

## Arbroath: Old and Abbey Parish Church (Church of Scotland)

### Background

The Old & Abbey Parish Church is a 1990 union of the Old Parish Church and the Abbey Parish Church. It is one of five Church of Scotland congregations in the town of Arbroath. Our parish is approximately 6,000 people in size. Our church membership is approximately 580 and leans heavily towards an older age group. That said there are plenty of young people around involved in different ministries. In general our ministry is a mix of old and new. For example, while Sunday worship could be described as more traditional in nature, it includes a wide variety of elements, trying to ensure there is something for everyone. Members are never quite sure what they will get from one Sunday to the next! We are a church family and like any family we try to be accepting of each other's preferences.



The Kirk Session, made up of elected members of the congregation, oversees all organisations and gives vision and direction to our ministry. Given declining numbers of young people in our church and the increasing secularisation of society, the Kirk Session has made a commitment to placing children's and family ministry at the centre of all we do for at least the next five years. We believe there is huge potential within both our congregation and parish for touching young lives with the transforming power of the gospel. To help us further this commitment, in May 2010 the Kirk Session approved a Vision Statement and a Mission Statement as follows:



### **Vision Statement for Children and Family Ministry**

Our vision is to provide a safe and welcoming environment, that is attractive to children and their families, within which their faith in Jesus Christ is nurtured. We promise to value children as uniquely created in God's image and to encourage them to participate fully in the ministry of this church.

### **Mission Statement for Children and Family Ministry**

We intend to:

- nurture children's faith through age-appropriate worship, education and mission;
- identify and affirm children's gifts and encourage them to use them in the church's ministry;
- enable all church members to understand how children's faith is best nurtured and the environment that needs to be created in order for this to happen;
- share the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with as wide a circle of children as possible.

## Worship

Sunday worship takes place each week at 11.00a.m. (crèche provided). Bi-monthly we have a "Mixed Bag" worship, planned by a small group of children and families (with the minister) for children and families. What they come up with truly is a mixed bag!

Mid-week worship takes place each week on Wednesdays at 7.00p.m. This is a half hour informal, reflective Service in our Small Hall led by the minister or one of a team of worship leaders.

During the summer, Sunday worship moves into the New Hall, a move which might be considered for other types of Services.

We usually set up a Labyrinth in either Advent or Lent for members to journey through personally.

Joint Services are held approximately three times a year with our neighbouring Church of Scotland congregation.



## Church Organisations and Activities

The following organisations or activities are an active part of our church life (approximate numbers involved in brackets):



- Sunday School (weekly, 18 – we must change the name!)
- Youth group (weekly, 18, 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> Year, mostly un-churched)
- Holiday Club (annually, 60-70)
- Saturday Club (bi-monthly, 6-40 – a new venture)
- Boys Brigade (weekly, 12)
- Girls Brigade (weekly, 15)
- Small Group Ministry (monthly, 35)
- Bowling Club (seasonally, 15)
- Book Club (monthly, 5)
- Guild (seasonally, 35-40)
- Work groups/committees (Stewardship, Mission, Property, Worship and Education, Eco-group and Multi-media – 35)
- Tuesday coffee morning (30)
- Playgroup (close connection with church but not formally a church organization – 30)
- Church BBQ (annually, 50)

## Mission and Outreach

**Parish** – The minister conducts funerals and weddings for those who live in our parish who have no other church connection. The minister is Chaplain to one primary school, a link that could be developed further. Financial assistance is given from time to time to those coming to the church with emergency needs.

**Locally** – Members of the church have been involved in the setting up and running of Starter Packs (packs of house-hold goods given to the homeless or others moving into their first tenancy), the Furniture Recycling Project (donations of furniture restored and sold for small amounts to those struggling financially) and, to a lesser extent, the Angus Credit Union. A Food

Parcel Service is run in conjunction with our neighbouring churches (provides emergency food to those in crisis or transition). Members of the congregation donate food, household goods, furniture and money regularly. For the last two years we have had a church stall at the town's annual Seafest. We are an **Eco-congregation**. As part of our eco-agenda we have adopted a stretch of beach on the south side of Arbroath which we commit to clean quarterly.

**Internationally** – We support and promote the work of Christian Aid, both their development work overseas and their campaigning in the U.K. We support and promote the work of the Vine Trust in Peru – their medical and dental work as well as their work with street children. We have hosted the African Children's Choir three times and a number of members sponsor children. Every year we are involved in the Blythswood Shoe Box Christmas Appeal. We have sent three teams to Africa (Uganda, Zambia and S. Africa) with Habitat for Humanity to build homes as part of Habitat's aim to eliminate poverty housing. We are currently in the process of setting up a link with an overseas congregation as part of the Church of Scotland's Twinning scheme. We are a **Fairtrade congregation**. Within the church we have made a commitment to using Fairtrade products where possible. We also actively promote Fairtrade through regular stalls and Fairtrade Fortnight, encouraging members to make the link between their buying power and those who produce the products they buy.



### The Future

The above information represents what we are currently doing. The future, however, lies wide open before us. We are continually trying to discern God's direction for our church and to grow as Christ's faithful disciples. Who knows what might lie before us. Our future lies in God's hands, which is both the exciting and scary part!



### The Town of Arbroath

Situated on the east coast of Scotland approximately 16 miles north of the city of Dundee, Arbroath is a town of approximately 25,000 people. Its red sandstone cliffs (along the top of which is a beautiful coastal walk) were the source for the stone for many of the old buildings in town, including the historic Arbroath Abbey. The town used to be a hive for fishing, mills, tourism and light engineering, but in the last 50 years has had to diversify. Many people work within the town, but nowadays, many people travel to Dundee or elsewhere for work.

The town has various nurseries, six primary schools, two secondary schools, Angus college, leisure facilities, a swimming pool, two theatres, three medical practices, churches representing nine denominations or groups, numerous community clubs and activities, a sandy beach, a rocky beach, a Royal Marine base and, of course, some great fish shops selling the famous Arbroath Smokies! In others words, there is lots going on in Arbroath. However, there is even more in Dundee, an easy 20 minute drive away.