
Edinburgh Greenbank Parish and Congregation Profile 2017



- We are a friendly, welcoming and supportive congregation
- We value worship, pastoral care, Christian discipleship and outreach to young people and families
- We need a Minister to lead us to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus in an increasingly secular world and to face the challenges of an ageing and less active membership

1. Introduction

Greenbank Church is an active, forward-thinking congregation of over 700 members in Morningside, south Edinburgh. We became vacant on 18 May 2017 when the Rev Alison Swindells, our Minister since 2007, left to take up a call in Aberdeenshire. We are fortunate in being able to call a full-time minister on unrestricted tenure. From our own resources, we also employ a full-time Youth Associate and a retired minister who helps with the pastoral care of older and housebound people on a part-time basis. The Kirk Session has voted to permit a minister in a same sex civil partnership or marriage to be considered for the vacancy. A recent congregational consultation strongly supported this decision.

2. History

We were founded in 1900 as a United Presbyterian Church congregation and became a Church of Scotland parish church in 1929, just after the existing sanctuary was built. Adaptations and additions have taken place since then. The most significant was the construction of the Centenary Hall and meeting rooms at a cost of £1.25 million in 2001. This was done to serve the needs of our parish and as a statement of our faith in the future of our congregation.

3. Constitution

Kirk Session

- Chaired by the Minister
- Currently there are 82 Elders: 35 Men, 47 Women
- 12 new elders were ordained/ admitted in 2017
- There are 9 standing committees or teams; the convenors and members each serve for 4 years
- Each Greenbank adult and youth organisation has a 'link elder', who reports to Session annually.

Congregational Board

- Chaired by a Preses
- Currently comprises 18 elders and 10 elected members
- Carries out its work mainly through the Property Committee and the Finance Committee



Greenbank Parish Church, Edinburgh – on the corner of Braidburn Terrace and Comiston Road

4. Parish

We are, at heart, a parish church with 93% of our members living within 3 miles of the church. The parish is primarily residential, with a population (2011 Census) of 4,319 in 2,100 households. Many of our members live in bungalows or villas and property values are high. There are few, if any, first time buyers in the area, which skews the age distribution of the congregation. It is an attractive place to live, lying close to large parks and to the Pentland Hills. There are good bus services to the City centre, good

local amenities and facilities, and a selection of Council-run and private schools at both primary and secondary levels.

There are few commercial or public buildings in the parish. Just outside the parish is the main primary school for the area; the Minister is chaplain. There are four nurseries in the parish, two of which meet in the church halls. Because there are no community centres nearby, the church buildings are used by many local groups.

5. The Present and the Future

At this vital time in our congregational life we decided to consult the congregation about our current strengths and challenges and to clarify our hopes for the new Ministry. Around 100 people attended discussions and around 120 returned a questionnaire distributed to the members. Here is a summary of the responses:

About half the respondents indicated that they would be interested in attending mid-week worship or bible study. Sunday worship attracted many positive remarks about music, preaching, prayer and reflection. Less appealing features included the use of responses and intimations.

The congregation ranked the desirable characteristics of our next minister, most important first:

Major strengths:

a friendly, welcoming, supportive, large congregation with talented members and office bearers – and a good youth ministry

Challenges currently faced:

- Age profile of congregation
- Falling numbers
- Struggling to attract young families

Priorities for the future:

- Worship
- Pastoral care of all members
- Encouraging members to deepen their personal discipleship
- Reaching out to young families

Desirable characteristics of our new minister (ranked in order):

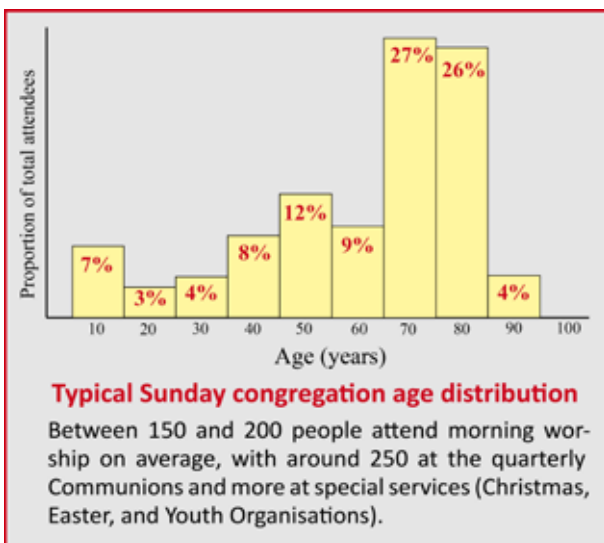
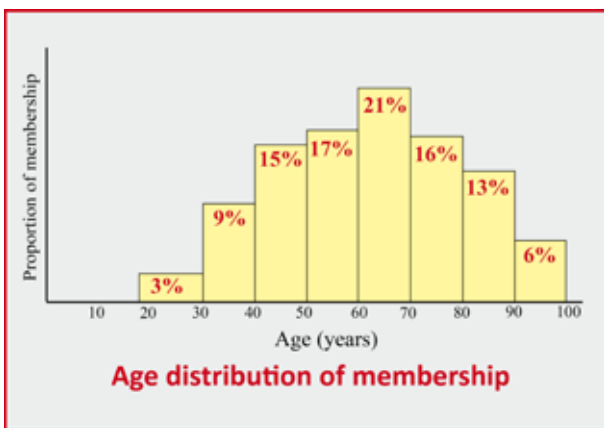
1. being a stimulating preacher
2. having good interpersonal skills
3. having good leadership skills
4. having a liberal, progressive, theological outlook
5. having good pastoral skills
6. being a good listener
7. being willing to delegate responsibilities



Rear of the church and halls

6. Some Key Numbers

The Roll stands at 714. The number on the Roll has been declining steadily in recent years, down 10% in the last decade. A quarter of that reduction was because more people moved away than moved into the congregation, but three-quarters was because the number of deaths exceeded the number of admissions by profession of faith. In the last 5 years, 8 members have joined by Profession of Faith, 19 by Certificate of Transference and 22 by Resolution of the Kirk Session. In the same period, there were 18 baptisms, 10 weddings and 94 funerals.



Sunday lunch in the Main Hall

7. Worship Life



Sanctuary

Worship is central to the life of Greenbank and takes many forms. The congregation has always had an inclusive theological ethos. It believes in the importance of the Minister preaching/teaching each Sunday. All the activities that happen throughout the week are a reflection of the faith expressed during worship.

- There is a 10.30am traditional service in the Church every Sunday. There are two special sections in it for children and young people, where they and the Youth Associate play an active part before they go to age-related meetings.
- The Choir sing an introit and an anthem from September to May. The Praise Band sometimes leads one of the hymns or songs. The Scripture passages are read by members of the congregation, including young people.
- We have less formal half-hour services at 9.30am for about six weeks in midsummer and on the first Sundays in October, November, February, April and May. They are held in our Centenary Hall and are led by various groups, including the Kirk Session and Guild, and individuals from the

congregation. Some services have a theme such as Homelessness or World Church.

- Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday in September, December, March and June at 9am and 10.30am in the church and 3pm in our modern Braid Room. The older members of our Young Church often attend our main and short Communion services.
- Communion is also celebrated at 9.30am on Easter Day and Pentecost and after the 10.30am service on the last Sunday of the month.
- Once a year there is a hugely attended 10.30am service for the uniformed organisations that meet in our halls. Leaders and members help in the planning and take a full part.
- We hold two Christmas Eve Services; family worship on Christmas Day; and a “Blue Christmas” service for people who do not experience much joy at Christmas.
- There are several all-age services during the year – in Advent, at Easter, at the end of the Young Church year and at the end of our Holiday Club in August. Leaders help the Minister prepare these services and the young people take part.
- In Holy Week there are services from Monday to Friday, with Communion on the Thursday. These are held jointly with Morningside Parish Church; the location is year about.
- There is a pew leaflet showing the order of service and intimations.
- Overhead projection is used extensively.

8. Pastoral Care

We attach high priority to the spiritual and practical care of our members, whether in the Parish or beyond, and to all people living in the Parish itself.

- The congregation is divided into 80 elders’ districts. Responsibility for care of the congregation is shared amongst the Ministerial team, District elders and District visitors.
- Every member in the Edinburgh area, including the Minister and family, has a District Elder and Visitor. Some elders continue to visit at each quarterly communion but the pattern is now tailored to meet the needs of the member. Contact is also made by email and telephone. District Visitors also visit and deliver **Connections**, our newsletter.

- The Associate Minister visits the elderly and housebound and may provide home communion. Elders and Visitors are expected to keep the Ministerial Team informed of pastoral issues. Once a year the Associate Minister’s visiting list is reviewed by the elders.
- The Ministerial Team, District Elders and Visitors visit members living in care homes (none is in the Parish); the Ministerial Team share in leading worship there.

9. Christian Education and Discipleship

Greenbank has a longstanding interest and commitment to children and young people. As part of our investment in young people we have appointed a full time Youth Associate. We launched our YACHT (Youth At Church Today) initiative in 2014 as a 5-year fundraising programme to lay down money to resource, support and encourage our work with youth and children in Greenbank. We are about half way towards our target of £500,000.

Our Christian provision for young people starts with the **Crèche. Spectrum** then caters for primary school age children. We use “Spill the Beans” as our main source of materials. **Springboard** is our group for those in S1–S3 in school. Here we use SU material.

The final stage of our programme for S4–S6 people is **QII**, whose leaders develop a programme and a safe space for young people to share their faith, views and doubts.

We have healthy rolls for these groups, approximately 70 in total, but regular attendance is much patchier – around 25. We are currently exploring setting up Christian education at other times or days in the hope of reducing competition with sporting and other activities. We made a start on this approach by introducing **Messy Church** on a Saturday at 4pm with a typical attendance of around 30. We also run a one day Christmas event and a week-long Holiday Club



Holiday Club



Young Church



Messy Church



Christmas Event for Children

for primary school aged children. These can attract between 60 and 100 children.

We have popular Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Beavers, Cubs, Scouts and Explorer Scouts – over 200 young people in total. We also run a thriving Pre-school in partnership with Edinburgh City Council. (We welcome the children, staff and parents to special church services to celebrate Harvest, Christmas and Easter.) We also host a Playgroup and two Toddlers’ groups. This all underpins our commitment to reach out and spread the gospel.

Our Christian education work with young people is overseen by a committee of the Kirk Session. It aims to support leaders and look at strategies.

For our **adult** members we offer opportunities for Bible Study and prayer during the week, though numbers taking part are small.

- In 2014 the Kirk Session held a very successful spiritual retreat day. The day was both fruitful and popular, and many elders are interested in developing such opportunities for the Session and the congregation. After the retreat there was a series of Alpha style courses, one for Kirk Session members and two for the Congregation and wider community.
- For some years we have provided two major programmes at Lent and in September. The Lent Study Programme is led by members of the congregation and is based on a variety of different published or other materials. In 2017 we ran a series based on a discussion of Rowan Williams’ “Meeting God in Mark”; attendance was over 20 on each of the four evenings.
- Sunday evening talks in September are organised in partnership with Morningside Parish Church. The evenings start with refreshments and an opportunity for fellowship. In 2016 the series was on “Chaplaincy”. This autumn it will be on “The Joys and Challenges of Our Faith”, with contributions on Roman Catholicism, Judaism, Buddhism and Islam. These series are always popular, with around 60 attending from the combined congregations.
- Other opportunities for Christian fellowship and education have centred on House Groups, but only one group, with a small but loyal membership, is currently active.
- A Library is provided on a regular basis at coffee time after the service, and book reviews by members of the congregation included in **Connections**.
- A Bookstall was run for 16 years, but has recently drawn to a close.

There are clear opportunities for our new Minister to encourage discipleship in the Session and wider membership.

10. Communication and Outreach

We publish **Connections**, our magazine, 9 times a year in paper form and online. We did a major redesign in 2016 to give it better appeal for the congregation and wider community. The early autumn edition goes to the full Parish, as do cards at Christmas and Easter. We are currently updating and refreshing our website.



We have an advantage and challenge in the fact that our large suite of halls and rooms are the only community facility in the Parish. They are used by an extensive range of congregational and community groups and are a major part of our mission to the community. On an average week we estimate that about 850 people come to the church buildings for worship or recreation but we have to work hard to form links between the groups' activities and the mission of the church. However, our Youth Associate now attends meetings of the uniformed organisations and is forming good relationships with staff and participants. We are currently exploring how best to relate to the parents and carers of the children who attend our Pre School, the Playgroup, two Toddlers' Groups and the uniformed organisations.

The congregation has a strong commitment to taking help to those who need it.

- For many years our congregation has focussed external fundraising on its Easter Appeal for local charities, its Christmas appeal for Christian Aid and on the house to house collection during Christian Aid Week. Last year our total contribution to Christian Aid was over £21,000.
- We also offered our first "reverse Advent Calendar", when the congregation and the local community donated a great deal of food for local homelessness charities.
- We have a strong **Help the Homeless Group**, donating food to hostels, equipment to **Fresh Start** and taking part in the **Edinburgh Night Shelter**.
- The Greenbank **Guild** holds a fundraiser each year, the proceeds going to one of the nationally

supported Guild charities. In the past year £1,000 was raised for **Female Genital Mutilation prevention work** and **Caring for Mother Earth**.

Greenbank also has a long tradition of interest in the wider world:

- There is an active **World Mission Team** and strong involvement in the local Christian Aid Committee. For many years we had a Church of Scotland Mission Partner, but, with the decline in numbers serving overseas, this has ceased.
- We are a Fair Trade congregation and run a One World stall around 4 times a year.
- Our Session Clerk is Convener of the Church of Scotland World Mission Council's Africa and Caribbean Committee.
- We have a long standing link with **Scottish Love in Action**, a charity which supports Dalit children in India. It was set up after a working visit by our youth group **QII** to Andhra Pradesh in 1999.

11. Organisations

We run organisations for people of various ages, and provide accommodation for others. We have an active **Guild** with about 40 members, from our own congregation and outside. The **Friendship Club** for older people also has members who are not in the Congregation. The **Work Party** makes and supplies clothes for children to the Edinburgh Clothing Store and ERI baby unit. There are also our



Friendship Club outing to the Kelpies

own Badminton and Country Dancing groups; and external Bridge, Community Choir and Yoga groups. The congregational website gives further details.

12. Stewardship and Finance

The Accounts for 2016 are available at

<http://tinyurl.com/y8u9llnf>

The total surplus in 2016 was £36,749 and in 2015 £8,674. However, this includes the YACHT Fund, the

Congregational Organisations and the Greenbank Preschool. The church broke even in 2016.

- In 2017 the Mission and Ministries contribution is £140,461, recently reduced to £135,312.
- The Congregation participates in the Church of Scotland's National Stewardship Campaign. We ask members to review their giving each spring.
- The congregation is registered as an Eco-congregation. It is adopting in-house energy efficiency and green initiatives, and identifying with wider campaigning on Climate Change issues. For example, we have installed an intelligent heating system and replaced much of our lighting with LED bulbs from an imaginative funding scheme called "Light a Light".

13. Staffing

Using our own financial resources we employ a full-time Youth Associate (not ordained), a part-time ordained Associate who helps with pastoral care of the elderly and housebound, and an Organist/Choirmaster. We also have a very friendly support team of church administrator, caretaker/handyperson, cleaner and Sunday beadle. They are managed by a Staff Elder.

14. Church, Manse and Halls

The congregation has no major property issues in any of its buildings but, with such a large estate, maintenance and improvement is always a challenge. The Board has accepted this and in the last two years has increased the allocation to property maintenance and to the property reserve. Hall letting is managed by our voluntary Halls Administrator. The Congregational Board sets letting rates. Our own organisations make donations.

Church

The Sanctuary is a large, light, modernised, traditional building with fixed pews and several spectacular stained glass windows. It was refurbished in 2010 after we received an unexpected large legacy. This enabled us to include modern lighting and a better audio-visual system. Currently, we are extending Wi-Fi into the sanctuary which will permit us to stream services if the Kirk Session decides to do so. In the refurbishment project and in the earlier Centenary Halls project we were mindful that the church is more than its buildings, however good they are, and so made donations to outside projects to further the church's work at home and abroad.

Halls

Our halls fall into three groups:

1. The Main Hall served as the church from when Greenbank was established in 1900 until the present church was built in 1927. The Lower Hall, the Pentland Room and the Church Office date from 1900 too.
2. The Upper Hall was added in 1958. Insulation is poor and heating inefficient there. Its improvement is part of our longer term Eco-congregation plans.
3. In 2001, we added the Centenary Hall, the Hermitage Room and the Braid Room in such a way that the premises are completely integrated.

We have a well equipped kitchen which can cater for large groups of people, a servery for Sunday coffee and two other serveries.

Our halls are in heavy use by our own organisations for Christian education and social activities, and by a range of organisations, including nine sections of the Scout and Guide movements. The Centenary Hall is used during the working day by Greenbank Pre-School, and the Lower Hall by a Community Playgroup.

Manse

The Manse is at 112 Greenbank Crescent, approximately 750 metres from the church. It is a traditional Edinburgh detached bungalow, built about 1935. It has a single garage. It is on a corner site with a spacious garden. All fabric, fixtures, fittings and services have been regularly maintained to a good standard. The Manse is double-glazed, with gas-fired central heating. The manse is in the catchment area for South Morningside Primary and Boroughmuir High School. Details of the accommodation are appended.

In addition to the Manse, the church and the halls, we own and rent out a traditional main door flat close to the church with a lounge, kitchen/diner and two bedrooms.

15. Web Links for Further Information

- Church of Scotland census data on the charge: <http://tinyurl.com/y74pqwan>
- Congregational website: <http://www.greenbankchurch.org/>
- Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/GreenbankParishChurchEdinburgh>

Appendix

Details of Manse at 112 Greenbank Crescent



The accommodation comprises:

GROUND FLOOR: Entrance vestibule leading to spacious, timber panelled reception hall; smoke detector; central heating radiator; large understair cupboard.

Living Room (4.57m x 4.13m): East facing six light bay window; living flame gas fire; central heating radiator; open recess and cupboard; ceiling pendant and wall lights.

Dining Room (4.60m x 3.37m): Side facing single light window; central heating radiator; pendant ceiling light; sliding, glazed doors connecting to;

Family/Sitting Room (4.46m x 3.61m): Gas fire; patio doors to garden; large side window; central heating radiator.

Master Bedroom (4.55m x 3.86m): East facing, six light bay window; central heating radiator; shelved recess; ceiling pendant light.

Bedroom 4/Study (3.05m x 2.26m): Single light window to side; central heating radiator; telephone/media connection.

Kitchen (3.82m x 3.02m): Ample worktop and storage cupboard space; stainless steel sink unit; gas hob with extractor hood over; built in electric oven; washing machine/tumble dryer; dishwasher; fridge/freezer; central heating boiler.

Bathroom: Four piece white suite including shower cubicle; window to rear; part tiled walls.

FIRST FLOOR: An original timber staircase gives access to the first floor landing which is lit by a large dormer window and has a smoke detector fitted.

Bedroom 2 (4.52m x 3.66m): Large front facing dormer window with views to the Braid Hills and the Pentland Hills; large eaves storage area; central heating radiator.

Bedroom 3 (3.67m x 3.59m): Large rear facing dormer window with views over the garden; central heating radiator.

Box room/Study (3.53m x 3.22m): "Velux" roof light; coom ceilings; central heating radiator

Separate WC: "Velux" roof light; two piece suite.

There is a single car brick built **Garage** with electric light and power, attached to the south gable elevation. The garage also has connection to water. There is further off-street car parking.



View of the Pentland Hills from the Manse

