

CHEVIOT CHURCHES

PARISH PROFILE

With the retirement in 2016 of the Rev. Robin McHaffie, the charge at Cheviot Churches in the Presbytery of Jedburgh has become vacant.

Cheviot Churches is a rural parish, situated in the Scottish Borders in famously beautiful countryside. There has been Christian worship on the various sites since medieval times, and the charge currently comprises five main centres of worship, over 100 square miles: Yetholm, Morebattle, Linton, Hownam and Hoselaw. There are regular services at Yetholm and Morebattle; a monthly service at Linton; intermittent services at Hownam and Hoselaw is a chapel of reflection used at Easter and Advent. Yetholm is a combination of two villages; Kirk Yetholm and Town Yetholm, separated by a bridge over the Bowmont River. Cheviot Churches faces the challenges of many rural parishes with ageing populations, but is highly considered in terms of the devotion and friendliness of the parishioners, and especially during the vacancy period the congregation has pulled together. The parish lies on the St Cuthbert's Way route and enjoys regular visits from pilgrims; it also sits on the Pennine Way and the Scottish National Trail.

There is a Mission Statement, a copy of which is attached, which the Kirk Session meets to review. Our role is to proclaim God's love, Christ's redemption and the ongoing presence of the Spirit by worship, prayer and example to the entirety of the community. The parish is openly and proudly ecumenical, with regular parishioners from many traditions – Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian and others – joining in the celebration of God alongside their neighbours and friends.

The parish is at present in the process of selling the old manse and acquiring a new one.

There are currently 295 members on the Church Roll and 56 on the adherent and supplementary, out of a population of around 1440. Average attendances would be between 30-50 at Yetholm; 20-30 at Morebattle and 15-20 at Linton, with joint services having significantly more. The charge currently operates under a unitary constitution. There are 24 elders, 21 of whom comprise the Kirk Session, with the average age being over 50, ten of them being men and eleven women. Seven elders were admitted in 2017, three by ordination and four by admission.

The following committees are active under the jurisdiction of the Kirk Session: Property and Finance Committee, Mission and Outreach Committee, Worship Committee, Ways and Means with Stewardship Committee, Children and Youth Ministry Team. It is an eco-congregation and has designated safeguarding specialists. Although Cheviot Churches is not part of the Kelso Churches Together initiative, there may be the potential to explore closer links with neighbouring parishes, both those in the Church of Scotland and from other ecclesiastical traditions. There are regular prayer meetings and occasional Bible study groups.

Cheviot Churches also undertakes a number of outreach programmes. These include: regular Guild meetings; a coffee morning, weekly through the summer and monthly through the winter at Yetholm; a breakfast Toast Club for Yetholm Primary School; a "Use Your Talents" Craft Club, a Mother and Toddlers' Group; an after school "Cool Club", with summer holiday special events; a presence at the local Shepherds' Show and in previous years an annual pilgrimage to Lindisfarne. The Church also provides, alongside other local churches, services at Queen's House Residential Nursing Home. The Churches have also been used for fashion shows, choir concerts and they have links to the local Common Riding traditions, with special services for the Crowning of the Morebattle Queen, the Vigilantes' Ride to Hownam and the Kirking of the Bari Gadgie and the Bari Manushi [village principals] at Yetholm. There are also visitors interested in the Pre-Raphaelite paintings in

Hoselaw Chapel and the medieval “Wyrn” stone carving at Linton. There is a quarterly parish magazine assembled and delivered by volunteers and Elders. In previous years there have been “Souper Sunday” lunches and a Harvest Lunch at Morebattle; a special service of thanks during the lambing period.

Within the communities the following facilities exist: there are Primary Schools in both Yetholm and Morebattle, with the local secondary school being in the town of Kelso, six miles away. There are local shops in both Yetholm and Morebattle, with a Post Office and cafe in the Yetholm Village shop, as well as butcher’s shops in both Morebattle and Yetholm. There are two pub/hotels in Yetholm and one in Morebattle. In terms of community venues there are three in Yetholm, two in Morebattle and one in Hownam. There is a garage and a medical centre in Yetholm, and a garage in Morebattle. The majority of the population is retired. The nearest hospital is around twenty miles away outside the town of Melrose. The nearby local towns have a number of supermarkets and independent shops. The villages have a strong social and cultural life, with the Community Council providing, among other things, screenings from the National Theatre in London and the New York Metropolitan Opera House; pub quizzes; local “village lunches”; an active Historical Society; a popular local pantomime; agricultural and rural shows; allotment competitions; film nights and a range of other events.

Both Morebattle and Yetholm Churches have modern sound systems, and Yetholm has four projection screens. Printed orders of service are available, and there are organs in all the churches except Hoselaw. Although CH4 is used predominantly, other resources have been used when appropriate. There are regular organists; a church rota for those who welcome people and uptake the offerings and for the reading of the Gospel. All worship is all-age worship, in that all are welcome. In terms of pastoral care, as with many small communities, news of need, especially bereavement or illness, becomes known by word of mouth, though the Eldership takes an active role in visits as and when appropriate. The church participates in both Christian Aid and Tearfund, as well as Fairtrade and a presence at the Cancer Research Big Coffee Morning. The average deficit over the past two years has been in the region of £10,000, and our contribution to Ministries and Mission was £45,800. There were approximately 20 funerals in the past five years and 30 baptisms. Auxiliary duties, such as administration, web presence, cleaning, changing of seasonal banners, flowers and such forth are done by volunteers. The website, which has a visual record of the parish activities and further information may be found at <https://cheviotchurches.weebly.com>.

MINISTER PROFILE

After prayer and deliberation, the Nominating Committee has agreed upon certain characteristics which we believe would be particularly apposite for our Session, Congregation and Community.

CHALLENGES

This may not be the easiest of charges, given the extent of the parishes, the number of places of worship and the rural nature of the area, but it should be noted that the two previous ministers both served for over twenty years; a testament to their affection and commitment to this place. We realise that much is to be done – with an ageing population and fewer young people attending Church – but are hopeful that the right person in the right place at the right time might begin to address this.

VISION

First and foremost, we would care to have a minister who was able to lead by guidance, who would use the talents of the existing congregation while encouraging others to contribute, and who would delegate when necessary and appropriate. There is a need for a vision how a parish such as this continues its work, and a necessity that the minister, when necessary, takes the leading role in moving that forward with drive and integrity. We are a diverse congregation and it would be beneficial if the minister were able to communicate to every part of that diversity. As a group of small communities, there is an expectation that the minister would take part in, and indeed carry the Word of the Lord into, the other activities which bind the villages together.

WORSHIP AND CARE

The parish is traditional but not conservative. Increased ecumenical activity and innovations which prove to be of spiritual worth would be welcomed. In terms of pastoral care, we would expect someone with empathy, kindness and able to speak to all members of the community rather than just the congregation, and who was more of a listener than an orator.

FAITH

Many of the ideal qualities the committee discussed were features we would expect of any minister: a commitment to preaching the Word, diplomacy and sincerity, fidelity to the Church of Scotland's principles and the ability to clarify the future of Cheviot Churches in terms of outreach.

OPPORTUNITIES

This parish would offer both rewards and challenges to any new incumbent, but anyone who feels that this might be their calling can be assured that there is already in place a committed, faithful and supportive group of people to advance our challenge.

Supporting Documents

From the Order of Service for the Union of the Linked Charges of Linton, Morebattle and Hownam, Yetholm [2004]

We the members of this congregation re-affirm our Mission Statement; - We, members of Linton, Morebattle, Hownam and Yetholm, affirm that our congregation exists to love, serve and worship God in our communities. In the name of our Lord we express his call and compassion to all. We bring to young and old the teachings of Jesus Christ and the good news of God's love for us. We exist to be open to, available for and alongside all who need Christ's care and strength. On the 25th of November 2004 we enter this union seeking his will as we gladly celebrate his presence amongst us and place all our gifts and resources into his hands. We enter this union rejoicing in our common faith and life in the Holy Spirit and will walk together till he comes again to make all things new. God be blessed forever.

From the Trustees' Annual Report to year end 31 December 2017

Objectives and Aims

The Church of Scotland is Trinitarian in doctrine, Reformed in tradition and Presbyterian in polity. It exists to glorify God and to work for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom throughout the world. As a national church, it acknowledges a distinctive call and duty to bring the ordinances of religion to

the people of every parish of Scotland through a territorial ministry. It co-operates with other churches in various ecumenical bodies in Scotland and beyond.

This congregation exercises an extensive territorial ministry to four former large rural parishes. As well as providing worship and sacraments at five places of worship a pastoral minister is offered to all residents of the parish. Christian education is offered through an active children's ministry and study groups. Through various working groups a parish magazine is circulated, events and exhibitions organized and an attempt is made to engage in the life of the communities within the parish area.