

Notes re Vestry Away-Day Saturday 23rd June 2018

Present: Rev'd Christine Downey, Ted Tracey-Bower, Jane Russell, Carole MacBride, Douglas Walker, Denis King, Alan Coupe, Caroline Gunn, Rona Finlayson, Rosie Mann, Gavin Craig, Geoff Angell.

Apologies for absence: Lord Morton

The meeting was held at St Mary's Church, Grangemouth, which proved to be a very suitable and relaxing venue. Thank you to Rona, Jane, and Rosie for looking after the catering for the day. The soup, sandwiches, and cake were excellent.

Prior to the meeting starting, the minutes of the Vestry meeting on June 4th were approved with some small amendments. Alan will make sure that these are posted in the Douglas Hall and put on the website once John Blaber returns from holiday.

The meeting started with a welcome, opening prayer, and short introduction to the day from Christine. This was to set out the purpose of the meeting which was to look at the past, present, and future of St Mary's Dalmahoy with a target of defining some tangible actions which would be progressed.

Where We Were: The group was then split into two sections and a brainstorming session was held. The purpose of this was to get the attendees' views on what they felt were positive and negative experiences that they had encountered at St Mary's in general and also as Vestry members. We were also asked to think about our own qualities and finally about things we would like to see happen at St Mary's in the coming year. The output from these discussions were noted in bullet point format and Christine took them away to view and pick out the major points.

Where We Are Now: Christine then challenged the Vestry by saying that one of the attributes that is often claimed for St Mary's is that we are a welcoming and inclusive church. While she agreed that, in the main, this was true she asked whether we could still do better in this area.

The ensuing discussion highlighted a couple of areas where this improvement could be made. These were where visitors attended the church for a service and at the coffee session in the hall after the service. In the first instance it was felt that more could be done to identify visitors and to assist them with finding their way through the service. Within this though there is a requirement to remember that some visitors may just want to be in their own personal space. It was felt that for the coffee in the hall, the layout needed to be reviewed to allow visitors to feel more part of proceedings.

There was then a brief discussion on Stewardship. It is not all about Finance, although we have to be aware of it. Time and Talents are also areas that need to be taken into consideration. St Mary's is currently in a strong financial position. We should not be looking to get new members just for their money but to help St Mary's grow in all areas.

Where Do We Want To Go: This started with a short meditation session led by Christine. This session encouraged us to think of the St Mary's we would like to see and what would need to be done to get there.

That was followed by the attendees putting forward the things that they had thought about during the meditation. From this input a list of possibilities was compiled. These were then voted on to decide which would be the ones to focus on in the coming year. The others were

still relevant but there is only so much that can be progressed without overstretching and getting little done.

The three items chosen to progress were:

Increasing the size of the congregation which would include raising St Mary's visibility.

Reviewing the type of music played at the service. Especially at the recessional to more spirit-lifting pieces.

Having St Mary's in a position to hold Same-sex Marriages.

The Same-sex Marriages item led to a discussion on how this subject is handled. Some felt that while they were not against this they had concerns that St Mary's could be seen as the place to go for this type of service. Christine assured us that she would only marry couples if they were getting married for the correct reasons and that this covered all marriages, same-sex or not.

Specific Goals and Tasks : Once the three items above had been adopted as our main goals for the coming year, tasks which would help achieve these were identified.

Increasing size of congregation/Visibility.

Create a leaflet on St Mary's for distribution. Christine is already working on this.

Leaflet new-build estates in the local area. Douglas to identify estates and liaise with them regarding leafleting.

Build relationships with schools in the area. Caroline to give contact name for Clifton Hall. Christine to talk with Ella Henderson about contacts gained through the school choir competition.

Look at creating a stronger relationship with the Dalmahoy Hotel. Possibly getting leaflets into all rooms and holding a golf competition. Christine, Carole and ? to progress.

Reviewing Service Music

Christine to discuss with Alan Philips

Same-sex Marriage

Hold a congregational meeting before November AGM to discuss.

Create a proposal for a vote on whether or not this is the will of the congregation. This will be voted on at AGM.

Should this be approved by the congregation, Christine to apply for a licence to officiate at Same-sex Marriages.

Blessing : Christine then thanked all for attending what she felt to be a very productive day. The meeting concluded with the Blessing.

Denis King