

Newsletter No 3 March 2013

Hi, it's been a long time since our last Newsletter (February 2011) but a lot has happened since then but the three biggest things are:-

1. The congregation voted by a 70% majority to progress the church plans to planning approval stage.
2. The Property Review Team stood down and the Development Team was formed with mostly different people to carry the project forward.
3. Our architects, Kennedy Fitzgerald, have submitted a planning application to the DOE Planning Department in February.

The members of the Development Team are:-

Robin Kirkpatrick (Chairman)	Lyle Creighton (Clerk of Session)
Harry McFadden (Treasurer)	Matt Herbison (Committee Chairman)
Irene McMahan	Lindsey Thornton
Alastair Crowhurst	Jonny Alexander

John Orme

If you have any ideas, suggestions or opinions etc please feel free to talk to any of the Team members, we want to hear from everyone!

Hopefully you will have seen some plans of the proposed church on the big screen over the past two Sundays and that there will be an **Information Evening in the church on Wednesday 17th April**. There will be lots of information to share including a talk by some people from other churches. Topics to be covered are:-

- Ø Details of programme and finance
- Ø Details on the proposed plans and the planning application
- Ø Fundraising
- Ø Our plans on the world wide web
- Ø Congregational awareness

A very important part of the Teams work is to learn as much as possible from other similar church building projects and this is being very successfully by Irene and Lindsey. They have even recruited a sub Team with Greer Ferguson and Lesley Kirkpatrick. They have taken the time to visit the new buildings at East Belfast Mission and Orangefield Presbyterian, a visit to Willowfield Presbyterian will take place soon. They have been amazed and greatly encouraged by what they have seen and heard. The remainder of this Newsletter is part of what they have discovered. Come along to the Information Evening and hear the whole story of what God can and is doing.

East Belfast Mission is an amazing project: vibrant worshipping congregation, café, hostel for the homeless, partnership with local communities and child care facilities and in 2012 they won the UK Best Social Enterprise Award from Social Economy Networks! And it was all started by a homeless drunk....

In 1975 every Saturday night a homeless alcoholic took refuge on the steps of the East Belfast Mission hall. It was warm and dry. Every Sunday morning the church warden came to open up the doors and had to awaken the stowaway and move him along to make way for the worshippers. Moving a homeless man from the church steps did not sit easy with the wardens' conscience and in time the congregation found creative ways to accommodate the homeless man and others like him; that was 21 years ago. Today they employ 90 staff and bridge the gap with a multitude of activities between those who know Christ and those who have not yet been introduced.

We do not envisage undertaking anything quite as ambitious as East Belfast Mission, but then neither did they in 1975!

Orangefield Presbyterian a church in a situation remarkably similar to our own; they had an ageing building that did not comply with either fire or disability regulations had a damp problem and a listed façade. It was going to cost £800,000 to deal with these issues and they would still be left with an aging building inadequate for their needs. Their congregation wrestled with this decision as we have. In due course they decided to demolish and rebuild something which would enable them to fulfil their vision of reaching out to the surrounding community and accommodate a growing congregation.

What have we learned from our visits so far?

- The building must serve the purpose of the congregation: there must be a vision and a good understanding of why we are where we are and what God has called us to do there.
- Each of these projects took a long time (7 years for Orangefield and 21 years for EBM) and was costly.
- Some members in both these congregations left because of the decision to spend so much money on buildings and that during the building project all organisations suffered a drop in numbers.
- However both congregations have increased significantly and the average age in both congregations has dropped.
- When a congregation believe in the vision they have, there is no end to the creative ways of raising funds.

Come along to the Information Evening on the 17th April and hear the full story.

Your House and Your Kingdom shall endure forever before me.....