

The Presbytery of Duns

LOCAL CHURCH REVIEW

Part 2



YOUR CONGREGATION TODAY

**St Andrew's Wallace Green and Lowick
Congregation**

2.1 The story of your church

2.1.1 Suggested content:

Please tell us something of your church's history. Think back over the last ten years. Share the recent story of your congregation – the celebrations, the struggles, the dreams. Where have you seen God at work? How did you get where you are in church life? Where do you think you are?

The report that follows asks many questions and the answers given will tell much. Therefore, your story below need not be more than a very few paragraphs.

2.1.2 Your Church's Story:

St Andrew's Church, which had been steadfastly Church of Scotland since the early 18th Century, incorporated the Tweedmouth Presbyterian Church of Scotland in 1971. Ultimately the congregations united in April 1987. Although there were difficulties at the time, more than 25 years on, the two congregations are now generally indistinguishable.

St Andrew's Wallace Green Church of Scotland holds a privileged position in Berwick upon Tweed, not only because of the imposing building it currently uses, which dominates the town skyline, and the close ties with Scotland, so helping to blur the border, but also because it isn't bound by traditional parish lines. In Scotland, each parish church serves a clearly defined area and the same applies in England for the Anglican communion of churches. Unlike other free churches however, the Church of Scotland in Berwick upon Tweed also enjoys a national identity, which appeals to Scots living in the town.

Berwick itself has a colourful history. When the separate nations of Scotland and England were formed from the earlier multi-kingdoms (Berwick being in Northumbria), the town entered the Kingdom of England in the mid-10th Century. A strategic port and river crossing point meant that it witnessed many battles as well as important treaties. Although it changed hands between England and Scotland over the centuries and was more recently mooted as returning to Scotland, it has spent most of its existence as England's most northerly town. The commercial part of the town serves communities both north and south of the border but for the Church of Scotland; its gathered congregation mainly comes from North Northumberland, approximately equivalent to the boundaries of the now abolished Berwick Borough Council.

There are seven denominations serving the five villages of Berwick (Berwick, Tweedmouth, Spittal, Ord and Scremerston), including Church of England (four churches), Church of Scotland, Methodist, Salvation Army, Catholic, Baptist and United Reformed Church.

Currently we are planning for a stewardship season in March 2015, with a focus on 'time' and part of this will include opportunities to think about our past – where we have found growth and what have been the biggest challenges. The last ten years have seen two periods of vacancy and two ministries, the most recent starting in Oct 2012. Listening to people who have been around over this period, there is amongst some a sense of malaise, sometimes touching on fatalism. In the medium past there have

times of ferment when expectations have been raised about possible changes in church life/property as part of planning for the future, but the expectations have not been realised. Recently we have begun in Session to start talking about how we can plan for the future and what our goals will be, but it is proving difficult to move beyond the disappointments of the past. In Feb 2014 the Session agreed a working 'Mission Statement', which is as follows –

'Our aim is to witness to the 'Good News about the Grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ and known within the life of the Church. '

How:

1. Offering opportunities for worship, where the good news is made known and celebrated;
2. Building a fellowship of God's people, where all are welcomed and cared for and the good news is fleshed out. We try to do this in many ways at the moment: through pastoral visitation undertaken by minister, elders and pastoral visitors; through the work of bowling group, work party, Guild, keep fit, prayer group; church picnic.
3. Reaching out into the community with the good news, through service in Christ's name and through evangelism. Our involvement with worship in Tweed View; our prayer groups' ministry to the local community; our financial and practical support of Berwick Youth Project; our involvement in Churches Together; our organisation of the 'Big Sing'; organising and supporting the annual town Remembrance Service; the minister's offering of occasional offices (weddings & funerals); by making our premises available at cost to local cultural groups and schools; the minister's role as chaplain to the Legion; the minister's involvement in RE at Tweedmouth Middle, B Academy & Lowick schools and also as governor at Lowick; participation of several members in writing for the Berwick Advertiser; regular retiral offerings for local, national and international charities; our involvement in local initiatives, such as the walking festival.

The initial attempts to develop a strategy to take things forward include our commitment to a stewardship season and a working group to look at developing our ministry to those with dementia. The recent upgrade of our audio and visual equipment in the church was also part of our attempt to renew our worship.

2.2 Life of the congregation

Tell us about congregational life and its worship, fellowship, service, discipleship and evangelism. Please type responses in relevant box and it will expand to fit your text.

2.2.1 Worship – The shared experience of meeting God; we gather to express our need for God and to express our gratitude for all that God has done for us.

- **Style(s) of worship – describe a typical service format;**
 - **Musical range; praise band; organ; soloists; etc;**
 - **Use of audio visual equipment;**
 - **Congregational member involvement in leading worship;**
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- **Anything else you would like to tell us?**

Responses:

Typical format is hymn; prayer; children's talk; hymn; reading; hymn; sermon; offering; prayer; hymn; blessing. Sometimes we vary this a little by front-loading songs/hymns at start of the service. We also have frequently used songs as sung blessings after the benediction and short songs as responses during prayers or communion.

For musical accompaniment we are mainly reliant on pipe organ/electric piano, but occasionally use small praise band (violin, squeeze box, flute & guitar) and shaker instruments. We use CH4 (newly introduced) and Mission Praise. In worship we use a range of styles of songs/hymns – from both hymnbooks.

After using PowerPoint quite regularly for photos and films, we recently installed a screen and digital projector and new audio system in the Church. Presently the intention is not to project hymn words, but to use the digital facilities to support our worship through photo and film and responsive prayers.

The Bible readings are done by members on a rota. Members have participated in dramatic readings, sketches, interviews and prayers on special occasions such as during holy week, Sea Sunday, the Guild Service and at Christmas.

2.2.2 Evangelism - *The calling of every Christian to be a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is all the ways in which we share our Good News and bring others to the point of beginning their own journey of faith.*

a. How do you help people to start to become Christians?

b. How do you communicate with members and your parish?

c. Anything else you would like to tell us?

Responses:

a. Communicant classes have been offered.

b. Intimation sheet on Sundays; Quarterly Kirk News, website and notices in local newspaper. For special services we sometimes publicise our activities in local shops and on through posting on websites specific to the area.

2.2.3 Service - *The living out of our faith in practical ways. Jesus called us to be servants of all and this is shown to others as we care for our neighbours.*

- **What systems of Pastoral Care (elder districts, etc.) do you have?**
- **How do you respond to the needs of others in the parish and beyond?**
- **Are you involved with school or other chaplaincies?**
- **In what ways are you involved with social issues?**
- **In what ways do you share responsibilities with community groups or agencies and/or mission partnerships at home or abroad?**
- **Anything else you would like to tell us?**

Responses:

Elders are allocated a district and are encouraged to visit members at least once in each quarter. Infirm members may be identified to pastoral care team – made up of 8 visitors, who will visit regularly – ideally once per month. If requested, minister celebrates home communion.

Pastoral care team is drawn from congregation and will visit members in care homes or those who are housebound and would appreciate more regular visiting.

The minister is involved as chaplain and governor in Lowick First School. He regularly visits Tweedmouth Middle School to take assemblies and also took an Easter assembly at Berwick Middle. The relationship with Berwick Middle is developing through the church having hosted their annual prize giving over the last two years. The minister has also participated in RE classes at Berwick Academy. The minister is also chaplain to the Berwick branch, Royal British Legion and regularly attends management meetings. The minister is also a trustee of the Askew Housing Trust.

For social issues see item 7

We have recently had a visit from Kati and Malcolm Ramsey and we anticipate being much more involved with them – including raising funds to support their projects. We also typically support a wide range of local, national and international charities through retiral collections. Locally we have played a key part in raising funds for and supporting the visit of the Bible Society 'Bible World' unit to Berwick and also in organising the Big Christmas Sing (set to become an annual event) on behalf of Christian Aid. A group from our congregation are also actively involved in the Berwick Youth Project as supporters and we have regularly supported them in providing a Christmas meal for youngsters living in their centre.

2.2.4 Discipleship / Christian Nurture - *The act of following Christ. It is about learning what it means to be a Christian as we experience life and question what we believe. Does the Church equip its members with practical guidance for expressing their faith in the world during the week?*

- **How do you help people of all ages grow in their faith?
Children, Young People, new members and adults**
- **In what ways do you promote personal devotions, private prayer and opportunities to reflect on life experiences?**
- **Which resources do you use?**
- **Anything else you would like to tell us?**

Responses:

We have started recently to offer a periodic bookstall. The last was at Eastertime and provided a range of Easter materials and gifts, including Bible reading notes. The intention is to promote the regular use of Bible reading notes. The Sunday Club uses SU materials appropriate for the age group.

2.2.5 Fellowship - *The opportunity of experiencing God's grace and love in and through God's people; this is about people really getting to know each other.*

- **How do you build relationships within the church?**
- **How do you encourage people to meet outwith worship?**
- **Anything else you would like to tell us?**

Responses:

There is a weekly coffee time after church each Sunday, which enables the building of relationships.

A number of groups meet in the church including Bowling Club; Keep Fit Group; Walking Group; Guild; Work Party. All activities are open to non-members.

Members are encouraged to represent SAWG in other areas notably the Berwick Youth Trust.

The Guild run regular coffee mornings, which help to facilitate fellowship within the congregation and with those from outwith the congregation.

2.3 Congregation and Wider Church

2.3.1 Wider church – *Your relationships and involvement with Presbytery, central church structures and other denominations.*

- **How would you describe your congregation's relationship with Presbytery?**
- **Tell us about any relationships with Councils (and/or their committees) of the General Assembly.**
- **Tell us about Ecumenical relationships.**
- **Tell us about relationships with neighbouring Church of Scotland congregations including those within your own linkage.**
- **Tell us about any partnerships you have with the World Church.**
- **Tell us about your involvement with organisations like Christian Aid.**
- **Anything else you would like to tell us?**

Responses:

We play an active part in the Presbytery through regular attendance and participation in the meetings and committees. Minister currently interim moderator.

SAWG is an active member of Berwick Churches Together. The minister is currently acting convener and members also are treasurer and members of committee – as well as web-site manager.

We are actively represented on local Christian Aid committee

2.4 Resources – people, buildings, money

2.4.1 Human Resources – *People helping to make your mission statement a reality.*

- **Who are your ministry team members?**
- **What support is there for your minister/ministry team including admin support?**
- **How is training and development (in-service training, study leave, staff appraisals, etc.) supported?**
- **With your present staffing and volunteers are you resourced to achieve any developments you are planning to make?**
- **Anything else you would like to tell us?**

Responses:

The minister and organist are our paid ministry team. There is no admin support, though the congregation have paid for minister's computer, printer and internet connection.

The Kirk Session have been willing to support members participating in occasional, appropriate courses, such as for Sunday Club leaders and the Session Clerk.

2.4.2 Buildings – Church, halls, manse, church officer's house, etc.

- **How are your premises used and when was the last full inspection?**
- **What is their state of repair?**
- **Describe their suitability for purpose?**
- **Do you have a five year Property maintenance plan?**
- **Anything else you would like to tell us?**

Responses:

Manse - residence of minister & his family.

- Last inspected in April 2014.
- Very good state of repair.
- Extremely suitable for purpose
- We do not have a 5 year maintenance plan as property is relatively new. Repairs & decoration assessed at annual inspection.

Church - premises used for worship, public events & concerts. Session room has various uses i.e. bowling, keep fit etc.

- Last inspected April 2014.
- Very good state of repair.
- Very suitable for purpose.
- We do not have a 5 year maintenance plan. Property is inspected annually & repairs required are assessed & works carried out as / when required.

2.4.3 Money – Income, reserves, stewardship, etc.

- **Comment on your ability to finance all you are currently doing.**
- **How is the work of your church financed – is it mainly from weekly givings or is it dependent on income from hall lettings, fundraising, legacy interest, etc?**
- **Do you think your congregation is over-dependent on the amount of income from a particular age group or individuals?**
- **When did you last address stewardship, what stewardship programme are you using and when will stewardship next be addressed?**
- **Anything else you would like to tell us?**

Responses:

We are able to finance what we are currently doing by drawing on reserves accumulated in earlier years. We have reserves that would approximately cover 18 to 24 months of expenditure.

The large majority of our income comes from weekly giving. We are also fortunate to have cash investments but we are suffering from the low interest rates as are all savers.

We are probably over dependent on the 55+ age group.

There are no immediate dangers of us not being able to finance what we are doing. However, we are significantly dependent on capital interest and the use of savings to meet our commitments. In part, as a response to this, we are currently in the early stages of entering onto a stewardship season approach to stewardship and the plan is to focus on 'time' in March 2015.

2.5 Presbytery Plan

2.5.1 Presbytery Plan – *A Plan for Presbytery 2011-2021.*

How has the implementation of the Presbytery Plan, approved in November 2011, affected your congregation and how will planned changes, not yet in place, fit into your goals for the future?

Responses:

We have kept in mind the possibility of a linkage with Foulden & Mordington Parish church on retiral of their current minister and have tried to encourage links however the opportunities have been limited. F&M now seeking to unite with the other churches in their existing linkage so any overtures are in abeyance. Even if this uncertainty is removed, it will not significantly affect our short-term plans because we didn't anticipate a change within the next 5 – 10 years.

2.6 Communication

Communication Strategy – *Tell us about your communication strategy/plan including website use:*

- **How do you promote your vision and mission?**
- **How do you keep in touch with members?**
- **How do you encourage members to keep in touch with one another?**
- **How do you advertise your church and its activities?**
- **Anything else you would like to tell us?**

Responses:

We promote our mission through worship, at the AGM and through communicating with the congregation through our quarterly church magazine. Please see above for information about our various get-togethers and for information on advertising. We are especially pleased to have a website manager who regularly updates information on the website.

2.7 Knowledge of your community

No congregation is complete in itself.

- Tell us about the knowledge you have of activities, community enterprise, organisations for different age groups etc in the area. Identify specific needs in your community which you feel need to be met.
- Show us how you have used the Statistics for Mission material in your congregation's planning.

Responses:

We actively support the local Foodbank

We are supporting the current mayor (2014) with her dream to see Berwick categorised as a Dementia Friendly Town and are working to ensure that SAWG meets and exceeds guidelines as a Dementia Friendly Church.

Concurrently we are looking to see whether we are truly an all age, all ability accessible and welcoming church

As we do not have a fixed parish, our view is possibly a little different from churches in Scotland but we serve the community in a wide area covering North Northumberland and just across the Border.

AGE

The 2011 census population reported the whole of Northumberland (the local government administrative area, including Berwick, which became a unitary authority in 2008) as 316,028. Berwick (excluding Scremerston) has a population of approximately 13,500 which hasn't significantly changed since 1991. The 2001 Berwick Borough population was approximately 26,000 so one could estimate that was about the same in 2011.

17% were under 16 and 22% over 65 in 2001. The ratio is broadly similar in 2011 (source: ONS Neighbourhood statistics – see extract below) but there remains a higher than national average number of over 65s.

	Under 16	16-65	Over 65	TOTALS
Berwick North	693	2728	1056	4,477
Berwick East	834	3132	908	4,874
Berwick West	738	2502	826	4,066
	2,265	8,362	2,790	13,417
	16.88%	62.32%	20.79%	
N'land	53,866	202,926	59,236	316,028
	17.04%	64.21%	18.74%	

North East	462,437	1,712,526	421,923	2,596,886
	17.81%	65.95%	16.25%	
England	10,022,836	34,852,899	8,136,721	53,012,456
	18.91%	65.74%	15.35%	

FAITH

Of the 316,028 in Northumberland who answered the question, 216,673 described themselves as Christian (68 percent which is above the total England average of 59 percent. Duns Parish 55 percent and Scotland 53 percent), 30 percent either answered 'no religion' or declined to answer. The remaining 3574, just under 2 percent, belong to other faith groups. For the purpose of this paper, we will assume the same analysis so potentially there are more than 9000 people in Berwick who profess Christianity as their faith. It is likely that there are considerably fewer than 500 who regularly attend worship in any of the town's churches.

ECONOMY

It is difficult to get a true picture of the levels of deprivation through the census or government statistics. Unless they claim some form of benefit or Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA), they will not be counted. Anecdotally, this is seen as a deprived area and although it reports lower than the national average unemployment figures, much employment is in unskilled jobs or is part-time, while seasonal variations will skew any figures. There is evidence of families and single people living below the poverty line (CAB).

Thank you for taking the time to complete these booklets. They will form the basis for our discussion when the Local Church Review team meets with you and with your Minister.