

COWAL KIRK MISSION PLAN 2021

In September 2018, as part of the coming together of the five congregations of South East Cowal and Central Cowal a group of representative elders, including representatives from eXp, were tasked with forming a Mission Plan for the new united congregation. At the time, there was no indication of how the congregations would unite, the ministry team or the buildings available for use and thus an overarching view of the needs of the parish were considered.

Each church brought to the table their current activities (both within their own congregations and community outreach) and a list of perceived priorities from their respective Kirk Sessions. Parish profiles of each of the church were produced looking at population age groups, economic activity, health and well being and religious affiliation.

From this very initial research it became clear that there were three key areas that kept coming to the fore. Thus in order to continue God's work within our community we would need to address the following:

Lack of connection with the church from within the community

Lack of connection with the youth in society

Support the elderly and vulnerable including health, welfare, mental health and poverty

Two years later as we come together as one united congregation as THE COWAL KIRK we re-visit our Mission Plan to see if there have been any material changes and whether our focus needs to look at other areas.

The Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic has probably made our Mission Plan even more relevant than ever before. The 3 areas identified within our Mission Plan are all inter-connected and multi-dimensional.

Communities coming together to help look after the vulnerable and support the shielding, much of it involving members from all the churches, shows that there is a definite will for community spirit to come back to what it was many years ago.

The youth have experienced unprecedented times where they have been separated from school friends and teacher interaction and have lost out on so many life events - from nursery graduation services to Leaver's Dances and up to College and University graduations. There is no doubt that the toll on some young people's mental health has been immense.

The elderly, who often suffer loneliness and the vulnerable who rely on interaction to give them the support they need have been separated from these support mechanisms for many months - even from something as simple as family visits. Foodbanks have seen a huge increase in people requiring the service.

THE WAY FORWARD

At an early stage it was acknowledged that the delivery of our Mission Plan was a huge undertaking and would need collaboration with many different agencies such as the NHS, Social Work, Schools, Presbytery, Argyll & Bute Council and the community as a whole. Collaborative working is already in place with all faith denominations locally and that can be cemented further and expanded.

However, now that we are formed into one united congregation we have to make a start and it was agreed that an 'Action Plan' should be drawn up and we look at short (6m - 9m), medium (1-2 yrs) and longer term goals and slowly start to implement them as we come out of these unprecedented times.

Our Mission Plan is a "live" document; open for review on a regular basis and will evolve as we build up the necessary relationships to see 'What is the need', 'Why is it needed' and 'What can we do'