

KIRKCALDY TOWN CENTRE CHURCHES

ABBOTSHALL, AUCHTERTOOL, BENNOCHY, LINKTOWN AND ST BRYCE

MARCH 2021

WELCOME BACK

It has been a while since we published any information about the conversations regarding the future of our Churches.

We have so much we want to share with you but first here is a recap: In 2019 the Kirkcaldy Presbytery paused vacancies and setup a group to see how the local churches could adapt to the changing landscape; a looming shortage of ministers, aging congregations, the need for churches to be more missional, and the need for church closures.

Kirkcaldy Town Centre Churches started conversations to find a solution and at our meeting in January 2020 the following was decided:

1. It was agreed *in principle* to move to one worship centre PLUS one or more “pockets of presence” to connect with the wider community.
2. It was agreed that the General Trustees be invited to revisit the churches, with a proper brief and with a process that involved representatives of the congregations and presbytery. To that end it was agreed that a small group of elders would draw up the brief.
3. It was agreed that this proposal be communicated to the Strategy and Resourcing Committee for action.
4. It was agreed to undertake a Mission Audit of the area comprising the current parishes, and invite Diane McWilliam, a Community Development Consultant, to meet with a group of representatives to advise on the process.
5. It was agreed to invite the ministers to devise a pattern of joint working, including patterns of shared worship and varied styles and times, and to report to this group of representatives at a date to be arranged. It was hoped that some form of collaborative, shared worship events might be effected as soon as possible.
6. It was agreed to welcome the offer that Justin Taylor would act as Locum/worship leader at St Bryce for a year, and to aim for a resolution of the future pattern of joint working by July 2021.

THEN CAME COVID...

The arrival of COVID meant that conversations ceased as we waited for the pandemic to pass. However, this took longer than we anticipated and the good work that we had started had to be deferred.

Things changed drastically in this period for the churches locally and nationally. In Kirkcaldy we went from five ministers to two, and ministry was stretched as we tried to respond to our community. Nationally, the Church of Scotland has taken a severe hit, with our CFO Dave Kendall suggesting that the Church would accrue a deficit of £11 million and therefore a reduction of ministerial staff (Ministers, Deacons...) by 40% was needed (this means a 40% reduction in churches).

It became apparent that we needed to start the local conversation once more. Because of restrictions, the Session Clerks met with the Ministers in October to restart talks, in order to progress on the six agreements agreed in 2020.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Conversations were fruitful and we created three groups to help us move forward.

A buildings group made up of a member from each congregation to assess our buildings and to ascertain which building, if any, would suit our new church.

A community audit made up of 20 members of our congregations to make sure our future church is tailored to work with our local community (More to follow).

A planning group made up of a member from each congregation, to help find ways of working together.



At the moment we are collecting data about our buildings and our community in order to help future discussions about what shape our new church will take.

Decisions will be made by Kirk Sessions throughout this process, and we will be communicating (and getting feedback) with congregations regularly.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

This new church we are building together, will be our church, built on communal needs. Please start to invest in the process.

We also ask that people pray for the groups. We are all dealing with a tremendous task and we need all the help we can get (Psalm 127:1).

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY AUDIT?

If we are honest, the church has been absent from large sways of community life in Kirkcaldy. Although we have done good work in our communities, could we do it better?

Our Community Audit is based on Asset Based Community Development. But what is it?

From Church of England Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham *“Asset-based community development is founded on the idea that change will only happen if we identify and mobilise the gifts and capacities of local people and the social, physical and economic resources of a local place. It is an approach that seeks to build strong, sustainable communities from the ‘inside out,’ through forging and nurturing relationships of care and creativity.*

ABCD potentially transforms individuals and communities and can help churches to reconnect with those in the parish.

From Nuturedevelopment.org *“Asset Based Community Development builds on the assets that are found in the community and mobilizes individuals, associations, and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths. This makes it different to a Deficit Based approach that focuses on identifying and servicing needs. From the start an Asset Based approach spends time identifying the assets of individuals, associations and institutions that form the*

community. The identified assets from an individual are matched with people or groups who have an interest in or need for those strengths. The key is beginning to use what is already in the community. Then to work together to build on the identified assets of all involved”.

The hope that through our community audit the church would be able to build a mission to our community, that is relevant, and works with people, mobilising the community’s strengths and in so doing make Kirkcaldy a place where all people thrive.

This might not mean that church attendance on a Sunday goes up. It does however mean that church is no longer limited to a Sunday service in a building but is rooted in the action of our community. The church, and the therefore the gospel, will be embedded into the life of our community.

Some helpful links:

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asset-based_community_development
- <https://www.weareonechurch.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Asset-Based-Strategies-for-Faith-Communities1.pdf>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NaFG8vbFQkc>
- https://churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/006/39876/Taking_an_Asset_Based_Approach.pdf
- https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/56300/2019_Priority_Areas_Learning_Programme.pdf
- <https://www.sclld.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Final-report-web-version.pdf>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a5xR4QB1ADw>

