

REPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND EVANGELISM COMMITTEE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2019

INTRODUCTION

The main role which the Committee seeks to undertake is to help encourage the spiritual nurturing and equipping of all members of our congregations, both in their own personal discipleship and in their engagement with the wider society, in evangelism and in service. In this we are not trying to take away from local congregations as being the primary place where such nurturing and equipping takes place. Rather, we seek to work with local congregations and their ministers, and also with presbyteries, to resource better what is already happening and to foster new learning opportunities. We continue to rejoice in the way that the Lord has brought gifted new ministers and other leaders into the denomination, but we recognise that we must not leave the work of mission and ministry simply to the paid professional. The vital move in our thinking and practice from regarding a congregation as something to be maintained, to understanding it as a source of mission in the community requires the educating and equipping of all members, not just of ministers and leaders. As a committee it is our hope that we will be able to promote increasing numbers of opportunities for resourcing and equipping all members of our congregations. We long to see church members identifying and developing their gifts both for use within their congregations and within their communities.

DUNBLANE EVENT

The annual Dunblane event is one of the key ways in which the committee attempts to provide training and development opportunities across the denomination, and we are always heartened by the numbers that attend, representing about 10% of our total membership. The theme for 2018 was “Even greater things...”, exploring the promise which Jesus gives to his disciples in John 14 that they would do even greater things than they saw Him do. Our plenary speaker, Rev. Alastair Duncan of St. Georges Tron Church of Scotland, was appreciated, as were the variety of workshops. The new addition to the programme last year was the Good News Market Place, opportunities to hear some of the stories of what is going on in some of our own churches, with the vision of inspiring others to try new mission ventures for themselves. Attendance at these sessions varied, and with hindsight we probably included too many, but folk who attended enjoyed them. We will continue with the Good News Market Place at this year’s event, though at a different time to try to encourage greater attendance. The theme for this year’s event, due to take place on August 31st, is “Engaging Communities”, exploring ways in which churches engage with God and with their local communities, and are themselves attractive communities in which the presence of Christ is experienced. The committee is grateful to all those volunteers who help out in the planning and set up, in staffing crèche, children’s and youth programmes, in serving teas and coffees and in other ways behind the scenes.

MISSION SHAPED INTRO

Another learning opportunity which we have continued to offer this year is the Mission Shaped Intro course, produced by the Fresh Expressions movement of the Church of England and the Methodist Church. This is a six-week course designed to help churches begin to think in a new way about how to engage in mission in their communities. Most of the material in terms of PowerPoints and study notes, with supporting video clips, is available for free, and all that is required is to make slight adjustments so that it is relevant to the local situation. A course was run in Carnoustie during the last year, and plans are being made to run a second course in Presbytery of the West. A course scheduled to run in the Presbytery of the East was under-subscribed, possibly due to issues of timing, so it is hoped to run this at a different time in the

future. However, we would also encourage individual congregations or small clusters of congregations to consider organising a course locally, and the Committee will gladly help them in the preparation and running of such a course.

FAITH STORIES AND ELDER TRAINING

In last year's General Assembly report from this committee, reference was made to two resources which were in preparation, one to encourage Christians in talking about their faith, and one to provide training materials for elders.

"Journeys to Life", the material on faith sharing, is now available, and we would encourage churches to consider running this. It combines the use of "home grown" video testimonies with Bible study material and discussion, all designed to help people understand more of what is involved in seeking to share the Gospel and see others come to faith in Christ. The intention is not just that churches will run this as a course, but that those who study the material will continue to meet on a fortnightly or monthly basis to pray for and to support each other in their ongoing witness and evangelism. For those who wish to know more about this, please contact the office or the Convenor of the committee.

As far as elder training material goes, the committee has set up a task group whose remit is to make available various resources on an ongoing basis, with a view to seeing these used in Kirk Sessions. These will include some "home grown" materials, but will also make available material which other churches have already developed. The survey of elders and ministers which was conducted last year identified a number of areas in which elders would value input, and based on that, material will be provided on a rolling basis. Topics to be covered over the next couple of years will include: -

- Pastoral visiting
- Leadership within the congregation
- Prayer
- Leading in worship
- Mission
- Leading where there is no minister

The Committee's intention is that this approach will save us from trying to reinvent the wheel in terms of trying to produce our own customised material when other churches have already done this. It will also enable us to keep material current and responding to expressed needs. We believe the reach of the internet and the convenience of electronic and digital distribution of material make this a much more economical way of providing appropriate and helpful training material.

With regard to both "Journeys to Life" and the elder training material the committee would value feedback from congregations and Kirk sessions who trial the material. And as well as these resources which the committee is making available, we continue to encourage individual congregations to circulate information about other courses, materials and resources which they have found helpful in their own contexts and which they feel could work in other similar settings.

One of the key themes of Paul's letters to churches is that of spiritual gifts, which are for all believers and not just for a particular few (and definitely not just for the minister!). As a committee, our hope and prayer is that across our congregations we will see more and more of our members discovering and developing the gifts which the Holy Spirit has given them, and using them for the glory of God and the extension of his Kingdom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Finally, we acknowledge in particular the key role which Rev. John Fulton has played over many years as Secretary to this committee, not just in producing agendas and minutes, but also in enabling many of our planned events to take place. In particular his contribution to organising the Dunblane Day each year is hugely appreciated. We wish him well in his "retirement". We also want to record our thanks for all the work which Mrs. Helena Jarvis has done and continues to do to enable the committee to function, recognising the extra load which she will now bear, along with Rev. Colin Brown, during the period of transition.

In the name of the Committee

I DAVID MILLER	Convener
ROBERT O OWENS	Vice-convener
COLIN C BROWN	Clerk