

Edinburgh: St. Nicholas' Sighthill

Future Focus Session 2 (2/5/18) Facilitator's Report

Introduction

An encouraging total of 31 people (not including the minister or facilitator) attended the session, which was once again, held in the main church hall. There were a few new faces present, although a few others were unable to attend. As previously, all were seated around tables and gathered in four small groups. Initially however, specific small groups were not strictly necessary.

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

The Story so far

Rob then delivered a quick re-cap of the previous session, mainly as a refresher, but also for the benefit of those who were not present at that time. The main points were highlighted from the timeline and mapping exercises.

The Healthy Church Check Up

The format for this session was then outlined. Thereafter, there was a time of reflection on the *Church Without Walls'* definition of a healthy church, based on six key characteristics. Each characteristic was defined and explained, along with allowing a few moments for discussion. Before moving on to the next characteristic, each person gave a "score" for the congregation, the choices for which were "very weak", "weak", "strong" or "very strong".

The six characteristics were:

- **Integrity** (everything geared around Jesus and "walking the talk")
- **Body & Soul** (caring for the "whole person" and the whole church)
- **Open House** (welcoming to all and reaching out to the unchurched)
- **Growth** (in spiritual depth as well as numerically)
- **Local** (truly engaging with all areas of the community in a relevant way)
- **Love & Care** (genuinely caring for the needy – action over words)

There then followed a tea/coffee break (our thanks again to Margaret and Moira), during which time the scores were translated into numerical form as follows:

Very Weak = 0
Weak = 1
Strong = 2
Very Strong = 3

The limited choices discouraged "sitting on the fence" and helped to focus thinking. It should be pointed out that the scoring was private and all of the score sheets were completed anonymously. There were 31 score sheets returned.

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The scores were tallied on a flip chart sheet and totalled up by Tom and Rob. With 31 participants, a minimum score would have been 0 and a maximum, 93. Whilst these numbers may help as a guide to each characteristic's degree of "health", the ranking of the characteristics is more significant, as it gives some indication of the congregation's main strength and weakness. The scores in this instance were not vastly different, but a perceived strongest and weakest characteristic did emerge.

After the tea break, the results were revealed by Rob and they were as follows (highest score first):

Love & Care	62
Local	60
Integrity	58
Open House	45*
Body & Soul	45
Growth	40

(**Open House* was ranked higher on the basis of receiving more combined scores for "strong" and "very strong".)

The tally patterns were also revealed and showed that the vast majority of marks (155 out of 186) were recorded in the 'weak' and 'strong' categories, with just six recorded in the 'very weak' category. *Local* received the broadest range of marks, whilst *Love & Care* scored all but seven of its marks in the 'strong' and 'very strong' categories and along with *Integrity*, were the only two characteristics to score no marks in the 'very weak' category.

The people then worked in four small groups and were invited to look at the strongest scoring characteristic (*Love & Care*) and to suggest up to three simple measures ('quick wins') that would help to build upon this perceived strength. Furthermore, the groups were also invited to suggest three simple measures to help address the weakest scoring characteristic (*Growth*). There was a time for feedback, providing an opportunity to identify any common ideas/themes. This was no easy task and as time was limited, not all groups were able to provide a total of six measures.

For the first task (building on *Love & Care*) the collective feedback from the four groups was:

- Find out more about the Calder Community Flat
- Provide a church service with livelier music
- Extend an invitation to the local college or school
- Host a welcome community lunch
- Seek more integration of church groups
- Set up a visiting plan
- Deliver/post flyers to promote Christmas/Easter services
- Instruct an Elder to make contact with church members who have not attended for at least a month
- Consider providing transport for those who find it difficult to travel to church
- Promote the Calder's Project (e.g. a talk in the Sunday service)
- Develop the spiritual side of Messy Church (less of the 'messy' and more of the 'church')
- Organise a 'surprise re-shuffle' at a Sunday service, where everyone moves to different seats from the ones they may usually sit in (possibly link this with a fire drill)

For the second task (addressing *Growth*) the collective feedback was:

- Visit Gate 55
- Use a more personal approach (especially for new members) when help is needed (e.g. for the garden)
- Increase publicity by delivering flyers and invitations through a door drop
- Take part in the Edinburgh Open Doors Day in September
- Provide more focused services (focused on specific people groups)
- Set up a 'welcome group' for universities and colleges
- Provide sheets for new people to write down their contact details
- Move the welcome team to the vestibule and ensure younger members are on the team
- Start up a suggestion box
- Remove the collection bowl from the table at tea/coffee time after the service
- Follow up on the Youth & Family Worker application
- Place magazines or flyers (to include all activities) in local shops
- Provide alternative worship

In the plenary session, everyone was able to hear all the suggestions and note any common ideas, such as distributing publicity and providing alternative worship.

After a brief summing up, Tom thanked Rob for his facilitation and led the evening in prayer, before everyone said the Grace together.

Rob Rawson

Facilitator