



Molesworth Presbyterian Church

Mission Plan 2010

Introduction

It is now one hundred and seventy-five years since permission was first given to organise a new Presbyterian congregation in Cookstown which was later to become known as Molesworth. During those years of history many have come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and there have been some very significant times of blessing. We think, for example of the 1859 Revival, which spread throughout all of Ulster, and of a more localised revival arising from a Gospel Mission in Molesworth in 1978. We are grateful to God for the way he has worked in people's lives down through the years and for individuals he has raised up in the life of our congregation who faithfully prayed and proclaimed the gospel of God's saving grace. However, whilst the blessings and labours of the past have left a good legacy for us today we are vitally aware of the need of the present hour when we find ourselves in an age of growing secularism and neglect of gospel truth.

Many in our town affiliate to no church whatsoever and many others are little more than nominal in their church connection. A generation has now grown up in which there is little or no knowledge of the Bible and that generation has never had contact with the life of the church. At the same time there are others who may have been raised in the churches and Sunday Schools of our town but have in adulthood abandoned the church for a secular lifestyle.

As we rise to this challenge we must pray that the Lord would give us fresh vision for the revitalising of our church life and for taking the Gospel out to the scores of people in our town who are lost without Christ, believing that we have the best news in the world to share with them. There is undoubted need to maintain faithful pastoral care in the homes of our congregation and to continually challenge those who have lapsed from active involvement in church but the main purpose envisaged by the PCI Board of Mission in Ireland in this mission planning process was to encourage congregations to consider how they will best reach those outside their fellowships.

Therefore we have identified three particular areas in which we believe there is need to develop our work. Our first emphasis is on **prayer**, believing that by this means Christians will be empowered to share the gospel effectively and unconverted people will be touched by the life-changing power of God. Our second concern for **fellowship and contact with people** recognises that we need to live, work and worship as the family of God, and be a community into which people will want to come. Our third concern for **reaching out to the community** is simply the acceptance of Jesus' command to - "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." (Mark 16:15). These are not the only things that might need new thinking in our congregational life but we believe that at this time these should take priority.

Prayer

Why?

We believe that a Mission Plan without Prayer is a Mission Plan without Power. Therefore the revitalisation and growth of the congregation's prayer ministry is a matter of first importance – the thing that is fundamental to everything else we do.

How?

It will be necessary to continue to teach the importance of prayer from the pulpit but also to take practical steps to increase the numbers of people praying and to keep them informed of various prayer needs. To this end we propose the appointment of a Prayer Co-ordinator with the following remit:

- To gather information for prayer
- To see that information is communicated to each prayer group.
- To follow up on the progress of prayer requests
- To take a lead in developing prayer ministry

What?

SHORT-TERM

- Small groups – discover how many small prayer groups are currently in operation and see if more might be developed. Also to use these as a vehicle to help people learn to pray aloud with others
- Special times of prayer e.g. Half-nights and days of prayer and fasting. These may be related to special events but should also be built into the regular church programme

MEDIUM- TERM

- Developing means for our church family to share prayer needs and to see that these needs are prayed for with sincerity and confidence

LONGER-TERM

- Developing a community prayer ministry whereby our local community whom we target for outreach know that we are a people who love them and will pray for their needs
- A task for all the members of the congregation – not something to be seen as a job for a few enthusiasts

Fellowship and Contact with People

In order for mission to operate through our words and actions we must be prepared to interact within our own congregation (fellowship) and the wider community (contact with people).

What?

Fellowship & Contact – Within the body of our church, its new members and visitors, the aim is to increase and improve the level of meaningful fellowship. Fellowship will grow from improved contact with people and the quality of this contact.

Why?

From the results of the congregational questionnaire and the discussions of the Mission Plan Group, a need for improved fellowship within our church has been identified. It is also believed that the way in which our church interacts both together and with the wider community can be developed for the benefit of the church and everyone which it is in contact with.

An improvement in the quality of the fellowship within our church community may help our mission activities to be effective from the outset. It is hoped that by creating a church atmosphere which is loving and caring this will help to make visitors to our church feel welcome and open the gospel.

The aim of making improvements to the fellowship and contact aspects of church life is to see the love of God grow within our congregation through care for our brothers and sisters in Christ. The opportunity exists for our church to develop consistent and meaningful times for fellowship during the services, on going weekly activities and special events.

Community engagement already exists within our church however if we are to see our church grow and be effective in mission we believe that improvements can be made.

How?

Church Services

To make the worship life of our church more welcoming and engaging to those who are not usually involved with church, it is proposed that special services and meetings be organized on a regular basis. This will allow opportunity to invite people such as colleagues, neighbors, friends and family. Examples of these services may be;

- Youth services
- Special interest service
- Congregational services involving special after church activities

Contact with people

To encourage a greater number of people to attend weekly worship and partake in the life of our church the following activities have been suggested for development:

- Personal contact and invitations
- Publicity materials
- Website
- Special events

Congregational Fellowship

The way in which services are conducted has been investigated by the Mission Plan team. Following discussion a number of possible changes have come to the fore. These include:

- Informal opportunity to meet with new people attending each week.
- Coffee/tea and chat before church on a regular basis
- Congregational activities - for example a barbecue following Children's Day or increased number of Soup & Cheese lunch type events.
- In the longer term this may involve consideration being given to the way in which we use the seating and layout of the church sanctuary.

Who?

Whilst a number of the activities outlined will require the action of our church leadership, much of the activity will require the action of those members of our church who are communicants and are willing to spread the word of the Gospel to work out the conviction of their faith by developing meaningful fellowship with others.

When?

Some of the above aspects can be quickly implemented such as the website. It is the ambition to deliver the remaining aspects over the next 18 months but we are aware that many of these activities need to be sustained over the longer-term to ensure the best impact of the mission plan and the sustainability of the interactions initiated. Therefore we will develop our mission plan over short, medium and long terms identifying activities which can be carried out in each phase as well as the correct people to work in each area.

Reaching Out to Our Community

Why?

Jesus said we should go into the entire world with the gospel. He indicated to his disciples that their task was to begin where they lived first and then radiate out from there. Increasingly the community has become more disconnected with any church so we feel the need to move outside the boundaries of our church and outside the member list on our books to make contact with those in our town and district.

We feel that within a mile radius or so of our church building is perhaps our first challenge. In that area we have a wide variety of places where people meet. There are commercial businesses including shops, pubs and nightclubs and a factory, there is a mix residential homes, a sports club, a hostel for the homeless, schools and a police station. We would expect to meet a wide variety of people in these places in their religious backgrounds and social needs and as such our approach needs to be tailored for each situation. We expect to make contact with those who live close to the church first.

How?

Our job is making contact with these people and to build relationships. This will involve telling them more about who we are and what our church is about, and building bridges with these communities. We expect our contact to include visitation – meeting people on their doorstep. We would also like to plan a series of events perhaps breakfasts, mission weekends and other events to attract and engage folk who may not normally come to a formal church service. Although our main focus is on the area within immediate radius of our church building it would not preclude making contact with those in our town outside this geographical limitation particularly if we were organising a special event in our church. In attempts to attract folk outside our current church membership we would hope to perhaps also appeal to those on the fringes of our own congregation. With another Presbyterian church in the town also producing a Mission Plan, and not far from us we will liaise with them to ensure our Mission Plans do not overlap and indeed how we might be able to work together.

Who?

Although we have a Mission Plan team who have been working on this formal plan it is surely the job of those of us who are Christians and church members to be involved in this work of witness on a daily basis. This should happen through our Christian example and our prayer for and contact with those we meet every day. Each of us has been given various gifts from God and as different elements of the plan are carried out we trust there will be a variety of our members willing to get involved.

When?

As our intention is to plan things over short, medium and long term that will mean considering our resources which include personnel. We have to consider where we are already in our work of outreach and how we develop that and integrate it into future plans. The planning may involve some training and, of course, prayer. Already our Mission Plan has made progress in our attempts to reach the outside world with our new website. This we feel is an important place these days for existing members

to find out more details of what is happening at their church and for others currently outside our membership who may be looking more information on churches in the town. Other short term projects will include initial contact with people through visitation. It is important, however that we have a mindset that focuses on mission, not purely to add numbers to our church but that we have a burden and concern for those in our town and district who have drifted away from any Christian witness and are spiritually lost. Our Mission Plan will be flexible enough to adapt as the Spirit directs and to respond to new situations as we make progress. We must also realise we are involved in God's work and we want His blessing, guidance and presence on all that we may plan.

The Challenge

In his book entitled Radical Reformation Mark Driscoll notes that Jesus has called us to (1) the gospel (loving our Lord), (2) the culture (loving our neighbour) and (3) the church (loving our brother). However, he goes on to note that one of the causes of failure to fulfil our mission is that many churches are faithful on only one or two of these three counts. Typically conservative evangelical churches are good at combining love for the gospel and for the church so that they have great concern for Biblical truth and for the internal life of their church, its people, buildings and traditions. Where they often fall short is in the matter of engaging with the culture beyond their church fellowship. Thus the desire is that people should come in to hear the message rather than that Christians be sent out to tell the message in a culture that is possibly far removed from church life.

There may have been a day within living memory in Ulster when church-going was a strong tradition in the community and we could expect many people to come in and hear the gospel message. As our culture now heads ever faster down the road of secularism we no longer can enjoy that luxury. In these days to presume that we can sit back and wait for people to come our way is probably naïve but fundamentally it is also a denial of Christ's commission to his church. Jesus commands us to go in His name.

We pray that together we will catch the vision and be ready to take new steps of faith confident in the power of God who "is able to immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine." (Ephesians 3:20)