

Glasgow and Galloway Mission Action Plan



Name of Charge/s Saint Columba's, Largs

Name of Facilitator Revd Liz O'Ryan

MAP Completed June 2012

Strategic intent is growth

Stage 1: Why are we going for Growth?

<p>Review - <i>how would we describe ourselves?</i></p> <p>- <i>where God has been, and is, at work in the community and in church</i></p>	<p>We see ourselves as a generous and welcoming congregation which is proactive in using the good facilities we have for the benefit of both church and community. Our current worship style could be described as 'traditional' and we are open to development and change. We enjoy very close ecumenical relations with the other churches in the town.</p> <p>God has been, and is, at work in our active participation within Largs Churches Together (LCT). The Rector is secretary of LCT and serves on the committee alongside two members of our congregation. LCT offers regular joint acts of worship, throughout the year as well as each day of Holy Week. The Good Friday 'Walk of Witness' through Largs is a powerful reminder to the residents of our common faith and of its place at the very heart of the community. Other well attended ecumenical services we offer include Candlemas and the Liturgy of the Last Supper with the Washing of the Feet, on Maundy Thursday as well as two Taizé-style services per year.</p> <p>God is at work through our shared commitment to the work of Christian Aid. Together with the Rector, three members of the congregation serve on the joint Christian Aid Committee and the congregation plays a full part in the fundraising ventures arranged throughout the year including the Ferry Collections and well supported lunches held in a local Parish Church each Wednesday throughout the season of Lent.</p> <p>Our annual service of the blessing of animal companions takes place in October each year, near St Francis' Day, and encourages all member of the public, including those from the Dog Obedience Club that use our halls, to bring their pets into the church building for a special act of thanksgiving.</p> <p>Local Clergy share in joint chaplaincies at both Primary and Secondary schools as well as regular visits to the Inverclyde and Crosshouse hospitals and the Ardgowan Hospice. The Rector and Worship Leaders from St Columba's play a full part in offering services in local Nursing Homes together with other member churches of Largs Churches Together.</p> <p>We enjoy good relations with the Guides and Brownie groups that regularly meet in our halls and are constantly developing a closer working relationship with the Pre-school that meets five mornings per week in our premises. Both of these groups respond well to our invitation to them to</p>
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Appraise, affirm and celebrate:
with regard to each strand of the strategy, we exhibit the following strengths ...

Learning and Discipleship:

For many years our congregation has provided an extensive staffed library offering a regularly updated stock of books. This is available in the hall each week following the main Sunday service and it is promoted on a regular basis in our monthly magazine.

The Rector is the Convenor of the Diocesan Learning and Discipleship Development Team and is active in publicising diocesan educational and training events. Our Discovery Group meets at various points throughout the year. This group which covers biblical and theological topics meets in the Rectory and is open to anyone.

Prayer and Spirituality:

In addition to the regular services offered by the church the Daily Offices are said publically on most days of the week and publicised on the noticeboards and pew sheets. Members are encouraged to use the Daily Prayer books at home as a basis for their own devotions. The church building is open for prayer from 8.00am – 5.00pm on most days of the week.

The church magazine includes a suggested theme for prayer for each day in the month. Many find it helpful to know all are united in prayer in this way.

Intercessions are offered by members of the congregation at most services and a prayer board is available on which to place petitions. The board also includes the diocesan prayer list, Porvoo prayer list and Mothers' Union monthly 'Prayer Chain'. Much use is made of votive candles during services, as a symbol of prayer.

Members are encouraged to attend the annual 'Away Day' – led by a guest speaker, this provides a valued space for fellowship and reflection. The diocesan Quiet Days are promoted along with Ayrshire's 'Pathways to Prayer' event held each year in Troon. Some of our members attend a local monthly Contemplative meditation group.

The offering of a Taizé-style service twice a year attracts many, including those from other congregations and denominations.

Missional Leadership:

For its size, St Columba's has a strong and influential community presence and 'punches well above its weight'. Members of our congregation are actively involved in many missional activities in the local community, including membership of the board of directors for The Largs Viking Festival; membership of the Joint Christian Aid Committee; representation in the Largs Churches Holiday Club and the Largs Churches Together Committee.

The congregation continues to develop a strong missional leadership ethos; each member being encouraged to play their part in the faith community and the idea that we are 'all in this together'. Being a well-established and non-transient congregation means that there are deep bonds within the fellowship that foster trust and a real sense of caring for one another. A small informal team of church visitors keep in contact with housebound members of the congregation and pass valuable pastoral information to the Rector.



with regard to each strand of the strategy, we exhibit the following strengths ... (continued)

Children and Young People:

Our congregation is blessed with many willing volunteers who are gifted in children's work. Our 'Junior Church' was re-established in recent years and remains small and fluctuating in number. Two of our members are committed to being there each week for any children who attend. The 'Junior Church' is active in providing articles for the monthly church magazine including a prayer composed by one of the children.

Younger members of the congregation play an active part in the Liturgy as members of the choir and the Scottish Guild of Servers.

A Pre-school meets on-site in our hall five mornings per week and relations with this organisation have grown over the past three years. The Rector is invited to teach the children in preparation for both Christmas and Easter and this link has led to parents responding to invitations to special services and events eg. Christingle Service and the annual five-day Children's Summer Mission.

Imaginative Outreach into Community:

Imaginative outreach into the local community is all about sowing seeds consisting of lots of small and positive actions that seek to draw those around us into the community of faith. It is about building up and strengthening good relations with all those around us and all on the fringes of the churches life. We, at St Columba's, have been reaching out in the following imaginative ways:

Great numbers of local people flood into the hall and grounds of St Columba's at each of our Summer Car Boot Sales. As well as offering a valuable source of fund-raising these events forge important relational links with many who would not otherwise visit the church or its environs.

Relations are also being strengthened with the families of the children that attend the Pre-school which meets each weekday in the church hall. Posters and invitation flyers have led many to attend the occasional child-based services and events offered throughout the year.

Our church hall is well used by various community groups. This offers the potential of contact with individuals who may have otherwise remained at a distance from the church's influence.

In response to the Dog Obedience Club that use the church hall each week, an annual service of blessing of animal companions takes place each October. This is widely advertised and is the only service of its kind in the area. The result of this is that many, who would otherwise have no church connection, gladly respond to the invitation and are grateful that the church recognises and celebrates the importance of pets in our daily life. Due to the unique nature of this service a photographer always comes from the local paper and a photo and short article soon appears – all good for reaching the community with the message that all are welcome and we are a people that rejoice in God's good gifts.



with regard to each strand of the strategy, we exhibit the following strengths ... (continued)

The Rector and Church Worship Leaders make contact with staff and residents of local nursing homes by offering services in these institutions each month. In addition the Rector is part of an ecumenical chaplaincy team at both Kelburn Primary School and Largs Academy. This contact raises awareness of the church within the community and establishes positive relations with staff and pupils that, again, carry potential for development.

The fact that we are able to leave the church open to the public each day, and advertise this on our two street noticeboards, offers the opportunity for anyone to come into the building on their own terms and just as they are. We believe that the discovering of this sacred place of peace and prayer can be used by God to lead individuals into the life of faith and service. Familiarity with the church building, as well as making use of the information and welcome leaflets, can lead to breaking down barriers and may make it easier for seekers to risk meeting the community at worship.

Welcome, Integration, Numerical Growth:

Renewed signs now make our small church building much more visible and our services and events information is now easily accessible from the surrounding streets. We also place welcome and information cards in local hotels and guesthouses.

We have developed our own church website and its address is printed on all publications. An advert promoting church events and services is placed in the local paper each week. As well as keeping locals up-to-date with what is going on, this raises the profile of the church in the wider community and lets those new to the town know of our existence and our welcome.

At the services each Sunday a team are on duty at the door to welcome all who come to worship. Large-print copies of the liturgy are available and a sound/ induction-loop system is in place.

A carpeted play space with play-bags and children's books is available at the back of church. This allows families with young children to remain for the service, yet let their child enjoy freedom and fun.

Refreshments are offered in the church hall following the 11.00am Sunday service and all are warmly invited to come to this and share in fellowship together.

Welcome leaflets are available, as are 'welcome packs' for specific services and events. Slips are available that encourage newcomers to inform the Rector that they would appreciate being visited.



Assess:

with regard to each strand of the strategy, we suffer from the following weaknesses....

Learning and Discipleship:

Although various opportunities are offered for learning and development of discipleship, at both parish and diocesan level, there is often very poor uptake. This may be for a variety of reasons including family and work commitments, the limitations of an ageing congregation and the timings/venues of events.

There is always the fear that all our learning becomes too narrow and 'churchy'. It may be that there is more need for stronger links to be made between 'faith and life' in order that learning and discipleship can be understood to be clearly relevant to the majority of the congregation instead of simply an interest of the few.

Prayer and Spirituality:

Again, lack of involvement is a weakness with regard to prayer and spirituality. Few sign-up for the annual Congregational Away Day. It is also very difficult to gather the community for an act of worship out-with the usual Sunday morning setting. Even important parts of the Christian year often fail to attract a congregation of reasonable numbers eg. Saints Days, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday etc.

In the feed-back from the congregational Growth Strategy Day some also felt that the services, as currently offered, gave little time for silence or extemporary prayer.

Missional Leadership:

Though enjoying the reputation of being part of the ecumenical life of the Church, very few of the congregation actually attend Largs Churches Together services, regardless of the venue.

It may well be that the timing of the services are not contiguous to family life.

The geographical spread of our membership (from Skelmorlie in the north to West Kilbride in the south) coupled with an ageing demographic may partly explain the lack of involvement in this area.

Children and Young People:

The Sunday morning gathering of 'Junior Church' competes with many other alternatives. Extra-curricular sporting and social activities can be a factor of why we continue to struggle with low and inconsistent numbers of children and young people in the life of St Columba's.

The inflexible venue and timing of 'Junior Church' leaves little room for manoeuvre.

There is definitely a lack of connectedness between 'Junior Church' and the services of the church. The style of music and hymns are a vivid reflection of this and can be off-putting to young people.



<p><i>with regard to each strand of the strategy, we suffer from the following weaknesses... (continued)</i></p>	<p>Imaginative Outreach into Community: The strength of a close and well-established community of faith carries with it the possibility of the church becoming inward-looking and self-serving. Even if this is far from the truth, it can be perceived as such and so make it difficult for a new comer to feel they can ever really break into that community and be part of it.</p> <p>The narrow demographic mix of the congregation (currently mainly post-retiral and middle-class) again, could be a barrier to new people of a differing age and background. They may feel that they could never see themselves as part of St Columba's.</p> <p>For busy young families Sunday is often used as a family day with no space for church. Perhaps the church is failing to use opportunities to be where people actually are. Instead, perhaps we simply wish they became like us.</p> <p>Although the hall is used by a variety of community groups contact with the congregation remains, for the most part, minimal. The hall is still unused for some periods during the week and could be more fully offered to those around us.</p> <p>Welcome, Integration, Numerical Growth: Despite providing a 'Welcome Team' at all main services we are still capable of limiting the welcome offered, often without realising it. The welcome offered in church is not always followed through to refreshments in the hall and beyond.</p> <p>Due to the limited demographic of the congregation there is currently little scope for the development of 'peer groups' that could otherwise have made natural friendships and encouraged new comers to return and put down roots within the church.</p>
<p>Investigate: <i>with regard to each strand of the strategy, we detect the following opportunities...</i></p>	<p>Learning and Discipleship: Growing in discipleship goes hand in hand with fellowship. Building on the current practice of offering a 'Discovery Group' there is scope for the creation of alternative types of study/prayer groups. These might take on a less 'threatening' and more attractive aspect if combined with the opportunity of eating and socialising together as part of the experience. Some examples of this might be a regular 'Wine & Theology' evening or the opportunity to discuss the Sermon Over Soup on a Sunday. This type of study group would be the ideal forum for the informal sharing of our faith journeys and building one another up in the faith. This type of sharing would naturally lead on to a more natural understanding of Christian discipleship in everyday life.</p>



with regard to each strand of the strategy, we detect the following opportunities... (continued)

Prayer and Spirituality:

Prayer and spirituality are at the very core of all that we seek to achieve in and for God. To take this seriously, and build upon it, it is important that an accurate picture of where we are at present is gained. A questionnaire of church life at St Columba's should open the way for a review of the styles of worship that could potentially be offered here.

The current practice of an annual 'Away Day' for the congregation has the potential of going one step further and offering a longer, more structured guided retreat for those who would like to experience this valuable part of our Christian heritage and practise.

Many growing congregations have small groups as part of their work and worship. Small informal prayer groups or faith sharing groups could be formed, giving regular times and space for relationships to deepen and prayer and spirituality to be explored.

Missional Leadership:

The current informal team of church visitors that make regular contact with some of our housebound members could be developed. This team could participate in the lay pastoral training course available from the Diocese and members of it could be officially licensed by the Bishop for this important task.

Children and Young People:

The many children's events and services currently offered could be more tightly followed-up. The details gained from the Summer Mission and occasional services could lead on to involve a personal visit from the Rector or children's workers. Invitation fliers for new events could be posted out to individuals and families.

Alternatives to the Sunday 'Junior Church' could be developed in order to make contact between the faith community and young families as easy as possible. The church must go out to where people are already and create attractive opportunities that fit into busy lives. These might include informal expressions of church that include the space for building relationships over a meal.

Our current worship format could adapt in many ways in order to become much more accessible to children and young people. The current separation between 'Junior Church' and the Liturgy could begin to be overcome by creating an opportunity for the children to be part of the whole service on a regular basis.

Relations with the Pre-school that meets in our premises could be developed as they are encouraged to participate in the life of the church. This could be done in small and simple ways e.g. inviting them to create an Easter Garden and have them come to decorate the Church Christmas Tree.

The Rector could build on his role as school chaplain to liaise with teachers and offer the church as a place of learning/class projects.



<p><i>with regard to each strand of the strategy, we detect the following opportunities... (continued)</i></p>	<p>Imaginative Outreach into Communities: Although the church building is open to the public on most days of the week, this could be better publicised and developed. An advertising board could be placed out on the steps to attract attention and encourage visitors in. The welcome leaflets could be updated and paddles produced for use by visitors. These would greatly enhance the visitor's experience and inform them of who the community are that use this beautiful and historic building.</p> <p>The church could be promoted as an appropriate and ideal place in which to be married.</p> <p>The extensive grounds we have could be used to offer opportunities for those in the wider community to come to us. Ideas for this might include the creation of a Largs Labyrinth, which could be made of paving in the front lawn and used by many groups, including children and young people, ecumenical guests and holiday makers; and the erection of a flag pole in the front lawn, to highlight saints days, liturgical feast days and increase 'kerb appeal'.</p> <p>Car parking is problematic in Largs and our car park remains unused most of the week. Visitors could be encouraged to use our parking facilities and notices request that they leave a token amount in the 'honesty box' within the open church.</p> <p>Welcome and Integration: The church building is a good example of Victorian gothic-revival architecture. Although this is attractive to see it may not meet the standards of comfort expected today, our future options may include, replacing the pews with modern seating or making the pews more comfortable.</p> <p>The Welcome Teams we have could be trained in how to offer an effective and consistent welcome to all who come to worship. This could include the realisation that welcome goes beyond the door into the service, but out into the hall and the world.</p> <p>The congregation could be encouraged to invite friends and family into church. This might happen throughout the year and make the most of special occasions such as our Patronal Festival, Harvest Festival, Christmas, Easter etc.</p> <p>The church website could be reviewed and updated on a weekly basis to reflect the many services and events offered by St Columba's.</p>
<p>Communicate: <i>How has everything so far been communicated?</i></p>	<p>A series of six sermons, one on each of the strands of the Diocesan Growth Strategy, has been given. Questionnaires relating to the sermons have been completed by members of the congregation. Results from these were fully discussed in a Growth Strategy congregational meeting led by our facilitator.</p> <p>Our annual Vestry Away Day used the Growth Strategy as its theme and was ably led by our facilitator.</p> <p>In addition to this there are leaflets available and notices in the weekly pew-sheets and monthly magazine on the progress of the Community Audit Group and Mission Action Planning Group.</p>



Stage 2: What will our Growth Strategy involve?

<p>God's call to growth.</p> <p><i>Having thought about the challenges for each strand, discern your overall strategic response.</i></p> <p><i>(i) what is your vision of the way of life God is calling you to?</i></p> <p><i>(ii) what values do you need to have for this growth to happen?</i></p>	<p>Our vision is that of being a truly missional community. This is at the centre of all that we are, here at St Columba's. Our life together is based completely in Christ who came to us that we might share in the very life and love of God. Our vision springs from that profound truth. Christ has brought us into relationship with God and calls us to grow together and to build on the community relations we have developed. We are called to be a place of nurture in the faith, encouraging and developing a sense of belonging, offering a place of sanctuary, healing and peace.</p> <p>The values required, for this vision to take root and grow, are those of complete commitment to and ownership of what has already been expressed in this Mission Action Plan. They involve a shift from the concept of a 'strategy' to that of our own calling as a 'community of growth'. These values lead naturally to the taking of responsibility, the embracing of change, risk-taking and being outward-looking.</p>
<p>Our prioritised response</p> <p><i>To work towards responding to that call, and expressing our values, we will focus upon the following strand (or strands) of the strategy because...</i></p>	<p>Imaginative outreach into Communities We will use this year seeking to better understand the community we are called to serve. This will be achieved through the implementation of a Community Audit which will allow us to more fully explore and put into place mechanisms to meet questions regarding the wider community.</p> <p>Children and Young People The main response to our call will be in the area of children and young families. We will seek to develop and nurture the young shoots of faith already here and provide a fertile environment that will encourage children, young people and their families to be part of our life and faith here at St Columba's.</p>
<p>Goals</p> <p><i>We will address the following by means of...</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Completing a Community Audit 2. Introducing a monthly 'All age' Eucharist 3. Establishing Messy Church and running this on a regular basis 4. Opening the Sacrament of Holy Communion to all Church members regardless of age 5. Initiating an ecumenical 'Largs Churches Together' youth gathering



Stage 3: How will we encourage Growth?

Plans, processes, people and resources

Remember: **SMART** – plans must be **S**pecific and documented,

You must be able to **M**easure the difference you are making; so change or re-visit the Goals if necessary.

Your proposals must be **A**chievable; do not try to meet impossible goals.

Actions must be able to be **R**esourced, by people, buildings, and funding.

To enable proper review, your actions must be **T**ime bounded.

	Actions: small achievable steps which gradually build into something bigger	Who	When
1	<p>Community Audit: Collecting information on the local area to use as a basis for future Mission Action Planning. Keeping the congregation up-to-date by displays of data on noticeboards and via magazine articles. Offering a full report of findings at the Congregational AGM.</p> <p>Measurement of growth Growth of our understanding of the community would be measured by a feedback form given by the C.A.G. at the A.G.M. To make the display of the community Audit interactive for comments, clarification and questions. The degree of feedback would reveal the level of interest and comprehensibility.</p>	Ray Young, Alice MacDonald, Fiona Reader, Stuart Robertson	To be completed by the Church AGM 21/10/12
2	<p>Introduction of an ‘all age’ Eucharist: A monthly ‘all age’ Eucharist would be introduced. This would be less formal in style than is currently the case and would include an address in place of the sermon. Children would remain in church for the whole of the liturgy and be offered much more scope for involvement in it. This form of Eucharist is not a ‘children’s service’ and so would take place whether or not children or young people were in attendance.</p> <p>We believe that all the baptised are full members of the community of faith. This includes our children and young people. In response to this fact, and in order to allow the development of the role of children and young people in the liturgy, other changes would be introduced. Among these would be the implementation of an annual church music plan involving the introduction of a much wider repertoire of music and hymns which recognise the presence of children in the services and are sensitive to them. Eucharistic Prayer 5 would be used occasionally and, due to its short length and simplicity of language, be more accessible to a younger</p>	Rector, Musical Director, Junior Church members, Ray Young, Linda Young	Beginning 19/08/12



	<p>congregation. Children would be encouraged to offer the welcome each month.</p> <p>Each week, rather than have the children go straight to the hall and only appear at the Peace, we would have them in church from the beginning. They would only retire into the hall for the teaching part of the service.</p> <p>Measurement of growth Number of children and new families who attend and general attendance of congregation. These numbers are recorded the church register of services.</p>		
3	<p>Establishing Messy Church and running this on a regular basis: An imaginative and creative way for us to reach young families in the area would be to offer an informal meeting of 'Church' at a more suitable time during the week. 'Messy Church' would be offered on a weekday afternoon following school on a monthly basis. This is an initiative that welcomes children, as long as they are accompanied by an adult, to an hour and a half of story, crafts, worship and fellowship over a simple shared meal. In regularly offering this we would build up relations with those currently on the fringes of the congregation's life and draw them from where they are into the life of faith.</p> <p>Measurement of growth Numbers of young families attending. Consistency of family attendance. Feedback of enjoyment, both informal and in the longer term in a more formal format from attendees</p>	Rector, Hilary Moran, Mairie Gusterson, Nessie Rankin, Linda Young, Alison Anderson	Beginning October 2012
4	<p>Opening the Sacrament of Holy Communion to all church members regardless of age: Baptised children are full members of the community of faith. In recognition of this fact the Sacrament of Holy Communion would be offered to all, regardless of age, provided that they and their parent/guardians are happy for this to be the case. The Rector would provide some initial instruction and children would still, in time, publically affirm their faith before the Bishop and congregation at Confirmation.</p> <p>As part of the process of fully integrating children and young people into the life and work of the Church, the name 'Junior Church' will need to be replaced by another name that reflects this truth.</p> <p>Measurement of growth Numerical growth and consistence of attendance.</p>	Rector, Junior Church members, and Congregation	August 2012



5	<p>Initiating a ‘Largs Churches Together’ youth gathering: We would seek to establish an ecumenical faith-encouraging peer group for young Christians that fully reflect the good relationships already enjoyed between the churches in the town. This group would build one another up in the faith as they grow together and share in acts of worship, friendship and charitable projects.</p> <p>Measurement of growth Number of youth attending.</p>	Rector, ‘Largs Churches Together’ Committee, local youth groups	September 2012
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Stage 4 Outputs: keeping the MAP alive

*We will endeavour to **address these plans in action, ongoing consultation and prayer**, and will regularly **affirm and celebrate God's gifts and blessings and our responses**, culminating in our annual MAP review. We will communicate widely what we have attempted, so that others may learn from our experience.*

We have already identified the "resilience" required to keep the MAP alive. The following factors will not discourage us in our task:

Fear of failure, anecdotal negativity, the fact that some of these initiatives have been unsuccessful before. The fact that growth means change and has a cost.

Date of MAP Review with Bishop/Dean

MAP signed by

Rector*Gordon Fyfe*.....Date...10 June 2012...

Secretary of the Vestry*Chris Evans*.....Date...10 June 2012...

(5 copies are signed, being for the cleric, the Vestry, Bishop Gregor, the Convenor of the Regional Council and the Facilitator. One is posted on the Growth Strategy web site for public viewing.)

I will keep in contact with the charge throughout this coming year as they work for growth

Facilitator*Elizabeth O'Ryan*.....Date...10 June 2012...

Agreed frequency of ongoing Facilitator contact ...As required.....

*Spirit of our Loving God,
in your mercy and compassion
inspire, encourage and empower us
to live and work together
as a Diocese,
to allow your mission for us
to take flesh
through Jesus Christ
our Living and Eternal Lord. Amen*

