

Rev Stuart Davidson - Pioneer Minister,

Paisley North End, incorporating Ferguslie Park (Clyde Presbytery).

Introduction

Since my last reflection submitted back in February 2023, a lot has been happening and I want to report back on all that has been happening since February this year to the time of writing 4th of December 2023.

Looking back

Paisley North/Paisley

Over these past few month's things have been ticking over. I continue to be a part of the monthly Homeless/Befrienders group that meets in Paisley Abbey. This group seeks to work with other churches, third sector groups and Renfrewshire Council to help spread the word amongst vulnerable people as to what is available across Paisley. Other weekly things included working with Street Connect to support men currently in recovery from drug addiction. I stepped back from this role to focus more upon the work and the Drop In at Ferguslie Park. I have also been continuing once a month to do Street Pastors whilst Rail Pastors hasn't resumed mostly due to the pandemic and a slow return on the rail network.

Other routine things include working with the Locum at Paisley North Church and me covering the sheltered housing units at Shortroods with a monthly church service and communion. I've also been doing a monthly church gathering at the Hunterhill Care home on a Friday morning from 1045am.

I have also been offering home communions to around 6 communicant members of Paisley North during communion seasons throughout the year on top of home and hospital visits and occasional funeral.

I also led the Good Friday Easter walk of witness again this year along with all the planning that goes with it. I've decided to stand down from the planning of this and worked this year with Churches Together Renfrewshire with the view to handing it over to them for next year.

During March I visited the outdoor centre belonging to SU at Gowanbank, Darvel for a visit. This was with the idea of taking the holiday club children for a visit in the Autumn (more to come below about this.)

Ferguslie Drop In

The Wednesday Drop In still runs on a weekly basis every Wednesday morning. This group has grown over recent months to between 12 and 15 women. The group in recent months has changed with the arrival of new members. This has brought new challenges and allowed for different conversations to begin. Along with the biblical exploration that we do together, it has been interesting to see how others

have been encouraged by the new members. We have also found that relationships are growing with local council partners.

On the 22nd of March, the group went a day trip to Stirling Castle, the Wallace Monument and had lunch together. On the 19th of April, the Moderator of the General Assembly Rev Dr Iain Greenshields was visiting Clyde Presbytery and visited our Wednesday Drop In Ferguslie Park along with the Presbytery Moderator and the Presbytery Clerk. It was a good visit by all and much appreciated by those who attend the Drop In which celebrated its 5th anniversary at the end of May. During the Moderator's visit both he and his wife invited those from the group to visit them sometime in July once the moderatorial year was over. This we did with a visit to Dunfermline and St Margaret's Parish Church on the 19th of July along with a visit to Aberdour Beach. The group was thankful to Iain's congregational members for welcoming us and offering lunch on what was an enjoyable day with warm sunshine, which meant a lot to all the group members.

Along with regular weekly events, pool playing, tea and toast, breakfast rolls, darts, board games, the group had also applied during these months again for funding from the "Good Ideas Fund" which we successfully received. This allows us to plan for the year ahead and to pay towards the room rental in the Tannahill Centre.

Ferguslie Community Choir

Since the forming of the Ferguslie Community Choir back in September 2018, with the help of "Go for It" funding from the Church of Scotland, we had been meeting weekly. It began with the then Outreach worker Graham McCallum at St Ninian's and me working with Jenny Cheung, Director of the Voice Project Scotland, bringing it together. Much to our surprise a reporter from the Daily Record, remembered about an article in the Paisley Express about our choir and passed this onto a BBC researcher who was looking for choirs to join the Coronation "Sing for the King" Choir later in the year. We had to go through various hoops, however, we were surprisingly chosen along with one other choir to represent Scotland at the coronation event. This meant various practices and rehearsals during the months of March and April and a trip to London for a rehearsal weekend 28-30th April which was fun!

It would take too long to go into all the details around this, enough to say that we've been interviewed and sung on The Nine on BBC Scotland and took part in a BBC Coronation documentary "Sing for the King: Search for the Coronation Choir" as well as taking part in the actual King's Coronation Event at Windsor Castle on Sunday 7th of May along with other choirs from across the United Kingdom and other celebrities which was recorded live. Some details can be found on the Ferguslie Community Choirs Facebook page. It was great fun and a once in a lifetime. It's done wonders for the Ferguslie Park Community Choir, and we hope to see numbers grow.

Children's Ministry

Meantime I decided in March to host a three day “Rocky’s Plaice” holiday club in the Tannahill Centre at Easter. This was at very short notice, however, I managed to get a team together of 10 folks from Paisley North Church and we held the event during Holy Week (5-7th April 1.30-3.30pm) which, was, a challenge given all else that was on. We had 30 children attend during the three days with most of them being in Primary 1 to 4 age bracket. We had really good fun and more can be seen of this on the Ferguslie Community Church Outreach Facebook page. We made good connections with families and offered the children a hot cooked meal each day.

On Monday 31st July after a lot of planning and preparation carried out by some members of Paisley North Church, we again hosted a weeklong “Seaside Rock” holiday club in Ferguslie Park for Primary aged children. We had 39 young people attend this event during the week (1pm to 3.45pm) which again included snacks and a hot meal each day for the children.

The material built upon the stories of Peter and Jesus from the Easter Club with a good number of those who came at Easter choosing to also come to our Autumn event. We held a parents / carers open invitation on the Thursday to join us to see and share in the programme and to enjoy a hot meal. On the Friday the P1-3’s went to visit the Community Circus in the old St Ninian’s Church building. They had great fun learning to walk a low tightrope, work on the silks, spinning plates, unicycles, and handstands.

They really enjoyed themselves.

Meantime the P4-6’s with three adult team members went to visit the SU Gowanbank Outdoor Centre for the day. They enjoyed the journey along with two activities in the programme, supervised instructor led tree climbing and crate climbing along with an outdoor barbeque. They had great fun if the photos are anything to go by on Ferguslie Community Churches Facebook page.

So thankful to all those who contributed financially and otherwise to allow both these clubs to happen during Easter and Autumn and of course thanks be to God for His provision.

Presbytery-Wide

I have met now and then with Andy Reid, the Presbytery of Clyde’s Mission Officer. This has been offering times of support and catching up as well as attending Dalmuir Barclay Church as they have received money from the central Church to develop a fresh expression of Church through the medium of their community pantry over the next year.

I have now and then covered pastorally for Paisley Abbey and preached on Sundays at St Andrews Trinity Johnstone, and on one occasion at Kilbarchan and a few times at the Mount Kirk in Greenock. Apart from St Andrew’s this has been to cover annual leave of the ministers for those Churches, which could become an increasing problem as things go on in the wider church across the Presbytery.

Reflections

I'm thankful to God for all that's happened since February and would encourage any of my ministerial colleagues to reflect upon their ministry. It provides for good moments and an awareness on what went well, what was a challenge and didn't go so well.

I realise from the story of the Prodigal Son (a favourite from of our Drop In crew) that sometimes we need to be challenged, to come to an awakening in order to face with honesty where we are at and then obviously to act and seek to change.

This isn't my revelation; it comes in no small part to the writing of a pastor in America called Kyle Idleman. I hope you don't mind but on reflection I suspect that the Church of Scotland is in the same place.

We've had our awakening and to some degree the brutal honesty that Kyle speaks of and now we need to act, rather than procrastinate.

May God help us to get up and keep on acting in response to our Lord's calling so that we can reach out to those whom He is seeking.

Please do ask me should anything require clarity.

Every blessing,



Davidson

December 2023