

Youth Worker Report **Mossneuk & Westwood Parish Churches, East Kilbride**

August 2010 - July 2011

'Uniformed' Groups

During the year I have unfortunately had a limited involvement with the 'uniformed' groups within the two parishes. I use the term uniformed loosely to include Girls' Brigade, Boys' Brigade, Guides (Rainbows & Brownies) and the Fusion Group.

I have attempted to make at least one visit to each group over the year, however there are one or two groups which I did not manage to attend. For the coming year I plan to remedy this and visit each group a minimum of 4 times in the year – at least once in each term. This may not seem like much but I hope that this will allow me to visit all sections of each group as trying to visit all sections in one evening is one of the things which caused me to be unable to see everyone. This would mean that, for example, although it seems like I would visit Girl's Brigade at Mossneuk once each term, this would actually work out as 3 visits as I would plan to visit each section once per term.

I was pleased to be involved with the Youth Service during Holy Week at Westwood Church and I am grateful to Carol Sadowski and Yvonne Gallacher for their work in organising this service. I think that anyone who attended would agree that the boys of the Fusion group and girls of the Rainbows, Brownies and Girls' Brigade led a wonderful service and I was happy to provide a short talk for the service.

I was also very grateful to the Girls' Brigade at Westwood Parish Church to invite me to be a member of their platform party for the end of year display and the Girls' Brigade of Mossneuk Parish Church to invite me to attend their display as inspecting officer. At both of these evenings I was impressed with the quality of the work the girls had put into very entertaining evenings and pleased to see them all turned out smartly in their uniforms.

When I started a year ago I had hoped that we would be able to produce a quarterly update with information about each of the organisations, upcoming activities or important dates and successful activities or awards. Unfortunately despite a number of emails to each organisation this did not happen as I did not receive any information from any of the groups.

Mossneuk Holiday Club

Very early into my time in East Kilbride I was involved in the 'Rocky's Plaice' Holiday Club at Mossneuk Church. This was something I found extremely beneficial as I got to meet some of the congregation, young people and children in and around Mossneuk. I found myself made extremely welcome and integrated into the team immediately, being given a group to 'look after' for the week. I thoroughly enjoyed this week and felt that this was a fantastic welcome for me into my post.

I am looking forward to again being involved in this year's 'Desert Detectives' Holiday Club and am interested to see the activities that the team have planned.

COSY Coffeehouse

The COSY Coffeehouse held weekly in the Duncanrig Hall of Westwood Parish Church was

another established activity I found myself involved in, not just as a member of a team but also in a leadership role with the co-ordination of volunteers. I was thankful that there was an established team of volunteers who knew exactly what was happening and were able to guide me through the process of how this Coffeehouse operates.

Over the year we have seen the number of young people attending the group increasing, giving all members of the team great encouragement. Although we have had a few minor issues with behaviour of young people, these have been extremely rare, and the respect the young people have for the space provided and the staff has greatly increased – more of the young people take litter to the bin, bring cups back to the kitchen and thank the team as they leave – which again has been encouraging to the team to see the young people develop over the course of the year.

With the increased number attending we have had a few issues trying to optimise the use of the hall, however after experimenting with a few table layouts and discussions with the team I feel that we have found a good layout. On a number of occasions when the young people came in we were showing videos – this seemed to be well received and is something I will be discussing with the team as we move into the new session.

Towards the end of the year we gave the COSY Coffeehouse an online presence on the Facebook social networking site to keep in touch with the young people. This was done for a number of reasons – it is a much quicker and easier way to contact a large number of people than handing out flyers, it provides a way for the young people to contact each other out with the Coffeehouse and it allows us to update at least some of the young people if the Coffeehouse has to close due to volunteers or weather.

The volunteers all work extremely hard and we are always happy to welcome more people to the team.

We attempted to introduce a Spiritual aspect to the coffeehouse during Holy Week – although not entirely successful I feel this may have been in the execution and am looking at ways to attempt this again. Although we did this I feel that main purpose of the Coffeehouse is to provide a safe, warm, welcoming environment to the young people so that they are comfortable being in the church building and speaking to members of the congregation.

Scripture Union

I have been involved in 2 Scripture Union groups over the past year – one in Mossneuk Primary School and one in Duncanrig Secondary.

Mossneuk SU (Mossy Jammers)

I have been involved in this group with Dr McPake and one of the teachers from the school Mrs Goring. During the first part of the year I was involved more in an assisting role whilst Mrs Goring took the lead in planning and running activities. After Christmas I took more of a lead role in this group. This brought a few challenges as I have more experience working with teenagers and had to find relevant analogies and methods of communicating more effectively with the primary school group. This is something I feel developed over the year as initially my sessions mainly involved reading a passage and talking about it, however as the year went on and I grew more confident the number of games and crafts increased giving more active learning in the group.

Duncanrig SU

In November this SU group began with Phil Craven from Westwood Baptist Church and myself taking a joint leading role in this group. Although the group is still small with only 4 or 5 regular attenders, there were some new faces starting to appear towards the end of the year. I felt more

comfortable speaking with this age group and organising games/activities to illustrate stories. I also faced some challenges with the passages which we covered during the year and was grateful of the input from Phil and a number of teachers who would come along to assist.

Chippy Church, Sunday Club etc.

This activity was launched initially out of the Summer Holiday Club at Mossneuk as a way to engage with the teenagers who came to help in running the club. This initially took the form of meeting in the church hall for chips and to talk. This also included a trip to the Glasgow Science Centre Halloween party and a trip to see Pirates of the Caribbean at the IMAX (unfortunately due to technical issues at the IMAX we did not get to see the full film).

This group fell apart after a few months for a number of reasons – due to my wedding in November, the meeting scheduled for this month was missed and after this the adults who had been helping took the decision no to continue due to other commitments. I was struggling to find adults to help, however have now had a number of people come forward to say they would be willing to help but not make a commitment to being involved every time. As a result I am now in a position to think about restarting this group in a more structured way.

I have also visited the Sunday Schools, Focus Group and Sunday club a number of times over the past year. As with visits to the 'uniformed' groups I hope to continue and increase these visits in the coming year.

Bubblegum 'n' Fluff

This was a session we ran for two local primary schools in the run up to Christmas in which we explored the story of Christmas through a variety of storytelling and craft activities. These sessions were primarily led by Rev. MacKenzie and Dr. McPake in their respective churches with a team of volunteers. Unfortunately I missed part of the session at Westwood due to the extreme weather, but thoroughly enjoyed the session with both groups.

East Kilbride CLD

This is a new group or invited youth practitioners which has been established within The Key centre to work on South Lanarkshire Council Community Learning Development outcomes. This group is in the very early stages, however I am to collate information about what each congregation offers for young people in their respective parishes. To complete this I will be in contact with the leaders of relevant groups to attain the information I need to complete these reports to submit to the group. There is also scope for working together with some of the other groups who have been invited to attend. All of the other members are from bodies such as Careers Scotland and NHS Scotland with myself being the only person invited from a faith group and I find this encouraging that the Council are seeing us as a viable partner in providing services to the children and young people of East Kilbride.

121 George St

As an employee of the Church of Scotland Ministries Council, I have found myself involved in a couple of activities within the offices at 121 George Street in Edinburgh. Primarily this involved being a member of the planning committee for the annual PPW conference. This sees all PPWs

(Presbytery and Parish Workers) including Associate Ministers, Parish Assistants, Presbytery Facilitators and Youth Workers who are employed by the Ministries Council coming together for two days for networking, training and an update from the Ministries Council. Although I was heavily involved in the planning, even suggesting the venue and theme/title which were eventually used and one of the speakers, I was unfortunately unable to attend the conference due to the birth of my daughter.

I was also invited to a number of activities by the Mission & Discipleship Council. The first of these was to attend the National Youth Assembly in September as a group facilitator during the debates. I was also invited to a meeting with a representative from Youth Scotland, a national youthwork body, and to represent the Church of Scotland at the Scottish Youthworker of the Year Awards as they are the sponsors of one of the awards.

Worship

Over the year I have been involved in worship at both churches in a number of ways. I have enjoyed these and feel that I have developed in my understanding of worship and worship leadership over this time. Examples of my involvement are Childrens' Talks, leading prayers, readings and in particular taking a leading role in the Harvest worship at Mossneuk, getting the young people involved in this and jointly leading the family Christmas Eve worship in Westwood Church with Rev MacKenzie, among others.

August 2011 – July 2012 ?

'Uniformed' Groups

As mentioned in the earlier section of my report, I intend to improve on the visits to the 'uniformed' groups meeting within the churches.

To achieve this I have already been in contact with the contact person for each organisation and asked for suitable dates to visit between when they resume and the school October holidays, and will do this again for each of the periods October – December, January – March and March – May/June.

My involvement at these visits will be left up to the leadership of each group and may range from visiting to observe, assisting in planned activities for a session or something else.

I hope again to attempt establishing a youth newsletter for the 2011-2012 school year and will be contacting the organisations about this soon. My hope would be that this would take the form of a newsletter which could be distributed to all youth organisations meeting within both churches and would be available to members of both congregations if they wished to see what the young people were doing.

COSY Coffeehouse

My hope would be that if we were to receive more volunteers that a rota system could be established to relieve the pressure on some of the team to attend every week.

I established a short devotional time for the team prior to the doors opening, however this started to fall away towards the end of the year due to the exams and people arriving earlier. I would hope to restart and continue this after the Summer and establish the practice of volunteers getting in contact

if they are unable to attend as there have been a few occasions that we have been a little bit tight. I also hope to speak to the young people about things they would like to see us doing at the COSY Coffeehouse such as introducing takeaway style paper cups for hot drinks as this is something that was asked for a number of times, particularly during the Autumn and Winter last year.

As mentioned earlier we attempted to add a Spiritual input to the group – not in a forced way but in a way to allow young people to engage if they wished. I am looking at ways to try this again and will be discussing these with the team and seeking advice from other COSY Coffeehouses in how they do this, although the main purpose of the Coffeehouse remains to provide a safe, warm, welcoming environment to the young people so that they are comfortable being in the church building and speaking to members of the congregation.

Moving into the future I would hope that after my contract ends, this group would be able to continue under the strength of the current team, hopefully with new people coming on board and I have no doubts that this group was be capable of doing this.

Scripture Union

We are hoping to resume both groups after the Summer break and I will be meeting the relevant leadership teams for discussions about how these groups will move forward in the next few weeks.

Chippy Church

Now that I have had some volunteers come forward I am now in a position to think about restarting this, and I know that the young people who attended last year are keen for this to happen.

The group will probably have a different name and the method and outcomes will be different. Initially the reason for the group was to allow the teenagers attending Mossneuk to meet socially and for me to get to know them, now the group will hopefully be a place where the young people can meet socially, but also explore Spirituality, Faith and what these mean to them.

I would hope that I would be able to do this by using a programme such as Youth Alpha, Youth Emmaus, RITE or similar. The emphasis would also move away specifically from chips (this was chosen as it linked in directly with the Summer Holiday Club) and more to generally sharing fellowship and it may be more relevant to refer to the group simply as a Youth Fellowship. This would also make the nature of the group more apparent to other young people.

Moving into the future, I would hope that this group would be able to find a way to function in a self supporting fashion with minimal involvement and guidance from adults, although I would hope that prior to the end of my contract I would be able to recruit someone to continue this group, or to have an established rota system of adults that the group could continue to support itself.

East Kilbride CLD

Over the coming year I plan to continue attending this group and exploring ways for the other members and the church to work together.

Worship

I hope to continue with my involvement in worship within both congregations as deemed appropriate by the ministers and involve the young people in worship.

Other Projects

The Hub

The Hub is a proposed outreach to take place weekly in Westwood Church. This would be a continuation of the work which we have started with the COSY Coffeehouse and would take place one afternoon after school. There are a number of things which could happen with this project and I have attached my initial proposal of this to the minister and Kirk Session of Westwood Church as an appendix (Hub.pdf). This document contains a fair amount of information. I am currently investigating feasibility – do the young people want this – and costings. The initial feedback from the people who attend the Coffeehouse is extremely positive. I would hope to recruit a number of volunteers and will be beginning this process shortly. My hope would be that this project would be predominantly led by a committee of young people with a small number of adults on hand to assist. If this does come to fruition, this group should be perfectly able to continue to function with minimal input from an adult co-ordinator. If this project does become successful it may be worthwhile investigating seeking funding for a project worker towards the end of my employment.

Family Fun Days

I hope to try and organise a minimum of one family fun day in each church over the next twelve months. For this I would require a number of volunteers and the day would involve a number of activities available to members of the parish such as bouncy castles, crafts etc. The exact details of these events would have to be investigated after dates for these have been investigated, although it is likely that the Westwood fund day may take a birthday party theme or feeling in celebration of the jubilee. It is possible that these days may follow the format of a venture called 'Messy Church' in which families are encouraged to come and explore church together in a similar way to the Holiday Club and Bubblegum 'n' Fluff events.

Reflections

Over this year I feel I have achieved a lot, however I feel that I could have made better use of my time in visiting and supporting groups and continuing the group which was started shortly after my arrival. Time management is something which I have struggled with this year and I hope from my report and my plans for the coming year it can be seen that this is something I am working to address. I feel that there were two main things which affected my prioritisation over the year and they were that I was focussing on my wedding in the initial part of the year, and later in the year on my progress through the enquiry process. With these both now in the past I will be able to put more focus into supporting the groups within the congregations. I have also found the number of hours a challenge as I have been looking at my employment as 3 days rather than 3 days equivalent. This has seen me looking at Tuesday-Thursday as my 'core' days due to Scripture Union groups and COSY Coffeehouse taking place on these days. I think this is one of the issues I have had in ensuring that I visited all of the uniformed groups, along with balancing hours within this job with hours in my alternate employment. This balance of hours, aswell as life/work blalance, is something I am working on to ensure that I am able to give equal attention to each of the groups.

I feel that I have built a number of good relationships within both congregations, not only with young people, and that I am fitting in well with both congregations. I also feel that people have been responsive to me whilst conducting talks during the services and that my understanding of team ministry and the need for people with different skills to come together to make things work has improved.

In the main I have not had any issues with the congregations, however I have been struggling to receive expenses from Mossneuk. I initially emailed the treasurer on May 11th with a request for expenses to cover my phone bill, after a discussion with the treasurer and a second email sent on 22nd June I received no further word until 10th July at 9pm to inform me that the treasurer was going on holiday 'early tomorrow morning' and would post me the cheque if I responded that evening. With the time of the email I didn't receive it until the next morning and as of 31st July have still to receive the cheque and my phone bill expenses are increasing and are now in excess of £150.

After the decision to stop the regular line management meeting was taken I do not feel this had a massive impact on how I worked as I feel I continued to speak to both ministers in relation to my work and felt that it was easier to raise issues or discuss things in a less formal setting than a structured meeting. I did however find myself spending more time within the church office after these meetings stopped and having more of a presence in this area.