

# **Our Church's Future – Our Children's Faith**

## **The report of a Bothwell Parish Church Working Party, 2015**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **Background:**

Bothwell Parish Church recognises the declining numbers of children and young adults participating in its church-related activity. The survival of Bothwell Parish Church as a congregation and our faith support of the community at large is dependent on reversing this trend.

A working group was appointed by Kirk Session to identify factors that could support the growth of the Youth Church. It researched other UK opinion in this area, undertook a survey open to Church members and the community, interviewed Church and community children and visited several Churches known to have strong Youth Churches.

#### **Findings and recommendations:**

Of the statements made by national reports the most significant was felt to be "*Growth is a product of good leadership (lay and ordained) working with a willing set of churchgoers in a favourable environment*".

This statement has shaped the Working Group's recommendations. The Group believes that the Bothwell Parish Youth Church should have active provision for the encouragement and enablement of faith in all youth age groups from nursery to University. Suggested age groupings are ages 3-5, 6-10, 11-14 and 15+. Particular attention should be paid to establishing and maintaining Youth Church activity for adolescents and young adults.

**Leadership:** a significant expansion in congregational involvement is required. A part-time youth worker should be appointed as Chair of a new Youth Church Team Ministry and an Elder should be assigned whose sole remit is to support the Youth Church. A Youth Church Team should be established with Leaders for each section of the Youth Church. Where possible, leaders should be aged  $\leq 40$ . Leaders should be supported by a minimum of 4 associate leaders per section. Training should be provided. Rota arrangements should be made such that each section of the Youth Church operates 52 weeks a year, but that each leader has one Sunday in four 'off'. Leaders should not serve for more than 4 years.

From the rest of the congregation, a list of additional visiting skills providers (e.g. in craft, computing, cooking, sport) should be established and used regularly and a 'willing hands' team should also be recruited to provide volunteer cover about three times a year. Separate leaders and associate leaders, supported by volunteer teams, should be appointed to lead a 'Messy Church' and a weekday Youth Club.

**A willing set of churchgoers:** Bothwell Parish Church is rich in experience and talent, but much of this is hidden day to day. Few of those attending Sunday by Sunday know the work, skills and interests of those in the congregation. We need to find those willing to lead, provide skills, or be 'willing hands' and make the most of that information from year to year. The Working Group recommends that a talent stewardship campaign is led by Kirk Session and refreshed annually to capture and store electronically data on the work and hobby skills of members and their willingness to support the Youth Church.

**A favourable environment:** The Church Centre provides a very valuable resource. Nevertheless, the Working Group recommends that the use of space within the centre is reviewed and space is identified that is suitable and available to be set aside for use by the young adult youth group; as a breakout room for younger Sunday Youth Churches and for use during Messy Church and Youth Club nights i.e. capable of housing table-top sports and IT games, with comfortable seating. In addition, the space used by other Sunday Youth Church Groups should appear designed especially for their meetings Use of existing and potential storage space should also be reviewed and Youth Church children should be involved in refurbishment decisions.

In addition, the Working group wishes to highlight the Church of Scotland statement that ***Children are neither peripheral nor preliminary; they are central*** and recommends that Youth involvement in church services and the timing and format of church services should be reviewed by the Worship Committee. Consideration should be given to involvement of older children in services and in the provision of a regular youth focused service and also to moving the timing of congregational interaction with the Sunday Youth Groups to towards the end rather than the beginning of services.

**Improving our communications** in line with that used by other Churches was also felt to be crucial. The Working Group recommends significant changes to our use of communication within the centre and to electronic communication with the wider community.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Kirk Session of Bothwell Parish Church has expressed concern about the falling number of children and young people participating in Church-related activity.

To assist its consideration of the possible actions to take to address this concern, the Kirk Session appointed a working party with representation from existing young peoples' organisations within the Church, families with young and teenage children, young adults, grandparents, child protection leadership, members with teaching experience and the church centre committee. The working group committee is detailed in Appendix A.

## **AIMS**

1. To research today's 'Children's Church'.
2. To identify resources available to support children in today's church.
3. To compare practices in Bothwell with examples of best practice in Scotland and identify transferable factors in achieving success.
4. To understand the views of the Kirk Session, Congregation and Children regarding how the Church in Bothwell can best support families in the Christian upbringing of children.
5. To identify differences in the views of families affiliated to the Church from those in the wider parish, regarding how the Church can best support the development of children.
6. To identify the level of appetite for ecumenical activity
7. To learn about those activities which are most attractive to children (and their parents).
8. To identify factors that would prevent children from participating in activities within church premises.
9. To identify the optimum time and format for 'Sunday School equivalent' activity in the pre-school, primary and secondary age groups.
10. To identify the level of untapped commitment from the congregation to the support of children's activities and the barriers to adult participation.
11. To understand the changes in practice that will have most impact on Bothwell's children and be realistically achieved by the Church in Bothwell.
12. To identify costs in terms of room space, resources and adult participation required to adopt best practices in Bothwell.

## **INTENDED OUTCOMES**

1. To present a report to Kirk Session detailing the findings of the working party
2. To develop and present a roadmap for a revised Bothwell Children's Church.

## **METHODS**

1. The working group was convened from June 2014 – January 2015 and met approximately twice monthly.
2. After an initial review of online and literature-based resources, the group met with the Church of Scotland Schools and Churches Development Officer to learn of current initiatives in the church community, challenges faced by others and examples of good practice.
3. A series of visits to other congregations and youth initiatives were made and reported using a structured template.
4. Opinion on current and potential resources was sourced through the creation and publishing of online and paper surveys that were open to the congregation, all attending the Church Centre and the wider public, through the Church website, for 6 consecutive Sundays.
5. In addition, focus groups were held with children in the Church Sunday School, the Company, Junior and Anchor Boys sections of the BB, children attending BOOSC and children of the pupil council of Bothwell Primary School using structured formats with questionnaires tailored to the different age groups.
6. A thematic analysis of issues raised by the surveys and focus groups was undertaken.

## **RESULTS**

### **National Context:**

The trend of reduction in congregational attendance and involvement of young people has been experienced by congregations across Scotland. The *2014 Church of Scotland Assembly Blue Book* reports membership figures from December 2013 of 398,389 - a fall of 15,099 as compared with December 2012 and a fall of 173,309 as compared with 2002. The data from this report also reports reductions in national statistics recording the population of children of school age: 680,291 in 2012, a fall of 71,805 from 2002, yet a rise in total national population of 258,800 over the same period. In the Church, the number of children and young people aged 17 and under involved in the life of congregations was 64,230.

In 2012, the Church of Scotland membership approximated 7.5% of the total population in Scotland. Yet, according to the 2011 national census, 32% of the population claimed some form of allegiance to it. This

discrepancy between association and involvement is aligned to the issues affecting the attendance of children and families and is perhaps at the root of its cause.

Equally, the idea of the family who may be attending Church has changed. *Growing up in Scotland Today* (report of the C of S 'Church and Society Council', 2009) records that 49% of births in Scotland in 2007 were to unmarried parents. The Church of England Report *Numerical change in church attendance: national, local and individual factors* states that *"the problem is not adults leaving the Church: it is that half of the children of churchgoing parents do not attend when they reach adulthood"*

In addition, the use of social media and access to electronic devices has brought a cultural sea-change, with what can be a widening divide between the old and young in their approach to community. The *Childwise* report 2009 found that 70% of 5-16 year olds have a mobile phone and over 80% of 7 – 16 year olds have internet access at home and the 'Byron Report' (Department for Children, Schools and families, *Safer Children in a Digital World*, March 2008) noted that *"while new technologies bring incredible opportunities to children and young people, parents' general lack of confidence and awareness is leaving children vulnerable to risks within their digital worlds"*.

Aware of this, the Church of Scotland has appointed a 'Children and Young People Working Group', reporting to the 'Congregational Learning Group' of the 'Mission and Discipleship Council'. A consultation was held by this group (*Now You're Talking!*) in January 2014, aiming to establish a set of proposals for enabling more effective ministry among children, young people and young adults. It has yet to publish its report, but when available it should be obtained to supplement and guide further those considering the situation in Bothwell.

In the meantime, the above-mentioned Church of England Report provides strong messages for consideration. Drawing on statistics from national parish returns and a national survey, it considers the difference between churches that are growing and those that are declining, and identifies factors associated with both growth and decline and activity with no impact on growth.

#### Growth associated factors:

1. **Leadership, whole congregation involvement and environment:** *"Growth is a product of good leadership (lay and ordained) working with a willing set of churchgoers in a favourable environment"*.
2. **Seeking and embracing change:** *"what seems crucial is that congregations are constantly engaged in reflection" "for there to be growth, the existing congregation must be willing to experience change...in the timing and type of worship, in how and when the building is used and crucially, in shifting lay leadership towards younger and more recent arrivals. It is also necessary for a significant subset of lay members to be active in assuming responsibilities, rather than passively leaving things to the ordained minister"*.
3. **Human resources:** *"the most important returns come from human resources."*
4. **An understanding of the perspective of children and experience:** *"Young vicars with young families have the edge in leading vital churches"* However, growth is also associated with *"tenure in the post"* and *"some very long serving vicars continue to achieve growth"*.
5. **Focus on older years:** *"churches that are most successful in attracting children have provision for teens/young adults as well" "overall, the findings underline the importance of retaining young people, particularly in the critical period of adolescence and early adulthood"*.
6. **Style of worship:** factors that are individually associated with statistically significant growth include those such as *"non liturgical worship and contemporary music"* and with multivariate analysis *"the number of midweek services approaches statistical significance"* and *"consistency in the style of the main Sunday service emerges as something favourable to growth"*.
7. **Environmental projects:** *"it is intriguing that environmental projects and social services do have an impact (on growth)...when all of these activities are considered at once, only environmental projects have statistically significant effects"*.

#### Decline associated factors:

1. **Lack of rotation of the people serving in volunteer leadership roles:** *"lack of rotation is linked to decline; substantial rotation is linked to growth"*.
2. **Style of worship:** *"growth is least likely to be found in the 'middling to old-fashioned range': somewhat high church, somewhat liturgical and with relatively traditional music"*.
3. **Uniformed organisations:** *"interestingly, having a uniformed youth organisation is related to church decline. Presumably, ...tend to be found in parishes with traditional activities that for other reasons are struggling to maintain their numbers"*.

#### Non-growth related activities:

1. **Child day care, pre-school, before or after school programmes.**
2. **Elderly care or care in community programmes.**

## **Understanding what we are about**

The working group greatly benefited from guidance provided by Jen Robertson who outlined key areas that should be considered when planning a youth church and emphasized that it takes a whole church to raise a child spiritually, not just 2 or 3 adults,

The key areas were:

1. **Relational** - the atmosphere created by the whole congregation and its relationships with children should be conducive to nurturing the growth of children.
2. **Incarnational** - God should be revealing himself to children through our lives and our involvement with children's lives.
3. **Recognizing the priority of worship** - it is not enough just to set up a youth club. We were encouraged to focus on the values we wish to pass on. However, this is not just through services but can involve other means of prompting spiritual thinking e.g. reflective spaces. We heard how it was important for worship to also include creating a 'wow' factor that uplifts and helps youth be prompted to ask those key questions. In addition, we were advised that it may help to involve children in the rituals and service of worship e.g. in collecting the offering, reading etc.
4. **Nurturing and learning** - we were encouraged to see ourselves as equipping, empowering and enabling, rather than educating or entertaining. We were introduced to the **4 phases of development of faith**.
  - a. Experience of faith (pre-school),
  - b. Affiliation to faith (primary school),
  - c. Searching for faith (secondary school)
  - d. Owning faith (adult).

We appreciated that we may all move up and down these 'Faith phases' and recognized that each is important and that the process is a long term one.

The understanding provided by Jen Robertson also echoed the above mentioned Church of England report and also a key statement in the Church of Scotland *Growing Up in Scotland Today* report: "*Children are neither peripheral nor preliminary; they are central. From the time of the promise to Abraham, they are a sign of hope for the future, but they are also central now. In them, we are to recognise, and welcome, Christ.*"

## **Messages from the Children**

Each of the children interviewed had constructive and practical suggestions to offer for enhancing their experience in the Church and its Centre.

### Sunday Club children

Key things to note in regard to their views about the Sunday clubs were

1. The importance of food and drink to their enjoyment.
2. The preference for crafts and games that were active.
3. The enjoyment of special activities and free-play provided in the holiday clubs.

In addition, the children had thoughts about enhancing the time they spent in Church.

1. Enhancing perception of welcome— providing orders of service.
2. Enhancing perception of involvement - using children to undertake roles e.g. door duty, prayer reading, having a designated service, telling the congregation what they do, sometimes being in charge of the children's section of the service.

### Boys Brigade Junior Section

18 boys completed a questionnaire using group discussion to prompt reflection. A few of the boys also attended Sunday School here or the Evangelical Church. Friday night was their preferred night for attending BB. A recurring comment was the desire for 'better tuck'. Most felt comfortable in the centre. One asked for more cleaning and one for a different paint colour in the hall. They liked the friendly atmosphere.

When asked '*What other activities in the centre might you attend if they were held on a different day or at a different time*' and '*What other activities do you wish the Church Centre had on offer for you and your friends?*' the following were recurring themes

1. active sport style games e.g. table tennis, table football, pool, PT, football
2. electronic club – PCs, play station, 'Minecraft', Xbox etc.
3. craft and art activities.

### Boys Brigade Senior Section

15 boys completed a questionnaire after group discussion. A smaller proportion of boys attended a Church Sunday school, service or club. Some of the boys would prefer activity (including BB on a night other than

Friday) so they could do other things on a Friday. Most felt comfortable with the building and appreciated the friendly atmosphere. They would like to be able to access the water fountain.

When asked '*What other activities in the centre might you attend if they were held on a different day or at a different time*' and '*What other activities do you wish the Church Centre had on offer for you and your friends?*' two felt they were too busy for anything else, but from the rest were suggested the following recurring themes

1. Sports club including table top games and badminton or football.
2. Social club for teens to meet and do homework (ideally with PCs for homework).
3. Technology based games club.

#### Bothwell Primary School

12 pupils were interviewed. None attended a church. 1 used to attend Sunday school but stopped because of conflicting activities. 3 had attended BB, 2 had stopped because of football training. 1 attended Girls Brigade and 1 Guides. 6 used to attend BOOSC and 6 had attended the summer playscheme. None felt that changing the time of these activities would impact on their attendance. All had attended the centre for 'Bubblegum and Fluff' last Christmas. Some had attended the café and like it. The centre was felt by the children to need more light and by 2 to need more colour in the crèche. Suggestions for additional activities they would be interested varied but included sports club, art club, gymnastics, computing / animation club and an older after school club. Greater advertising of activities was recommended.

#### BOOSC

Parents were advised in advance and 12 children from P1-7 were interviewed. 1 child attended a Sunday School elsewhere. Suggestions for additional activities they or their friends would be interested in attending included football, computing, hockey, basketball, Irish dancing, karate, cubs and cooking classes. The centre was felt to be a relaxed and happy place. They would like fewer spiders, more room to run around and an outside space to play in and seasonal decorations.

#### **Messages from the congregation and wider community**

Web and paper versions of the survey were available on our website and actively promoted in the Church services and Church Centre for several Sundays, however only 39 people chose to participate. Of those responding, approximately a third had children attending ballet & jazz, a third attending baby & toddlers, and a third attended Sunday school or crèche. Just under a quarter attended BOOSC. The report from the survey is given as Appendix B.

Key messages from it were that provision for secondary age children was felt to be worse than for pre-school and primary children; that location was important to those who came and that youth clubs and other active learning events were desirable. Perceived barriers to youth presence in the Church were other competing activities, formality and parents not being associated with Church. Perceived barriers to adult support of youth activity included time and fear of being left with commitment, the lack of appeal of the church to younger parents, child protection procedures.

#### **New National Initiatives**

A key development happening in other places across Scotland and the rest of the UK is '**Messy Church**'. This defines itself as

1. A way of being church for families involving fun
2. A church, not a craft club, that helps people encounter Jesus as Lord and Saviour
3. Being found across the world (2362 Messy churches around the world)
4. With values that are about being Christ-centred, for all ages, based on creativity, hospitality and celebration

Messy Church is supported by the Bible Reading Fellowship. It usually involves a regular monthly time (usually not on a Sunday) when volunteers support a meeting with a themed set of activities aimed at varying age groups, the eating of a simple meal and a focus on faith. Resource materials are provided to support the meetings. It usually attracts those not going on a Sunday, appealing to those for whom regular Sunday worship is not part of their lifestyle and while it extends the number who are in touch with faith, it usually does not increase Sunday attendance. It is not child-care – children must be accompanied by an adult. It is usually held in a hall, but may move into a Church building at the end of the evening. It requires a hall rather than a small room.

The working group has visited Churches that provide a Messy Church, one of our families participated in such a Messy Church and one of the working group attended a regional meeting about Messy Church. Some churches have built a large Messy Church following. Others have seen their numbers wax and wane. All have needed a team of volunteers and space for the meeting. The family participating found the experiences to be very enjoyable for all. The format was felt by the committee to be deliverable in Bothwell and there was a perception of the availability of a supporting network at regional level.

## **Lessons from other Churches**

The group sought information about the youth activities which were operating in other Churches. It contacted 12 Churches based in the central belt of Scotland. Each was chosen because of prior recommendation in terms of youth work and strong Youth Church Communities. Telephone interview and personal visitation followed and 10 detailed responses were collected and are summarized in Appendix C. The group discussed these reports and identified key lessons for the Youth Church in Bothwell:

1. **Leadership:** vision and direction is needed to drive and galvanise activity. The majority of successful churches benefit from either a paid youth worker or a young minister for whom the youth church is a key focus.
2. **Team Church:** the designated Youth Church Chair usually needs support from additional section or activity leaders. Leadership works well when held for a short fixed term and it can also be shared. The wider congregational family is also crucial to the successful Youth church and regular recruiting and refreshing of the volunteer pool is needed. Use of rotas to distribute the load are advisable. Young adults also have much to contribute here.
3. **Kirk Session engagement:** Successful churches demonstrate the importance of the work and ensure Kirk Session is regularly briefed on successes and challenges through the use of an elder whose sole portfolio is the Youth Church.
4. **Financial support:** grants from the national church and community funds have been used to good effect to fund or part-fund youth workers and equipment or accommodation but the parent church will still need a regular youth budget annually.
5. **Space:** designated Youth Church space provides a sense of ownership and belonging for children and allows youth leaders to create a continuum from one week to the next. A space for larger games and activity is important. Different settings for older and younger children are appreciated and involvement of children in the design of facilities is beneficial.
6. **Timing of activity:** leadership energy and the nature of the activity appears more important than when the activity is held. However, Sunday tea-time and evening appears to work well for secondary school age group attendance. Additional week-day clubs and holiday clubs appear to be attractive as do less frequent events such as competitions and trips. Messy Church (held at times other than Sun AM) is also generally working well. Time for social activity as well as religious activity appears to be important.
7. **Format of activity:** being active and interacting is important to children and young adults. Games (and for older children roles e.g. in developing service content) should form a large part of sessions. Access to regular table and IT equipment is very helpful for this. A balance has to be struck between religious teaching and fun with a strong emphasis on fun. Food is also important with breakfasts, cakes and tuck shops all playing key parts. The group learned of several materials used to support Sunday Groups (see Appendix C).
8. **Involvement of children:** several successful churches involve older children as leaders for younger activities, and in designing and delivering service content (as part of evening or mains services). Younger children involvement in church is also important – some churches have found that children attending the end rather than the beginning of services helps them feel that the congregation wants to know what they have been doing and increases a sense of participation (as opposed to being dismissed so the adults can continue).
9. **Review:** annual review of activities is very helpful. Children's opinions are important to this. Links to the Church's overall strategy via the Children's Elder is also important.
10. **Communication:** most successful Churches use regular media based communication with Facebook and Apps supporting standard website pages. Regular newsletters are also helpful. Communication works well when it does not rely on the community to seek information but actively sends it to members and all in contact with children e.g. baptismal parents, youth activity parents via email etc.
11. **Ecumenical Support:** The Bothwell Roman Catholic Priest is very supportive of collaborative work to grow ecumenical youth activity and has offered to share materials. Three of the local Roman Catholic Churches have already appointed a shared full-time Youth Officer.

## **Access to Financial Support**

Other Churches have drawn on support from various sources of funding to support the purchase of equipment, refurbishment and salary costs for a youth worker.

1. The Church of Scotland's 'Go For It' fund will provide sums of up to £5K for pilot work but larger sums of up to £45K over 3 years for up to 50% of costs of substantial projects that meet its key criteria.
2. The Church of Scotland Special Trusts can be approached for funds of approximately £500
3. The Novum Trust is designed to pump prime work that is novel and "focused on the welfare of young people, the training of lay people or new ways of communicating the Christian faith" and provides grants of between £500 and £2500
4. The Society in Scotland for Propagating Christian Knowledge has a 'home fund' principally for the Highlands and Islands, but grants have been awarded outside this area before.

5. The Britland Trust is designed to support people involved in the advancement of Christianity, mission work and Christian education and training.
6. The Awards for All (Scotland) can be approached for funding if we have not used this funding in the past three years
7. The Rank foundation and the Tudor Trust will not normally fund churches but will fund initiatives to support youth leadership that are integral to the community.
8. Youth clubs can also affiliate to the national UK Youth network and thereby draw on funding from 'Variety -the Children's charity'.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The working group is of the strong opinion that to survive, our Church must wholeheartedly adopt the message of the previously mentioned Church of England report and **grow by good leadership** (*lay and ordained*) **working with a willing set of churchgoers, in a favourable environment**. Furthermore, we believe that we should actively seek and embrace a meaningful and ongoing change in the direction and provision of our youth resources. Equally, we believe that it is not enough simply to provide diversions or support for youth. We acknowledge that **our primary priority as a Church is encouraging and enabling the faith of the next generation**. We believe that Bothwell Parish Church must embody the Church of Scotland *Growing up in Scotland Today* report's message that **Children are neither peripheral nor preliminary; they are central**.

Guided by our research, and influenced by the voices of our children, the Church of Scotland's Schools and Churches Development Officer, our community and the Churches we visited we recommend the following:

**Youth Church structure:** The Bothwell Youth Church should have active provision for the encouragement and enablement of faith in all youth age groups from nursery to University. Suggested age groupings are age 3-5, 6-10, 11-14, 15+. Particular attention should be paid to establishing and maintaining Youth Church activity for adolescents and young adults. This will require experimenting with different timings for their church attendance.

**Leadership:** a significant expansion in congregational involvement is required.

1. A part-time youth worker, (with commitment to the Church of Scotland faith tradition, and young but experienced) should be appointed as Chair for a new Youth Church team ministry to identify new trends, support school liaison and ensure each section of the Youth Church is supported to operate at its best. They should be directed to have as a particular focus, children and young adults of secondary school age. Advice should be taken from the national church advisor over how best to manage employment aspects.
2. An Elder should be assigned the support and growth of the Youth Church as their sole portfolio. They should actively participate in the Youth Church Team meetings, regularly attend Youth Church activity, champion the Youth Kirk within Kirk Session and other relevant bodies and provide an additional source of leadership to the Team.
3. A Youth Church Team should be established with leaders for each section of the Youth Church. Where possible leaders should be aged <40.
4. Section Leaders should be supported by a minimum of 4 associate leaders per section. Each associate leader should be prepared to deputise for the leader when required. A rotation of the section team participation in Youth Church events should be arranged such that leaders and associate leaders have at least one Sunday in 4 'off'. However, each section of the Youth Church should operate 52 weeks a year.
5. Additional associate leaders should be sought, where possible, from young adults, for involvement with the lower age group sections.
6. A list of additional visiting skills providers from the congregation (e.g. in craft, computing, cooking, sport) should be established and used regularly.
7. A 'willing hands' team should also be recruited to provide episodic additional volunteer cover, about three times a year.
8. A separate leader should be appointed to lead congregational involvement with a Messy Church, under the direction and leadership of the Chair of the Youth Church. 3 separate associate leaders should be appointed and a team of 15 volunteers (not otherwise involved as youth church leaders) should be established.
9. A separate leader should be appointed to lead the provision of weekday youth club activities, (±holiday club activities) under the direction and leadership of the Chair of the Youth Church. There should be a particular focus on activity for secondary school age children. 3 additional associate leaders (not otherwise involved with youth church leadership) should be recruited and a team of 20 volunteers recruited to provide a total of 3 - 4 adults or young adults per session on a rota basis.
10. Leaders and associate leaders (except young adults) should serve for a maximum of 4 years but could take up a second term after a break of at least two years.

11. The full Youth Church Team leadership should meet at least quarterly to discuss and plan sessions and rotas and other Youth Church seasonal events, and to identify and troubleshoot challenges. This should be led by the Youth Church Chair, and with the participation of the Children's Elder and the involvement of the Minister. An annual review of activity should also be undertaken with involvement of children and parents and with visitation to other notable churches to identify new ideas and ways of working.
12. A leader should be designated as Youth Church Facebooker of the month (for 2-3 months).
13. Programmes of leadership and teaching development for adult and young adult leaders with no previous such training should be provided.
14. Training in optimal use of IT media to support Youth Group Leaders should be sourced and provided.
15. Child protection training should be delivered in Bothwell Parish Church on three occasions at the Youth Church launch and provided at least annually in Bothwell thereafter but sourced locally on a quarterly basis.

**A willing set of churchgoers:** Bothwell Parish Church is rich in experience and talent, but much of this is hidden day to day. Few of those attending Sunday by Sunday know the work and hobby skills and interests of those near them. Yet we need to find those willing to lead, provide skills, or be 'willing hands' and make the most of that information from year to year. The Working Group recommends that

1. A talent stewardship campaign is led by Kirk Session and refreshed annually to capture and store electronically data on the work and hobby skills of members and their willingness to support the Youth Church.
2. The personal relationship of elders with their communicants should be used to optimize this response.
3. The Church office should hold and access this data to produce reports per talent, as needed by the Youth Church leadership. The National Church should be consulted for advice on how to handle data protection.
4. Noting the statement "*the problem is not adults leaving the Church: it is that half of the children of churchgoing parents do not attend when they reach adulthood*", it is recommended that in addition to the provision of a Messy Church, that work is undertaken to provide social activities that will be attractive to parents, especially of teenage children and to promote ongoing contact with the Church.

**A favourable environment:** The Church Centre provides a very valuable resource. Nevertheless, the Working Group recommends that space use within the centre is reviewed and that:

1. Space is identified that is suitable and available to be set aside for use by the young adult youth group; as a breakout room for younger Sunday Youth Churches and for use during Messy Church and Youth Club nights i.e. capable of housing table-top sports and IT games, with comfortable seating.
2. The space used by other Sunday Youth Church Groups appears designed especially for their meetings e.g. does not contain adult height furnishings or equipment for other organisations and uses wall displays that display only the relevant content (use of blinds and covers for other boards may support this).
3. Space for a weekly youth club should be identified. The children interviewed did not identify any one night as being better than others for this. The space could overlap with the breakout room. (Hours of opening i.e. afternoon and/or evening, would be dependent on the ongoing provision of BOOSC).
4. Space for a regular monthly evening and/or Saturday breakfast Messy Church should be identified (large hall, breakout room and one other room).
5. The Church's activity should be more prominently displayed and apparent throughout the Centre and also outside the Centre.
6. Use and style of lighting options should be reviewed
7. Use of storage space should be reviewed and additional storage space identified or created
8. The Youth Church children should be involved in refurbishment decisions

**Central not peripheral, nor preliminary:**

1. Youth involvement in church services and the timing and format of church services should be reviewed by the Worship committee.
2. Consideration should be given to involvement of older children in services and in the provision of a regular youth focused service.
3. The timing of congregational interaction with the Sunday Youth Groups should be reviewed and consideration given to this being towards the end rather than the beginning of services.
4. Formats of 'Sunday school' materials used by other churches should be investigated by the new leadership (see Appendix D).
5. Timing for Sunday Youth Groups should be reviewed with consideration given to Sunday evening activity rather than Sunday morning, for the older groups.
6. The format of Youth Church activity (on Sundays and at other times) should be shaped by the lessons learned during the production of this report and on an ongoing basis by the views of young people. There should be predominance interactive, physically active and technology based activity and food should also play a prominent role.
7. 'Bring a parent' days should be held when parents are actively involved in the session of their child.

**Reaching our community:** Much greater use must be made of contacts with all those entering the Church Centre and Church and greater encouragement of those involved with the Youth Church is needed. The Working Group recommends that:

1. The Youth Church should have a separate prominent notice board on which to display posters of fixed size that change monthly.
2. A separate Youth Church Facebook page should be created.
3. A single page Youth Church newsletter should be created monthly and made available in the Church Centre, on the website, emailed to all Church contacts, e.g. using mailchimp and posted on our Facebook page.
4. All baptismal couples and parents of those attending Youth Church activities should be required to register with the Youth Church e.g. as part of the paper work for a baptism and when leaving their child. This registration should include an email address. Contact should be made at each newsletter issue and at birthdays and baptismal anniversaries.
5. Visitor cards in Church should request an email address, which should be entered in the communications database.
6. A flyer about regular youth church activities should be on every pew or inserted in the weekly order of service.
7. Organisations using the church centre should be strongly encouraged to agree to send the newsletter to those on their email distribution.
8. Greater use of more engaging media should be made to advertise Youth Church activity e.g. the foyer of the Church Centre should be equipped with a screen showing a rolling image collection. If the waiting area is retained in the Church Centre, an additional screen should operate there.
9. Consideration should be given to the use of free software development of an App.
10. Liaison with local schools should be undertaken to request poster space, assembly mention of key events and involvement of the youth worker in SU sessions.
11. Further and regular dialogue with the local Roman Catholic Youth Ministry should be initiated to support the development of ecumenical youth community activities and the sharing of materials.

#### **Recommendations regarding barriers to success**

1. The principle barrier to success of a modern Youth Church in Bothwell is the participation of sufficient people in its delivery. It is vital that this activity is perceived as integral to church membership –whether as a leader contributing on a rota basis, or a volunteer, the majority of members could contribute something valuable to the Youth Church. Participation of all ages should be seen as the norm, not the exception. Such participation should be actively reviewed by elders and when members join the church.
2. Financial resources are another key barrier. However, it is unlikely that the Church would need to bear all the costs involved. Alternative sources of funding are available and the working group recommends that these should be explored. The principle ongoing cost is that of a part time youth worker. It is possible to operate the Youth Church without this, but it would need considerable involvement from a member to act in their place. Suggested costs for the new Youth Church are contained in Appendix E
3. Space for activity and Youth Church presence. The Church Centre is already heavily used. However, the use by activities involving children has not resulted in greater children participation in Church activity. The remit of some existing activities would also directly compete with potential Church Youth Clubs and Holiday Clubs. The working group recommends that the Centre Committee, in liaison with the Finance Committee review the room space and modifications that would be required to implement the other recommendations of this report and identify the impact on the current centre financial model and potential solutions to reducing this impact.
4. Older children's time is also a potential barrier as there are many competing activities on both Sunday mornings and weekday evenings. It may take a while to identify which time slots will best suit the youth of Bothwell. Nevertheless, those we spoke with identified the need for social interaction and even for somewhere to do homework. It is recommended that time slots for older children's activities e.g. youth club are seen as flexible over the first year.

## Appendix A: Working Group Membership

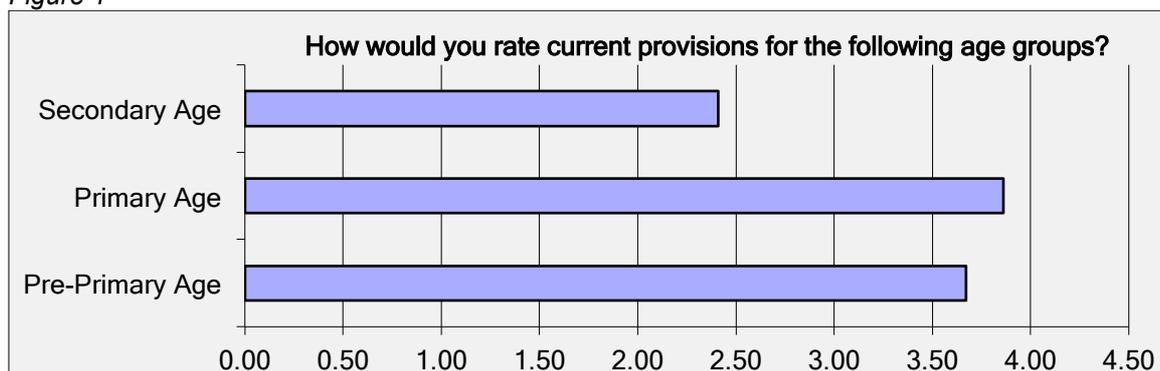
Craig Barr  
Ann Brownlie,  
Jaynie Craig,  
Valerie Gibson  
Hazel Gilmour,  
Val Grzybek

David Hepburn  
Jessie McPherson  
Gillian Ormiston  
Russell Parsons  
Hazel Scott (Chair)  
Ross Walker

## Appendix B: Bothwell Parish Church Youth Church Survey Responses

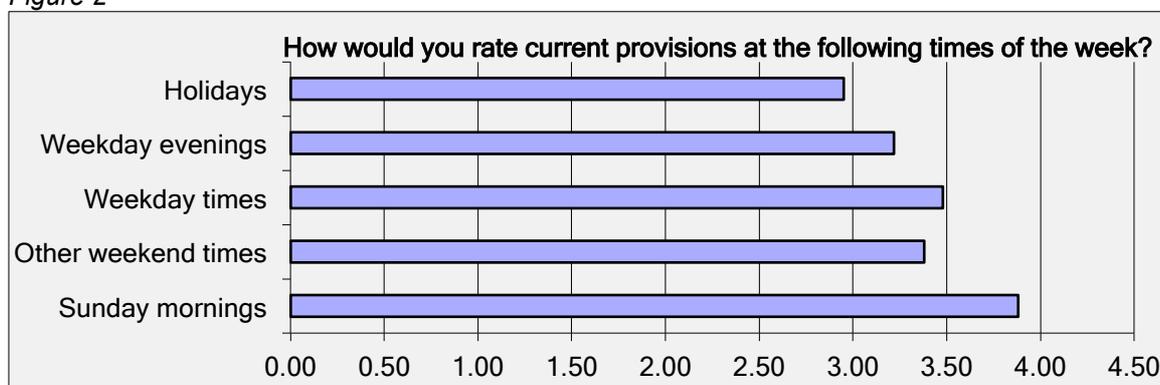
For the question 'how would you rate the current provisions for the following age groups?', scored on a scale of 0 (poor) to 5 (excellent) the average scores were, for pre-primary age, primary age and secondary age: 3.67, 3.86 and 2.41 respectively (as shown in figure 1)

Figure 1



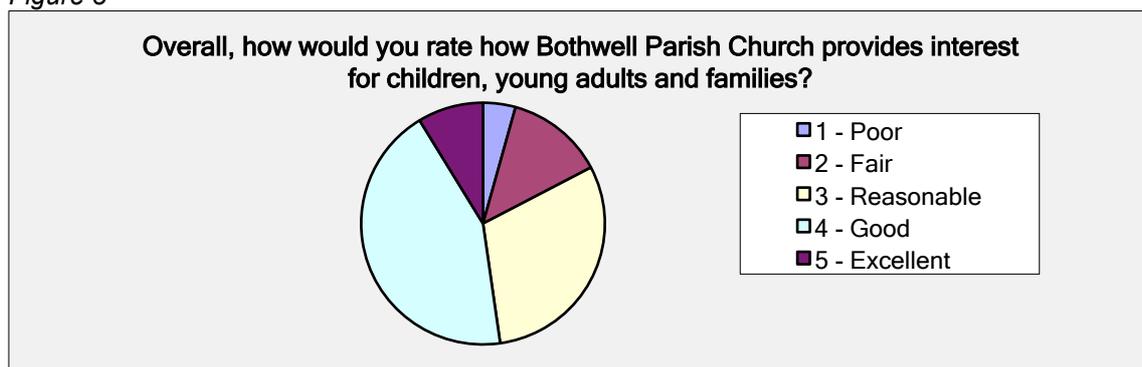
For the question, 'how would you rate the current provisions at the following times of the week?' on a scale of 0 (poor) to 5 (excellent), the average scores were as follows and as shown in figure 2: Sunday mornings (3.88), other Weekend times (3.38), Weekday times (3.48), Weekday evenings (3.22), Holidays (2.95)

Figure 2



For the question 'overall how would you rate how Bothwell Parish Church provides interest for children, young adults and families?' on a scale of 0 (poor) to 5 (excellent), the percentage responses were 'poor' 4.3%, 'fair' 13%, 'reasonable' 30.4%, 'good' 43.5%, 'excellent' 8.7%, as shown in figure 3

Figure 3



For the question: *'In your opinion, what three things contribute most to making what is currently provided especially good? Please consider different age groups. (e.g. Capabilities, Resources, People, Experience, Knowledge, Financial, Awareness, Location)*' key responses were:

- People/ volunteers/ staff quality/ friendliness (14)
- Location (12)
- Resources/ facilities/ activities (12)
- café (5)
- community spirit/ atmosphere/ environment/ space (4)

Others included 'the crèche', 'cost of toddlers group'

For the question: *'What three things limit what is currently provided? Where is change needed? (e.g. Capabilities, Presence and reach, Financial, Time, Continuity, Effects on core activities, Distraction, Commitment, Leadership, Accreditations)*' responses were:

- Leadership /commitment of volunteers / staff (10)
- parking (7)
- advertising / put flyers out to schools (4)
- space/ limited availability to hire/ number of children (3)
- Cost of venue / classes (3)
- time (2)
- review provisions against needs of Bothwell demographic (2)

Free text responses of note included *'Involvement from Schools'* *'Youth band could be established & perhaps a different service time held for them'* *'maybe having a Sunday School every so often where we have a fun day and just a short insight to Sunday School life and put flyers out to schools'* *'visible manager'*

For the question: *'What else could we do to better serve the needs of children, young adults and families as a church in this community? Perhaps examples you have seen or heard of elsewhere? (e.g. Activities, Media, Lifestyle trends, Technology, External influences, Community, Information and research, Partnerships, Seasonal)*' the response echoed some of those expressed by the children but had some additional ideas:

- youth clubs / evening clubs
- technology / IT clubs / free Wi-Fi / be more up to date and current (4)
- integrate better with schools (2)
- more welcome / understanding of children in centre (2)
- holiday activities with bible focus (2)
- more active / learning group activities for children: football training / team, music /choir/band, puppetry/craftwork/painting, bouncy castle, 'how to...sew a button, repair a puncture etc.' –could be monthly rather than weekly (3)
- community events (2)– *'Come up with fresh new ideas to encourage community gatherings, e.g. consider holding a Family fun open day or event such as bouncy castle in hall, stalls, fundraising, charity car wash, and use these to promote facilities and events'*

For the question *'What do you think are the barriers to youth presence in Church associated groups and activities? Both internal and external factors? (e.g. Demand, Other Children's Activities, Resources, Premises, Lack of staff, Finance)*' responses included:

- Other competing activities / time (5)
- Church stigma / not cool to go to / link with organized religion / image / ( 3)
- Formality / tradition / Need to be more modern / stuffiness (3)
- Parents not linked with church things (3)

For the question *'What do you think are the barriers to adult support of youth presence in Church associated groups and activities?',* responses included:

- Time / work / fatigue / fear of being left with commitment (9)
- Church stigma / old fashioned / lack of appeal to younger parents (3)
- Feeling of not fitting in / how to include those who don't fully believe (2)
- Child protection procedures and responsibility

Appendices C, D and E available on request