

TYNE VALLEY PARISH CHURCH
ACTIVITY REPORT FOR 2023

"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'" (Luke 10:1-2)

Executive Summary –

Rev. London wishes, at the start of this report, to express his deep gratitude and appreciation for the support, prayers and well wishes from the people of Tyne Valley Parish (TVP) both during his struggle with COVID in January and during his convalescence following knee surgery in September and October. This church gave life to God's word in Galatians 6:2: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ." Thank you from the bottom of my heart – DL.

The sense of purpose and drive that was felt in 2022 carried over into 2023. New initiatives were planned – some of which did well, some others not so much. Opportunities for greater engagement in our communities arose and we took them.

Attendance continued to improve over the year as the effects of lockdown waned, and though the roll has shrunk further, the congregation is more involved than it has been for several years, bringing a sense of hope and anticipation.

Following on from the results of the "Future Vision" conferences last year, several new activities have sprung up, not the least of which was TVP's enrolment into the "Growing Young" programme, and the unanimous decision by Kirk Session that TVP should begin active mission work in Pathhead and Cousland.

TVP saw two significant changes in the operations of the church. The first came in January when the Royal Bank of Scotland closed its safe-deposit services in Dalkeith. This necessitated a fevered scrabble to find a new safe, secure, and not too inconvenient home for TVP's communionware. This was thankfully found with Will Callendar at Prestonhall, who volunteered to keep it in his safe without charge. TVP will continue to look for a more permanent solution, but we are meantime grateful to Mr Callendar for his hospitality and service to the church.

The second came in February when the General Trustees and the Church of Scotland Law Department asked Kirk Session to consider the issue of the back letter to the sale of Crichton Church to the Crichton Collegiate Church Trust. The back letter imposed several restrictions on the Trust with regard to the use of Crichton Church and the Trust felt that, as over 20 years had passed since the sale, the letter had become more of a hindrance to Christian witness than a help. After prayer, consideration, and discussion, the Kirk Session unanimously agreed that the back letter no longer served a valid purpose, and it was in the best interests of the parish and the trust that it be rescinded. The Moderator passed this decision on to the Trustees of Crichton Collegiate Church Trust, who expressed their thanks and satisfaction at Session's decision. The Session Clerk also forwarded an extract of the minute of this decision to the office of the General Trustees and Law Department.

All in all, 2023 has been a very good year for Tyne Valley Parish and God deserves all the glory, honour and praise.

Kirk Session – Kirk Session held 7 meetings through the year, including the annual joint meeting with the Congregational Board, and one member, Iain Luke, resigned from Session following his move to Haddington. Also, the Health and Safety Advisor to the Session and Board, Audrey Grahame resigned her position, she and her husband Richard having also moved to Haddington and shifting their lines. Rev. London and the Session wish to thank both Iain and Audrey for their many years of valuable service and wish them well in their new homes.

Congregational Board – The board held 7 meetings this year including the annual joint meeting with the Kirk Session and welcomed two new members: Emma Softley and Harriet Dalrymple onto the board as full voting members.

Congregational Roll – As of December 31st, 2023, TVP had 255 members and adherents. We lost three members through death, two by certificate, performed one adult and three infant baptisms, three weddings and four funerals. The combined average weekly attendance in church is around 80. Approximately 40 children are involved in the life of the church and we see a regular attendance of about 15 children under 16, 10 of whom receive communion.

Work of the Church in 2023

Growing Young – Tyne Valley Parish joined the new cohort of churches participating in Presbytery's Growing Young programme. It aims to help reimagine a truly intergenerational church. Joining the programme required the minister and a small group of 3-4 others to commit to participation in the programme, which would involve attending at least 18 events over 24 months, including webinars, day conferences and coaching sessions. The team has worked very hard to ensure that most, if not all the activities undertaken by TVP this year furthered the goal of TVP becoming a more intergenerational church. While it's work has not been especially visible, it has been invaluable in supporting and building on the work over virtually every other part of the church.

One particular endeavour of the Growing Young Team was "Ready-Steady-Cook," a group that met for 6 weeks in the runup to Christmas and brought loads of young people and parents together. This group received funding from both the Moorfoot Community Council and the Seeds for Growth fund, resulting in a huge win for TVP. At the end of the sessions, the attendees asked that it be continued into the new year.

Growing Young will continue throughout 2024 and the minister, Kirk Session and Congregational Board wish to congratulate the team, Fiona Corsar, Lisa Hobson, Carrie Bennett, and Janie Nugent on a job well done in their first year. We encourage them to continue their efforts into 2024. Thank you all and may God bless your work!

Worship - TVP solidified its pattern of worship over the year and Kirk Session introduced "Fifth Sunday" celebrations starting in January. These services were handed over to Impact and the TVP Music Group as a rolling project for the members of the youth group. One important element of these services was the provision of breakfast within the context of the service. Our young people, with the guidance and support of the minister, youth worker, and the music group, took on responsibility for all but the call to worship, the catering, and closing benediction of

the worship service. These celebrations have been a rousing success, bringing in people who otherwise do not worship, and fostering the formation of many new relationships.

Apart from our moderator, Rev. Dale London, we were blessed to have the benefit of Rev. Robert Simpson, Rev. John Hunter, Rev. Malcolm Ramsay, Rev. Norman Smith, Pastor Allister Crompton, and a well-qualified and experienced worship team of eight elders and our youth worker. Many others in our congregation also participated in worship with readings and prayers.

During 2023, TVP conducted 109 services of worship. These were: 54 Sunday morning worship services (including 4 baptisms), 9 Messy Church sessions, 21 Fala Midweek Services, 9 communion services, and 16 special services (of which 5 were held at Crichton Collegiate Church). The number of people attending worship ranged from 5 (for small, informal services) up to nearly 80.

Home Groups – Our four Home Groups continued to meet on a regular basis. We study, learn, share and build close relationships that provide a safe and confidential space for support and where our members display real, deep love in joyful and difficult times alike.

We believe that significant spiritual growth occurs when Christians share with and support each other. Home groups are therefore a very important aspect of our church family life. The Minister and Worship Team remain firm in their aspiration to eventually have all or nearly all of the congregation involved in a home study group.

Perhaps even more important to our spiritual health, we believe prayer is a cornerstone in our relationship with God. Thus, in concert with our home groups, our Prayer Circle meets regularly, and our cherished Prayer Diary continues to be published on a monthly basis. This prayer diary travels as far as Australia and Estonia!

Youth Group – The TVP Youth Group saw a resurgent year as we witnessed God's grace working through the church. Throughout 2023 attendance at Impact continued to increase and partnership opportunities arose with the Youth Ministry team in Gorebridge. Members from both the Pathhead and North Middleton Impact groups were invited to take part in the summer program called 'Stage and Slam' held by Gorebridge church. While the Pathhead group did not participate, several children from North Middleton did join in and enjoyed the experience. We hope to repeat our involvement with "Stage and Slam" in 2024 as well.

In Pathhead, Impact saw a steady increase in numbers, though they dipped again at the close of the year. The total number of young people encountered by Pathhead Impact was 15 and the average attendance was 5. Most were from P7 but several in high school also attended. The goal of Impact was to encourage young people to get to know others of their own age and feel it was a place where they could enjoy time with friends. Activity focused on sharing the gospel, along with teamwork exercises, games, and activities.

In North Middleton, Impact has grown its activity and involvement in different areas throughout the year. The total number of young people encountered by North Middleton Impact was 9 with the average attendance being 5. This group focused on sharing the gospel and exploring discipleship. Most of the young people who attend, have a background in the church and are now looking to discover more about Christianity. This group has been involved with running church services and

partaking in the music group throughout the year. Their involvement, especially with the "Fifth Sunday" celebrations has been received well by the church and the young people involved. It also had 'family events' which encouraged the parents to come along and spend some time together. We had a games night and a BBQ. We also had a visit from a representative of the rocket company, Skyrora. Mr Derek Harris gave a presentation explaining who they are and what they do. Showing the young people pictures of the testing facility near North Middleton, as well as the rockets they are building and using for space satellites.

TVP continued to support the Pathhead Youth Project (PYP) by having the youth worker help run the club. Reece leads the Thursday night gathering, alongside another young worker. PYP has been a great opportunity to meet more of the young people in the area. Many of the young people attending PYP also come along to Impact. The connection between the two youth groups (Impact and PYP) is in a very positive place, with both groups fully supportive of one another.

Impact also ran a Youth Alpha course this year, working with the people of St Mary's Catholic Church, who hosted the event in Pathhead. The course ran just before the summer holidays with 7 people, a mixture of young people and adults from both churches participating.

Another new venture, the Kids Fun Singing Group was started by Catherine Shimwell and Colin Robertson, with the aim for the group to take part in the Easter service. Their plan was perhaps more successful than they had envisioned because that group met regularly throughout the rest of the year and contributed greatly to the "Fifth Sunday" celebrations as well. All of TVP thanks Catherine and Colin for their hard work and enterprising vision. Well done!

In the coming year we aim to expand on the work we have done in North Middleton and Pathhead, and to grow the programme with active participation with Tynewater Primary School, and expansion into Cousland and Fala.

The minister, the Kirk Session and the Congregational Board wish to thank Reece Allan and his crew of dedicated volunteers for their commitment to our young people and their steadfastness in sharing the love of Christ.

Children and Families: Messy Church – We saw steady participation and satisfied engagement in our young families coming to our Sunday afternoon Messy Church services held in the year. The Messy Church group celebrated its 10th anniversary with a birthday party which was very well attended. The families who come to Messy Church are considered part of our active congregation, with some becoming more active in the life and governance of the wider congregation. It is such a great blessing to see this area of our church life flourishing in both commitment and faith resulting in child baptisms and much greater involvement in the life of our church here at Tyne Valley. The minister, Kirk Session and Congregational Board are deeply grateful for the work of David Richardson and his entire team for their steadfast adherence to the principle of loving and serving the parish in this wonderful way. Thank you all.

Children and Families: Holiday Club – It was originally planned to host the Holiday Club in Vogrie Park in August, but the weather was not kind and we needed to shift to North Middleton Village Hall. The theme was "Restoration Station!" and was a great success with 32 children attending and a good turnout at the Family Celebration on the Sunday after the Club week. This outreach into our community

continues to be a great blessing. The minister, the Kirk Session and the Congregational Board wish to extend our deep gratitude to Louise Spenser and her entire team of tireless volunteers for their hard work, dedication, and considerable resourcefulness. Well done!

Christian Education – Having established in previous years our commitment to continuing the spiritual growth of our members and parishioners through regular, structured Christian education, TVP continued the march in 2023 with a Lenten Bible study in the form of the Christianity Explored course. It was well attended, starting with 12 and with 10 finishing – mostly elders and home-group members, all of whom expressed their satisfaction with the teaching and a growth in their spiritual knowledge. It was planned for an additional course, Alpha, to be run in the autumn but as the start date approached, those who had expressed an interest found there was too much happening in September and October already so, with the minister laid up following surgery, the course fizzled on the pad. This was later revived by David Richardson, who plans to run the course in the new year, as the minister and Allister Crompton bring a new course: Discipleship Explored, into the parish. We pray for God's blessings on these new endeavours.

Community Involvement – A number of our congregation are actively involved in our communities from being members of the Community Council, running an afternoon club for elderly people, starting the Crafternoon club and getting it well established, helping at local Primary Schools, organising a weekly drop in 'Tea N' Chat' group for people who are lonely and isolated, leading a local Walking Group, involvement with the 'Fala, Soutra & District History and Heritage' Society, taking part in the production of plays by the Pathhead Players, and the Friends of Crichton Garden Party. We were also invited to participate in the Pathhead Christmas Lights event, and in the Pathhead Coronation Fun Day, which led to Louise Spenser being invited to participate in the "Love Pathhead" group and the Pathhead Focus Group. Not forgetting the Combination pilgrimage walk/Messy Church/Crichton Harvest Festival, and the Tear Fund Big Quiz Night. We also were blessed by the music group opening its doors to all for open-call meetups for anyone who wanted to join in, and for an Advent Bible Study led by Malcolm and Cati Ramsay.

The minister, Kirk Session and Congregational Board cannot begin to express our gratitude both to the congregation, and more specifically to Our Lord, for the blessings showered upon us by God through our members. Thank you for making TVP what we are: a committed, faithful, and vibrant church in the midst of great and exciting change. May God bless us all.

Elder Area Teams - Through a number of different events, each of our four Elder Area Teams were very active and effective in bringing Christ to the communities of TVP and their work was highlighted by the success of each event. These included A Burns Lunch at Fala Village Hall, a Ceilidh in North Middleton Village Hall, a World Day of Prayer event in Fala Session House, lunches, afternoon teas, birthday cards, flowers and Christmas cards with invitations to our services. This positive contact is greatly appreciated, and we see this as an expression of 'Church' with the Gospel proclaimed, teaching, prayer and real fellowship. Interest in our church activities grows as a result and our Elders feel welcomed, involved and see this approach as being a great improvement on the old style of infrequent and unannounced Elders' Visits. Well done to all our elders. Our hearty thanks go out to you.

Additional Duty Offices – As mentioned earlier in this report, our Health and Safety Administrator, Audrey Grahame stepped back from her role in June, following her move to a church in Haddington. Her departure has left a significant hole in our team, and she is greatly missed. Our Data Protection Officer, Pastor Allister Crompton and our Safeguarding Officer, Fiona Corsar provided advice and action as required in both these areas and ensured confidentiality was maintained. We thank you both for the stellar work.

Note of Thanks

The Moderator, Kirk Session and Congregational Board wish to thank the members of Tyne Valley Parish and the various communities within the bounds for their continued support and participation in the life of our church.

Rev. London would also like to thank the Elders and Members of the church, and those office bearers and volunteers who make the running of a successful church possible.

God grant much fruit and blessing to this church in the coming year. Amen.



Reverend Dale Kay London

Minister

Tyne Valley Parish, Lothian and Borders Presbytery

The Church of Scotland



Date