

## **Bowden and Melrose: Interim Review**

Mr Grahame Henderson and Rev Calum Macdougall met with the minister and Kirk Session on Monday 1 February 2016. Upwards of 50 elders were present. Discussion lasted just over an hour and focused on Future Focus with particular reference to issues raised at the Parish Review.

At the time of the visit the congregation had recently learned of Rev Alistair Bennett's forthcoming translation to Bermuda. Alistair's ministry had been a distinguished one over the last thirty years or so and the congregations (Melrose prior to the union and Bowden and Melrose since the union) had responded very positively to him. He would be greatly missed but it is recognised that a new ministry will present new challenges and opportunities.

### **Worship:**

The monthly 10am Family Service in Melrose Church Hall continues and is well supported on a regular basis. The plan for an ecumenical approach to work with primary school age children on Friday afternoons was followed through but initial hopes were not realised and the initiative has been dropped. The ecumenical Friday evening youth club is continuing however and is going well although the ecumenical monthly Messy Church is struggling.

### **Pastoral Care and Outreach:**

The Pastoral Care Team continues to function effectively with systematic as well as informal visiting of elderly, housebound, sick and bereaved members and parishioners. In addition the team organises a weekly coffee morning in Priorwood Court residential home. The group also takes a monthly service in St John's Care Home and there is a monthly lunch club in Melrose Church. There is also a monthly coffee morning in Bowden.

Members of Bowden and Melrose are involved in almost every group and organisation in the parish and, on an informal basis, this constitutes a major part of the congregation's outreach. Beyond the parish, the congregation continues to be very active in the Zomba partnership and also in its ongoing support of the school in Bethlehem.

### **Opportunities and Challenges:**

The Kirk Session felt that the new Borders Railway brought great opportunities to the area and expectations are running high within the Session. It was felt that the railway would be the catalyst for a change in behaviour with many more day-trippers expected to visit the area. The elders believe that Bowden and Melrose is a very welcoming community and the influx of visitors provides an opportunity to "flag up" that welcome.

It is felt that the major Melrose Gait development on the western fringe of the parish presents an opportunity for growth. At the same time it is felt that outreach in Tweedbank can be developed and can lead to further growth.

The Bowden and Melrose Guild continues to thrive with a lively membership of 28 and an average attendance of 24.

### **Issue of Concern:**

There were no major areas of concern that the Kirk Session wished to raise with Presbytery other than the issue of the Fire Risk Assessment which, in the case of Bowden Church, has led to difficulties due to the fact that the building is 'A' Listed.