider community.

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Ministry to the Wider Community

A variety of charities have benefitted from our efforts this year.

We are in the process of fundraising for St. Andrew's Hospice New Build Appeal and by February had collected over £2000 with the total still rising. Thanks to Isobel Main and Nan Turner, our Hospice Link persons, for organising such an effective fundraiser idea and for getting so many of the congregation involved in the project.

Supporting 'The Trussell Trust UK Foodbank Network' is ongoing. A particular thrust for goods was made prior to Christmas with some members taking part in a 'Reverse Advent calendar' scheme and donating one item each day in December.

Shoebox Appeal

Once again we took part in the Samaritan's Purse Shoe-box appeal collecting an amazing 123 boxes of which St. Serfs Primary gave 46. One hundred and forty-six pounds was also donated to help with transport costs. Thanks to Liz Easton for organising this project every year and to everyone who gave so willingly to this worthwhile cause.

Syrian Refugees

The Church continues to support the appeal for warm clothing for Syrian Refugees coordinated by the organization Glasgow the Caring City. A substantial number of bags have been delivered on two occasions to the collection point at Old Cathcart Church, Glasgow.

Our Guild have raised over £700 for the National Guild Project by running a Sponsored Silence.

Our retiral collection this Christmas was sent to the charity 'EMBRACE the Middle East.'

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Yearly Statistics

Our roll at the 31st December 2016 was 343. We welcomed 5 new members. Sadly seven members died this year and one left by certificate. Three weddings, ten baptisms, and thirty-seven funerals were conducted. Our number of elders totals thirty-five with a further seven members (not elders) on the Congregational Board.

As stated earlier, the Reverend Derek Gunn, who has been our minister for over 8 years has announced his intention to retire in September of this year. Although much more will be said at that juncture, I feel it is appropriate to say a few words just now as this is his last Clarkston Annual meeting.

Derek, on behalf of everyone here. I would like to thank you for all that you have achieved for us over the years and for working tirelessly with us to achieve this next chapter in the history of our Church. Your support and knowledge has been greatly appreciated and we commend your enthusiastic, approachable, friendly and flexible personality.

A vacancy, however, can be a demanding time for a congregation but just as in previous vacancies, I know that we will all pull together to realise the future vision and targets for our church as outlined in our Local Church Review. We are not pessimistic, and always have a 'can do' not 'can't do' attitude to challenges. As someone said at our recent meeting with members of Presbytery's Implementation Group, 'all of us in this room are thinking what we can do to address these targets'.

We need to continue with this focus and attitude so that our Church will be seen by possible ministerial candidates as an attractive and vibrant Christian community, where everyone works with love, respect, fellowship and care for each other and where the main focus is to share God's message and love.

In conclusion, I would like on behalf of the Board and Session, to thank you for your support in all Church matters and activities and once again for your attendance here today.

Barbara Sefton

Session Clerk