



# Parish Voice

## Summer 2016—Future Focus Update

The magazine of Dunbarney and Forgandenny Parish Church: a charity registered in Scotland  
No. SC009638

### From the Manse

Many readers will recognise this photo to be the building of the former St Paul's Church in Perth. It is now screened by scaffolding and has become a common source of complaint by those



**“our church family must continually move forwards”**

visiting Perth. But it is also a reminder that our church family must continually move forwards and reform. One outcome

of *Future Focus* was to make changes to Dunbarney sanctuary in order to meet the needs of our worshipping community and those in our parish. The purpose of this newsletter is to summarise some of the issues that Elders have discussed this year. I hope you find this to be helpful.

Throughout the summer, may you know God's peace and presence as you take time to enjoy the beauty of creation. *Alan*

### Kirk Session: a digest of meetings

**Minibus Training:** Karen Smith has now passed this course and is available to drive the minibus.

**Supported Study Groups:** These were appreciated by those who attended and the Rev Susan Thorburn was thanked for all her work.

**Data Protection:** Church Communion Rolls are now considered to be 'sensitive' and so care must be taken as to how these are maintained and stored. Members will be asked—in due course—to sign a form agreeing to their details remaining on the electronic roll. Work is ongoing to ensure that the Congregational Roll is accurate and up to date.

**Prayer:** The 'Reflective Prayer Space' at Easter was helpful and moving and it is hoped that the newly dedicated Prayer Walk will be a blessing to the community.

**Social Media.** The church now has a FaceBook page. Please encourage those who use Social Media to 'Like' the page.

**Property:** There was discussion on:- notice boards, church signage, painter work, rhone pipes, re-

pointing at both churches, Dunbarney garden tree and bush clearance and replanting, improving security at Dunbarney. There are now Swift nesting boxes on both church buildings.

**United Services:** It was agreed that services would take place for (i) Let's Build a House Youth Service on Sunday 15th May which would be followed by a simple soup and bread lunch and (ii) Communion on Sunday 5th June (inc. dedication of Prayer Path)

**Stewardship:** This year's focus will be on giving financially. A lunchtime stewardship event is to be held on Saturday 17th September that will include a light lunch, entertainment and a short presentation. Invitations will be distributed at the end of August and the Stewardship week will run from Sun 11th Sept to Sun 18th Sept 2016.

**Church Outing:** 30 people visited Rosslyn Chapel and Peebles. Elizabeth Honeyman was thanked for all her work in organising such a happy day.

### Future Focus: Dunbarney Sanctuary

Over the last few months, elders have continued to discuss possible changes to the sanctuary at Dunbarney. Along with them, members of the congregation visited churches that have already made changes to their sanctuaries. We benefitted enormously from visiting Comrie, Auchterarder and Kinross churches. Furthermore, elders had the opportunity to read a report written by the Rev Scott Burton on the benefits of refurbished church sanctuaries (found at: <http://www.stmatts.org.uk/Our-Minister.html>).

In his report, Mr Burton summarises what he had gleaned from visits to other Church of Scotland congregations. His report looked at: (i) the benefits to the congregation (ii) benefits to the community (iii) drawbacks and (iv) the effect, if any, on attendance at worship. What follows are extracts from his report.

**(i) Benefits to Congregation:** What emerges is that changes to the sanctuary had a transformative effect on the people who worshipped there. Respondents at North Berwick Church said that refurbishment, “utterly transformed the theology and culture of the congrega-

**“Changes to the sanctuary had a transformative effect on the people”**

tion". People can see each other in worship and worshippers are now keen to stay and chat with one another in the sanctuary following worship.

In Bellie Church, Fochabers, wheelchair users no longer have to sit at the end of a row of seats because seats can now be rearranged to permit people with disabilities to sit wherever they feel most comfortable.

Members at Aberlour Church enjoy "worshipping in the round" and appreciate the flexible worship space which can be used in a variety of ways during the week and not just on Sundays. They also commented that people sit more closely together (and the singing has improved as a result.

In Elgin, refurbishment enabled "more socialization", "opened up relationships", created flexible space for wheelchair users, enabled more informal, and frequent communion services, and made the whole building easier to clean.

Edinburgh: St Cuthberts also mentioned that the change in the buildings created more accessibility, more comfort, more flexibility, tremendous opportunity for worship lunches, creativity, use of hi-tech, and alternative worship.

Kinross Church is now used for concerts, exhibitions, summer clubs, singing groups, etc. People are warmer physically and in character, and there is a flexibility of use as never before.

**(ii) Benefits to Community:** St Andrew's Arbroath said that people now see the church as part of the 21st century; not out of date and out of touch. People comment on "how welcoming" it is. Likewise in Kinross, the comments included that "there is now an enhanced view of the church by non-members. It has become a place that people now want to be".

Bellie Church, commented, "The people felt they were allowed back in". The church is used as a concert venue, for school assemblies and for musicals concerts. "It's not scary anymore".

Scott Burton describes how some local communities no longer perceive the church to be inflexible, dull and old-fashioned. His view is backed up by the experience of those in North Berwick. They said that the refurbishment has "given the church credibility", and "...the community clearly see the [church] building as being for them and it gives value to their lives."

**(iii) Drawbacks:** Most churches stated that there were no real drawbacks in refurbishing the sanctuary except for a year of teething problems. There was often a sense of "preciousness" in looking after the building when the congregation first moved back in.

Elgin's office bearers highlighted that people who had once been negative about refurbishment had now changed their minds and were now positive.

Kennoway Church highlighted the danger of developing a mindset called "arriving" i.e. understanding refurbishment to be the conclusion, rather than the beginning of a new chapter of life and work in a congregation.

**(iv) Effect on Attendance:** Essentially all congregations shared the disappointment that refurbishment did *not* result in noticeable growth. But many had noticed that it had stemmed decline. Congregations agreed that refurbishment had not been about numerical growth, but about the long-term sustainability of their building.

Interestingly, Kinross Church stated that that the refurbishment had made a significant, positive difference. "It makes ministry easier. It is a help and not a hindrance. It facilitates ministry rather than frustrates it."



Scott Burton ends his report with the following: *If we do not refurbish tired old buildings, then these same old buildings will be unsuccessful in retaining the people who gather and even less successful in reaching out to others beyond the walls.*

## Pause for Reflection

- What is your reaction to Scott Burton's report?

*As you think about possible changes to Dunbarney Church sanctuary (i.e. the removal of pews and the subsequent reorganisation of the chancel area with new lighting and heating):*

- What elements do you consider to be positive and negative?
- How do you feel about possible change?
- If you have children/grandchildren, what are their views?

*Please take some time to write down a list of the pros and cons and pray through both lists.*

- How could the Kirk Session and Minister help you with this? Please tell them.