

Granton Parish Church – Our Kirk Session, moving to mission – the journey so far

Recognising the Issue - Asking the questions:

- Why is the church here? [Up/In/Out]
- What should authentic pastoral care look like?
- What does our pastoral care look like today?
- What do we understand as the role of an Elder?
- What are we going to do about it?

The Research - Stage 1

Survey/Interview of all existing Elders

- What was your motivation to be an Elder?
- Where do your gifts lie?
- Where do your gifts not lie?
- Would you retire if you felt able to?

Only 1/3 of Elders thought they had pastoral gifting and 10% expressed a wish to retire

The Research - Stage 2

Survey/Interview of all existing Members

Gifts/Abilities	% Response
Confirm/Update biographical information	
Select preferred contact method	
Annual Visit + Mailed out magazine	1/4 between this and Mail
Mail	
Telephone	
Email	1/4
At Church	1/4
Quarterly Visit (<i>Default for no response</i>)	1/4

Only 1/10 of Members actually asked for a quarterly visit

Reflection

- The strongest motivation to regularly visit came from longest standing Elders.
- Not everyone who wants a visit needs one and vice versa
- Effective pastoral care goes beyond visiting
- We as a church needed to do more to equip our carers
- Many congregational members had pastoral gifts but were being excluded
- Some Elders were being de-motivated by the need to visit
- How people related to the church was different for different generations

Implementation (Not in the order we did them)

1. Wrote to each member confirming their decision (or the default)
2. Set up a Befriending Ministry for targeted pastoral care
3. Set up a 'Nurture Group' for general care of the congregation
4. Confirmed with each Elder the area they would exercise Leadership in
5. Set up communications channels for people to change their contact choice
6. Moved to the Unitary Constitution
7. Changed the way we conduct Kirk Sessions so
 - they all start with ½ hour discussion
 - all our work is categorised as either
Worship / Discipleship / Fellowship / Evangelism/ Service
8. Changed our vocabulary
 - Rotas became Welcome Ministry etc.
9. Redid our Session Group Structure
 - Worship / Nurture and Outreach Action groups
 - Finance / Fabric / Social / Communication Support Groups
 - Support Groups are there to help the Action groups
10. Set up regular review of the system

Negatives

1. Have the new system ready to run as soon as the old stops
2. Recognise some elders will never get the change
3. Recognise some members will never get the change

Positives

1. Encouraged a wider set of gifting amongst Elders
2. Reoriented Session around congregational leadership
3. Reintroduced outreach to the parish as opposed to the lapsed
4. Net result was more pastoral care taking place
5. Opened up pastoral care to the whole congregation