

Report on the facilitation with Wallneuk North Church, Paisley
On Saturday 16 May 2009

Session 1 - Where have we been?

There were six groups in this session, two tackling each topic.

Topic 1 Timeline

You have a long sheet of paper with a line drawn roughly along the middle. Divide this line into decades depicting the length of life of your congregation (historic churches may do the early part in centuries!)

Using one colour of post-its, write celebrations in your congregational life above the line within each decade; using the other colour write times of struggle below the line. Suggest you begin with the current decade and work backwards as far as memory allows!!

If there have been external influences like wars or industrial unrest which you feel contributed to your congregational situation, please add them directly on to the paper at the appropriate date.

At one end is the founding vision of your church - rediscovering your roots can revitalise a church. One church may have deep Celtic origins; one may have been a pioneer church only about 50 years ago; one may have arisen out of the disruption in the 19th century or as a result of a union (or several).

At the other end is the area of dreams for the future - choose one or two to put on your timeline.

When you report back:

- (1) *Highlight the best moments; how did people feel about the struggles or difficulties and/or how were they handled?*
- (2) *The DNA of a church can be traced to its origins. Is there inspiration from the founding vision of your church? What is your church's identity based on?*
- (3) *Share any dreams you have of what you would like your church to be.*

Report

- (1) *This part of the exercise was done very well by both groups with the celebrations and struggles openly talked about. Because it was mainly an industrial area, the north part of the town and consequently the church suffered from the strikes and periods of industrial unrest. Towards the end of the last century, the local industries were down to 3 day weeks, and some finally closed. That has also had an effect on the membership of this church.*

Also towards the end of the last century, changes in road design in the town resulted in WNC occupying a traffic island, not an easy position but maybe it could be capitalised on?

In the 1990's WNC 'lost' the Gallowhill area from their parish when the Presbytery rezoned the parish boundaries, and then in 2006, their minister Tom McIntyre left after 18 years' ministry.

Through all the years, though, and especially latterly, there were plenty of occasions of celebration identified; with a union in 1983; a deaconess arriving in 1990; P.A.C.T. being set up and WNC being a working force in that. The association with St Ninian's and St James's which resulted in the formation of Network Paisley is also seen as a positive strategy, and although they are sorry to have no choir and no Guild now, and feel they are an ageing congregation, yet they are positive thinkers and hard workers who will respond to the challenge of the new ministry they now have after a 2½ year vacancy.

- (2) Wallneuk began as a Mission for the mill workers with Peter Coates from the mill putting up the money to build a hall in the first instance. The Mission members bought bricks, so that the church was fully built by 1917 with a Mr Greer as its first minister. The groups felt the WNC has always been primarily a working man's church, and that its members have always been hard-working folk with positive thoughts.*
- (3) The dreams were to be a 24 hour church witnessing in the north of the town; to have lots of children; and to be able to distribute a promotional leaflet.*

Topic 2 Physical Mapping

Draw a rough sketch map of your community area highlighting main roads and natural boundaries; key buildings or special features and social gathering points; churches or religious centres; major workplaces; meeting places of vulnerable groups.

When you report back, please address these questions:

- (1) What are the main centres of community life?
Colleges and schools; Christian Action Centre; Star Project; Beechwood Community Centre; other churches; shopping precincts; pubs.*
- (2) Where does the church building sit in relation to the main centres of the community?
The maps of both groups showed WNC to be very off-centre in its parish nowadays. Very little housing in the vicinity now, and most factories demolished or standing empty.*

(3) *How does the physical make-up of the community shape its life and affect the life of the church?*

Because of the lack of housing around the church, the congregation is mainly 'gathered' with only about 10-15% from the parish area. This affects attendance at other events as well as on Sundays. There is a good car park, but the traffic island situation is felt to be not good, with the noticeboard not being easily read from a travelling vehicle.

(4) *Are there any sectors of the community untouched by the church?*

Both groups felt most sectors were untouched - nursery and some housing could be targeted; but there is influence in schools, Reid-Kerr College, Springbank Complex and the Star Project.

(5) *What do you see as missionary challenges for your church?*

The new housing in the north end; need to attract greater participation in church involvement; targeting new housing area (the Spires etc) also second phase Shortroods; extend hand of friendship to Sanctuary Housing.

Topic 3 Power Mapping

Draw a large circle on your paper. On each of the post-its, write one significant influence on your community - good or bad, political, economic, religious, social

Place these on your circle, in such a way that those influences you feel are most powerful are at the centre, and those you feel the least influential are at the edge.

When you report back, please address these questions:

(1) *What does the map tell you about your community?*

The church isn't just a location, it is the people; it's a church with a lot of activity, but not a huge influence as it's not community based.

(2) *Which of these influences are positive, and which negative?*

+ve: Gp1: Public & private sports facilities, sheltered housing, restaurants, pubs & clubs, public parks, parent & toddler, other churches, youth organisations, car boot sale, Network Paisley, community centre, STAR project, outreach activities, educational facilities, WNC.

+ve: Gp2: People know where we are, car boot sale, well used-busy with activities, Christian Aid, new housing area, dependable members, links with elderly, links with education, STAR project, commitment, friendly & welcoming, coffee fellowship, WNC.

-ve: Gp1: Locality, drugs, drink, debt issues, job losses, housing issues, shops.

-ve: Gp2: Need for transport - both young and old, isolated from community, peer pressure, drugs & alcohol, poverty, non-denominational schools, perception of C of S, lack of commitment, other activities,

? : Gp1: BB headquarters, vacant ground, industrial estates, medical centre.

? : Gp2: Middle of roundabout, gathered congregation, ageing congregation, Network Paisley.

(3) How do you assess the role of your church in this power map?

The location of the building makes role difficult; need to do more PR work; lack of people.

(4) What do you see as challenges for your church?

People - younger members - commit to support church; public perception of the C of S needs to be dispelled; need to tell everybody we are there; have the doors open, not just on Sundays; changing people's opinions of churches.

Session 2 - Who are we now?

The Health Check

from "The Healthy Churches' Handbook" by Robert Warren. The material came out of research done in England (Durham Diocese) looking at churches from various types of social area that had undergone significant growth in the first half of the 1990's. The research identified common characteristics, and came up with Seven Marks of a Healthy Church.

Following a presentation about each of these 'marks', the elders scored WNC individually (1 is low and 6 is high). They were then in 5 groups and the collated scores were:

	1	2	3	4	5	Total
1. Energised by faith	27	31	30	24	28	140
2. Outward-looking focus	*23	30	**38	23	**33	147
3. Seeks to find out what God wants	24	*27	*23	*22	*27	*123
4. Faces the cost of change and growth	26	29	31	24	31	141
5. Operates as a community	**28	32	33	23	28	144
6. Makes room for all	27	**35	31	24	31	148
7. Does a few things and does them well	27	32	32	**25	**33	**149

[* indicates the lowest score for each group and ** the highest score.]

Looking at the group score sheets, nobody gave a score of 1 to anything, and only 4 people used a score of 2. However, only 8 people used the score of 6 at all. So you stuck mainly with 3, 4 and 5!! It is therefore not surprising that the final scores are very close together, apart from No.3.

Each group was then asked to consider where your congregational strengths are, and what needs working on, using the 7 Marks of the Healthy Church as above.

- No comment from any group*
- These points came from three groups:*
 - Improve links existing at present (college, schools, care homes, etc)*
 - Review links with areas of new housing*
 - Consider industrial chaplaincy*
 - Greater awareness of needs of others (both within and outwith parish)*
 - Encourage others to be involved with church*

- *How others view church and church-going*
 - *Expansion - PACT, Network, STAR*
 - *Expansion - communication within the church and community*
 - *Outreach - Car boot, education, industrial visitor / support, internet, church open 24/7*
3. *These points came from four groups:*
- *Finding out needs of others within parish e.g. by survey in parish*
 - *Shared sense of direction - aims and goals*
 - *Network Paisley - spiritual function, local spiritual function*
 - *Midweek services, witness, exclusion?*
 - *Listen to others - and to God*
 - *Mission priorities - retiral offering local/ national / international*
 - *Explanation of each working group and what they do*
 - *Key words - communication and coordination*
 - *Focus on each of these areas on noticeboard*
 - *Find other ways of involving people in e.g. STAR project, Fountain Gardens Gala Day*
 - *As STAR project expands, they will need more space etc.*
4. *No comment from any group*
5. *Only one comment - refer to 2 above*
6. *Only one comment - coffee fellowship is essential - more opportunities for socialising*
7. *Comments come from one group:*
- *Course for parents of children for baptism*
 - *More people involved (spread the load)*
 - *Worship leaders' course*
 - *Services in e.g. Morrison's on Sunday - where the people are!*
 - *Coffee fellowship - more socialising*

Session 3 - What is our vision?

Using five headings taken from the actions required by the Healthy Church, as well as taken from all the New Testament teachings, people chose a working group for themselves - worship, mission, discipleship, fellowship and shared ministry.

They were asked to brainstorm ideas for WNC over the next 3 years under their chosen heading.

The groups were then allowed to move round to agree with the written ideas and/or add their own.

And finally each group was asked to choose three ideas from their sheet which they considered likely to be fulfilled in the 3 years (marked with *).

By the end of 2012, building on our strengths in **WORSHIP**, we would like to see:

- *Variation in worship time
- *Projection of materials in connection with services
- More participation with other churches' services, and within the congregation - music, prayers
- Sound for singing group enhancement
- *Organist / choir master / music leader
- Praise band - children's band - singing group
- Mixture of music & worship styles
- Include Young Church with singing group
- Feel good worship!

By the end of 2012, building on our strengths in **MISSION**, we would like to see:

- New connections with new people
- *Strengthening existing partnerships (STAR etc)
- Better internal & external communications and publicity
- Basic effective business structure - flowchart
- *Maximum use of technology - internet café?
- Pastoral structure
- *Needs of community identified and fulfilled
- Church door open 24/7 - welcome homecoming
- Greater awareness of WNC in community
- Build on existing networks
- Better connections with other faith churches
- Community outreach
- Industry / retail chaplaincy
- Mission connection
- Christian aid
- World organisation - support Bible Society

By the end of 2012, building on our strengths in **DISCIPLESHIP**, we would like to see:

- Commitment
- Knowledge
- *Spiritual awareness
- Openness
- Listen more
- Study - research
- *Bible study
- House groups - small groups
- Leadership - teaching
- Prayer - meaningful
- Caring
- Witness
- Open to change
- Can discipleship be 24/7?
- *Open doors - website

By the end of 2012, building on our strengths in **FELLOWSHIP**, we would like to see:

- More people in the church
- New people involved in the work - and made welcome
- *Ask new/ different people to get involved
- *Encourage people to come back to church
- Organise a greater variety of activities - for all ages, not necessarily more - e.g. talents, concerts, fayres / fetes, ceilidh - plan and calendar added
- Working together in harmony having a shared purpose
- *Youth group / children's music / singing group
- Junior badminton club - adult organisation
- Increase numbers in all organisations
- Increase perception of Church of Scotland - change it!
- Extended fellowship within the community

By the end of 2012, building on our strengths in **SHARED MINISTRY**, we would like to see:

- More young people regularly participating - and adult added
- *A youth group - students from Reid-Kerr - times to suit / café drop-in / relaxed / somewhere to meet
- *Dedicated pastoral care team
- More elders and/or visitors
- Alpha course (open to all) - or similar added
- Opportunities to share - for all
- *Change format of KS (agenda) - more pastoral added

- Encourage members to team meetings
- Booklets to support baptisms / marriages / funerals - guidance added - preparation and support added

Session 4 - Vision into Action will change Wallneuk North

Each group was now asked to take one of their three Actions and make it a plan - priorities, resources and timescale.

Worship - use of visual aids

- Minister and Kirk Session approval and advice from '121' - already all in place
- Visit other churches
- Decide whether to rent / buy / borrow
- Obtain costs
- Inform congregation
- Create a production team
- Installation
- Target time - soon!

Mission - Identify needs of community

- Set up a focus group
- Set a remit leading to an action plan
- People and budget
- Target time - 1 year

Discipleship - Bible study

- Location - church? Quiet room, board room - atmosphere
- Resources - material / leadership / tea/coffee
- Timing - when? Autumn / winter / spring
 - how often? Short blocks of 6 weeks or 2 week intervals or...
 - time of day? Early evening - 1 hour study + $\frac{1}{2}$ hour fellowship
- Find a meaningful name
- Topic - choice available
- Training of a leader
- Target time - September 2010

Fellowship - Ask different people to get involved

- Welcome teams etc - if everyone asked one one person to assist them
- Make it personal i.e. come and help me
- Just a minute - for a Sunday service
- Use Summer Fayre as an opportunity to get new and different people involved
- Target time - till end of 2009

Shared ministry - Change format of Kirk Session

- Group to discuss what changes do we want
- Take 3 proposals to Kirk Session
- Want less formal / business
- Topics / discussion - time managed

Planned topics relating to long term goals
Resources / participation
Target time 2009/2010

Facilitators' comment

There was a real feeling of 'let's get on with things' at the end of the day, although everybody was rather tired, having really worked quite hard, and increasingly under pressure of time as the day progressed! I would recommend that you don't wait too long before taking the next steps that I recommended at the end.

Each of your 5 Action Groups should

- *Arrange another meeting soon - depending on the target date*
- *Appoint a spokesperson who will communicate your progress to the KS*
- *Move your vision into ACTION!!*

The sooner something (anything!) happens, the sooner you will feel you have begun!

I felt the whole event went very well, and was a good experience for this facilitator - those present were ready to participate from the word 'go' and there was a real buzz about the exercises being tackled, and I felt a real desire to move ahead.

The fact that the Minister was kept out of the group discussions was deliberate. It helped accentuate that it is up to the congregation to explore the possibilities for change, so that it will not always be 'that new minister' to blame! Peter is now among you, bringing his own strengths to your ministry in north Paisley. The various bits of the conference gave him insight into the congregation's strengths and he can see for himself your potential to grow and your openness for change.

There is a lot of work to be done, I feel, in the area of discerning God's agenda for WNC. I think you need to pursue the Bible study groups / house groups ideas and maybe do a workshop or two on prayer, private and corporate. You might want to pursue Faith-sharing as a topic for discussion - different, distinct and separate from Leading Worship workshops. It would also do no harm to set up a small focus group to deliberate the pros and cons of having your church doors open - if not 24/7, then at least more than they are at the moment.

Thank you for the opportunity to meet you all, some of you for a second time, and work with you through this exciting stage of your history. I look forward to perhaps coming to work with you again on the next stage!

*Beryl Luke – Adult Trainer Kirkcaldy Presbytery
19.05.2009*