

Making known God's love in Jesus: spiritual growth within the church

Within the church there has been a focus on developing the congregation's pastoral care, with a particular emphasis on wholeness, healing and 'therapeutic community'. Similar themes were explored as the Cambridge University-developed Beta Course was used in a series of evening services. The plan is to develop this into a free-standing course to be run in the new year. The work of pastoral carers and elders supporting older members of the congregation was particularly appreciated during the harsh weather in late 2010, but throughout the year much pastoral care and support goes on behind the scenes.

New prayer initiatives have built on the regular Prayer Meeting and e-mail based Prayer Circle. 24/7 Prayer and Prayer Room events were held during the year – different times and locations were used to encourage participation. An after-service Prayer Ministry has been established, offering people the opportunity to be supported in one-to-one prayer.

A new probationer, Adrian Lough, joined our Minister Sam Torrens in September in leading services, and representatives from the congregation were able to attend Victoria Linford's Induction as Minister of Stow Church in the Borders (Victoria was a probationer with Barclay Viewforth in 2009).

Achievements and Performance

The age profile of those attending our services is changing - the number of students and young adults in our parish has grown over the last few years and this is reflected in the congregation. There has been a notable increase in the number of young families. We have an active student group and it has been encouraging to see their welcome and hospitality for overseas students who have attended the church. The work Sunday by Sunday with children and teenagers continues to thrive, a number of new leaders joined this work during the year, and the attendance at our August Holiday Club grew once more.

New equipment allows us to offer service recordings on CD to the housebound, and we plan to make sermon recordings available on our website. We aim to do a parish-wide leaflet drop at Easter and Christmas and have adopted a more contemporary style for this publicity. This has proved to be an effective way of making contact with those who then attend the special services.

At present the Kirk Session and its sub-teams (which develop strategy and ideas for the church) are trialling a new way of working, with the aim of simplifying decision making and allowing quicker implementation of new ideas. We plan to evaluate the initiative in the Summer of 2011.

As a church we have continued to look beyond our parish - taking part in the difficult discussions on Same Sex Relationships that are the subject of wider debate in the Church of Scotland. Among a range of people and charities supported, the congregation is actively involved in the local promotion of Christian Aid Week. We have missionary links overseas with Interserve workers in Thailand and with Joel Githinji, a World Mission partner in Nepal working with an HIV Project, whose Commissioning Service was held during the year in Barclay Viewforth at the end of a period of study in Edinburgh.

During the year Edinburgh Presbytery visited churches in the city in a programme called Unless the Lord Builds the House, an initiative seeking to re-focus congregations on the need for mission. Following the visit to Barclay Viewforth, it was encouraging to get positive feedback on the steps we have taken to make mission our priority. And as we look forward to 2011, the strengthening of our Ministry Team, and a range of new ideas developing on the foundations laid, there is a sense of anticipation at the mission opportunities ahead.