

DIOCESE OF GLASGOW AND GALLOWAY

ST NINIAN'S CHURCH, CASTLE DOUGLAS (SC011079)

REPORT OF YEAR ONE MAP REVIEW WITH BISHOP GREGOR

Wednesday 1st April 2015

Present:

Bishop Gregor Duncan, Canon David Bayne, Mr Douglas Allison, Mrs Kirsty Allison, Mrs Alison Bayne, Mrs Sue Beddows, Mr Fred Coulthard, Mrs Stephanie Dewhurst, Mr Steven Dill, Mr Clem Gault, Miss Sheila MacKenzie, Mrs Joy Margerison, Mr Ian Mather, Mr Maurice Till, Mrs Jenny Wright, Mr Matthew Wright.

1. The meeting took place at 7.00pm in the Gordon Memorial Hall. The Rector welcomed Bishop Gregor to the meeting, which had had to be postponed from 10th March following his fall.
2. Bishop Gregor opened the meeting with the Growth Strategy Prayer and his apologies for the postponement of the meeting. He explained that its purpose was to review the past year, and what we had planned to do, and then to see what had actually happened.
3. The Rector then showed a presentation he had put together under different headings to illustrate the worship, activities and outreach of St Ninian's.
 - a. The MAP had been signed with our facilitator, Sandra Walsh in March 2014. Of the six strands of the Growth Strategy, the two chosen for the first year were Learning and Discipleship, and Children and Young People.
 - b. Following Anne Tomlinson's recommendations at her visit to us in 2009, we had tried to ensure that our targets were SMART:

Specific
Measurable
Achievable
Realistic
Time-bounded

Some things we had already commenced before the MAP had been officially signed and these were listed on our plan:

- i. Ongoing since August 2013: **Reorganising books and leaflets** in church and providing **welcome packs** for newcomers.
- ii. Ongoing since September 2013: a weekly **Bible Study Group** in Bothwell House (Abbeyfield Home); Jenny Wright had taken over leadership of this group since the original leader had become ill and died. The group regularly comprised 6-8 people, meeting for an hour on a Saturday morning.
- iii. September 2013: the Rector had led an **Intercessions Training Seminar**. This had been well-attended by members from other churches as well as people from St Ninian's. In response to a query from the Bishop he said that it had included people who had never yet done intercessions as well as the more experienced. It was the Rector's intention to hold another seminar specifically for St Ninian's.
- iv. Since December 2013: Volunteers were available to **read to blind or partially-sighted** members of the congregation (although nobody had yet accepted this offer).
- v. From Lent 2014: further **study groups** offered by the Rector; Alison Bayne mentioned the ecumenical study groups in connection with the World Day of Prayer - usually three meetings took place prior to the actual service to study the bible readings on which the service was based. Members from St Ninian's, the Catholic

- congregation and Kelton Parish Church met for these, which had happened annually for about 16 years. They were lay-led and did not involve any member of the clergy.
- vi. During 2014: **Bible Reading Fellowship notes** or similar for study had been made available to those who wished. Jenny Wright reported that twelve people were now using these on a regular basis; Bishop Gregor reminded the meeting that diocesan funds were available to help with the cost of materials such as this; the Rector felt that, if required, St Ninian's should pay out of its substantial funds, rather than the diocese.
 - vii. During 2014: the Rector had met with the **young people** from the congregation to discuss their needs, hoping to involve them in Taizé Services, but he had found that they were all so busy that they had been unable to take part. In discussion it had proved that, while they might appreciate some further teaching, they felt that they currently attended a sufficient number of services.
 - viii. Ongoing: **Community Audit**. This had been commenced with a comprehensive assessment of the facilities and services in the area, compiled by Jenny Wright, who had also produced a map showing the distribution of members of the congregation. It still needed to be extended to ascertain what help the church might be able to offer to the community. (Also see e. below.)
- c. Other initiatives had been commenced, continued or completed:
- i. There had been a **Vestry Away-Day**, facilitated by Anne Tomlinson. This had been the first such meeting.
 - ii. As part of the Learning and Discipleship strand of the MAP, the Rector had just begun a new series in St Ninian's Review entitled, '**Raiding the Rector's Library**' in which he recommended books on spirituality, prayer, theology and Church history.
 - iii. A comparatively large number of **Baptisms** take place at St Ninian's, attributable in part to the **Little Fishes** group for pre-school children, run by Roz Stevens, at which the Mothers' Union served juice/tea/coffee to the toddlers and their parents/grandparents/carers. As well as fulfilling a need in its own right, the group had also raised funds for Comic Relief with a Gruffalo Party.
 - iv. During school term-time the youngsters of the **Sunday School** had continued to meet in the Hall during the main Sunday Service each week, leaving after the first hymn and returning in time for a blessing or to take Communion. The Sunday School children were involved in the life of the church and they participated in services once term: Mothering Sunday, Harvest Festival and at the Nativity, using all their own material. They were also involved in outreach, raising money for Samaritan's Purse and Mary's Meals. During the July and August holidays, a **Summer Club** was run for the children in place of Sunday School. In addition to the serious stuff, the youngsters also had fun at an **Annual Ceilidh** arranged by the Rector and Alison.
 - v. Most years there had been candidates for **Confirmation**. Inevitably they eventually left for further education but there were still young children at St Ninian's and there was ongoing ministry for children.
- d. Over the past year there had been **comings and goings**: eight members of the congregation had died and three had moved away to live nearer their families. However, there were new additions bringing in five adults and three children. The numbers on the Congregational Roll remained fairly constant, but the older and infirm members were able to attend less often or not at all.
- e. **Community Outreach**: Jenny Wright explained the results of her research as illustrated on maps and other information on a display board, gained from questionnaires which had been distributed to the congregation. She said that not all the questionnaires had been returned

and many of those which had were from the older members, which could be one reason why the congregation appeared to be made up of a highly elderly population. Other questions involved how many people had disabilities, and how far they lived from church. Regarding the latter, the majority lived within five miles, but there were significant numbers who travelled much longer distances when they came. In response to a question asking for suggestions from members of the congregation were the following:

- i. A back-up team for post-hospital visiting;
- ii. Someone had offered to make their house and garden available for events;
- iii. Regular visiting for those who are unable to go out; there was no pastoral care team as such and most of the visiting was carried out by the Rector in person, who commented that the addition of Dalbeattie to his responsibilities meant that this would have to change in the future;
- iv. A good many individuals from St Ninian's were involved in voluntary work outside the church;
- v. There was no food bank in Castle Douglas - there appeared to be insufficient need for one - but there was one run from Greyfriars House in Kirkcudbright, which also supplied Castle Douglas when and if required.

Jenny had recently discovered that the recently appointed minister to the Parish Church and surrounding area was already undertaking a similar exercise as hers. She hoped to be able to work with him and planned to arrange a meeting with him to share information.

- vi. Groups from within St Ninian's who regularly used the Hall included: Mothers' Union, a Men's Group, Thursday Club (for older people), Little Fishes for pre-school children and their carers, and the Ministers Fraternal Group which met monthly in the hall for midday prayer, lunch, to compare diaries and discuss topics of mutual interest. The numbers attended could vary from six to ten, many of those being retired.
- vii. Groups from the community who had met once/weekly/monthly in the hall during the period January-March 2015 included:

Alzheimer Scotland, 2 days per week	Children's Party x 2
Feral Choir	Crossmichael Guild
Glenkens Meditation Group	Castle Douglas Spiritual Group
Probus	Sugarcraft Class
Stewartry Retirement Group	Stewartry Art Society
U3A	North Solway Ringing Group
Castle Douglas Flower Club	Clarsach Society
Yoga classes (4 different groups)	Suzuki Group Annual Concert
Kadampa Buddhist Meditation Group	D&G Family History Society
Stewartry Scrabble Club	Galloway Preservation Society
Dumfries Physio At Home	Glenkens Meditation Groups
Dance Improvisation	

The question remained of how to try to integrate with these groups.

- viii. The Rector referred to the use of the hall for the monthly ecumenical Sunday Evening Alternative Services (Taizé, Iona) as well as annual events such as the World Day of Prayer Service, and commented on how the numbers for all of these had grown since moving into the hall instead of using the church, bringing in some from other denominations e.g. Catholic/Church of Scotland/Quaker, with some travelling considerable distances.
- ix. Bishop Gregor commented how much he appreciated using the hall for his lectures - it was a wonderfully welcoming venue.

- x. The Rector mentioned how the **Crib and Christingle Service was excellent outreach** into the community - there could be 100 attending altogether. The older children began a game of hide and seek, looking for all the figures to go in the crib and each of the younger children was given a knitted sheep to bring to the crib. Then all stood in the Chancel with a lighted Christingle to sing Away in a Manger in the darkened Church.
- xi. The Rector mentioned that the **Church was open to the community and that the community had come to accept the Episcopal Church for different events**, such as the Castle Douglas Civic Week Pageant and the Sashing of the Douglas Lass and Lad, and the British Legion Standard Service. It had also been used for a regional Mothers' Union Quiet Day, and for a Memorial Service and Concert in memory of our former organist.
- xii. **Practical examples of outreach** included the Healing Blankets, which go all over the world; the collection and distribution of toiletries for Wigtownshire Women's Aid Refuges; a fund-raising event in support of two youngsters from the church who were going to Germany to sing with the Dumfries Youth Choir. A large project had been the funding of a roof for St Barnabas Anglican Church, Mwaya Beach, Malawi, as well as sending money to help Kenny Macaulay's school in Nigeria; sponsoring two cyclists raising money for Christian Aid and Abbas Rest; sponsorship of a walk for the Lymphoma Association.

Bishop Gregor commented that a lot was being done already, there was a lot to take forward and that the ministry with children was of great importance. **The Bishop enquired of those present what they had learned about themselves as a congregation while engaging in these activities/projects, and what they had learned about God.**

- Kirsty Allison responded that she had learned that she could do more than she thought she could, by the grace of God and thanks to the church.
- The Bishop commented that it can be a place for people to discover their gifts and for people to find fulfilment in helping with things.
- Alison Bayne suggested that even doing small things was important and that those who were unable to contribute in a practical way could still help by staying at home and praying.

Bishop Gregor then asked what had not been so encouraging in the past year.

- Douglas Allison mentioned that a large number of the congregation were over 76 and that there was a limit to how much outreach could be done.
- Sheila MacKenzie highlighted the fact the map showed that a significant number of the congregation do not live within Castle Douglas and that, while there is a tremendous welcome here, realistically it was impossible to attend every service/function.
- Joy Margerison pointed out that the absence of younger people could be attributed to their involvement with family life - people tended to return when they were older.
- Bishop Gregor said that St Ninian's should concentrate on doing the things that are possible and not to be discouraged by trying to do the impossible.
- Stephanie Dewhurst commented that the small numbers attending this meeting gave an indication of how little support the congregation as a whole were giving to the MAP process; she felt that this, combined with falling numbers in those attending church services, showed a need to concentrate on numerical growth in the future.
- The Rector concluded by saying that he felt that some more social events were needed so that people could get a better chance to get to know one another.

In summary, Bishop Gregor thanked the Rector for his presentation and encouraged him to find an opportunity to show it to the entire congregation. He felt that they might be surprised and heartened to see how much was going on. He looked forward to the next Review.