

CUMBERNAULD OLD PARISH CHURCH – ANNUAL REPORT 2017

2017 continued where 2016 left off, with the congregation maintaining worship and outreach in our community and beyond while still searching for a new minister.

In the wider world, our Mission Circle continues to be well supported, with all monies raised being passed to our mission partners in South Africa to assist with medical, travel, education or daily living costs for those in need.

Our knitters have been busy making baby clothes for the Life for African Mothers appeal.

The congregation continues to donate generously to special appeals – Mary's Meals & Poppy Scotland, The Church of Scotland World Mission Stamp Appeal, Shelter Scotland & CACE (a local charity for the care of the elderly) as well as our own regular involvement with Christian Aid Week. We participate in the annual door to door Christian Aid Week collection which has raised thousands of pounds over the years.

In addition our Boys' Brigade company is very active in raising awareness of Christian Aid in our community by holding events to coincide with Christian Aid Week.

The Boys' Brigade also host a very popular Christmas Carol Service which is open to all. There have been close links with the church, local community and the Boys' Brigade for many years thanks to the dedication and enthusiasm of their officers. The boys also support our food bank through regular donations and this Christmas they provided 'reverse Advent calendars' for our food bank guests.

Our links with the Brownies are less well developed but we hope to address this in the coming year. A recent visit to the Brownies by Elders found a thriving enthusiastic group of girls from different backgrounds all enjoying Brownie life.

Our Food Bank which began in April 2015 has been busier than ever in recent months with numbers attending roughly doubling. It continues to open for one morning a week providing food parcels, toiletries and basic household items as well as a safe warm, welcoming place for tea and a chat. We also provide information regarding other services, eg Citizens Advice, Scottish Welfare, Uniform Banks etc. All this is achieved with the support of our sister church, Cornerstone, who can also supply clothing, household and baby goods if needed.

At the joint Christmas food bank event around 250 hot meals were served by another local church – Craighalbert – while around 150 food parcels were given out in a single day. Many gifts were also provided by our congregation and the wider community for distribution to those who might otherwise go without.

A similar venture occurs at Easter with Easter eggs donated by the congregation.

The good links with other churches in our town help us to identify and respond to needs as they arise but this would not be possible without the ongoing regular support and generosity of our congregation and community. The food bank will remain open as long as there is a need.

We continue to work closely with our Community Council on local issues and look forward especially to joining them on a Remembrance Day Poppy Project for 2018. It is also been agreed that we provide accommodation for a community police presence in our Session House.

In addition to our weekly worship, there are several special services throughout the year which can often draw people from the wider community. These include the annual Boys' Brigade dedication service, Remembrance Sunday, the annual Rainbow Service for the bereaved as well as special Easter & Christmas services.

For some years the church has participated in Doors Open Days, welcoming people into the church building. In addition, we are open regularly during the summer months as a condition of funding received for church building work.

In August 2017 our prayers and endeavours were rewarded when our new minister was appointed. This has led to a renewed enthusiasm and new ideas as well as a recognition of what is already being achieved.

Going forward into 2018, we hope to build on our relationships within our community and beyond and to respond to the changing needs as they arise.

In particular, we aim to encourage the use of Fair Trade goods by providing fairly traded teas and coffees at social events and offering fairly traded goods for sale.

We are also exploring the possibility of obtaining Eco-Congregation status. This programme helps churches make the link between environmental issues and Christian faith, and to respond with practical action in the church in the lives of individuals and in the local and global community.