



Path of Renewal

Feb 2016

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What is the Path of Renewal Process?

by David Clarkson

The Church of Scotland has, through the Panel on Review and Reform and Ministries Council, introduced this pilot scheme which involves 23 congregations from across Scotland. Essentially, we know that the church is not particularly effective at its core function – making disciples. For decades the main operating model has been attractational: we’re here, and you should come to see what we offer. That model doesn’t really work today and so we need to find another model with which to engage the communities we serve.

Path of Renewal is a programme for churches to think, and work through, how they can be more relevant in society today. It begins by recognizing the missional challenge of a changing culture - understanding that the culture outside the church has changed and is very much more secular than Christian. The church now finds itself on the fringe of society rather than at the centre, and that raises questions about what church should look like when it’s no longer at the heart of the community, or a place people would instinctively turn to for support. We know that sitting back and expecting people to come is no longer a realistic option. Instead, we need to go and move beyond our comfort zones and reshape what we do.

Alan Roxburgh and Scott Boren in the book, 'Introducing the missional church', say that we face a radically new challenge that requires more than minor readjustments. In fact, we need a new imagination for being the church.

Following a rigorous discernment process Monkton and Prestwick North has been chosen as one of the pilot congregations. As part of this process there will be three teaching blocks each year (with two months in the summer and the month of December off).

In the **first year** there will be teaching on missional theology and leadership; principles for managing change - moving from maintenance to mission; and, training and mentoring missional leaders.

In the **second year** the teaching will be on community development - using a partnership approach; spiritual formation, creating a discipleship process; and, creating effective local structures.

Each three-month block will include two or three day teaching events for ministers who will return and share what they have learned locally. Ministers are also required to take at least one day each week to begin the process of reading, thinking, praying and beginning to 'work it out' where they are. Part of that process includes mentoring and coaching which will be available for the ministers as well as for the congregation or leadership. In addition, each pilot congregation



has a choice to make between allocating funds to pay for pastoral or admin support for the Minister, or, later in the process, to appoint someone from within the congregation to take some of this 'new work' forward.

It is very important to stress that this is not about changing everything at once. There is an expectation that each congregation will create a small team to take new developments forward and in many cases this will involve a continuation of things that are already taking place within the life of the congregation. This team is to be committed to developing a missional approach and one of their first tasks will be to begin to understand what that means in their specific context. This team is to be supported, encouraged and resourced by the Kirk session, Presbytery and others in the congregation.

It's not going to be easy but it is something we need to work at together. Members of the team are going to be asked to commit to meeting together every fortnight and to read, pray and prepare between meetings. They will agree that work on the process will be their priority. However, to think that the new team will have sole responsibility

for working out what God has for us in the future is to miss the point. The team are committing to giving priority to the process but all of us are expected to be contributing to it as well. It is not about favouritism – those on the team will be making a significant sacrifice, and anyone who is willing to make that commitment is able to put themselves forward to the Kirk Session for inclusion on the team.

Participation in the process will cost each congregation £1000 per year but the hope has been expressed that Presbyteries will find a way to assist congregations with this cost.

We are delighted to have been chosen to be part of this process and are looking forward to working together to find new and innovative ways of sharing our faith in Jesus in our communities.

Different Congregations

This process involves twenty three congregations across Scotland which are different in so many ways but share some things in common:

- A commitment to Christ & the cause of the Kingdom
- A commitment to his Body, the Church
- An awareness that the shape of what we have and do now is not right – and a commitment to do something about that!

The congregations involved are:

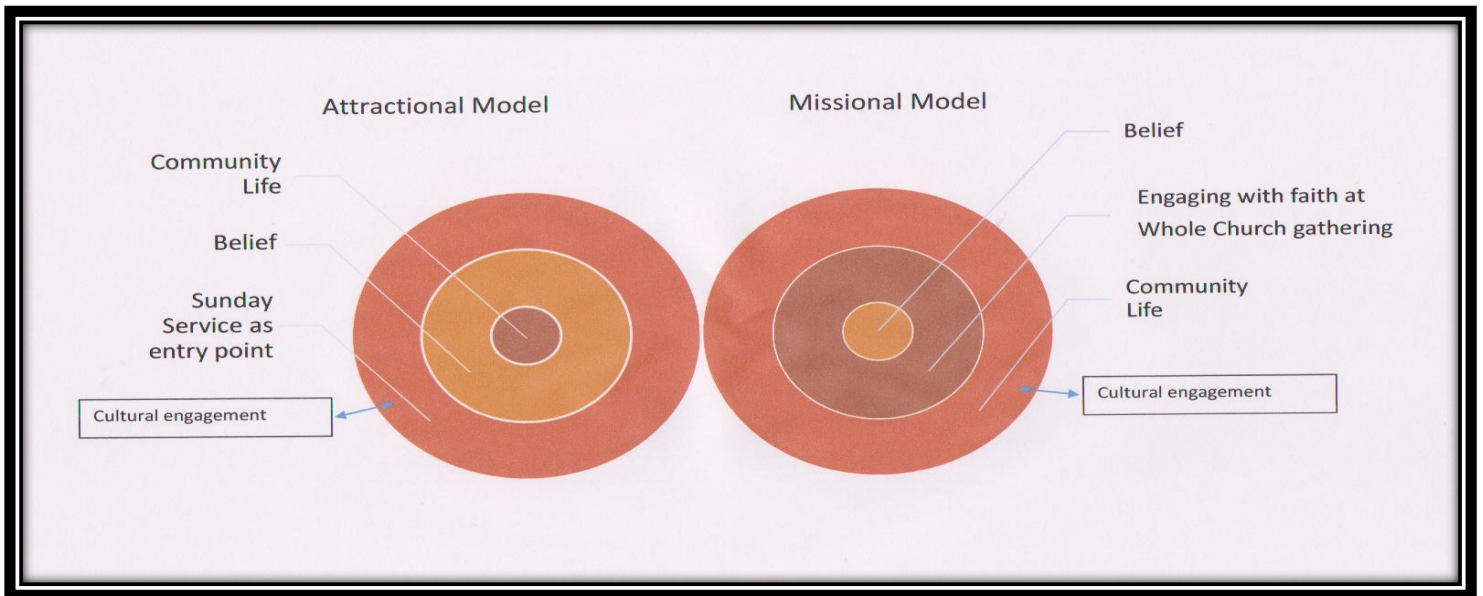
- Tron Kirk
- Pilrig St Paul's
- Longniddry Gladsmuir
- Innerleithen
- Alloa: Ludgate
- Dunfermilne: St Leonard's



- Bishopbriggs: Kenmure
- Bearsden: Killermont
- Camelon
- Balfron
- Auchterarder
- Dumfries: Maxwellton West
- Monkton and Prestwick North
- Stevenston High
- Linwood
- Sherwood Greenlaw
- Hamilton South
- Mid Deeside
- Kintore
- Culloden
- Melness and Tongue
- Shapinsay
- Burra Isles



***The goal of the process:
Churches with members secure in faith and their reliance upon God, being used by God to bring about societal transformation and helping others become disciples of Christ.***



Why did we decide to apply for Path of Renewal?

As a congregation we had tried to be innovative and had introduced new ways of worshipping, as well as a new management structure.

Realising that the traditional Sunday morning service was not effective at reaching people who had no church background was a significant point. What it had been successful in was engaging with people who had decided to 'come back to church' and had been looking for a congregation to call 'home'. We used to have two traditional evening services each month and had also started Messy Church as a way to engage with young people and their families.

Messy Church allowed us to build bridges into the local community and many of those are still growing almost four years later. Numbers attending the evening services began to fall and it was decided to stop them and focus instead on Messy Church along with 'The Gathering'. Both events are from 4-6pm and start with food. Messy Church is an interactive event based on biblical theme or story and includes crafts, games, stories, food and lots of mess! The gathering is more like a very informal service with less mess.

The thing is that although both have enabled us to engage in a new and different way they are still using the 'attractional model' – we have something on and you should come and see what it is. We realised that we needed to start thinking about a new model but we didn't know what that might be. The picture

shows that with the attractional model engagement with the community was through 'services', and that people were expected to believe before they could fully engage in the community life of the congregation. The problem is that if they're not at services opportunities for engagement are limited.

Path of Renewal will help us to explore a missional model where engagement with the faith community is in the wider community where believers live out their faith each day. That engagement leads to involvement in the life of the congregation, and a sense of belonging which, in turn, leads to attending church gatherings and eventually to faith. One problem is that we've never done it that way and we're not really sure how to do it. In fact, we're not even sure that it will be any more successful than any other model.

Our hope is that as we engage in the Path of Renewal process we will learn new things and have to reconsider those things we currently do. We understand that there is a significant challenge in trying to 'do things differently' while keeping the best of what you have but we also know that we can't afford to do nothing.

We are called to make disciples and we're looking for ways to do that which are appropriate for the culture in which we find ourselves. Culture changes but God still says, "Go, and I will be with you." We're excited to find out what he has planned for us as we go.