

PARISH PROFILE

St Columba's Church, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen



We seek a new minister to lead us onward in this new phase of our congregational life.

We are a reformed evangelical congregation, loving the word of God, believing in the full humanity and full divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in his virgin birth, his sinless life and his atoning death, bodily resurrection and ascension to God's right hand. We believe in the gift of the Holy Spirit to all believers. We believe that salvation is by grace through faith alone and that faith without works is fruitless. We agree with the Westminster Confession of faith.

OUR NEW MINISTER MUST



St Columba's
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



1 LOVE THE LORD JESUS

Seeking to follow him as the Bible instructs, desiring to serve him and share the good news of his kingdom with the people of the Bridge of Don.

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2 BE BIBLICAL IN THEIR THEOLOGY

Holding to the essential doctrines of our Reformed tradition.



3 DELIGHT IN THE BIBLE

Reading it, applying it, discussing it and preaching it to help us understand how to live more as God intended.



4 RECOGNISE ALL BELIEVERS AS PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

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Encouraging and equipping all generations to use their talents and gifts to extend the kingdom.



5 DESIRE TO SEE MORE PEOPLE COME TO KNOW CHRIST

Prayerfully seeking God's guidance on how we can best reach our community with the good news of Jesus.

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Who are we?

St Columba's Church came into being some 42 years ago, a church plant from St Machar's cathedral, to serve the increasing population in the growing suburb of the Bridge of Don. Initially the congregation met in a local school and unusually our new building was designed to be shared by our Roman Catholic neighbours, who were facing the same need to provide a place of worship for their flock in the area. Each congregation has their own sanctuary at either end of our building with some shared facilities joining these.

We are an active outward looking congregation, who love to worship joyfully, while loving and supporting each other. We have just over 180 people on

the communion roll but have a significant number of adherents who also attend services regularly.

Around 80-90 people attend worship most Sunday mornings, which includes a programme for children and young people called Rise and Shine club. We have around 15 children and young people who attend, ages ranging from babies to teenagers. The age range of the congregation is mixed, from children and families to our older members, some of them being founder members of the congregation. Others join worship online, either watching live or catching up through the week. We consider them to be part of our church family.

After the retiral of our previous minister, who served lovingly for 33 years in the parish, we entered this period of vacancy



in September 2024. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we have stayed united in our desire to stand firm on the gospel and continue to be the church of Christ for the glory of God in this community. We give thanks to God that he has strengthened us, equipped us, provided for us and guided us through this 'in-between' time.



We are part of a parish grouping with 4 other congregations in the north of Aberdeen; Dyce linked with Newmachar, Brimmond and Stockethill. The presbytery plan envisages that 4 centres of worship will be maintained, with Stockethill continuing to meet in community facilities. We meet regularly for prayer and worship and are keen to see what other joint activities would be helpful for our mission. There is currently no plan to operate a ministry team, but the 4 churches are supportive of each other, helping each other when we can. We have been very aware of their prayers as we entered this period of vacancy.





Team St C's!

St Columba's operates under the unitary constitution, with the Kirk Session providing spiritual and civil leadership to the congregation. There are several small groups which report to the Kirk Session on Sunday worship, Finance, Property, Children and Young People, Senior Citizens and Intergenerational activities. The Kirk Session currently has 13 members, 4 women and 9 men. Elders range in age from those in their 30s through the ages to a few in their 80s. We have ordained several new elders over recent years.

The Kirk Session is united in their love for Christ, in their theology, as recently demonstrated by a unanimous vote to not depart from the church's practice in relation to human sexuality, and in shared purpose. We share a desire to glorify Jesus in all we think, do and say, seeking to encourage all in our congregation to grow more like Christ and to do all we can to share the good news of Jesus with those in our community.

Although we currently only employ a part-time administrator we operate a team ministry model. This allows everyone to use their gifts and abilities to serve in a variety of ways including worship leading and preaching. It also means the challenges of leadership are shared and that there is usually someone able to 'step in' in case of illness or unavailability.

A new minister, called by God to lead and care for the people of St Columba's, will be welcomed into this team. We are looking forward to their leadership, seeing how God will use their particular gifts and talents in our church and community, and learning from them.

We consider ourselves a supportive eldership and church family, acknowledging the need for a regular rhythm of rest and time for study and development.

It is not just the elders who form 'Team St C's', we are blessed by a congregation faithful in praying, willing to support ministries and events and happily volunteering where able to do so. We acknowledge that change isn't easy, but with our eyes fixed on Christ, the whole congregation does their best to understand the need for it and support any changes designed to help us better share Christ's love with each other and the community.



Where are we?

The Bridge of Don is a large suburb to the north of Aberdeen city: it is described as the largest suburb in Europe. The population of the Bridge of Don is around 20,000 and has 2 parishes, the other parish - Oldmachar - being a church plant from St Columba's over 20 years ago. Our parish has a population of 10,000, with new houses still being built – a new scheme of 536 social homes, Cloverhill, is giving us pause for thought as how to best reach out to these new residents.

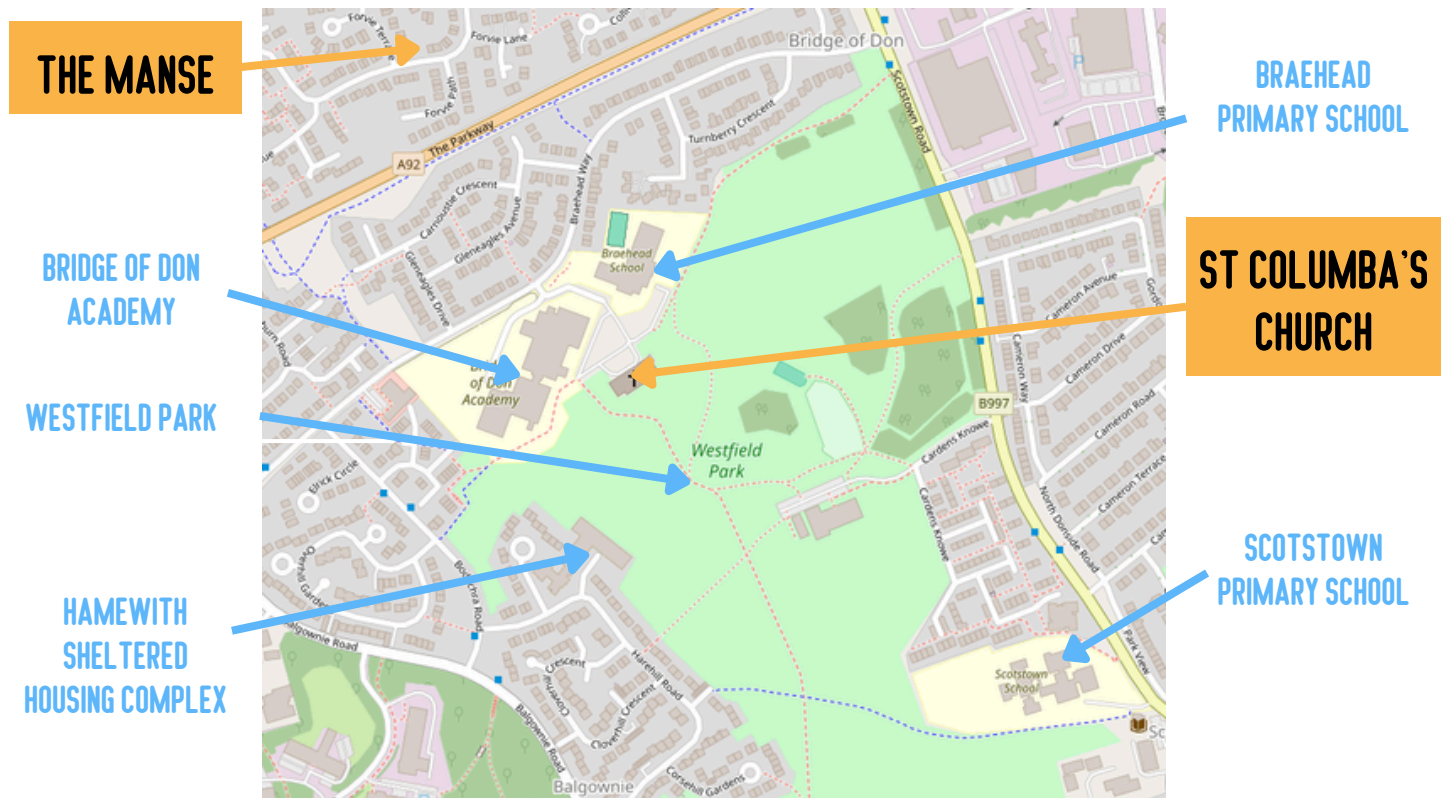


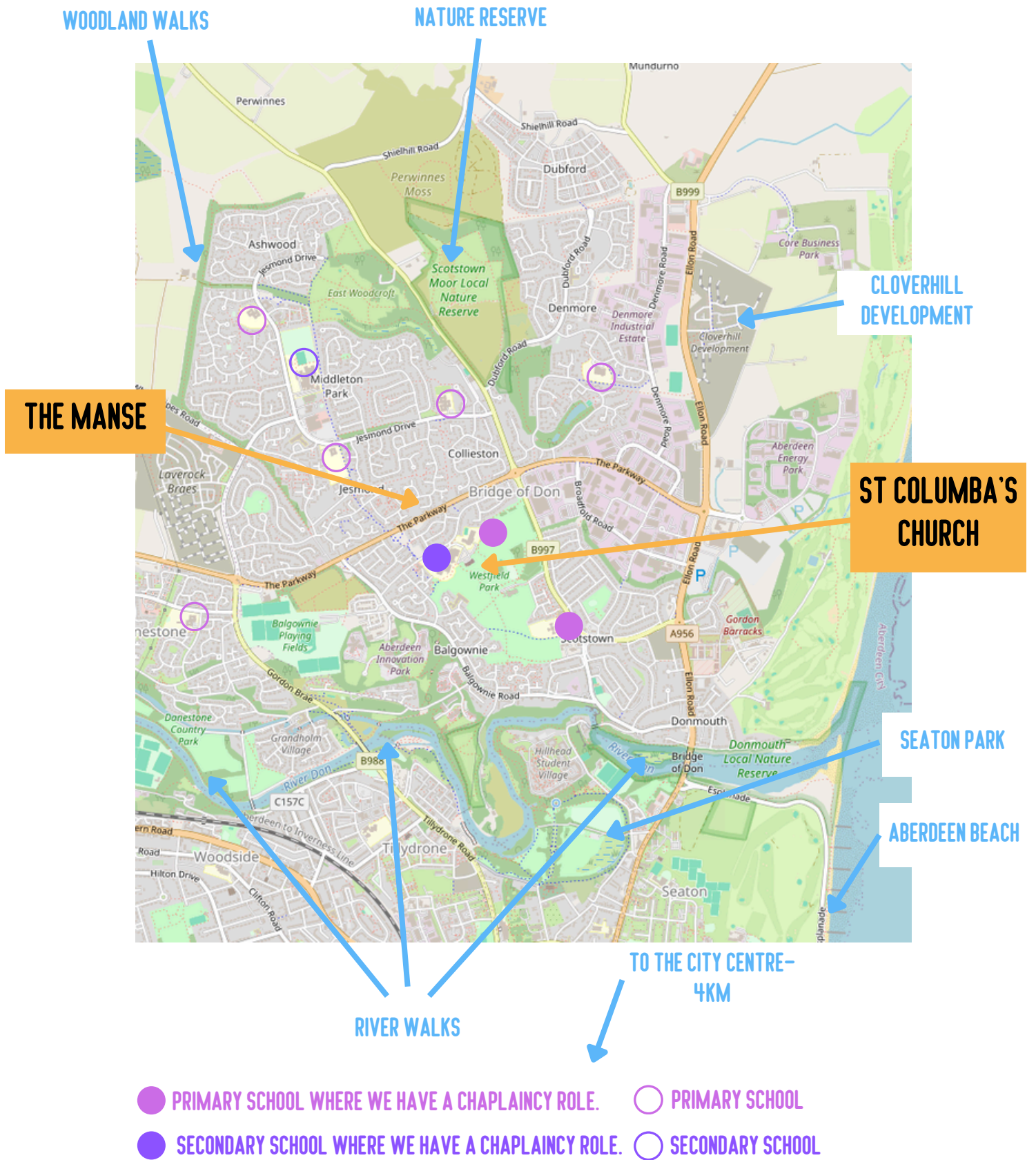
The parish offers excellent amenities including 2 primary schools and a secondary school, a community centre with a swimming pool & a library. There are parks and a golf course and very easy access to beautiful countryside and lovely beaches.

Our church building is centrally located and shares a campus with one of the primary schools, Bridge of Don Academy and the community centre. To the rear of our building we have a large park with footpaths across the area, a play park & football pitches. We have our 6 am Easter morning service at the rear of the building enjoying the beautiful sunrise over Aberdeen bay, while celebrating the resurrection of our Lord.

Most of the housing in the parish is private, with some social housing in the older part of the area and of course the new estate currently being built. However, the apparent affluence of the area can mask some challenges for residents, especially since the recent cost of living crisis. We collect weekly for a local food bank and to support the breakfast club in one of the primary schools.

There is a sheltered housing complex close to the church where we lead monthly services and other social activities; we also provide church services and other activities in a very sheltered housing complex.





Worship

We meet weekly for worship at 10.30am on Sunday mornings. A growing team of church members share in the leading of worship, preaching, delivering the Bible reading, praying and giving all-age talks.

Our Sunday mornings begin with an invitation to join together and pray. We meet at 9.45am to pray for the service, the work of the church, the church family and the community.

The services are joyful and contemporary in style, worship songs being accompanied by a music group of singers, keyboard players, guitar and on occasion other instrumentalists. Most of our worship songs come from "Songs of Fellowship", but other sources are used at times. We have a well-developed audio-visual system that projects a live video feed, images and videos including song words and other text or visuals that aid us in worship. This allows those in the building and those watching online to share the same experience.



Our children and young people attend Rise and Shine during the service, sometimes starting worship with the congregation and leaving for their activities after a time or joining us near the end of the service – particularly when we celebrate the Lord's Supper. We currently celebrate communion 6 times a year.

Our regular altogether (all-age) services, some being 'café style', reflect our belief in the importance of intergenerational ministry. We value all our church family, regardless of age, as members of the body of Christ with unique gifts and talents and an ability to hear from God.

We try to create opportunities for people of all ages to talk to and learn from one another. Children and young people serve as part of our volunteer teams, alongside people of all ages, taking their turn on the welcome and hospitality rotas, singing and playing in the band and working as part of the tech team.

We enjoy fellowship after services with refreshments and have regular Soup and Sing along lunches.

We lead monthly worship services in our local sheltered housing complexes.

We meet with the other congregations in our Area Grouping for quarterly prayer and praise meetings on weeknight evenings.

We lead a service of Remembrance for the Oldmachar British Legion.

Find us online

www.facebook.com/StCBOD

www.youtube.com/@stcolumbaschurchofscotland7287

www.stcolumbaschurch.org.uk



OUTREACH TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



UNDER FIVES GROUP



We currently have an active under 5s group which meets on a weekday morning, staffed by volunteers from the congregation and attended by local children and their carers. There is often a waiting list to join this popular group which is welcoming and shows the love of Jesus in a very practical way to young families.

We have developed a close relationship with 2 local primary schools. We deliver regular assemblies, which provide opportunities to build relationships and share Bible stories. We are working with SU to establish a lunchtime club.

A group of our older congregation members are currently operating as Friendship Buddies in one of the primary schools, this group enjoy playing games and getting to know each other benefitting both the children and their buddies. There is discussion about how this might be extended in the future.

We sometimes have children from both nursery and primary classes coming to entertain our older members at their Friendship group. This connection is valued by ourselves and the school.

PRIMARY SCHOOL MINISTRY



HOLIDAY CLUBS

We run an annual summer holiday club the format of which changes depending on the needs we see that year and the team available. This is a significant part of our outreach and is also a key part of our church year in building intergenerational ministry. A team of all ages plan, pray, take part in mission and 'do life' together that week.



SECONDARY SCHOOL MINISTRY

In the last year God has provided opportunities to strengthen our links with Bridge of Don Academy through a connection with the Developing Young Workforce team and the new Depute head. We are working with the Home Economics department to provide opportunities for the pupils to practice their hospitality skills at our monthly coffee mornings.

We minister to the young people of the academy through our regular weekly hot chocolate lunch club where around 150 young people come and have free hot chocolate, served by volunteers from the congregation. A weekly breakfast club, Toasted, started in the autumn of 2024 funded by a Seeds for Growth Stage 1 grant.

Both these ministries have allowed relationships with young people and staff to flourish. Young people are offered, and are taking, gospels and we are praying for wisdom as to how to help them explore the Christian faith. This is a current priority for the congregation, and we are excited to see how God develops this ministry.



UNIFORMED ORGANISATIONS

A range of uniformed organisations meet in the church, these include The Bridge of Don Brigade, a Girls' Brigade company and a Rainbow and Guide unit. We are delighted to have them as part of our church community and are looking to develop our relationships with them.

OUTREACH TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



SENIOR CITIZENS MINISTRY



FRIENDSHIP GROUP

The Friendship Group meets fortnightly during the school year. Around 40 members attend and enjoy talks and presentations from a variety of speakers as well as time to chat over refreshments. Strong friendships are made and group members stay in touch in-between sessions providing connection, companionship and pastoral care. The committee has recently identified the need to provide activities over the summer months and a mix of outings and games afternoons have been arranged, including the yearly treat of the Strawberry Tea.

SHELTERED HOUSING

The Senior Citizen's team provides social events at Hamewith, a sheltered housing complex. 15-20 residents attend and enjoy events such as Beetle Drives, quizzes and Karaoke evenings. These events are happy times where relationships are built and pastoral care given. Monthly worship services are held here for the residents.

We also provide church services and other activities in a very sheltered housing complex, Denmore Court.

PASTORAL CARE

There is an increasing need for pastoral care for the elderly within our church family. While the minister plays a part in this, there is a team who keep in touch with members and ensure everyone is regularly visited. 'Informal' pastoral care happens between members, with friendships always having played a key part in our church life and spiritual development. Housebound members of our congregation are able to attend the service online and we are careful to include them in our church life.

COFFEE MORNINGS

Our monthly coffee mornings, as well as raising money for selected charities, provide another opportunity for getting together and as such are viewed as an important part of our senior citizens ministry.

PLAYING A FULL AND INTEGRAL PART IN OUR CHURCH FAMILY LIFE

We value highly the older members of our congregation, acknowledging the wisdom and experience of a life lived with Christ that they bring. They are involved in all aspects of our church life, for example as members of the worship band and as Friendship Buddies for our local school. We intentionally work to create opportunities for those in different generations to get to know each other, for example our Soup and Singalong lunches and cafe style services.

Pastoral care and discipleship



We are a loving and caring congregation, with members showing Christian love for each other, especially in times of need. We recognise the role we all play in encouraging one another to grow in our Christian faith.

There are small groups, some who meet online and some meeting in person, who gather to discuss the Bible, pray and provide care for each other.

Elders and others visit people in their own homes when this is appropriate.

The minister is informed of any concerns about individuals by anyone who has concerns and elders show leadership regarding communication about vulnerable members of the parish. A well-established confidential prayer chain is in place when particular concerns are expressed about individuals. The number of funerals carried out by the minister has reduced greatly in recent years, with 10 -12 on average being delivered, most of these being congregation members or those with links with the congregation.

We have a thriving Friendship Group, which meets fortnightly, where older members of our parish meet. A variety of speakers attend and refreshments are served, but the value of the friendships formed and mutual support which arises is a key element of this group. This was demonstrated vividly during Covid lockdowns, where the group formed weekly phone contacts and supported each other during this challenging time.

A monthly men's breakfast is held, again providing a space for friendship and support.

There is an eagerness within the congregation to both learn more about the Bible and to contribute to the life of the church. Book, podcast and other resource suggestions enhance the sermon series allowing individuals to grow in confidence to access the Bible for themselves. The number of people in a small group has doubled over the past year. We work hard to grow inter-generational teams of people serving in ministries, recognising using the gifts God has given them matures their faith.

Missionary partners

We currently provide support, both financial and pastoral for 2 missionary partners working abroad. As they share their experiences of God working in the part of the world that is now their home, we are strengthened and encouraged.



We have sent several people from the congregation to work in mission fields both in the UK and abroad over the years, and we maintain links with many of these people.

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO US?

Making disciples and building the church wherever Christ leads

When a church member observed young people hanging out at our picnic tables during their lunch break she knew God was saying 'here is an opportunity'. That prompt resulted in our weekly hot chocolate club. In the two years since it started the team have noticed an increasing willingness in the young people to chat and that anytime Gospels or Christian books are put out they are immediately taken away. Links with the academy have grown through unplanned conversations with staff, another indication to us that this ministry growth is a work of the Holy Spirit. **Our current question is 'what next?' While we seek God's direction we are working to ensure we are equipped and ready, for example attending youth ministry training courses, and praying that God will send us more workers for the harvest field.**

Build on our connections with young people.

Although this new housing estate is within the parish it sits across a busy road and has little physical connection to the rest of the parish. Children and young people from the area attend the schools in our parish and discussions with school leadership teams are giving us an insight into the needs and challenges of the community. We have taken small steps to start to discover more about this community and began to build relationships. We offered outdoor activities for families during the summer, at Christmas and at Easter. **We are praying for more opportunities and wisdom on how best to demonstrate and tell about the love of God in this new community.**

Develop discipleship strategies for all.

We are exploring the suggestion of 'asynchronous Bible study' and looking to revisit strategies used during the Covid pandemic to help families unable to regularly attend on Sunday mornings (e.g. because of additional needs) connect with each other and grow in spiritual maturity. **This is not about introducing a particular programme but rather about offering variety and responding to seen needs.**



Outreach to the Cloverhill Estate.

Pray

The need to pray and keep praying has been a repeated message during this time of vacancy, and we are keen to explore how best to do this. The elders have begun to meet weekly at 8.30am on a Sunday morning to pray.

Stewardship and finance

St Columba's has always been able to support all its essential activities as well as outreach to the community and beyond; we have always felt God's goodness to us in financial matters, prayerfully seeking God's guidance especially when financial challenges have arisen.

The accounts for the last financial year are attached to this document. We showed a deficit for the year because a new heating system had to be installed in October. Appeals to the congregation have provided a small increase in our income to date this year, preventing the need to make a withdrawal from our investment fund.

We are grateful, but not complacent, about our relatively positive financial situation; we continue to gently and prayerfully remind the congregation that the rising cost of living affects the church in the same way that their personal finances are impacted; we encourage the use of Gift Aid wherever possible. The finance team advises the Kirk Session of how to make best use of our financial resources so that St Columba's can continue to show the love of Jesus to the community and beyond.

Staffing

We employ a part time administrator, who ensures the day-to-day administrative tasks are kept efficiently up to date.

The congregation has previously supported the employment of both youth and children's workers. We would consider revisiting the employment of ministry team members as God leads.

The church building

The church is a relatively modern building, with the sanctuary doubling as the main hall. There is a modern kitchen, a vestry and a meeting room. There are recently renovated toilets. Adjacent to the church there is a portacabin which serves as office space, including a separate room allocated to the minister. There is good car parking with designated disabled and staff spaces. There is a patio to the rear of the church with picnic benches overlooking a grassy area. This provides an outdoor area that we use for activities such as outdoor services, BBQs and holiday club games. The close proximity to Westfield park has provided opportunities for prayer and Bible story trails.

The location of the church building, particularly its proximity to the schools, community centre and park puts us right at the heart of our community.



The manse

The manse is a modern 4-bedroom detached house on a corner site approximately 1 mile from the church. There are 3 public rooms including a purpose built study. It has been well maintained, with all the usual modern facilities and has a large front garden, a private back garden and a garage. It is close to schools, supermarkets and walking paths. Further information can be found in the Manse report and schedule.



FIND OUT MORE:



St Columba's
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

**YOU'VE READ A BIT OF OUR
STORY, WE'D LOVE TO HEAR
YOURS.**

**MIGHT GOD BE CALLING YOU
TO JOIN US?**

**TO FIND OUT MORE/HAVE AN
INITIAL CONVERSATION CONTACT:**

Angela McKInnon (Chair of the Nominating Committee): mckinnona@sky.com
or
Rev Joe Somevi (interim Moderator): JSomevi@churchofscotland.org.uk



**WE ARE PRAYING FOR YOU AS YOU SEEK
GOD'S DIRECTION FOR YOUR FUTURE**



**"THEREFORE GO AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE
NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT"**

