

The Old Kirk and Muirhouse Parish Church

The Old Kirk and Muirhouse Parish Church formally united at our Service of Union on Sunday 8th June 2014; the Union of 2 local congregations – **Muirhouse St. Andrews and The Old Kirk of Edinburgh**.

The Old Kirk of Edinburgh originated from the Church where St. Giles stands now. Before the Reformation there were many chapels and several services held at the same time within the Church. The Nave came to be known as the 'Old Kirk' and the chancel as the 'New Kirk'.

John Knox became the minister of Edinburgh in the Reformation of 1559 and was joined by 3 other colleagues ministering to large crowds of worshippers, and separate services began to be held in the 'Old Kirk' and 'New Kirk'. Soon that wasn't enough, and the Church was divided up. The Old Kirk continued to worship in the building until 1820 where major alterations to St. Giles began. In 1869 St. Giles was restored into a single church. The Old Kirk was removed to Blackfriars Street. In 1882 a church was built for the Old Kirk at the south west corner of St. John's Street and it was allocated a parish west from the church to South Gray's Close, between the High Street and the Cowgate.

On 3rd January 1941 the Old Kirk was transported to Crewe Toll (where the Shell garage now stands) and given the parish of West Pilton. In May 1950 the foundation stone was laid at the site of 24 Pennywell Road, and the Church was officially opened on 25th November 1951. On 7th September 1952 the parish was divided with the Crewe Toll hall becoming the new charge extension of Drylaw. The Manse (attached to the Church) was built in 1953. New halls were built in 1972. The Church was a hall church with a roller shutter which closed off the sanctuary when worship was not held, allowing many activities to be held in the hall space. Communion was celebrated fortnightly introduced by the Rev Duncan Allan Easton (Minister from 1941 to 1947). He wished to make the Lord's Supper the central act of public worship each week but compromised with Communion on the 1st and 3rd Sundays until "other parishes fell into line"!

The Old Kirk sacramental vessels (a silver ewer and basin) which had been made in 1602/3, probably not for church use, and bought in 1728 for baptismal use, are in the Royal Museum of Scotland. The bell, cast in 1693, came from Ormiston. The cups used at communion were made early in the seventeenth century and reshaped in in the eighteen, the date 1751 is stamped onto the cups.

From 1641 to 2013 The Old Kirk of Edinburgh was served by 34 Ministers, including a father and son (James Macknight 1778-1800) and Thomas Macknight 1810-1836). The Rev. Tony Maclean-Foreman demitted in September 2013 following the decision to unite both congregations.

The Union of the two parishes followed 2 years of discussion between the two Kirk Sessions and with the Business Committee and Deployment of Resource Committee of Edinburgh Presbytery. As the 3 churches in our area (Muirhouse St. Andrews, The Old Kirk of Edinburgh and Drylaw Church) had a good relationship, it was suggestion that we should look at including Drylaw Parish Church in our discussions of Union/Linkage, but this was not taken forward. The Basis of Union decreed that The Old Kirk of Edinburgh Church and Manse at Pennywell Road be sold with the united congregation worshipping at the former Muirhouse St. Andrews Church on Pennywell Gardens and Manse at Silverknowes Road. The Church was sold in 2015 with the Manse being sold in 2016. The proceeds of both placed into the Consolidated Fabric Fund on behalf of the united congregation.

Muirhouse St. Andrews parish church (apologies for errors, all non-Fabric documentation is in Registry House)

Muirhouse parish church was constituted in June 1961, as a translation of approximately half of the congregation of South College Street church. The then church is still standing, a University building at

the end of College Street, the rest of the street including church halls was demolished in the early 1960's along with much else locally, hence the translation to EH4. The rest of the congregation became an enlarged Kirk O'Field parish. The College Street communion plate came down to Muirhouse, but though historical* being pewter was condemned and not to be used. (*the historical element comes from an earlier incarnation of College Street church as a 'Kirk of the Relief', in 1766). It has little commercial value.

The congregation met in the now demolished Silverknowes Primary school from June 1961 till summer of 1965 when the building was opened. The manse was bought at preferential rate from Mactaggart & Mickel who were building the Silverknowes scheme, the terms took a lot of untangling a few years ago, and now is settled on as being 'owned' by the General Trustees, though Mactaggart & Mickel get 50% of any resale price.

Ministers: (dates are approx.)

- Rev. Thoms Webster: 1961 – 1975;
- Rev. Stanley Hood: 1975 – 1980;
- Rev. Fred Shewan: 1980 – 2005.

During the 1990's the Kirk Sessions of OK, MhStA & Drylaw used to meet to share ideas, plan common services (Easter & Advent) and other activities. It was here that the first understanding was developed that a day would come when OK & MhStA would unite. To this end, once Mr Shewan retired slightly early on medical grounds, MhStA was declared a continuing vacancy. This was a formal declaration of a decision by the Central Properties in Church offices that the building should be maintained on a 'wind and watertight' basis: with hindsight MhStA should have asked for the implications of this to be spelled out a little more clearly.

From 2005 MhStA. had a series of Interim Ministries under different names, with meetings with the Interim Ministry committee: Brenda Robson (OLM), Rev. Russell McLarty, Rev. John Cook, Rev. Linda Dunbar, culminating in Deacon Anne Lyall leading us through the Union. At one point The General Trustees undertook a formal 'Options Appraisal' of the 2 sets of church buildings though no final decision was made. However, after the financial crash the financial value of the land of both sites was zero, which made any redevelopment based on selling the other site out of the question at that point: it has only been in last couple of years that this has changed. The 2 Kirk Sessions had done their own joint Options Appraisal around that time, which felt that the buildings were equally difficult, however the central position of the Old Kirk site tipped the balance. Hence we were slightly surprised when the General Trustees decided on keeping the Muirhouse site.

Since start of New Charge 'The Old Kirk and Muirhouse' united on Sunday 8th June 2014

The first minister of the new charge was Rev. Steve Ashley-Emery, inducted 16th August 2016, who demitted on 21st December 2019 for a Call to Royal Navy Chaplaincy. In 2018 the new charge was given 2 part-time workers (Youth & Parish development), permanent contracts, as outlined in the existing Presbytery Plan. Our Minister re-negotiated the hours of the Youth and Parish Development Workers to enable us to hire a Project Developer Worker on a 2-year contract (commenced November 2018) to focus on our building redevelopment aspirations and assisting with day-to-day fabric issues.

It would be fair to say that for the first 18 months of Steve's Ministry, a large percentage of his time was taken up with discussions regarding the legal question surrounding our Manse (Steve was not permitted to move into Manse until the legal question was resolved and the Manse refurbished), refurbishment aspirations and employment of our MDS staff and contracted Project Development Worker.

The Manse legal question was resolved in September 2017 with an entry being placed in our insurance Policy Schedule 'Interest Clause – The Manse 35 Silverknowes Road. The interest of Mactaggart & Mickel is noted, with effect 22nd September 2017, in the building of the Manse, 35 Silverknowes Road, Edinburgh EH4 5LL as heritable creditors'.

As has been documented in the Muirhouse St. Andrews section above, prior to the Union, our understanding that as a 'Church Extension' all property matters, including repair and maintenance were administered by Central Properties in the Church Offices. It was very apparent from the start of the Union that the Church and Halls and the Manse were in an extremely poor state of repair and condition with little evidence of a Fabric Programme and Budget for regular maintenance. It is clear, that the 'wind and watertight' decision has not served the buildings well and has forced the necessary spend below. From the outset the United Congregation has grappled with buildings already over 50 years old which should have not been the case and very unfair as it detracted from forging new relationships, learning to be The Old Kirk and Muirhouse, our ministry and our mission.

One piece of work that the Central Properties organised as part of the handover to the United Congregation was for asbestos to be removed from the boiler house and new boilers installed, this was completed at the end of October 2014. Indeed, we were unable to call a Minister until we had a firm proposal for the refurbishment of the Manse, which we were unable to undertake until January 2018 due to the legal question of the Manse being resolved as above.

We have demonstrated excellent stewardship of our funds. Fabric spend has been on priority areas only and keeping all our buildings wind and watertight. Phase 1 was created, improving health and safety, fire safety and security of our building.

From 8th June 2014 to 31st December 2020 £132,878 has been spent on fabric for the Manse and Church as follows:-

- Manse (including refurbishment project) - £62,011.
- Church and Halls (including Phase 1) - £70,867.

The majority of the funds were drawn down the funds which are held by the General Trustees on our behalf in the Consolidated Fabric Fund. The balance in the Consolidated Fabric Fund at 31st December 2020 was £359,880.

We earn interest from the Consolidated Fabric Fund which we draw down, offsetting expenditure on fabric, heat and light, insurance, etc. The totals we have drawn down are:-

- 2019 - £14,735
- 2020 - £7,330, there is a balance of £5,907 in the Revenue Account that we can still draw down

The major refurbishment of the Manse began in January 2018, once the legal question had been resolved. This was essential work as we could not call our Minister without a Manse being available and the current condition of the Silverknowes Manse meant that the Minister could not move in on his appointment to the Charge. An Interim Agreement was reached with Ministries Council and Presbytery that our Minister would be based in his own home with one room (study) being furnished by the Congregation and rental of £1,200 paid each month, this rental being paid from 16th August 2014 to May 2018. The refurbishment was signed off as complete in May 2018, enabling our Minister and his wife to move in from June 2018. The refurbishment consisted of replacing the kitchen and bathroom, all floor coverings, painting, and redecorating, replacing cracked windows and roof repair. Since the refurbishment project, we have installed electricity to the Manse garage, replaced the back door, installed extra security lighting and a modern alarm system which can be

monitored and activated/deactivated remotely. The total costs of refurbishment, additional works and day-to-day fabric works to date for the Manse is £62,011.

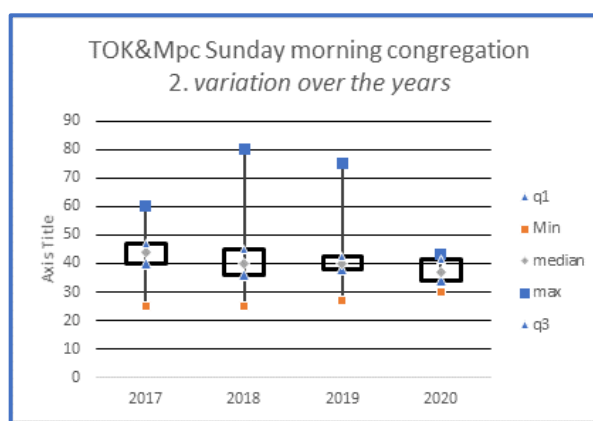
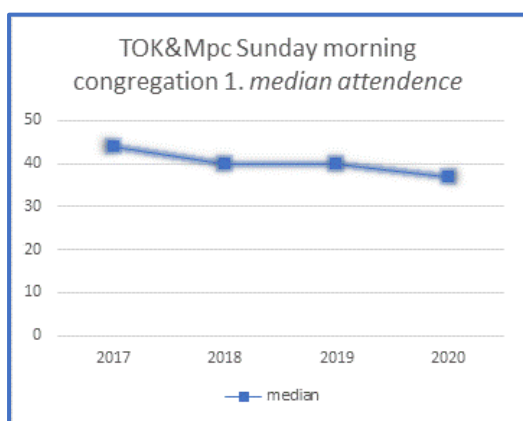
Following on from the Manse project, we were then able to concentrate on the Church buildings (from the Union in 2014, priority was given to day-to-day fabric issues to ensure the building was wind and watertight). Phase 1 of the redevelopment was the replacement of the front entrance. In consultation with CARTA, General Trustees, Edinburgh Presbytery and The City of Edinburgh Council, we received approval to replace the front entrance with like-for-like timber (we had hoped for upvc, however, the Council would not approve this change of material. Work on the front entrance began in September 2019 and was signed off as complete in January 2020. A parallel health and safety and building security project (including tackling vandalism), was discussed and agreed with Brian Auld, Safe Buildings Consultant, General Trustees and input from our local Police Scotland Crime Prevention Team. This project included the redesign of the fire doors, CCTV installation, fire door installed in the Church Sanctuary, security lighting, replacing broken fencing and clearing of unwanted items within the Church and our grounds.

Phase 2 plans are actively being developed now, concentrating on the sanctuary.

Phase 3 plans will concentrate on the redevelopment of the halls.

Our thoughts on recouping some of our investment is that we continued to reclaim VAT paid through the 'Listed Places of Worship Scheme'. Other income generating options are attracting hall lets/letting office space/festival and music opportunities, café income (would need to be discussed further considering the Architects presentations in terms of soup/sandwiches, 2 or 3 course meals etc). Another option is the letting of the Manse which would generate income for the Church, not only to ensure the maintenance and upkeep of the Manse but could also be used for Fabric projects in the Church. 'Adapt and Thrive' funding from the Scottish Government will be applied for engaging support and advice in forecasting, cashflow, future planning, etc.

Attendance Figures from 2017



Attendance figures taken from our Non-Gift Aid cash claim records, of a fairly accurate number of adults attending. We only started collecting this data in 2017.

Attendance figures pre-COVID-19 lockdown have been 40 adults and 10 children and teenagers, who also attend Sunday Funday and our new Youth Group 'Ignite'. Further details are documented in the Performance and Activities Section of our 2019 Accounts.

Physical assets in the community: both West Pilton and Muirhouse have had major demolition and active redevelopment over last 10-12 years: a mix of 'For Sale', mid-market rent and housing association buildings of more than a thousand houses/flats. Part of the redevelopment is the creation of a 'Town Centre', named after a now deceased local community activist, as a physical focus for the area.

Community resources in the community: The Old Kirk and Muirhouse parish church is one of the largest non-Council landholders in the area. Recently North Edinburgh Arts (a major local cultural asset) has gained land through Community Transfer, and is a major player in a newly emerging strategic grouping of community groups called North Edinburgh Action Group (including ourselves, NEA, Muirhouse Housing Association, Fresh Start, Pilton Community Health Project, 'Community Renewal' (a community organisation sponsored to the Health Trust). This was formed with a view to creating a group that does things to improve the area without Council funding.