

Mission Audit Report to Kirk Session – 13 January 2014

Introduction

This report has been compiled by the sub-committee of the Kirk Session, comprising Lily Campbell, Mike Frew, Elizabeth Strong and Rita Welsh. It is part of the Action Plan agreed by the Kirk Session in partnership with Edinburgh Presbytery, and is intended to help inform decisions regarding our pattern of worship, evangelism and use of buildings

The Story of the Parish

Slateford and Longstone used to be separate villages, while the Kingsknowe bungalows were built in the 1930s. The prefabs were built in Longstone and Redhall post-WW2, followed by the building of the current properties in the 1950s which were a mix of private and council houses. Kingsknowe Place, Kingsknowe Court and Longstone Street flats were built in 1965. It is believed that many people are moving back into the area, having grown up in it and lived for a time elsewhere; but we do not know for sure the proportion of newer residents who fall into this category

Changes in the Last Decade

The Committee believes that the parish population is more settled than it used to be, with the former prison houses being sold on, and army families staying longer than used to be the case.

Other changes in the last decade or so include the closure of doctor's surgeries, chemist's shop and two post offices. None of these services are now available in the parish. Also there are no significant leisure activities or entertainment. Even the pubs seem to be very quiet.

Sainsbury's opened their new store in late August. Young people are hanging about the streets less than used to be the case, perhaps because of parental restrictions or the popularity of home computer games, in keeping with national trends. The former church youth club closed a number of years ago

Developments in the Role of the Church

The uniformed youth organisations have declined significantly in recent times, and there are less young people on Sunday mornings. This has freed up the halls for other groups, and the main outreach to young people is now through summer holiday clubs and TakeAway. Our link with the new(ish) Redhall School is an important one, while the Over 50s group has become an important social and spiritual facility for elderly people

Meetings Around the Parish

a) Sainsbury's: 60% of the staff live within two miles of the new store, fulfilling a commitment made by management before the store opened. The management have also made a great effort to support local community groups, including the church

b) Longstone Primary: Conversation with Irene Mirtle, head teacher, indicated that changes are afoot among the army families, with 1 Scots going to Belfast soon. At present there are 78 army children at the school out of a roll of 265, which includes a significant

number of children who don't live in the catchment area. There is some poverty in the area, but no more than in the past. Most families have at least one adult in work, but wages are quite low. Vandalism (to the school building) is less than 20 years ago when the current head teacher started at the school. There is no discernible change in one-parent families in the last five years. "Many" parents grew up in Redhall and now their children attend the school

c) Army Family Officer: Michele Price gave the following information about the army families in Redhall Drive and Gardens –

- there are around 100 families in Redhall Drive and Redhall Gardens. Some of these have now left the army and are looking for other accommodation
- there are quite a few Fijian families, most of whom are devout Christians
- the main social problem is isolation/loneliness. Army wives and their children tend not to form close relationships, even with each other

d) Army Garrisons Commander: Colonel Phil Bates addressed the November meeting of Edinburgh Presbytery, and included the following in his speech –

- a Community Covenant initiative aims to strengthen the links between the forces and local communities
- £30m is available over three years for projects that promote this integration

e) Local Development Plan: The first LDP in many years has been published by the City Council. It does not include any proposals for our parish, though major developments further west are envisaged

Census 2011

Many results of the Census are now available on a parish by parish basis. The main points in our parish can be expressed thus: if Slateford Longstone were a village of 100 people

- 18 would claim their pension
- 5 would be in primary school; 6 would be in high school
- 26 would be aged between 25 and 44
- 30 of 100 households would be in rented accommodation
- 9 households would speak a language other than English in the home
- 82 would describe themselves as 'White - Scottish'
- 10 would be providing unpaid care for more than an hour a week
- 5 would describe their health as bad or very bad
- **33 would say they belonged to the Church of Scotland**

In more detail, the sub-committee noted the following -

Age groups: the figures for pre-school (6%) and school age young people (see above) seem quite low but are in fact slightly higher than for the City of Edinburgh as a whole. The elderly (65-79 yrs) and very elderly (80+) age groups are also higher than City figures, while the student (16-24) and young adult (25-44) age groups are below average.

Religious affiliation: The 33% who claim a CofS connection is a much higher figure than for the City (24%). However, 42% of the parish population claim to have no religion (Edinburgh = 45%). It would be helpful to have these figures broken down into age groups, and this possibility is being investigated.

Ethnicity: The 82% who describe themselves as White-Scottish compares with 70% for the city. Intriguingly, the figures for White-Other British and White-Other are below City figures. Similarly other ethnic groups are below City figures, though above national ones. This indicates a parish with a notably high proportion of White-Scottish residents

Health: . 8% of people in the parish said that their day to day activities were limited a lot (7% Presbytery; 10% National) and 12% said that their day to day activities were limited a little (9% Presbytery; 10% National)

Household tenure: The Committee was struck by the high proportion of owner-occupied households at 69% (60% Presbytery, 62% Scotland), and noted also the relatively low proportion of private rented accommodation (13% compared with 22% Presbytery) though it is just above the national average of 12%.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Committee has found the exercise interesting and instructive, though there are no great surprises. We make the following modest recommendations

- i) Session should take seriously the large proportion of the parish who profess “no religion”. This seems to indicate that a considerable number of people are happily living life without God. We will not reach these people by simply continuing to “do church” in the traditional way
- ii) However, the higher than average numbers claiming a Church of Scotland connection, and the relatively settled population, may give us a missionary opportunity not so readily available elsewhere in the city
- iii) The audit indicates that it may well be worthwhile to explore additional times and forms of worship and church life. There are many new initiatives and good literature to help us in planning

Finally, It be noted that the Committee has made no recommendations at this time regarding whether our buildings are fit for purpose, believing to do so would be beyond our remit. Also, more Census statistics are expected to be released in the near future