

The Penicuik Conversations: an update, May 2021

between St Mungo's, the North Kirk, South & Howgate and Glencorse

Background

- The ministers* and session clerks from the four church of Scotland churches that relate to the Penicuik area have begun exploring together what closer working could look like. (**for Glencorse, the interim moderator*)
- This type of conversation is happening across Scotland as the Kirk regroups and looks to the future for the sake of mission. Declining numbers, dwindling finance and costly buildings mean that the Church is badly in need of reorganisation and revitalisation.
- The Presbytery of Lothian is asking churches in towns to move to town-wide ministry. It has proposed a formal coming together of certain churches for Penicuik.
- The task is to work out how to move forward together from where churches are both formally in terms of unions but also informally in terms of new mission projects.
- There have, over the years, been shared projects across the churches, but there is now the recognition that such shared mission and ministry should not simply be seen as an addition to the life and witness of the individual church but as integral to the future of church in Penicuik.

In order to take an informed approach, the group have shared stories from elsewhere in Scotland where churches have faced similar challenges and have successfully joined forces.

To better understand one another's community and to appreciate what is already going on in that church, a succinct summary of the mission and ministry of each church is being collated and agreed.

Progress towards joint working has already been made.

- **Kirk in Penicuik (KIP)** is the name given to a new association of local Church of Scotland churches (currently St Mungo's, North Kirk and South & Howgate). This was set up to facilitate mission and conversation across the Penicuik churches. At present KIP is expressed through a Facebook page (and soon through a website).
- **Joint KIP services have been happening monthly**, using the framework of Holy Habits and aiming to fuel missional discipleship. A monthly joint study group has been offered related to the theme.
- **Current shared Mission projects already identified or that are emerging**
 - Try Praying
 - Participation with Food, Facts, Friends
 - Alpha
 - Messy Church
 - Holiday Clubs
 - Christian Aid
 - Foodstore@PNK
 - Forest Church
 - Renew26
 - New Housing
- **Shared Prayer** There is a demonstrable commitment to pray together: monthly PCT (Penicuik Churches Together) and Thursday morning prayer meetings (based out of a shared concern for new housing).

Ongoing work

Buildings Presbytery have asked that in every locality there be greater clarity about buildings. In due course, there would be an agreed principal church building for future major investment. Current church buildings would remain in use in the meantime. At present, the group are also exploring the pros and cons of locating land and starting afresh against renovating an existing church building, to help clarify our options. After this, criteria could be drawn up and agreed as to what is required for a church centre for Penicuik.

It is hoped that the proceeds from the sale of Howgate and Penicuik South halls and manse (at least £600K) are already in the pot for any future development in buildings and, if allowed, ministry teams.

Covenant The group have examined joint working between other churches and one potential plan would be a local Penicuik covenant. This would be signed by each congregation and would commit everyone in our churches, and especially those in leadership, to working together. It is important that Kirk Sessions and congregations be involved. Any draft covenant needs to be seen to evolve, with input from all concerned.

Procedure and next steps

Kirk Sessions Representatives from each church will report regularly to their local Kirk Session.

Presbytery Involvement In June, Presbytery leaders will arrange to meet with church representatives. They will examine progress made and will look to help take the work further forward.

Local Gathering After the summer, there will be a joint gathering for elders from all four churches to explore and encourage further co-operation in mission and ministry.