

**IMMANUEL
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
35 AGNES STREET
BELFAST**



MISSION ACTION PLAN

2010

Immanuel Presbyterian Church

Mission Action Plan 2010

Mission Statement

“We seek to be a welcoming Church for all where we meet for worship in ways which are warm and meaningful, but also reverent. We strive to be obedient to scripture as it is applied to all areas of our lives. Our aim is to encourage everyone, by prayer and example, so that our church will be a vibrant, active and caring place where all can come for Christian fellowship. Our desire is to reach the local community with the message of the Gospel.

***Mission Action Plan Team: Revd Victor
Patterson, Tommy Irwin, Brian Davidson.***

The Area

Immanuel congregation is situated in the Greater Shankill road area of Belfast. This area has suffered much vandalism and strife over the many years of the troubles when the influence of paramilitaries was very evident. The loyalist feud was particularly divisive.

Years of conflict have left a district where there is much deprivation. In the report sent to the First Minister of the Northern Ireland Assembly, the Deputy First Minister and the Minister for Social Development (2002) by the North Belfast Community Action Project Team made the following points.

- 1. The Electoral Ward of Crumlin in which Immanuel is situated is ranked as the most deprived ward in Northern Ireland.*
- 2. Only 16.75% of school leavers achieve 5 or more GCSEs grades A-C compared to the national average of 55.42%. Many young people leave school with little hope of finding work. The area is one of great social and Spiritual need. (See Appendix)*

Dwellings in the area are a mixture of private, housing executive and housing association homes with some industrial units. Within the last ten years well over two hundred new homes have been built as redevelopment. Our parish includes the large council estate of Lower Shankill where some of the homes have become privately owned. Some sheltered accommodation exists for older folk.

The main historical features of the area are the old Court house and Prison that are now seen as tourist attractions.

Shopping facilities on the Shankill road are good but unfortunately there is a dearth of shops for Crumlin road residents. Though there are some signs of redevelopment on the Crumlin many sites still show evidence of lack of investment.

The Vine Centre on the Crumlin road provides a resource where the community can come for personal advice and help. Services provided include play groups, crèche, afternoon homework clubs and meetings for senior citizens. As a congregation Immanuel is involved at all levels in the Vine Centre with one member acting as a director on the management

committee and a number of volunteer's contributing to the day to day activities. The Congregation also gives generous financial support. We also have close connections with the Belfast City Mission through the hall in Jersey Street.

North Belfast, where Immanuel is situated, was originally an industrial area with many small houses for those who worked in the linen mills. Today the old industry is gone and unemployment is rife. This has contributed to the social problems of anti-social behaviour and both alcohol and drug abuse.

The Congregation

Immanuel Presbyterian Church is situated on Agnes Street in the Shankill area of Belfast. Agnes Street joins the Shankill Road and the Crumlin Road.

The congregation was born in 1971 out of a union of Agnes Street and Bethany congregations and a further union took place in 2007 when Immanuel and Oldpark congregations amalgamated.

Due to structural problems with the old church building a new meeting house was constructed on the same site. It opened on the 9th February 2008 and has been a source of great encouragement and hope to us all. Opportunity was taken to install up to date audio-visual and IT equipment. We also possess a good suite of halls which are in constant use by our organisations.

At present (2009) there are 245 families attached to the congregation.

List of organisations.....

Boys' Brigade, Girl's Brigade, Christian Endeavour Societies, Youth Fellowship, Sunday school, Mother & Toddler's, Presbyterian Women, Ladies Bible class, Women's Bright Hour, Old Boys' Association, Fresh, Tea Leaf,

Visitors are always made welcome and can be assured that those who come seeking a spiritual home will find warmth and friendship that many before have experienced.

The new church seats approximately 350 people.

The Church's Web site is to be found at www.immanuelbelfast.com

Finance

Our finances are in good order; Members are very faithful in their giving to the work of the congregation, to missions and to deserving causes. The “United appeal target” has been met every year.

The Current Life of the Church

The congregation seeks in a number of ways to reach out to the surrounding district and lead both young and not so young to the Lord Jesus.

The members of Immanuel are a warm hearted people, both committed to Christ and friendly. New housing in the area provides the potential for growth in the future.

In the district there are many children and young people some of whom, in our experience, receive little love or attention from their families. Generally they are street wise. We have a good number of such children entering our buildings each week. Our youth organisations still attract young people from the district and continue to do excellent work in their social, physical and spiritual development. We recently have started a new work “Refresh” on Saturday evenings. This work reaches out to teenagers who often hang around aimlessly in the area.

Sunday worship takes place both morning and evening and midweek Bible study and Prayer on Wednesday. There is a meeting for prayer before the evening service. Because we believe in the importance of prayer God’s people are encouraged to attend and participate in the regular prayer times and also pray for the work in quiet times. Additional Bible studies and Prayer meetings are held from time to time.

We have recently reintroduced a “Caring Team” where members seek to help those with special needs, who are ill or shut in.

We believe in the importance of Outreach and the need to go out into our district and proclaim the truths of the Gospel. Tract distribution takes place each Easter and Christmas when we take the opportunity to publicise special church services and events. Open air meetings are held on the Shankill road in May and as a follow up door to door visitation is carried out midweek in May, June and August.

A week of “Fresh” is held towards the end of August each year. This is a concentrated effort to reach children and young people of the church and area using a variety of strategies. It is also used as a means of recruiting new members into various organizations. This is continued through the winter months with older teenagers as a means to reach them with the gospel.

Our Mother and Toddler group meets on Thursday during the school year and at present we have twenty-two mothers attending, twenty-one of whom are from the local area. This work has seen much blessing over the years. A special event is held every year as a focused outreach to the Ladies of the church and area.

Further outreach work on Wednesday mornings “The Tea Leaf”. Here all who like tea, coffee and or a chat are made welcome. This presents us with another opportunity to listen and to share our personal experience of Christ with all who drop in.

Additional Bible Study groups are held in the month of June for those who find it difficult to meet for Bible study and prayer during the winter months.

We are blessed with a large number of young Christians and they are encouraged to develop their faith in service outside the congregation. Each year we have a number who join other outreach teams at home and overseas. In 2009 we had representatives involved with PCI teams, Beach missions, Reach and the House of Hope charity in Moldova.

Our youth fellowship is also linked to other congregations in north Belfast through “Engage” and meet up every six weeks to worship in after church rallies.

News sheet

Occasionally news sheets are produced to inform the congregation of work that the organisations are involved in, to update information on the missionaries we have a special interest in and also the work of the Congregational Committee.

The future for Immanuel Congregation and its impact in the area

We have recently identified that the 20+ age group in the church have been left behind and we are looking at what provision we may be able to make for them.

We are conscious that we need to improve our contacts in the surrounding district. We feel that this can be best achieved with someone who can visit them more often, spend more time with them, to get to know them better and seek to help them. We recognise that church to most of them is a foreign place and we need to set up ways to show that we love them for Christ sake. Our existing church and youth leaders do so much but have not the time for all that needs to be done so we are seeking to employ a full time worker/evangelist to help in this work.

Conclusion

We realise that we are in a difficult work because there is much apathy amongst the people of the area. That there will be setbacks we have no doubt but we believe that this is a vital work and with God's help we seek to be faithful to the great commission. The congregation has always actively supported, especially in prayer but also in other ways, all that is done in this regard.

Important Areas to be Developed in the Future

- 1. We will continue to encourage prayer as we seek to reach the unsaved of the area with the glorious message of the gospel.*

- 2. Progress the appointment of a full time outreach worker/evangelist.***
- 3. Continue to explore ways of improving co-operation with the Vine Centre to increase our effectiveness in the community.***
- 4. Enhance the work of the Caring team.***
- 5. Develop deeper relations with the local “Tudor residents association” to cooperate on matters of mutual interest and concern.***
- 6. Seek to engage with the 20+ group to increase their participation in the life of the congregation.***

Appendix

Socio-economic and demographic profile of Crumlin and Shankill wards that in large part represent the parish area of Immanuel Presbyterian Church

	Crumlin	Shankill	North Belfast	Belfast	Northern Ireland
Resident Population	4,376	3,784	86,066	277,391	1,685,267
Households (2008)	2,262	1,901	38,290	122,405	716,699
Under 16 %	20.5	24.0	23.3	21.7	23.6
Aged 60+ %	31.1	24.2	21.8	19.7	17.6
Average age	42.6	38.2	37.5	36.6	33.1
Adults with degree or higher qualifications	2.1	2.7	11.3	19.2	15.8
Adults with no/low levels of qualifications	87.7	87.3	68.6	56.6	58.9
Free school meal entitlement %	52.5	50.5	31.8	26.7	16.5
Births to unmarried mothers % 2008	89.7	84.2	66.6	56.9	38.9
Adults economically inactive %	63.3	60.1	46.7	43.1	37.7
Incapacity Benefit recipients %	7.7	7.3	4.9	4.1	3.9
Income Support recipients %	16.3	19.1	10.5	8.8	5.6
Owner-occupied %	18.1	18.3	51.7	56.1	69.6
Rented %	81.9	81.7	48.3	43.9	30.4
Lone Pensioner %	26.9	24.6	17.8	15.8	12.8
Lone Parent with children %	13.9	17.8	13.3	11.0	8.1
People with limiting long-term illness %	41.7	35.6	27.5	24.2	20.4
Households in relative poverty %	56.9	57.5	42.3	37.9	30.2

Source : NINIS, NISRA



