



# St Machar's Ranfurly Church Bridge of Weir Mission Audit 2021

## Contents:

What we have done to gather information	Page 2
What does our church do?	Page 2
What does our church do well?	Page 5
What should our church stop doing?	Page 7
What could our church be doing?	Page 8
Basic information requested	Page 11
Summary	Page 13
Appendix: Community Survey Findings	Page 15

## What we have done to gather information:

- congregational survey (electronic)
- joint community survey (electronic) with Freeland Church
- joint elders meeting focussed on mission with Freeland Church
- congregation mission conversations during church service
- revisit our Future Focus report (2017) and subsequent reviews (2018, 2019)
- visit to Boys Brigade; boys completed the community survey in small groups
- visit to local high school (primary school did not respond to request for meeting)
- survey sent to local councillors and local community council (BoW)
- contact with local GP practice (covering Bridge of Weir and Houston)
- studied census information and older congregational surveys

## What does our church do?

**Weekly worship** is appreciated and deemed of high importance by many who responded to our congregational survey and took part in conversations. Worshipping God, developing and sharing faith were key values. Offering support to one another, as well as those outside the church comes a close third and fourth, when asked what church is for. The installation (summer 2020) and use of livestreaming equipment is frequently mentioned as the most exciting thing that has happened in the past 5 years.



For the past five years **missional reflection and practice** has been at the forefront of our thinking. In 2017 we did **Future Focus** and we took three aims from this: to be more welcoming, more inclusive/all age and more connected to our local community.

Concrete steps taking since then are: **monthly all age service** with children and young people participating; appointing of a **mission convener**; creating a **play zone** in the church for tots; a **Summer Drop-In** (summer

2018 and 2019); **Uniform Xchange** (2019).

We reviewed our Future Focus aims in 2018 and 2019 and other developments were subsequently instigated: **new website**

<https://www.stmacharsranfurlychurch.org.uk/>

greater use of **Facebook**

<https://www.facebook.com/stmacharsranfurly>

and **email newsletter**; more frequent messages in local magazine; **hall upgrade**; two members took part in **worship leader course**.

We produce a **bi-monthly magazine called the Lych Gate** and it has a print run of 225. It goes out to all our members and is also publicly available in the local community centre, and electronically. It covers church news and groups that use our buildings. It is well read and received.

The monthly **Terrace Lunch** was already established but had been growing (pre-Covid) with not just older people but also carers and tots welcomed. It hasn't



restarted as yet due to limitation in our kitchen/Covid precautions.

**The Guild** has had an important role for providing social gathering and spiritual input, meeting fortnightly. It is hoped it can restart in January, but leadership has been depleted because of a few deaths in the past two years. During the Covid restrictions members were kept in touch with by phone and a Christmas gift (a plant) was personally delivered by volunteers to 50 elderly people in the community.



**Our Choir** has restarted having practices during the week under guidance of our new organist/choir director Ian Munro. This is enabling a section of our congregation to meet with others and sing, improving their well-being and our

Sunday worship.

We support the Renfrewshire Food Bank, Salvation Army Toy Appeal and other charities at different times of the year.

Although longer than five years ago, it is worth noting that our congregation was instrumental (with Freeland Church) in preserving the local Post Office and changing it into a small **community centre**, which can be used by groups and is run by volunteers from both churches.

The other thing to note is that many (retired) individual members are or were actively involved in other organisations/groups in our village, such as senior citizens, Brighter Bridge of Weir, BoW Horticultural Society, Rotary, Choral Society, bowling, golf etc. Some work in voluntary capacity for the local hospices and someone runs a charity called Olive Tree Scotland. In this way they participate and give to the life of the community.

It is also fair to say that current members of working age are often under pressure timewise with work, family and other caring responsibilities. Their mission and service is primarily through their daily lives rather than additional activities.

## What does our church do well?

The past years have demonstrated that there is a **greater missional awareness and desire to engage** with local community. We ask ourselves continually what we could do to reach beyond our church walls. There is a great willingness on the part of the kirk session and other members to get behind new initiatives, an openness to change and to put human and financial resources in where needed. Though we sometimes don't know where to start or who to target, there is a **willingness to try** things and see what happens.



We often work with other local churches in mission. Aware of a need to work towards a joint future we have asked Freeland Church kirk session on a few previous occasions to explore this together. In 2018 and 2019 this was not taken up, but we have asked again and

had a joint elders' meeting in October 2021. We talked specifically about what we can do together in mission, serving our village. We already share in school chaplaincy, and some church services and community events. There has also been sharing of ideas and plans between our respective mission conveners for a few years, and more recently in the Local Mission Area Team.

Each year we run a **village wide Christian Aid campaign**, jointly with Freeland and St Mary's Episcopal church. One of our elders coordinates this and despite the pandemic we have increased the giving year on year – 2021 being a record £8719!

Annually a Christmas card with all our respective services (St Machar's, Freeland, St Mary's) goes out to all people in the village.

During the past year and a half we have initiated more ecumenical cooperation: in the summer of 2020 we dreamt up '**Boredom Busting Bags**', which were given out to school children at the start of the holiday and which was supported by the two local CofS congregations, and a local independent church (Hope Hall).



During Advent 2020 our minister initiated and organised the production of an **online Advent calendar** for which three local churches (CofS and St Mary's Episcopal) created video content, which was shared online. This was well received, and everyone enjoyed the collaboration.

During Lent 2021 a joint **online Lent calendar** was produced using photographs and bible verses sent in by church members. This was shared via email list and respective Facebook pages.

For Easter 2021 the **entire gospel of Mark was read out** by church members of St Machar's, Freeland and St Mary's, in outdoor locations, filmed and published to YouTube by our minister.

### 4. Jesus' arrest and trial



Matthew 26:14-16 and 47-68  
Jesus is betrayed by Judas for 30 pieces of silver; taken to the Court of the High Priest; tried on trumped up charges; found guilty and condemned to death.

### Easter Trail



join in walking the Easter Trail

start at St Machar's Ranfurly Church where there are bags for children to collect and use on the trail as well as prayer trail cards for teens and adults

the Easter Trail is a collaboration of  
Freeland Church, St Machar's Ranfurly Church  
and St Mary's Church in Bridge of Weir

image: Surrender by Sieger Kodler

An **Easter Trail** consisting of 8 large boards with art and short description of the passion narrative was set out around the village – again a joint project initiated by us.

We are currently preparing a **Journey through Christmas** to be held on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December, which consists of multiple live scenes set up in our different church buildings for people to come and experience. This time all four local churches are collaborating, which is a first in itself! Our minister is convening the overarching committee with members of the respective churches.



Last but not least: we have just begun a **Junior Choir** in September, which is intended as a community outreach. We currently have 9 children (all but 1 not connected to church!) singing in weekly (free) practice and hoping to expand on this in January when a new term starts. We have an enthusiastic choir director (our organist) who will start doing the RSCM Voice for Life programme with the children. We are inviting the junior choir to sing at our nativity service and hope that we can build relationships with them and their families moving forward.

### **What should our church stop doing?**

We were major contributors to the **West Renfrewshire Youth Trust**, which employed a school worker. This trust has been dissolved earlier this year as it was felt that it was time for a different approach (and the school worker is now training for ministry).

**Junior Church** has effectively stopped, partly due to lack of numbers but also because families indicated that they preferred all age services as a way of integrating into the congregation.

**The Masqueraders** have each year performed a show of songs and skits/short plays raising money for a charitable cause. It is unlikely to restart in its former composition, however we do think there is scope for other types of performances returning.

## What could our church be doing?

### Which groups to target:

In our joint elders meeting there was a divergence of opinion if any group should be especially targeted, however younger and middle age groups are definitely thinner on the ground in our congregation. **Loneliness, social isolation and mental health problems** can occur across the age groups. In the community survey, there was a desire expressed for **community events**, which may reflect a desire for belonging, and perhaps more intergenerational connections. Churches are uniquely placed to encourage **intergenerational relationships** seeing as they are modelled on metaphors such as 'the family'; 'the people' and 'the body' of God. Everyone is welcomed, seen and needed (in theory!).

### Meeting perceived needs vs proclaiming the good news:

As Liam Fraser notes in *Mission in contemporary Scotland* (2021, page 211), we '*must leave behind the fruitless and unbiblical distinction between evangelism and service, accepting that they are two equal parts of God's mission to Scotland*'. And: '*every act of service increases the plausibility of faith, making it easier for our neighbours to believe the astounding claims that Christ makes through his Church.*' Having said that, it remains true that the community's expressed needs don't always match up with what we think we have got to offer, or even that meeting these needs will establish a 'way in' for deeper relationships and faith sharing. It was quite telling how many of the needs and suggestions in the community survey were related to infrastructure and facilities. It was equally telling that a notion persists among church members that having a better and more widely used building would address the need for local mission. Clearly well-equipped places in the right places are important, and they can be a catalyst, but they are not the 'be all and end all' of mission.

What is still lacking, is knowing how to personally communicate and share our faith with people in our community. Are we inadvertently reverting back to church being about the building and wanting it to be central to the social life of the community (as it was in the past...)? Who would we be and what could we offer if we had no building at all?



The other reality is that we need to work with what we've got in terms of human resource and therefore not all good ideas can be worked out! It will be necessary to select carefully what to do and develop and, what to leave or park. Having said all the above, these are some of the ideas, dreams and plans we have for the future:

#### Immediate future/quick wins:

1. We hope to develop and build on the launch of **the Junior Choir**.
2. We intend to have a **Summer Drop In** again this summer (2022) as it provides a need for a place to play and meet during the school holidays. We are also thinking of exploring (again) the idea of a **toddler group** seeing as the council run Cargill Hall is still closed.
3. Put more into the relationships with the **existing youth groups** (Guides and BB) in our buildings, support with leaders.
4. Restart **the Guild and the Terrace Lunch** if possible. If not, host coffee mornings or afternoons for the elderly during 2022.
5. Scope for organising **concerts and using music** as an outreach tool – our new(ish) organist/choir director is enthusiastic and experienced. The local high school is interested in using the churches as venue for performances.
6. There is an opportunity to get involved in helping organise the **Gala Week** as its organising committee is now chaired by a member from Hope Hall who is keen to see other churches more involved. The community survey points out that there is a desire/need for community events among different age groups.
7. **Continue collaboration in mission** with local churches, especially around Christian festivals e.g. Easter.
8. Establish contact with the **new local care home** to see what we can do for them (jointly with Freeland).



### Longer term and/or bigger projects:

1. Try a **Café Church** in a local cafe (preferably jointly with other churches).
2. Launch a **Messy or Muddy Church** (preferably jointly with other churches).
3. Develop regular **digital content** to reach younger demographic on Facebook/YouTube/Instagram/TikTok etc. (preferably jointly with other churches in the area) to share/explain/relate to Christian faith. There is an opportunity in the local high school to collaborate with music, and perhaps ICT departments, to have senior pupils gain skills in production.
4. Identify a local need/project and champion it, resource it etc (eg. for young people space to hang out/skate park/facilities).
5. Combined with other local churches it might be feasible to finance a **part time community/youth/or outreach worker** seeing as we've both previously contributed to WRYT. A clear focus would need to be established first.
6. Real blue sky thinking: build a **purpose built community church** with flexible space that different groups can use, with good parking and easy access!
7. Finally, and related to point 6; **clarity is needed over the long term future of the church(es!)** in Bridge of Weir and their buildings so that we can move forward with more purpose. This question hanging over our congregation makes some folk (though not the majority!) feel it is impossible to do long term mission planning.

## Basic information requested:

### Chaplaincy arrangements

- a. **Bridge of Weir Primary School:** pre-covid there were three annual services that both local CofS ministers are involved in, and which would alternately take place in our buildings. The two local churches also came in to the school annually to deliver the Christmas Unwrapped programme to P6 (formerly Bubblegum and Fluff) and the Easter Code (P7). In 2019 a Uniform Xchange was initiated by our church and run in conjunction with Freeland Church in our local community centre. Uptake was very limited and having done it twice (summer and winter) it has not been repeated in 2020.

Covid has created a huge barrier to engage with the school leadership. A Christmas video was created and sent to the primary school in 2020. Other input was offered but not taken up. At Easter the churches jointly created an Easter Trail and this was publicised to the school – permission was given to put one board up at the school gates.

No response was received at the repeated request to discuss the community survey questions with the school head.

**School chaplaincy is an area both local churches want to develop, but it is difficult** currently due to lack of responsiveness on the part of the head. Covid restrictions are partly but not entirely the reason for this. Rekindling this relationship will need patience and persistence.

- b. **Gryffe High School:** three local ministers constitute the chaplaincy team, there are usually various points of input and engagement surrounding Remembrance, Christmas, Easter and prize giving. In 2018 and 2019 the ministers attended the school lunch club weekly. During 2020 and 2021 we have videoed contributions which have been shown in all classes. A Remembrance Reflection room took place (again) in November 2021. There is considerable openness on the part of the senior management to work together and allow input from the chaplaincy team. **Arguably more could be made of this opportunity**, eg. offering prayer room or discussion groups.

## Sunday School/Youth Fellowship

- c. **Junior Church** – pre-Covid we had a Junior Church – the delivery of which varied from weekly to monthly depending on availability of leaders and also children. The age range of children present varied widely toward the end and so is currently deemed unsustainable. We have had a monthly **all age services** since 2018 to which families are specifically invited and in which young people and children take part. We (both families and elders) feel at present that this is the best way to develop our worship and disciple families. Pre-Covid we had created a play area at the front of the church for families with young tots. It is not back (yet)! There are 4 families with primary school age children who attend all age services, and there are 3 families with teenagers. One teen comes by herself. The teenagers (5) are all on the AV rota since we've started livestreaming and this means they are there once a month, sometimes more often. During the lockdowns we kept in touch with our families through recorded all age services to which they contributed and some Zoom sessions.
- d. **Junior Choir** – we have started a Junior Choir for the community in September 2021. Currently nine children involved (all bar one not connected to church) and we're hoping to expand on this in January during the second term. The choir sing a mix of religious and popular songs and will have their first mini performance in December as well as participate in our Nativity Service. The choir is free. This is enthusiastically led by our organist/choir director Ian Munro who is hoping to offer the RSCM Voice for Life programme in 2022, through which children learn about music and worship and can gain badges and certificates.
- e. **Boys Brigade** - shared with Freeland Church. Junior Section (18 boys) meet in our building, Anchor Boys (9) and Company Section (31) in Freeland. Most leaders are from Freeland Church or not attending church. Finding leaders can be challenging and the Anchor Boys need two new leaders urgently.
- f. **Guides** - two Guide companies meet in our buildings, not a church organisation but each has a church member as their leaders. They do find it hard to find leaders.

- g. **Rainbows** - two groups meet in our buildings, difficulty finding leaders. There is no Brownie group at present due to inability to find leaders.
- h. **Young Farmers** - not a church group but Young Farmers practice a show in our halls during the winter months - it is performed elsewhere.

#### Office Bearers

All posts are currently filled, although some by the same person (eg. safeguarding and session clerk). It can be challenging to find new people to take over. However, there are lots of volunteers who are active and readily available to help with specific projects or tasks. We have a unitary constitution with team conveners. There is **no convener for 'discipleship and learning team'** so de facto the minister does this. This covers young people as well, so this perhaps should receive dedicated focus and finding a separate convener might help keep this as priority area.

#### Paid Staff

We employ three part time staff: a church officer, a cleaner and an organist/choir director.

#### Additional Property

None

### Summary:

We have in this mission audit tried to outline what we do and could be doing as a church engaged in our local community. In a way this was not a new process for us, as we have over the past number of years developed a missional attitude, and ask ourselves these questions regularly and continually in order to inform our plans and activities. They have become quite habitual in fact.

Working and initiating new ideas with other local churches in mission has also been a key feature of our approach in the past few years, and this has been given a boost by the Covid pandemic. In doing so we have all had



opportunities to think beyond our buildings and congregations and it has meant we've been able to share resources and enthusiasm.

In trying to discern what we can do in mission, we have continually sought to focus on what we **do have** in human and other resources, rather than what we don't. This has proved very productive, creative and life giving.

Even in completing this audit, new ideas and opportunities have come to the fore, that we will be exploring and taking forward in the months to come, both as a congregation and with others.

Rev Hanneke Marshall – convener of mission audit steering group

On behalf of the steering group:

Ian Hales (property convener)

Dick Hughes (elder, worship leader)

David Macdonald (elder, CA week coordinator)

Margaret Richardson (elder)

Dennis Taylor (session clerk, administration and communication convener)

Mary Taylor (mission and outreach convener)

## Appendix: Community survey findings

These findings (in a filtered fashion) have fed into the 'what does our church do', 'what could we be doing' sections above in our mission audit.

These questions received very different responses, but we've tried to summarise them or take the most recurrent themes.

### **1. What would you say is the most exciting thing that has happened in our community in the last five years?**

- Brighter Bridge of Weir
- New businesses coming to the village
- Community involvement

### **2. Looking ahead five years- what would you like to see happen here?**

- More community events
- Better transport links
- Improvement to roads/pavements/drainage
- More local sports facilities for young people

### **3. What are the three most pressing needs in our community?**

- More community events and interaction
- Better local facilities/amenities/services/infrastructure
- Issues of isolation and loneliness, poor mental health

### **4. Besides buildings and money, what resources would the community require to realise these?**

- People to participate
- Volunteers to organise and champion
- Local Authority support

### **5. What do you see the churches doing in our community?**

- Organising and prompting community engagement and events

- Providing space for organisations/groups
- Being there, if needed

**6. What would you like to see the churches doing more in our community?**

- Support/lead village projects/groups
- Be seen as central to the community
- Help those in need, eg: collections for the homeless/poor mental health

**7. Would you say that our church buildings and property are easily accessible to all (please indicate which building you are talking about (e.g. Freeland or St Machar's Ranfurly halls and church)).**

- Freeland is more easily accessible but no disabled parking
- Parking can be a problem at St Machar's Ranfurly
- Some consider accessibility is fine at both churches