



## **Abbotshall Church, Kirkcaldy**

### **History**

Around the middle of the seventeenth century it was decided that a new church was needed to ease the pressure on the Old Kirk in Kirkcaldy, and thus the parish of Abbotshall was created. The land was on the Abbotshall Estate which was owned at the time by Sir Andrew Ramsay, and became a Burgh of Barony.

The first church is said to have been built in 1679, although there is a reused date stone from 1674 on the present church. There is no record of the appearance of the church before it was rebuilt in 1788, which is the church which stands today. In 1876 the parish was absorbed into the Burgh of Kirkcaldy. There is a graveyard containing some good examples of historic gravestones. Examples include one reusing a marriage lintel of 1720 on the western wall and several cast iron headstones. A small stone mort house sits on the eastern boundary of the graveyard which now has a modern concrete tile roof. In 1881 halls were built on the southern boundary of the churchyard and restored and extended in the 1950s.

The Kirk of Abbotshall was the second Church of Scotland Parish Church in Kirkcaldy, and continues to be a focus of worship and social gatherings. In 1964 Raith Parish Church united with Abbotshall, and the current Abbotshall Manse in Milton Road, was the original Raith Manse. The Church was completely re-arranged and re-furbished in 1975. Abbotshall Kirk celebrated 650 years of worship in 2000.

Recently Abbotshall Church Yard has been subject to some major very complicated periods of work being carried out by Fife Council and this has led to a certain level of disruption to the worshipping congregation, however the Minister and all who like to worship in Abbotshall, have to be commended for their patience and understanding as these works still proceed, now over the length of time that they were first proposed to be.

Situated to the west side of Kirkcaldy Abbotshall Parish Church is easily viewable and accessible for people living around the Beveridge Park, Raith Estate, Strathallan Drive areas. The housing is filled with a large majority of owner-occupiers and a small percentage of private rented accommodation. With the Church Buildings and facilities including a Sanctuary, separate halls, one comprising a stage, kitchen and toilets, the Church is used and appreciated by both members of the church and community, who both consistently throughout the week and weekend use the Abbotshall Buildings.

### **Worship**

At Abbotshall there are regularly between 60-120 members at worship on a Sunday. The worship is led by the minister, for most of the year, sometimes students in training also lead worship. Bible readings are led by these same people. The visiting team recognising the many talents and gifts that exist within the whole Church family, encourage the desire of the minister to have more people involved in worship and suggest that in the light of this, a rota for Bible reading may be

considered in order that elders and others can also have an opportunity to share in the leading of worship in this way.

The team was encouraged to note that weekly services are taped for people who are unable to attend Church and also that some services are added to the Church web-site. The visiting team acknowledge that to have services available in such innovative ways was really good.

Following our visits to the Young Church the team would wish to acknowledge and commend the efforts of Bill Page and the leaders of the Young Church at Abbotshall who show great enthusiasm and commitment in preparation of good material and craft activities, which all help to nourish the faith of the children who are in their care each week.

The new children's play area that has been created in the sanctuary is also acknowledged as a lovely space, well complimented with books and toys, table and chairs, soft cushions and pastel colours. All add to make this space a welcome place for all very young people.

Worship in Abbotshall includes the use of CH4 and NIV Pew Bibles and the music is led by an excellent choir and organist. The singing regularly of an introit and the contribution of the organist all adds to make a welcoming contribution to worship in the Church.

Abbotshall works closely with the other Church of Scotland congregations in the centre of Kirkcaldy and services are held in those other Churches. It has been the practice that during the summer that two services of worship have been held one at 9.00am and the other at 11.00am. However the team learnt that this arrangement led to two smaller gatherings and a divided congregation. This year, after much discussion the Kirk Session has decided to experiment with one service at the earlier time of 10.00am during June and August and then in July to join with their neighbours for united services which shall begin at 11.00am. The visiting team in respect of this news commends the minister and office bearers at Abbotshall in the way it seeks to provide opportunities for the congregation to worship at different times and in different places.

### **Christian Education**

As mentioned previously Abbotshall is privileged to have dedicated leaders who care for the Christian Education of all people. During our meetings and visits to the young church and the Sunday worship services, it became apparent through our conversations that Abbotshall would wish to increase this aspect of Church life. It was also good to hear that thoughts were moving towards the formation of 'Messy Church' a project that includes a time for young people and older people to share in faith and fellowship, out with the 'regular' time for worship. This now being included on the 3 year plan, confirms that the Minister and Kirk Session do show great responsibility to the area of Christian Education. In addition to this with Lent Bible Studies being offered the team would urge the Minister and Kirk Session to continue in their efforts to build in this area by aiming to establish a more regular Bible Study Group.

## **Safeguarding**

The checklist questions regarding Safeguarding as listed in Form SG11 (Safeguarding Service -- Schedule for Local Church Review) were discussed with Michael Baxendine the Safeguarding Coordinator for Abbotshall Church. From information gathered, it is considered that the Church's Safeguarding policies and procedures are being implemented.

The Property Convenor as Safety Officer arranges health and safety audits. It is recommended that these are made in liaison with the Safeguarding Coordinator with regard to potential risks to children and vulnerable adults at risk. From discussion regarding such risks, including security of access (and egress) for the halls, keeping a register of attendees, safety of equipment, safety of electrical sockets etc, fire safety information/records and safe storage of hazardous materials/equipment it was noted that these are given attention during regular auditing by assigned office bearers.

## **Mission**

'All are welcome' is the mission statement at Abbotshall and after several visits to the Church and the groups that use the Church Halls, the team would confirm that all are indeed welcome in this Church. Abbotshall is a congregation that comes from all areas of the town of Kirkcaldy and many of these same people are involved in the Church and community. Within the Parish the Reverend Rosie Frew is heavily involved in school chaplaincy work, with the care homes and street pastors. Abbotshall works closely with the congregations of Bennoch, Linktown and St. Bryce and are to be commended for this supportive partnership that has been formed and continues to be built upon. Abbotshall is also very supportive of KART's youth worker, Chris Beattie who works in schools with Reverend Rosie Frew and with other Churches in the Kirkcaldy Area.

The Church buildings are well used and maintained to a high standard. The team appreciated the efforts of the Property Convenor who is obviously diligent in his duties, which include dealing all aspects of the use of the Church and Church buildings. In this area of Kirkcaldy where there are no other buildings close by to be hired, there is a need for the buildings to be used by the community each day. This is confirmed by the large community of people who use the halls at this time for a large range of different activities including fellowship groups, coffee mornings, Scout and Guide Association meetings, Royal Scottish Country Dance Society and several other group meetings.

The members of the Church and those who use the halls are encouraged to support the wider work of the Church, both in Scotland and in the world, and it was heartening to note that Abbotshall is a Fairtrade church and in addition to this that the Reverend Rosie Frew intends this summer to visit Peru to increase her understanding of the plight of those who benefit from the use of Fairtrade. It is hoped that this visit which will be a new experience for the minister shall then be used by her to educate further the people who she comes to meet, both in the Church and in the community educating them about the importance of adopting Fairtrade.

Abbotshall Parish Church at this time already displays a concern for all people and the team were pleased to notice several posters displayed around the inside of the buildings and on the wall in the wooden cabinet outside the hall, acknowledging the ongoing support of Jenny Featherstone in Zambia, the Foodbank and the support of Crossreach and Blythswood Care among others. These poster type displays of forthcoming events and life at Abbotshall and the Church of Scotland in general, will be a helpful resource to all people who are interested in Church life. The Church has also to be commended for the thoughtful way it has strived to make everyone in the Church aware of what happens at Presbytery, as the Presbytery Precipis is circulated to them or when edited highlights of the meetings appear in the Church Newsletter.

## **Pastoral Care**

Pastoral care as considered in this local Church review in 2015, seems to have developed well over the last 7 years and continues to develop in a way that is very much appreciated by those who are cared for and also those who administer the care. It was interesting to note that all elders have undergone the Safeguarding training for Kirk Session and that members of the Pastoral Care Team have attended a number and wide variety of training days that have been offered by the Presbytery and other local churches.

The Pastoral Care Group's work is to be commended in the way they respond to needs as they are made aware of them. Pastoral Care is delivered in a wide variety of ways e.g. some people receive flowers or Prayer Shawls and receive cards if they are going through difficult times. Cards are also sent to people when they are celebrating special times in their lives. Alongside the sending of cards and visits Abbotshall Church offers an opportunity for Pastoral Care to develop during the time of the weekly fellowship after the service of worship and also at a monthly fellowship group that meets on the last Thursday of the month in the afternoon in the Church Halls. There is a small Prayer Group consisting of the minister and two or three other people, this is an area that could be developed. The Kirk Session have many ideas held in their mind about how development of the Prayer Life of the Church could move forward and have included this on their 3 year plan.

## **Congregational Life**

The membership of Abbotshall Parish Church is aging and falling. However the gender balance is good approximately 50% Male and 50% Female. The Minister and Kirk Session are not ignoring in any way however the importance of encouraging people into the life of the Church. Two elders are appointed to visit one group each from the long list who use the Church Halls each week. This visiting allows opportunity for communication to take place and confirms the mission statement that 'All are welcome' at Abbotshall.

Nevertheless there is still a feeling among the office bearers that to welcome more people into the congregational life in Abbotshall would be something that everyone would like to see. The Choir would like more members, the Young Church would like to see more families involved, the Pastoral Care Group also would also wish to recruit and train more volunteers. However as a visiting team we commend Abbotshall in the areas of Congregational Life which has seen development –The

Thursday Fellowship Group which fills a gap following the disbanding of the Guild some time ago, and now has attracted people back into the Church Halls for fellowship and has been successfully doing this for some 15 months now. The Craft Group which meets on Wednesday mornings throughout the year, provides fellowship to those who gather chat and take time to create beautiful gifts for young and old alike. It is these same people who create the Prayer Shawls that are blessed and passed on to people in the Church and community. The efforts of all who knit, crochet and sew bring healing, comfort and happiness to those who receive them. The team acknowledges their efforts and wish them every blessing as they continue on this good work.

In addition to the people aforementioned, the visiting team would wish to commend the Social Committee who work very hard organising monthly coffee mornings and occasional social events throughout the years. The efforts of everyone on this committee to encourage attendance and to create a welcoming place for all who attend, is acknowledged with thanksgiving. The diligent duty of the Church Treasurer who with wisdom is able throughout the year to use the funds from these events to support the ongoing work of the Church at home and abroad is also to be commended

### **Use and development of Office-Bearers**

The use and development of Office-Bearers in Abbotshall is something that could be described in one word as 'Good'. However, this would not give a full understanding of the full and compact support that office-bearers and younger people receive as they proceed to grow in faith and serve the Church in several different ways. New elders receive information and training before they offer themselves for ordination. The Session Clerk and Depute Session Clerk attend the annual Session Clerks conferences as organised by the Mission and Discipleship Council and the Presbytery. All Office-Bearers receive and are kept up to date with Safeguarding news. The visiting team also heard and noticed for themselves, that children who once attended the Young Church are now taking on more of a leadership role in the Church, by helping anyway they can, this is all very positive.

Being a gathered congregation it was commented that it is more difficult for the people of Abbotshall to build relationships within the congregation. However, this was not the finding of the visiting team who noticed strong fellowship among the many people who were willing to attend the events offered to them, i.e. the monthly coffee morning, or the time set aside for fellowship after the Sunday Service, the team found that these are welcoming times.

The visiting team would wish to encourage the Office-Bearers to continue to build on what is already established in respect of this opportunity for table fellowship. The visiting team would also commend the editors of the Newsletter, website and Facebook who each in their own individual way help to keep members and non-members aware of what is happening at Abbotshall Parish Church.

### **Finance**

Abbotshall is blessed with very many hard working individuals who give of their time and gifts to the service of the Church. During our visits it became apparent that everyone has worked really hard this year and commenting on the congregations finances it had been previously stated that Abbotshall would have a shortfall to contemplate. Nevertheless, through the efforts of everyone and the guidance of the treasurer it should be possible not only to reduce the shortfall that was expected but to eliminate this. The Church has gone through a successful Stewardship season, however in a similar way to many Churches that receive less income due to a decrease in membership, Abbotshall while making full use of Gift Aid and GASDS has made every effort to reduce the shortfall in their offerings and have to be commended for this.

## **Fabric**

Considering if the buildings, including the Manse, Church and Halls are kept adequately and maintained the response is 'Yes' they are. The Church and Halls are subject to something the visiting team felt quite unique and that is they are walked around each week to note changes in condition and any minor maintenance issues are noted.

In a similar way to other Churches regular formal inspections of the properties are carried out and a report is given to the management group and the Board of Trustees. The manse, which is the minister's family home is maintained regularly and in conjunction with the manse family is inspected by the property convenor, who later completes a schedule which describes the manse condition. Any necessary repairs that arise from the report or indeed at any other time throughout the year are dealt with at a time which has been agreed following full consultation with the minister.

Abbotshall have a fully costed 5 year plan for the maintenance of the Church Properties. The plan details the items that require addressing annually or at an alternative frequency. Costs of this maintenance can become high. However, the office-bearers are aware of this situation and are to be commended that every effort is being made by them to ensure finances are raised for specific projects on a case by case basis.

## **Ministry Support**

At Abbotshall there is no formal admin support, nevertheless support is offered in several ways which have to be commended. Each week one of the elders produces the weekly service/intimation sheet. Another small team puts together the newsletter and keeps the web-site up to date. All Clerks and Convenors are able to produce their own minutes and alongside this assistance to the recording of Church Services etc, the Kirk Session display that they are totally supportive of one another and also their Minister.

On the Reverend Rosie Frew's 10th Anniversary as minister the Board and Session marked this special time of their ministers induction by presenting her with a Susan McGill pottery dish and some gifts from Christian Aid's "Present Aid". This kind gesture and show of thoughtfulness confirms what has been continually mentioned

in this report that Abbotshall is indeed a 'Welcoming Church'. The visiting team commend the Reverend Rosie Frew for all the hard work she does at Abbotshall and also the work of the Session Clerk Morag Michael and depute Session Clerk Morna Scriven and the office bearers who were open and friendly and made our task of completing a Local Church Review report a pleasurable one.

The Local Church Review Team offer their sincere thanks to all who took part in the Review and commend the work of the congregation and their 3 year Plan.

#### Commendations :-

- Worship –all age, all inclusive forms of worship including the use of multi media
- Christian education – regular Lent Bible Studies with the vision to develop more
- Mission – ongoing support of Jenny Featherstone in Zambia, Kart, Crossreach, Foodbank and Blythwood Care
- Pastoral Care – completion of training of Pastoral Care Group and elders, development of Prayer Shawl Ministry and Craft Group
- Congregational Life – formation of weekly Fellowship Group
- Finance – efforts of everyone at Abbotshall to address potential shortfalls
- Fabric – excellent maintenance of buildings
- Ministry – Minister Rev R Frew for her hard work and the office-bearers for their support and encouragement.

Team member who will encourage and support the congregation for three years:

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Congregational contact :

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## **Three Year Plan - Abbotshall Parish Church**

(1) Aim: To develop 'Messy Church'.

Target: Start exploring subject of introducing 'Messy Church' with Kirk Session, Minister, other volunteers, people who are involved with schools within next year and beginning September/October 2015.

Time Frame: It is envisaged that the 'Messy Church' start date shall be September 2016.

(2) Aim: To develop the Prayer Life of the Church.

Target: To encourage the prayer promoter, elders and minister to consider lots of new ways to develop the prayer life of the Church. Thoughts of an Easter Labyrinth were mentioned.

Time Frame: 2015-2018

(3) Aim: To look at new ways of continuing support for KART - financially, prayerfully and practically.

Target: All members of the Church as they strive to contribute to retiring offerings, coffee mornings, etc which raise funds for Kart. It is also anticipated that Chris Beattie should be invited along to share news of his work annually.

Time Frame: 2015-2018

(4) Aim: To develop use and understanding of Fairtrade.

Target: Congregation and Board members to build on their on-going commitment to Fairtrade. Following Reverend Rosie Frew's visit to Peru in the summer it is hoped that newly gained information shall increase understanding about Fairtrade and how best to support it.

Time Frame: 2015-2018