



The Church
of Scotland



Aberdeen: Summerhill

PARISH PROFILE

Location

Summerhill is an area of Aberdeen that lies to the west of the main arterial route across the city, Anderson Drive and is bounded to north and south by Lang Stracht and Kings Gate, respectively. Housing was introduced to the area in the 1950s, on erstwhile farming land, to accommodate the rising population of the city and, as such, much of the housing stock was originally Council built. There is now a wide variety of housing types, including several new developments of private housing.

Aberdeen is the third largest city in Scotland and provides numerous opportunities and facilities for its inhabitants. For those with families, or interested in personal education, there are several well rated schools and two universities, University of Aberdeen and Robert Gordon University, both highly acclaimed in their own specialist fields. Aberdeen College provides vocational training courses on a full-time and day-release basis.

Aberdeen's hospitals provide a high standard of health care for the community and also, in conjunction with University of Aberdeen, a highly regarded teaching facility for the medical and nursing professions, including the new University of Aberdeen Dental School.

The traditional industry in Aberdeen was fishing, however, over the past 40 years this has been overtaken by North Sea oil and gas. This places Aberdeen as the Oil Capital of Europe and gives it an international feel with many different nationalities represented in its population. This industry provides employment for a significant proportion of the city's people, either directly or through the support industries, of which there are many involving innovative technology. The Church of Scotland has recognised the significance of this industry and established an Oil Chaplaincy with a full-time and a part-time chaplain. The recent fall in the oil price has caused contraction of the industry, which has impacted on most aspects of life in the city and resulted in numerous redundancies both within and outside the oil and gas sector.

The airport at Dyce on the outskirts of the city is now the largest heliport in Europe in its role supporting the oil industry. From Aberdeen Airport there are commercial flights to all parts of the UK and Europe, for both commerce and recreation. Aberdeen Harbour, in addition to the now reduced fishing fleet and the more significant oil supply and standby vessels, is the port for ferry services to the Northern Isles and cruises. Bus and rail travel connects Aberdeen with the rest of Scotland from the newly renovated stations attached to the recently opened Union Square shopping centre, one of several modern shopping areas within the city.

The city has good sports and leisure facilities, including swimming, skating, athletics, football, cricket, rugby and curling. Aberdeen also hosts an annual international outdoor bowling competition at venues throughout the city. Hazlehead Park is just outside the parish and provides many activities including a playpark, football and rugby pitches, three golf courses and a pitch-and-putt course. This area also contains the field on which the annual Highland

Games are staged, a children's zoo and beautiful rose garden with memorial to those who lost their lives in the Piper Alpha tragedy.

From Aberdeen it is only a short journey to picturesque Royal Deeside and several castles, many of which are open to the public. Slightly further afield, but still within easy access, are the ski resorts at Glen Shee, The Lecht and Cairngorm.

His Majesty's Theatre hosts a wide variety of plays and musicals, whilst there are concerts of many genres at the Music Hall. In addition, the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre is the venue for an eclectic mix of events including concerts, the biennial Offshore Europe Oil Exhibition and even the annual charity sleepout for the Cyrenians charity.

History

The congregation of Summerhill was formed in October 1959 to serve the rapidly increasing population in the area. The first church was a disused barn in what is now Stronsay Crescent, giving rise to the title of "The Barn Church" or "The Stable Church", through which it achieved a degree of fame nationally. The charge was an extension of Craigiebuckler Parish Church, which parish neighbours Summerhill to the south.

The first minister of the congregation was Rev J Douglas Duff, who led the congregation from its inception until 1969. It was during this time that the numbers attending Sunday worship exceeded the capacity of the barn and on Communion Sundays, three services were required to provide for those wishing to attend. With the number on the Communicant Roll in excess of 600, it was decided that a new building was required and the current site on Stronsay Drive was identified. The foundation stone was laid in 1962 and building work completed in 1964. The design of the building was intended to reflect the atmosphere of the barn, with exposed wooden beams and rafters.

Rev David Torrance was appointed to the charge in 1969 and served the congregation until 1977, when Rev Alasdair B Gordon became the third minister for Summerhill.

Rev Dr Ian A McLean, was ordained and inducted into the charge in May 1981. The General Assembly of 1988 granted full status to the congregation of Aberdeen: Summerhill. In June 2008 he translated to Montrose Old and St Andrews. Despite the vacancy, the congregation successfully and joyfully celebrated its 50th Anniversary year in 2009, with a series of events, culminating in a service of celebration at which the Moderator of the General Assembly, Rt Rev William Hewitt was the preacher.

The present minister, Rev Michael Shewan, was inducted into the charge in November 2010.

The current Presbytery Plan places Summerhill in a Deferred Union with Mastrick Parish Church, the union to take place at the conclusion of the current ministry.

Parish

The population of the parish of Summerhill is approximately 5,000, including 766 children of school age and 1,069 over the age of 65. The housing dates mainly from the late 1950s and early 1960s, although there are new developments and some housing is only recently occupied with other developments still under construction. The majority of the housing was built as Council stock, although much of that has passed into private ownership within the last 20–25 years. There are also areas within the parish that were built as private residences, some self-built, many of which are detached bungalows of sizable proportions.

Within the parish there are also two primary schools; one Roman Catholic (Holy Family School) and one a general school (Fernielea Primary School) for the local area. Hazlewood School, a facility for children with special needs, is also located within the parish. The secondary school that serves the parish and surrounding area (Hazlehead Academy) is sited on the opposite side of the boundary road, within Craigiebuckler parish. The minister of Summerhill has the chaplaincy for Fernielea and Hazlewood schools.

The site of the former Summerfield Maternity Hospital on Eday Road, now houses the administrative headquarters of NHS Grampian, which is the workplace for about 200 people. Grampian Fire and Rescue have their headquarters complex within the bounds of the parish and Woodend Hospital also occupies a site within the parish boundary.

Shopping facilities are provided within the area. Towards the west of the parish is a small group of shops including a Tesco supermarket, fish and chip shop, bakers and newsagent. In the centre is a group of shops, currently including a small grocery store and Post Office. At the east end of the parish is a larger centre that comprises a diverse range of retail units including a frozen food supermarket, a grocers, a bookmaker, a car parts shop and several pizza shops. Also within this complex is a Best Western hotel that has recently been refurbished.

The parish contains other religious buildings; the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints is situated in the north-east corner, whilst towards the western end is the relatively new Sheddocksley Baptist church. Near to Summerhill Parish Church is the Fernielea Gospel Hall. These all tend to be supported from throughout the city, rather than drawing their congregations locally. Relationships between the Christian churches are good and the Gospel Hall has on occasion used the facilities at the parish Church when its premises have proved too small.

A Christian based charity, "Somebody Cares" until recently occupied a vacant warehouse in Summerhill Road. Somebody Cares is a charity which provides free food, clothing, furniture, beds, carpets, dishes and cutlery (and more) to those in need. The congregation of Summerhill continues to support this charity in its new location.

Older people are well provided for within Summerhill, accounting for Summerhill's position as having the highest proportion of over 75s in any parish in north Aberdeen. There are sheltered housing complexes at Gray Court, Rosewell Gardens, Denseat Court and Bressay Brae; whilst Roswell House has recently reopened in a new purpose-built facility. Summerhill Eventide Home is a Christian Brethren facility, also within the bounds of the parish. Also within the bounds are areas of supported living, at various levels, including at Eday Gardens, which provides for people with severe disabilities.

There are recreational facilities based in Summerhill. Aberdeen Indoor Bowling Club, which is supported by patrons from throughout the city, including some of our own membership, is based in Summerhill Road. Curl Aberdeen is a modern curling rink situated towards the western end of the parish and, in addition to domestic curling, attracts international competitions.

In 2015, within Summerhill there was one Baptism, 14 Funerals and no Weddings.

Congregation of Summerhill

The Congregational Roll of Summerhill currently numbers approximately 133, of whom about 35 – 40 regularly attend Sunday Worship. The congregation is governed by the Unitary Constitution and Kirk Session comprises 17 Elders.

Currently, there is one service of public worship at 11 am each Sunday, with plans to hold a 9.30am Service for families, on 'Messy Church' outlines. Formal communion is held four times a year, with an informal communion at the close of the service on the last Sunday of all other months. This tends to be attended by around 20 of the congregation. An Emmaus Group (Bible Study) meets weekly in the church.

Those who are resident in the sheltered housing complexes within the parish are catered for on a rotational basis, with each home hosting an informal service led by members of the congregation or Minister once a month.

Approximately 70% of the congregation are female and a high proportion of the membership is of retirement age. There are few children of school age in, or associated with the congregation.

The congregation historically supported both Girls' and Boys' Brigade Companies, however, in recent years, the memberships of both dropped and in 2001 the Boy's Company folded. The Girl's Brigade remained until 2009, however, the numbers attending made it impossible to sustain the Company within the church and it, too, was dissolved. In both cases, the remaining members were directed towards nearby Companies, in which the congregation of Summerhill maintains an interest. Recently, a Parent and Toddler group has been formed and meets on one morning each week.

Twice a month, on Tuesday afternoons, the church hosts a Pop-in Café, which provides an opportunity for fellowship and a forum for anyone from the area to attend and chat, to share their troubles and triumphs. Although designed as a facility for the parish, the main support is from within the congregation, however, it is still considered a valuable service and the intention is for it to continue.

There is a housegroup, organised and run by members of the congregation, which has a small, but loyal regular attendance.

Once a month, the congregation runs a very successful lunch club, catering for 35 – 40 mainly older people from the parish. This is an outreach project that has developed recently.

The church hosts an indoor car boot sale on the third Saturday of most months and a quarterly Craft Fair, providing a service to the community, an opportunity to interact with people from outside the congregation and to raise funds for fabric work in the church.

The annual Christmas Sale in aid of the Fabric Fund is held in November in conjunction with the Craft Fair.

The congregation supports a number of other charities and agencies in their work. Our Mission Partner is Margaret McLaren, who is currently deployed in Uganda with Mission Aviation Fellowship. Annually, the members fill and dispatch about 100 shoeboxes for Blythswood Care Christmas appeal for Eastern Europe. We also support 'Christian Aid', 'Tearfund', 'Mary's Meals', 'Bibles for Muslims', 'Tools for Africa', together with local charities, Cyrenians and Instant Neighbour, who benefit from the Harvest Thanksgiving service. The congregation, though small in number, are

enthusiastic supporters of many projects and have raised disproportionate sums in support thereof.

Members of the congregation are involved in worship in various ways; a small (but enthusiastic) choir occasionally lead some of the praise, members read from Scripture during the services, lead prayers and sometimes even preach. Worship is led by music from an electronic organ and digital piano. A group of elders leads worship in homes for the elderly on a rotational basis. Relationships with neighbouring congregations are strong and Summerhill is instrumental in organising the annual World Day of Prayer services in the area.

The membership recognises that a small congregation cannot afford professionals to carry out domestic chores and, therefore, DIY is the order of the day. By this means, the church buildings are cleaned and decorated and minor property maintenance tasks are undertaken. There are also a number of talented flower-arrangers, who provide inspirational floral displays for worship.

Church Buildings

Summerhill Church occupies a site to the east of Stronsay Drive and comprises a large sanctuary with capacity for approximately 400, from which the pews have recently been removed, creating a useful multi-purpose space. There is a large hall with stage, two meeting rooms, a vestry, kitchen and toilets. The church buildings are approximately 55 years old and there have been a number of recurrent problems. Generally, these have now been resolved. Historically, members of the congregation have carried out much of the maintenance of the property, including refurbishment of the halls, decoration and painting of the exterior walls and most recently refurbishment of the kitchen and toilet facilities. Recently, the asbestos has been professionally removed and work is under way to install new boilers for the heating system.

The halls are used throughout the week by external groups, including a Kick Boxing Academy, Keep Fit classes and the local Councillor's regular surgeries. St Thomas' Congregational Church of India worships in the Sanctuary on Sunday afternoons twice per month and frequently uses other parts of the premises for social and outreach events.

The congregation has undertaken a programme of replacement of all windows with double-glazed units over several years. Major projects have been funded by means of loans from The Church of Scotland, all of which have been fully repaid on time.

Manse

The Manse was built alongside the church building in 1975 and is a spacious bungalow with three public rooms and four bedrooms, kitchen, utility room, bathroom and cloakroom. During the most recent vacancy, significant work was undertaken to upgrade the accommodation. A new kitchen was fitted, complete with modern appliances; the central heating boiler replaced, the master bedroom en-suite shower-room completely refurbished and a new shower fitted in the family bathroom.

Vision

The members are very aware of the ageing congregation and, particularly, the lack of young people, both adults and children, associated with the church. They see it as a priority to be proactive and to take the church to the people.

There are many individuals within the congregation who possess talents that are not fully exploited. It is a weakness of the congregation that nobody volunteers; it is a strength that when asked, most will do it – and do it well.

Utilising our recently updated multi-purpose space, we are developing the success of the Lunch Club and are looking to run an 'Alpha for Seniors' course. On a 'Messy Church' style basis we are planning to start an early Sunday morning family worship Service, which will provide a forum to explore different styles of worship and expand the music with complementary instruments.

We also plan to develop a deeper relationship with St Thomas' Church on an informal basis.

The Ideal Minister!

Summerhill, parish and congregation, is seeking a vibrant minister with an interest in all ages, who can lead and work with the Office Bearers to encourage new membership and revitalise lapsed members to build up the church in Summerhill. This is a challenging role within a small congregation, which needs an individual who can be supportive in all aspects of congregational life and can provide strong leadership and

guidance, whilst remaining sensitive to the emotional needs of the membership and congregation. We are an informal and relaxed family church in need of a dedicated minister who will work with the office-bearers and others to achieve common goals.

The current uncertainty regarding the buildings of the church and how they should be adapted or reconstructed means that this charge would be ideal for an individual with vision and flair who is willing to accept the associated challenges.

The parish and congregation comprise a high percentage of older people, who appreciate being visited in their own homes, especially by the minister. Whilst the successful applicant could not be expected to regularly visit every member, this is seen as an important part of the pastoral care that the minister would undertake along with the elders of the church.

Most of all, the congregation needs a minister who is an inspired leader and can guide us to Jesus through Bible-based teaching.