

# Edinburgh: St. Nicholas' Sighthill

## Future Focus Session 1 (18/4/18) Facilitator's Report

### **Introduction**

A total of 26 people (not including the Minister or facilitator) attended the session, held in the church hall and were divided into four groups, seated around tables.

The evening began with Rev Tom Kisitu introducing the facilitator, Rob Rawson. Rob then led a short time of devotions before the main exercises began.

### **Timeline Exercise**

The evening consisted of two main parts with a short tea break in between. The first part provided an opportunity to look back into the church's recent past (50 years) and discover more of how the current congregation came to be.

Those gathered worked in four small groups. Each group was invited to draw a timeline on lining paper dating from 2018 back to 1968. Key events were to be recorded for both the church and the parish/community over this period. Events considered to be positive ('celebrations') were to be noted above the line, whilst the opposite ('struggles') were to be noted below the line. The right hand end of the lining paper was sectioned off and left blank. This is because it will deal with the future and will be completed in the final session.

Although it is not possible to record the actual drawings, the main events have been collected from all the small groups and recorded below. As one would expect, there were a number of duplications, but the 'happenings' need only to be mentioned once, although some appear both above and below the line and are therefore mentioned in each respect.

### **Celebrations**

#### 1960s (and prior)

- St. Nicholas Children's Church is linked up with Burtons (1957)
- Sunday School is flourishing (at one time, the largest in Scotland)
- The Bowling Club is thriving
- Rev R. C. Dick is Minister
- New organ is installed
- Wells Campaign takes place
- Rev A. Ireland arrives
- Miss Sinclair and Barbara Mackenzie become first deaconesses
- New houses are built in the Calders
- The gardens are improved and laid out

#### 1970s

- Rev Ken MacKay arrives
- Wester Hailes housing is built
- Boys Brigade Pipe Band is formed
- Baberton is built
- Dual carriageway is constructed

## 1980s

- Wester Hailes Education Centre opens
- Holiday clubs start up
- St. Nicholas' Children's Relief begins operating
- Christian Aid lunches start up
- Bible Studies take place
- The Guild is at full strength
- Beetle drives take place

## 1990s

- Ceilidhs and concerts are held
- New Church Officer is appointed
- Marilyn becomes new Assistant Minister
- Gift Sundays (for needy children) begin
- Friendship Group starts up
- Parent & Toddler Group begins
- Plant sales take place
- Art Classes start
- Drama Club is formed
- Spring Fairs take place
- Good News Night takes place
- New organist is appointed
- Variety Show (including a Moses sketch) is staged

## 2000 to present

- Local canal is re-opened
- Strawberry Teas are launched
- Church celebrates its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary (Moderator pays a visit)
- Rev Alan Cobain arrives
- Food Bank is launched
- Gift Days take place
- Harvest Festivals take place
- Café Church initiative starts up
- Wednesday Café is launched
- Monthly visits to Blenham House begin
- New church website is set up
- Shoebox Appeals are supported
- Bereavement services are re-introduced
- Audio visual improvements are made
- Church building is listed
- Rev Alan Cobain leaves
- Messy Church is launched
- Bethany Trust is set up in the Calders
- Rev Tom Kisitu arrives
- Remembrance Community Service is re-introduced
- JAM ('Jesus and Me') youth group opens
- St. Nicholas' Day event is introduced
- Roof repairs are completed (after much fundraising)
- Re-engagement with primary schools takes place
- International members join

## **Struggles**

## 1960s

- Bowling Club is 'men only'!
- Not enough room for Sunday School means using Murrayburn School building

## 1970s

- Dual carriage way is constructed
- Church building starts to need ongoing repairs

## 1980s

- Gospel Singing Group closes
- Significant decline in congregational numbers begins

## 1990s

- Significant decline across youth organisations begins

## 2000 to present

- Choir is disbanded
- Organist dies
- Financial deficits occur
- Church building is listed
- Rev Ken MacKay retires
- Christian Aid lunches come to an end
- Boys Brigade group folds
- Westburn School closes
- Girl Guides group folds
- Local demographics change and cause less church attendance
- Rev Alain Cobain leaves
- Sunday School suffers severe decline
- Local bank and a number of shops close
- Guild group folds (been going since 1939)

## **Trends for celebration**

- 1960s to 1990s – Good church attendance taking place
- 1960s to 1990s – Large child attendance taking place
- 1960s to 2000s – Lots of social activities taking place
- 1970s to 2000s – Numerous young people's groups operating

## **Trends amongst the struggles**

- 1960s to 2000s – Problems occurring with church roof
- 1990s to present – Sharp decline in child attendance taking place
- 1990s to present – Sharp decline in overall attendance taking place
- 2000s to present – Noticeable drop in weddings and baptisms taking place

Everyone then had the opportunity to browse amongst the other tables and see each group's timeline, noting any commonalities. In a short plenary session, comments were invited as to what common themes participants noted. The responses for celebrations were: a large Sunday School, Ministers' arrivals (and departures!), the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the new roof, Café Church, St. Nicholas' Day celebration and Messy Church. Responses for the struggles included: loss of the organist and choir, certain deaths, decline of the youth organisations and being listed.

*TEA BREAK (thanks to Margaret and Moira for refreshing us!)*

## **Mapping Exercise**

The second part of the evening involved the same four groups drawing a map of the parish, upon which they were to provide as much relevant information as possible and paying particular attention to where people gathered. It is acknowledged that some features may lie outside the actual parish, but are nevertheless considered part of the immediate community. Despite these maps being in some cases, artistic masterpieces, they cannot be copied into this document, so the following features were collectively noted:

### Main Features

- Church & Hall buildings
- Manse
- St. John Ogilvie's RC Church
- A71 Calder Road
- Wester Hailes Road
- Bankhead Drive
- Longstone Road
- Minor roads
- Major roundabouts
- Canal
- Tram line
- Sighthill housing
- The Calders housing
- Parkhead housing

### Commercial Features

- Hermiston Gait retail park
- Sighthill industrial estate
- Burton's biscuit factory
- Scotmid store
- Makro cash & carry store
- Car dealership
- TSB offices
- BP garage
- Calder shops
- Sighthill shops
- Parkhead shops
- Post Office
- Clydesdale Bank branch
- The Dodger pub
- The Silver Wing pub
- Beijing Banquet restaurant
- Papa John's Pizza takeaway
- Funeral directors (2)

### Municipal/Community Features

- Nurseries (2)
- Murrayburn Primary School
- Sighthill Primary School
- Sheltered housing complex
- Blenham House
- Gate 55 Social Hub and library
- Fire Station

*Continued →*

- Health centre
- Edinburgh College
- Napier University
- Health Centre
- Community flats
- Food Bank & Youth Club
- Recycling centre

#### Leisure Features

- Bowling club
- Park
- Garden plots
- Time Twisters soft play centre

#### Notable Features outside the Parish

- Wester Hailes estate
- Baberton estate
- Hailes Quarry Park
- Wester Hailes Education Centre
- Wester Hailes Holy Trinity Church
- Wester Hailes shopping centre
- Whinpark Health Centre
- Bus depot

The final “feature” required from each group was for each person to place a small, red sticky dot on the maps to mark where their homes were. They were then invited to place green sticky dots as to the locations of their key friendships/networks. Any red or green sticky dots that were not in the parish were to be placed in the margin. One key aspect was highlighted, which was that few homes were located very close to the church buildings, yet a good number of friendships were close to or associated with them and indeed, littered throughout the parish.

Once again, there was a plenary session in which comments were invited as to any themes that transpired, following the groups looking at each other’s handiwork. Comments were thus: Common features noted were the church & hall, bowling club, shops, primary schools, nurseries, parks and gardens, canal, dual carriageway, funeral parlours, the Roman Catholic church, Gate 55, health centre and Burton’s factory. In terms of the red sticky dots, it was noted that a good number of people lived outside the parish and overall, were well spread out. In terms of the green sticky dots, it was noted that key friendships/networks tended to centre on the church and hall, the bowling club, various shops, the parks, health centres, eateries and the community flats.

After a brief summing up, the meeting finished on time and Tom thanked Rob before he closed in prayer.

*Rob Rawson Facilitator*