



The gift of age

Older people, faith communities, and volunteering

October 2022

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Since 2007, Faith in Older People (FiOP) has been working to explore, affirm, and celebrate the contribution of older people both to Scotland's faith communities and to the wider community at large.

The Tor Christian Foundation funded FiOP and Simon Jaquet Consultancy Services Ltd to carry out a one-year research project (September 2021 to August 2022) into the contribution to society of older people in faith communities.

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1 Introduction

Faith in Older People

1.1 Faith in Older People (FiOP) is a small Scottish voluntary organisation with the aim of developing a stronger understanding of the importance of the spiritual dimension in our lives as we age and for those who care for us. It provides innovative methods of encouraging and supporting people to value the importance of the spiritual lives of older people in their care in a practical way - both with faith communities and into the wider sphere of health and social care.

1.2 FiOP aims to mobilise faith communities to understand, promote and support the importance of the diversity of social and spiritual needs of older members in their congregations and local communities.

1.3 In addition, FiOP aims to highlight the contribution made by our faith communities to the wellbeing of their local community and in particular the role of older people from within these communities.

The Tor Foundation

1.4 The TOR Christian Foundation is the legacy of the TOR Christian Nursing Home that was based in Murrayfield and was closed and sold when it became financially unviable. TOR offers financial support to churches and organisations that share our vision for Pastoral Care work for older people to:

- Promote and support the physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing of older people, particularly those living in their own homes who are isolated due to physical or age related frailty
- Work as a champion for older people in the church, supporting older people in their physical and mental wellbeing as appropriate, enabling and assisting with access to wider community health support
- Enable and promote cross-generational and inter-church connections as well as seeking to make connections in the wider community, looking to serve not only the older people of the church but also those with no church connections
- Complement and run alongside rather than replicating or replacing ministry already being done by churches
- Encourage churches to work together, building networks to improve care and learn from one another

1.5 Monies given have enabled a variety of work to be undertaken ranging from kitchen equipment to be bought, continuation or expansion of day-care provision, new posts created to support older people within churches as well as capital projects.

The research aim and objectives

1.6 The overall aim of the research was to identify and better understand the contribution made by older people in faith communities to volunteering, community well-being and citizenship, highlighting in particular the voluntary 'ministry' which lies at the heart of Christian faith, and is also echoed in all other faiths.

1.7 To achieve this, we had the following objectives:

- Understand the extent to which older people sustain faith communities through voluntary service
- Learn about the impact from the experience of the current 'lockdown' on older people undertaking voluntary service
- 'Map' the needs, contribution, and potential of older volunteers in faith communities
- Identify examples of innovative and challenging practice, particularly ones which have developed in response to the pandemic, exploring how sustainable they are in practice.

2 Context

2.1 In this chapter we briefly summarise the principal policy drivers that currently impact on the lives of older people in Scotland. These include several Scottish Government policies and frameworks.

2.2 The Coronavirus pandemic has focused public attention on the significant contribution that older people make to their local community. There have been positive examples, such as the war veteran Captain Tom Moore raising more than £32m for the NHS. However, on the less positive side, those over 70 have, in effect, been largely 'excluded' from contributing their skills and time locally due to the requirements of lockdown.

Older people - the numbers

2.3 There are just under 700,000 older people aged 65 or older who belong to faith communities in Scotland.

2.4 The growth of the older population in Scotland is well recognised. The General Register's Office projects that the total population of Scotland will rise from 5.22 million in 2010 to 5.76 million in 2035 and that the number of people of pensionable age is projected to rise from 1.04 million in 2010 to 1.32 million in 2035 (an increase of around 26 per cent). However, mid-year population estimates in 2021 from National Records of Scotland¹ show that Scotland's population is ageing compared with previous decades. Since 2000, the number of people aged 65+ in Scotland has increased by a third, while the number of children has fallen by 6%.

2.5 All 32 Scottish council areas have also seen an increase in their population aged 65 and over in the last decade – including those areas where the total population fell.

2.6 These demographic changes will have implications for faith communities, as well as the delivery of health and social care, and the extension of work and lifelong learning for people over retirement age.

Scottish Government policy

2.7 In its report 'If not now, when?'² the Social Renewal Advisory Board set up by the Scottish Government in 2021 addressed three key challenges: money and work; people, rights and advancing equality; communities and collective endeavour. These in turn informed 20 calls for action.

'We need to use our new-found localness and the sense of coming together, that has been such a focus of the response to the pandemic, to enhance, build and redevelop our communities' and places' resilience.'

¹ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-estimates/mid-year-population-estimates/mid-2021>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/not-now-social-renewal-advisory-board-report-january-2021/>

2.8 We have grouped the relevant policy documents under the three headings used in this research report:

- Older people
- Volunteering
- Faith communities

Older people

2.9 In 'A Connected Scotland: our strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections' (December 2018)³, the Scottish Government's first national strategy to tackle social isolation and loneliness and build stronger social connections, four priorities were identified:

- Priority 1: Empower communities and build shared ownership
- Priority 2: Promote positive attitudes and tackle stigma
- Priority 3: Create opportunities for people to connect
- Priority 4: Support an infrastructure that fosters connection

2.10 Current Scottish Government policy highlights both the potential of older people as volunteers, and the challenges they face. 'A Fairer Scotland for Older People: A Framework for Action'⁴ (Scottish Government 2019) focused on three areas:

- Communities - including opportunities for older people to remain actively engaged with, and involved in, their communities, and activity that brings different generations together
- Accessing Services - including the health and social care services older people require, including mental health, and opportunities to influence how health and social care integration is organised and delivered.
- Financial Security - including flexible employment opportunities, and measures to address the rising retirement age and the implications it has for older people's caring responsibilities and volunteering opportunities.

2.11 The 'Independent Review of Adult Social Care in Scotland'⁵ (Scottish Government 2021) recommended that changes to adult social care take place in three areas: shifting the paradigm; strengthening the foundations; re-designing the system. The report contained calls to abandon 'old thinking' in favour of 'new thinking', and to co-produce a new system in partnership with those who it is designed to support.

Volunteering

2.12 The important contribution of volunteers (as well as the benefits they derive) is described in 'Volunteering for all: our national framework'⁶ (Scottish Government 2019). These carry a particular resonance for older people.

³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/connected-scotland-strategy-tackling-social-isolation-loneliness-building-stronger-social-connections/>

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-older-people-framework-action/>

⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/independent-review-adult-social-care-scotland/>

⁶ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/volunteering-national-framework/>

'Volunteering brings enormous benefits and enjoyment, not only to beneficiaries, but to communities, and to volunteers themselves. We know that – among other things – volunteering increases social and civil participation, empowers communities, and reduces loneliness and isolation. It can also improve mental and physical health, support the development of job and life skills, and foster a greater sense of belonging.'

2.13 'Scotland's volunteering action plan'⁷ (Scottish Government June 2022) builds on the Framework and recognises the importance of understanding 'older potential volunteers through research that examines their needs and motivations to volunteers'.

Faith communities

2.14 In November 2020, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon addressed Scotland's faith communities. Acknowledging the crucial role they had played during the current pandemic, she commented:

*'Scotland's faith communities and interfaith groups make a massive contribution to our society. That's true at all times but it has been especially evident this year as we dealt with the challenge of COVID-19. Across the country faith communities and interfaith groups have delivered food and support to vulnerable people. You have reached out to those who are isolated, and you have provided people with solace, comfort and spiritual guidance when they've needed it most. In doing so, you've helped mitigate some of the worst impacts of this crisis. And you've demonstrated values of solidarity, compassion and love which are so important to our society overall.'*⁸

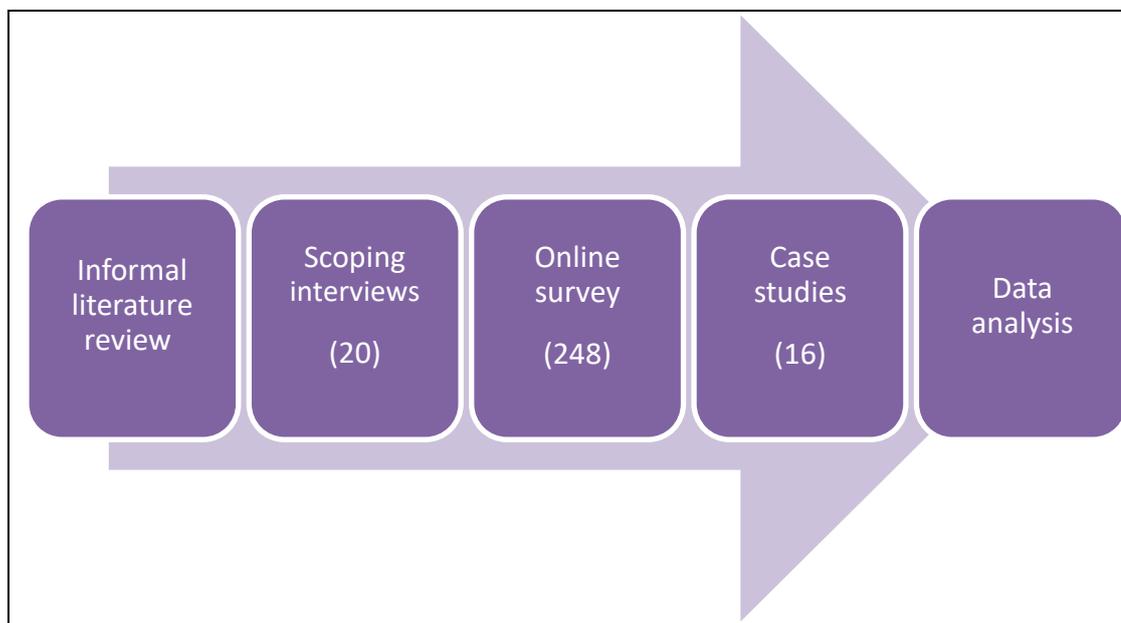
⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-volunteering-action-plan/>

⁸ [Nicola Sturgeon message to Scottish faith communities - YouTube](#)

3 Method

3.1 In this chapter, we briefly describe how we planned and undertook the research. The model below summarises our approach.

Diagram 1: Research method



Literature review

3.2 We looked at a range of literature that addressed the needs and aspirations of the following three social demographics within Scotland: volunteers; older people; those within a faith community. Examining reports on volunteering, health and wellbeing, faith-based charities, older people, COVID-19, as well as academic journals and media we found that 8 themes emerged. The full literature review can be found in the Appendix.

Language and preferred words/descriptions used when describing and understanding:

3.3 “Volunteering” can be classified into three categories - formal, informal, and neighbourliness. The concept of “service” varies across different religions and uses different terms (e.g. khidmat, tzedakah and seva). 'Older old' and 'younger old' were useful terms to describe a wide age range.

Motivations for volunteering

3.4 Outside of the spiritual motivations for volunteering, there were other drivers such as a desire for new experiences, the need for social contact, career development and enhancement.

The necessity for volunteering due to the ageing population

3.5 Reports expressed how important it was to volunteer to tackle our society's economic, health, and community needs.

Older people delivering vs receiving the 'gift' of volunteering

3.6 Within formal volunteering the largest percentage of volunteers across all age groups, was highest in the 'local community or neighbourhood' for people aged 60-74 (30%) and was highest in 'religion and belief' for 75+ (34%).

Collaboration between faith groups and non-faith groups

3.7 There are frequent collaborations between faith groups and non-faith groups and local authorities see faith based organisations. These are seen as 'essential' to building, developing, and nourishing civil society, especially when facing major challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Technology and online volunteering

3.8 Because of the impact of COVID-19, and the growth of an ever more online society as we moved through the 21st Century, technology and online volunteering became a large factor in how faith organisations served their communities.

The negative impacts of volunteering

3.9 In some research evidence, the negative impacts of volunteering were highlighted. Linning and Jackson (2018) also researched the adverse impact of volunteering on wellbeing. They found that features such as role strain, burnout, challenging roles, unemployment support, and physical health – particularly for older people - could mean a reduction in general wellbeing.

Methodological approaches relevant to the current research

3.10 Linning and Jackson identified important evidence gaps in their research paper Volunteering, Health and Wellbeing (2018) which included factors like informal volunteering, community wellbeing, and causal mechanisms - all relevant to this research.

Scoping

3.11 A series of 20 scoping interviews with key informants permitted us to explore relevant themes and issues - from current policy developments at government level through to practical methodological considerations. This included:

- The best way to engage with faith communities at local level
- The rough number of survey returns can we expect from each faith community, and how to maximise this
- Volunteer activities generated by and through the faith community and how older people are involved in this
- Examples of interesting projects we can expect to gather

- What helps / hinders older people becoming and remaining volunteers
- The impact of COVID-19 on the over 70s
- How the five 'gifts of age' can be used to describe older people's volunteering

Online survey

3.12 Building on the advice and intelligence gathered in the scoping phase, we designed, tested, and ran an online survey aimed at 'local' faith community leaders in Churches, Mosques, Temples, Synagogues, and Gurdwaras.

3.13 In order to help us reach our intended audience, we produced a short film - entitled 'The gift of age' - which gave some real examples of the kind of activities we were interested in. The link to access this online was then widely advertised through a range of national and local networks.

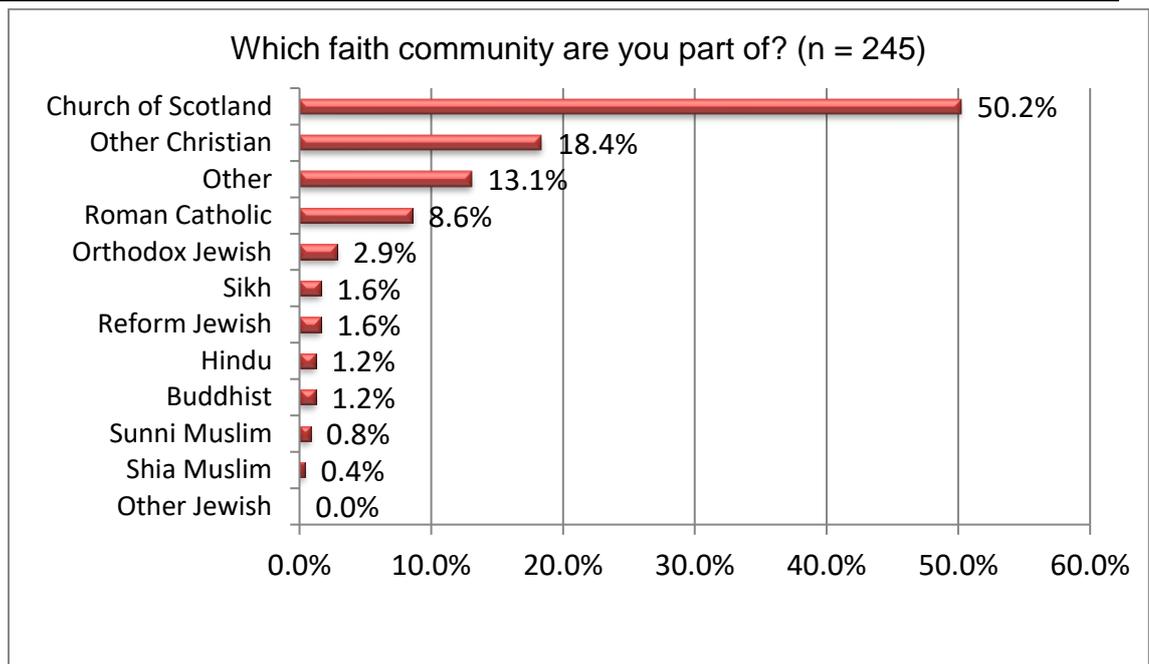
3.14 The survey asked respondents to provide data and views on the following broad issues:

- The size and composition of their faith community
- The services they provide for people in their local neighbourhood (from small local support groups to larger scale projects), and the beneficiaries of these services
- Any partnership arrangements with other organisations
- The particular qualities brought by older people
- The value of the 'five gifts' model of volunteering
- The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on older volunteers

3.15 The survey was open for seven weeks during March and April 2022.

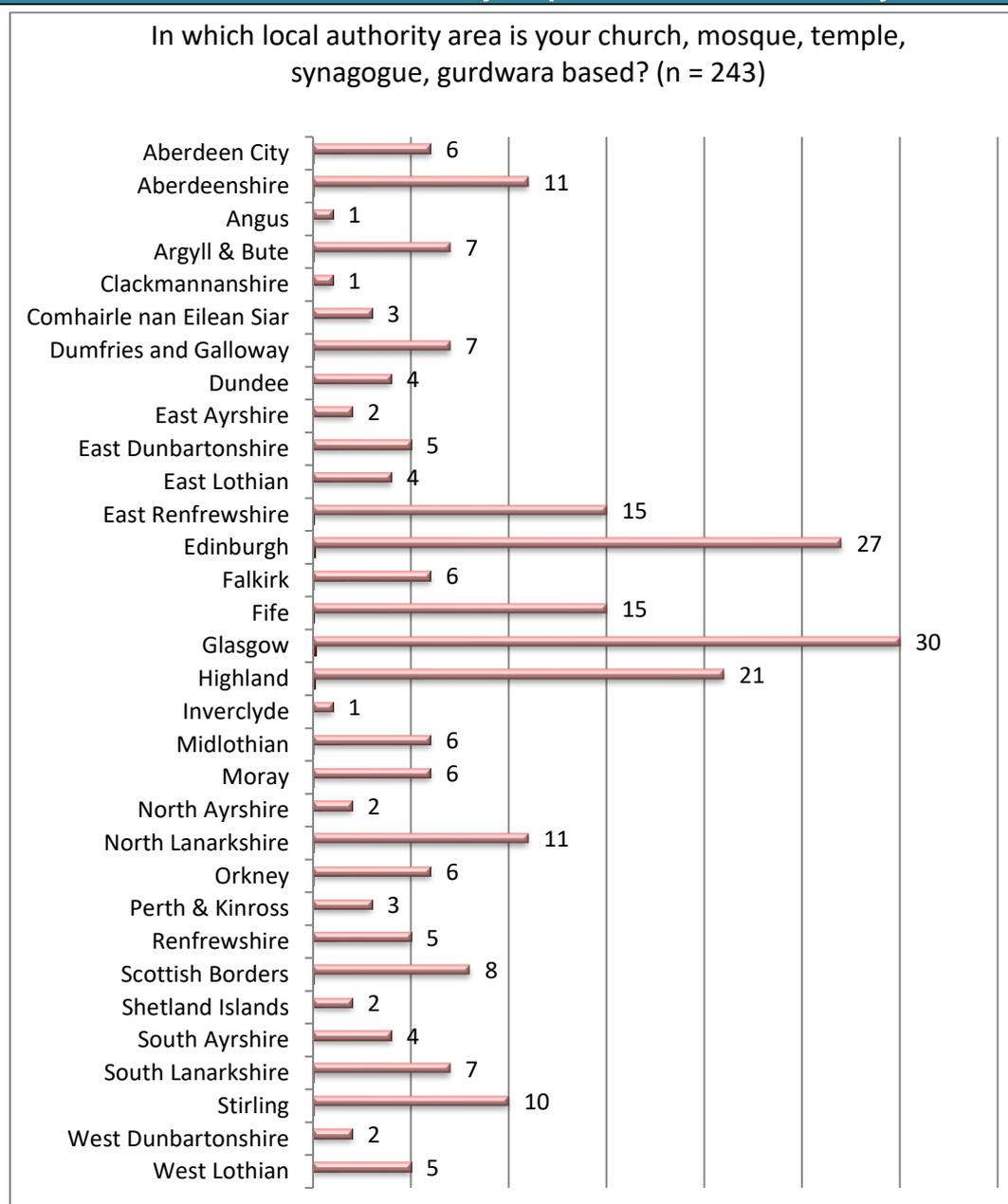
3.16 We received 248 responses. These are shown in the table below. All the main stakeholders groups were included in the returns, with half coming from the Church of Scotland. While not claiming to have achieved a formally representative sample across the faith communities, the broad trends echo the spread of faiths and denominations (see chapter 4)

Chart 2: Membership of faith community in online survey



3.17 There was a wide geographical spread in the survey returns, with responses coming from all 32 Scottish local authority areas (see the chart below).

Chart 3: Location of faith community respondents in online survey



Case studies

3.18 Respondents to the survey were invited to express an interest in providing further data about their work in the form of a short case study. 53 organisations said they were. 16 of these were then selected for further discussion, aiming to embrace a range of faiths, activities, and geography. Following an in-depth telephone interview with a researcher, each case study was developed collaboratively, expanding on the following areas:

- How the need for the project / activity was identified, and by who
- How it evolved
- Who it was mainly aimed at
- What actually happened (places, dates, participants, activities)

- Who the partner organisations were
- The distinctive role played by older people in running the activity
- Any significant changes in the local community brought about by the work

3.19 The table on the next page summarises the main focus, the local authority area and the geographical setting of each of the case studies.

Table 4: Summary of case studies

	Main focus of case study														Local authority	Geo-graphical setting	
	Loss & bereavement	Children	Foodbanks	Homelessness	Community cafes	Debt	Employability	Addiction	Asylum seekers & refugees	Social & pastoral support	Families	Environment & sustainability	Young people	Older people / dementia			Learning disabilities
Baha'i Community of Dumfries & Galloway		✓											✓			Dumfries & Galloway	Rural
(City centre) evangelical church									✓							Edinburgh	Urban
Cults Parish Church of Scotland					✓											Aberdeen shire	Rural
Drylaw Parish Church of Scotland		✓								✓						Edinburgh	Urban
Glasgow Friends of Israel								✓								Glasgow	Urban
Glasgow Gurdwara		✓											✓			Glasgow	Urban
Hindu Mandir Temple, Leith													✓			Edinburgh	Urban
Holy Trinity Wester Hailes, Edinburgh			✓													Edinburgh	Urban
Kinross Parish Church	✓													✓	✓	Fife	Rural

Lochside Churches														✓	Argyll & Bute	Rural	
Penicuik North Kirk														✓	Midlothian	Rural	
Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society										✓					Edinburgh	Urban	
St Aidan's RC church, Johnstone														✓	Renfrewshire	Urban	
St Andrew's Church of Scotland, Carluke														✓	South Lanarkshire	Rural	
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints								✓							Aberdeen	Urban	
West Lochfyneside Church of Scotland			✓												Argyll & Bute	Rural	
Total	1	3	2		1			1	1	1	2		3	5	1		

Data analysis

3.20 The research tools generated a large amount of both quantitative and qualitative data at every stage of the development of the project. The data from the initial scoping exercise, the survey responses, and the case studies was analysed and a thematic framework developed based around the following three themes:

- Older people
- Volunteer and community engagement
- Faith communities

Stakeholder workshop

3.21 The draft research findings were then shared with participants at a specially convened stakeholder workshop, where they were debated and prioritised (see Appendix).

4 Findings: older people

4.1 In this chapter we outline the main findings that relate to the recent experience of older people in faith communities.

The demography

4.2 We have known for some time that older people within the Scottish population are becoming an increasingly important demographic group (see Context). According to the last Census (2011), there are just under 700,000 people over the age of 65 in Scotland professing membership of a faith community.

4.3 The table below provides a breakdown (using figures from the 2011 census) of the over 65 year old population according to professed faith community, age, and gender.

Table 5: The Scottish population - by age, gender, and faith community

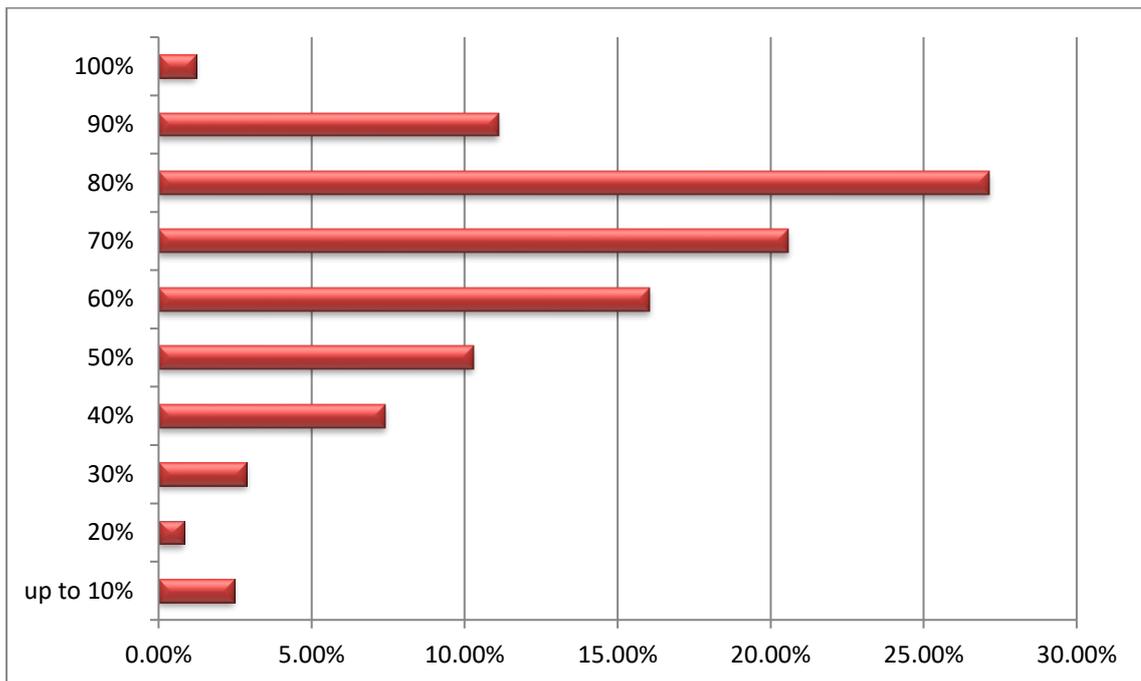
			Number	%
Scottish population	All people	All ages	5,295,403	
	Age	Under 65 years	4,405,069	83
		65 - 74 years	481,792	9
		75 years and over	408,542	8
	Gender	Male	2,567,444	48
Female		2,727,959	52	
Church of Scotland	All people	All ages	1,717,871	
	Age	Under 65 years	1,220,606	71
		65 - 74 years	256,491	15
		75 years and over	240,774	14
	Gender	Male	783,513	46
Female		934,358	54	
Roman Catholic	All people	All ages	841,053	
	Age	Under 65 years	715,512	85
		65 - 74 years	71,453	8
		75 years and over	54,088	6
	Gender	Male	390,059	46
Female		450,994	54	
Other Christian	All people	All ages	291,275	
	Age	Under 65 years	228,283	78
		65 - 74 years	33,196	11
		75 years and over	29,796	10
	Gender	Male	127,835	44
Female		163,440	56	
Buddhist	All people	All ages	12,795	
	Age	Under 65 years	12,074	94
		65 - 74 years	490	4
		75 years and over	231	2
	Gender	Male	6,037	47
Female		6,758	53	

Hindu	All people	All ages	16,379	
	Age	Under 65 years	15,749	96
		65 - 74 years	436	3
		75 years and over	194	1
	Gender	Male	9,613	59
Female		6,766	41	
Jewish	All people	All ages	5,887	
	Age	Under 65 years	4,418	75
		65 - 74 years	669	11
		75 years and over	800	14
	Gender	Male	2,828	48
Female		3,059	52	
Muslim	All people	All ages	76,737	
	Age	Under 65 years	74,210	97
		65 - 74 years	1,717	2
		75 years and over	810	1
	Gender	Male	41,241	54
Female		35,496	46	
Sikh	All people	All ages	9,055	
	Age	Under 65 years	8,548	94
		65 - 74 years	290	3
		75 years and over	217	2
	Gender	Male	4,785	53
Female		4,270	47	
Other religion	All people	All ages	15,196	
	Age	Under 65 years	13,902	91
		65 - 74 years	870	6
		75 years and over	424	3
	Gender	Male	6,314	42
Female		8,882	58	
No religion	All people	All ages	1,941,116	
	Age	Under 65 years	1,815,937	94
		65 - 74 years	79,957	4
		75 years and over	45,222	2
	Gender	Male	1,010,220	52
Female		930,896	48	
Religion not stated	All people	All ages	368,039	
	Age	Under 65 years	295,830	80
		65 - 74 years	36,223	10
		75 years and over	35,986	10
	Gender	Male	184,999	50
Female		183,040	50	

We also asked respondents to the survey to informally estimate, from their experience, the percentage of regular members aged over 65 in their own faith community (e.g. church, mosque, temple, synagogue, gurdwara etc). The findings of the survey revealed that over a quarter (27% - shown on the horizontal axis) thought that a significant majority (80% - shown on the vertical axis) of their community was over 65 years. This is shown in the table below.

4.4 The trend towards an ageing population in all faith communities is a well recognised phenomenon, although there are some exceptions.

Chart 6: Approximate percentage of membership aged over 65 (n = 245)



4.5 Key points from the analysis of the Census figures include:

- The total Scottish population is 5,295,403, with 83% aged under 65
- Just over 46% of the population professed adherence to a faith, while almost 44% gave either 'no religion' or religion 'not stated'
- The Church of Scotland, with just over 1.7m members, is the largest faith community
- Non-Christian faith communities tend to have a slightly higher percentage of under 65s compared to Christian faith communities
- There is a higher percentage of women (approximately 55%) in Christian faith communities compared to non-Christian faith communities where there tends to be a higher percentage of men

A retiring population

4.6 The research was interested primarily in the over 65 years age group. While some older people in this age group - in common with the wider population - were still in work, the overwhelming majority were retired. The case studies reinforced the value of involving people who were older.

“Most of our volunteers are in the older age bracket. A number of our volunteers have been former carers and some attended the Drop In before their loved one died.”

“All of my Sacristans are over 70, the Parish Council, the cleaners are all retired and take a pride and joy to clean the church. If there is a funeral, they are there providing support for the bereaved. Then there’s the great home baking – all these talents that they have. It’s not just that they are doing things - their own wee personalities are like a beautiful tapestry. Some of them

probably aren't aware of their gifts - there's one who says 'I'm useless now – I'm not good at anything' - but together they are a seam that runs through the church with their enthusiasm and just their ability to be there." (Johnstone)

4.7 For many faith communities, older people constituted an important resource for the whole community, In the survey we probed the roles that older people had in addition to direct involvement in projects, activities, and delivery of services. Playing a role within the leadership team (88%) and in the (often burdensome but necessary) administration tasks (77%) were the highest ranked tasks.

4.8 Several respondents to the survey spoke of the central role of older members of their community in 'keeping the wheels turning' - managing (and in many cases carrying out) the routine tasks required by any organisation. Some went further than this, and projected a rather bleak future, fearing the demise of faith communities with the passing of this generation.

Table 7: Practical 'behind the scenes' support provided by older people in your faith community (n = 178)

	Older people are frequently involved in this	Older people sometimes do this	Older people rarely do this	Older people never get involved with this
Leadership/governance of the faith community	88%	10%	2%	0%
Routine administration of the faith community	77%	18%	5%	0%
Facilitating small study groups	49%	36%	10%	5%
Leading teams (e.g. organising a welcome team or hospitality team)	74%	19%	6%	1%
Running worship (eg. prayer, music, preaching)	60%	32%	6%	2%
Spiritual direction / mentoring (for community members)	33%	33%	21%	13%

'Younger old' and 'older old'

4.9 It became clear during the scoping interviews and through the literature review that important differences existed between the 65 to 74 year old group and those 75 years and older. For some in the 'older old' group there was evidence of a reluctance to involve themselves in community activities - often brought about by their experience of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting 'lockdown'. While some became more isolated, others drew support from their group.

"The pandemic was a major blow to activities, but the club re-opened in October 2021. With the experience of being unable to meet and people having to isolate, they are more committed than ever to offering opportunities for social time together and a check-in to see if everyone is doing ok."
(Johnstone)

4.10 In Penicuik, the church developed a 'stay active' programme for older people. This has now been going for almost 20 years. The class has become much more than a way of keeping active. It has its own community of participants and volunteers who have different roles, including some 'older old' people.

"One of the nice things to come from it – so many of the older ones felt they weren't doing anything for anybody for any longer, or were no longer feeling needed, but helping with fundraising was one thing they could do – they feel they are doing something still within their community – that part of it has been really important." (Penicuik)

4.11 One minister highlighted the challenge faced by older volunteers as they become less able to play an active role in church life.

"It seems to me, as a minister, that this is an increasing issue in pastoral care. How do we support our older members to feel valued when they become more frail and they notice what they cannot do, rather than their value in terms of simply 'being'." (Drylaw)

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on older people

4.12 The COVID-19 pandemic has had a double impact on older people involved in supporting their community through their faith community. Paradoxically, many older people preferred home based contact using technology, while at the same time many appeared to feel more isolated and less confident to leave their house unaided.

Table 8: Volunteering in the pandemic (n = 242)

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
It has become more difficult for older people to volunteer since the pandemic	1%	9%	11%	39%	40%
Older people tend to have less confidence now to leave their home	1%	4%	14%	46%	35%
It is harder to get to places because public transport has got worse	1%	23%	31%	21%	20%

Technology means older people can stay in touch without leaving their homes	2%	6%	8%	54%	30%
Older people generally feel more isolated than they did before the pandemic	1%	5%	19%	49%	26%
Funding for projects has dried up, leading to reduced opportunities for volunteers	3%	14%	39%	22%	11%
Older people are constantly being advised not to leave the house	6%	28%	32%	24%	8%

4.13 There was an intergenerational effect for some people.

“There is a positive impact on grandparents and parents overall. About 80% of the children are sent to do the language classes. Children connect to their heritage, to their families, to their history. It creates that community”.

(Glasgow Gurdwara)

4.14 Faith communities also experienced difficulties during the pandemic but were able to demonstrate a quietly fierce resistance and commitment to the people they supported. While 49% of respondents commented on feeling more isolated than before the pandemic, 54% stressed the value of modern technology (Zoom, Facetime) as a means of staying in touch.

4.15 An intergenerational approach to offering pastoral support provided new opportunities for some older people post COVID-19.

“What it did was hopefully help the church get to know each other much better. That’s been very helpful post-COVID-19 when people are going back into the physical church space... Older people are able to give their wisdom and support to the younger generations.” (Bruntsfield)

5 Findings: volunteering and community engagement

5.1 In this chapter we explore and highlight some of the very 'ordinary' ways in which older people in faith communities collaborate to provide local support to vulnerable groups and individuals.

The local community context

5.2 It is important to understand the context in which faith communities provide varying activities for their local community. These range from foodbanks to playschemes, counselling to debt advice, and addiction support to community cafes. What brings the greater majority of these together is the faith community's longterm commitment to responding to a need (often for people unlikely to receive support from elsewhere), unbounded by the constraints of contracts and short term funding arrangements. Much of the work on offer goes unnoticed - whether in an urban housing scheme or a small, dispersed, rural community.

5.3 One of the most significant features shared by the vast majority of faith communities is their use of volunteer time, energy and skill. Some initiatives may employ staff, but all make use of volunteers. By dint of their voluntarism and their ability to recruit volunteers, faith communities are particularly well placed to provide care and support.

5.4 The project below illustrates this.

“The main impact of the work is that we see ‘the person’ not dementia – and encourage people living with dementia to live as well as possible for as long as possible. The focus is on getting to know them as people, treating them as whole people, listening when they have had a tough day or tough week.”
(Carluke)

Identifying the need

5.5 We wanted to learn how faith communities can we be sure that they're meeting a need and not simply duplicating an existing service? There are four main ways in which need is identified:

- Through local community based research to find the gaps - often in the context of impending structural change such as a church merger
- Through existing informal contacts and relationships, and often championed by one highly committed individual
- Through dialogue with a range of professional services (including health, education, and social care)
- Through links with other faith communities and other local voluntary organisations

5.6 An extremely wide spectrum of needs is evidenced in the survey and the case studies. Addressing these requires flexibility.

"The need varies from individual to individual – some may come on a Tuesday to get some support before they receive benefits on Friday. Some come once for support as they arrive and settle into the area." (Wester Hailes)

Activities, projects, and community initiatives

5.7 As we undertook the scoping work at the start of the research it became clear that we needed an inclusive approach for describing and understanding what the faith communities were offering. We aimed to do this by:

1. Starting with an existing model of the type of projects and services faith communities were providing (we chose the Cinnamon Network model as our starting point with minor adaptations)
2. Building the model into the survey questionnaire (there were 11 categories)
3. Running the survey
4. Reviewing the data gathered and compensating for where there appeared to be gaps. We added three new categories, taking the total number of categories from 11 to 14.
5. Analysing the 14 categories

5.8 In the survey we gave respondents the chance to briefly describe one of their 'community initiatives' where older people (over 65 years) from their faith community were involved. We asked them to include who the initiative was for, what was offered, who benefited from it, and how older people were involved.

5.9 139 respondents provided a brief description, including the following:

Table 9: Community initiatives

A Community Cafe run by volunteers for the whole community and people of all ages but most of the regular attendees are older.

We run a toddler group and some of our older people come to spend time with young families, as well as have a 'drop in' slot where a lot of the older people come for coffee and chat.

We run a Holiday Club for a week during the summer, where primary school kids come to the church for the whole morning and have fun and learn about the Bible. Older people help with leading small groups, serving snacks, doing registration, and they support the younger leaders too.

We run a Messy Church event once a month. All members of the congregation are encouraged to support this by donating items for crafts. Several older people are involved with the planning and leading of the event on the day. This activity invites families to come and engage in crafts, games and messiness whilst learning more about the Bible and Jesus. It allows the children and parents to interact together but also engage in conversation with some of our older members, who also give direction and support to those attending.

<p>Provision of a Dementia Hub offering support three times a week to those living with dementia and their unpaid carers/family members some volunteers are older, have completed training and between them provide approximately 10-12 hours a week of support governance (through the Kirk Session) is provided mainly by people over 65 beneficiaries are the people living with dementia and their unpaid carers, wider community and area young people from an ASN school and the local secondary school have also supported pre pandemic.</p>
<p>A Senior citizens' club is run, with senior citizens themselves holding it together. It is offered to the wider community, not just church members - a fortnightly meeting, with hospitality and speakers. The Committee ensures everyone is fed, watered and welcomed - and cared for in between times!</p>
<p>Running regular cafe for older people (though discontinued during COVID-19 lockdowns) - although for older people it is also mostly people of a similar age who run the cafe. We also provide seated exercises, also led by a senior retired health professional.</p>
<p>Until COVID-19 we ran a monthly city centre service (on Cadogan Street) on a Sunday evening offering tea/coffee/hot chocolate/soft drinks/biscuits and fruit to homeless people and those living on the street. We prepare the drinks and organise the fruit and biscuits (individually wrapped biscuits) in our Quaker Meeting House and then 2 or 3 of us drive to Cadogan Street in one car and set up the table and serve the drinks and offer the biscuits and fruit etc to those who come.</p>
<p>Jewish care provide a variety of support services for the elderly and disadvantaged. There is a daily service providing food and activities and an opportunity for conversation. It is staffed mainly by volunteers many over 65 who also get a benefit by participating.</p>
<p>Introduction of a local food bank and a walk-in cafe on Mondays. It is open to anyone. Older people are involved in all of the practical aspects involved and is a good platform for our reach into the community.</p>
<p>We have set up and now run a debt advice service with a hospitality drop-in. The service and drop in are entirely staffed by volunteers who are older people.</p>
<p>We run a foodbank for two island communities. This service is entirely run by older people who have their own transport to make up for the lack of public transport to reach those in need and to manage the premises/stock of the foodbank. Without them this venture would not exist.</p>
<p>My congregation is older and they live in a small rural community where everyone knows and helps each other.</p>
<p>Our Foodshare/community food cabinet is run almost entirely by over 70s. From collection, publicity, to distribution. They also initiated the programme.</p>
<p>Our weekly foodbank gives support to those in need in our community. We provide basic food parcels, links to our other support activities, and an opportunity to chat for individuals who may feel isolated due to lifestyle, health and personal issues. We also offer pastoral support, prayer and links to our more traditional church activities for those who want it. The majority of the foodbank volunteers are aged over 65 and find the involvement rewarding, a privilege to serve the clients, and develop relationships and trust with the increasing number of people needing support in these challenging economic times.</p>

5.10 We also invited respondents to assess to what extent they had been the 'creators' of the initiative, or 'supporters' with a less active role. The levels of involvement varied (as might be expected), with the following types of initiative demonstrating most ownership and creativity:

- Supporting older people (e.g. socially isolated, experiencing dementia) (48%)
- Providing activities and opportunities for young people (40%)
- Supporting children in the early years (39%)
- Supporting people experiencing loss or bereavement (33%)

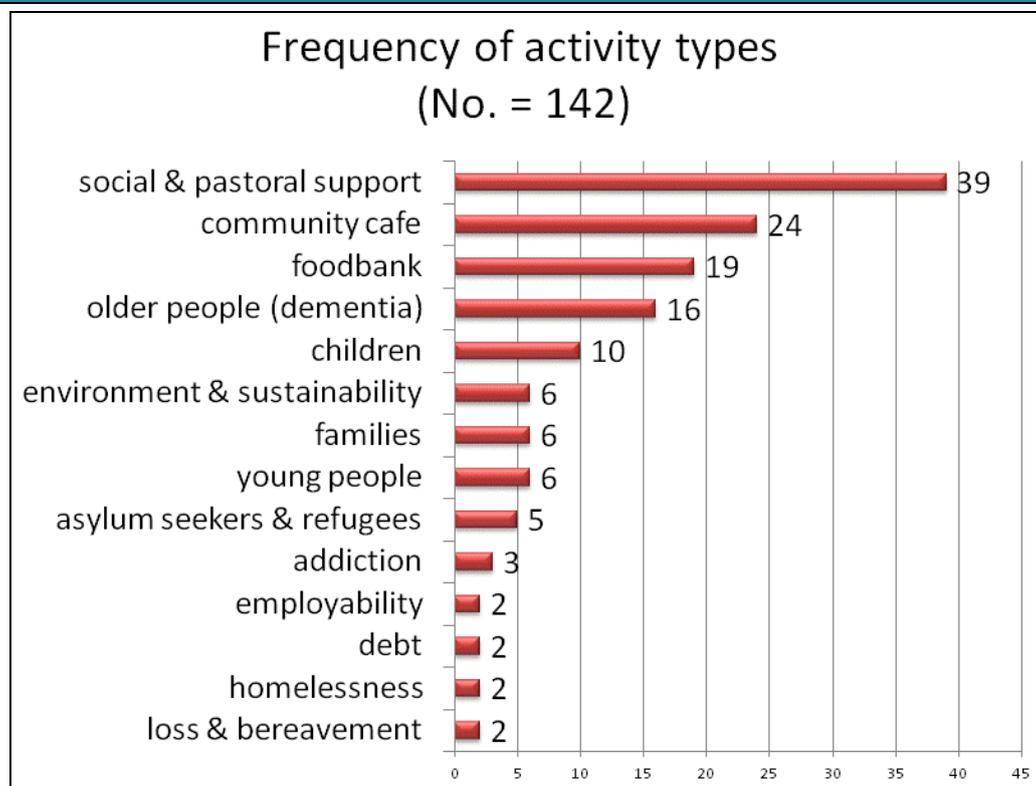
Table 10: Relationship between faith community and community initiatives

	Yes, we have created this and older people are involved	Yes, we have supported this and older people are involved	No, we don't do this	We have this, but older people are not involved
Supporting children in the early years	39%	23%	27%	11%
Providing activities and opportunities for young people	40%	25%	24%	12%
Supporting families	30%	37%	24%	9%
Supporting older people (e.g. socially isolated, experiencing dementia)	48%	39%	12%	1%
Supporting people experiencing loss or bereavement	33%	43%	18%	7%
Supporting people affected by, or recovering from addiction	7%	20%	62%	12%
Supporting people affected by homelessness	9%	26%	60%	6%
Supporting people with financial / debt problems	6%	22%	66%	6%
Supporting asylum seekers and refugees	10%	34%	48%	7%
Supporting people who need employability skills	3%	6%	85%	6%
Supporting community environmental and sustainability initiatives	31%	37%	27%	4%

5.11 We also asked respondents to say whether they would be interested in providing a more in-depth illustrative case study from their work locally. 51 people replied saying they would. In order to further refine our understanding of what was happening, we reviewed the contributions from these 51 faith communities, building in three further categories of activity types - social and pastoral support, community

cafes, and foodbanks in order to reflect the data. The following chart identifies the incidence of these 14 categories in the 51 potential case study responses. Several faith communities mentioned more than one category.

Table 11: Frequency of reported activity types



5.12 There were at least two examples of community initiatives in each category where the local faith communities played a leading role. We were struck by how frequently the more generic services such as social and pastoral support and community cafes were mentioned. The evidence pointed to faith communities particularly valuing their capacity to offer hospitality, including the use of informal social gatherings and the sharing of food.

5.13 The 16 case studies gave further in-depth descriptions of both what was going on and how the participants (and host community) felt the work was progressing. Work with older people figured in several case studies.

“Volunteers support the people living with dementia while their carers go to a different room. The carers do music and songwriting and Heart for Art. Meanwhile volunteers will be doing different activities, playing games, music, dementia friendly jigsaws, supporting things by giving out lunch and teas and coffees - welcoming people - chatting to people and building relationships.”
(Carluke)

5.14 This example focuses on the small practical tokens of support that faith communities can offer to people who have been bereaved.

“Bereavement can be a complete change of life for some and we recognise that many people need some ongoing support. There are around 7 mainly

older volunteers on the team with one being allocated to an individual or family who have been bereaved. The volunteers involved include those who have experienced difficult bereavements and recognised that they needed help and now want to give something back. They make contact 4 to 6 weeks after the funeral – taking round some flowers or a pot of jam as an ice-breaker, and really just to say that we are still thinking of people and want to make sure people are managing ok. This can be a time when the rest of society has moved on and can be a point where people are at their lowest ebb." (Kinross)

5.15 Another case study looked at addiction recovery programmes run by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the north of Scotland. These are volunteer-led - mostly by people over 65 - as the facilitators require to have relevant 'lived' experience.

"You feel a lot more comfortable talking to an older person - they're much more open. It's presented in a loving, respectful and caring way." (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

5.16 They spell out the value of the approach.

"That's where the age thing comes in, where we make sure life experience means we are non-judgemental. It's very much a case of looking after one another. It's not an assembly line. It's a continuum of helping people." (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

The human resource and volunteering

5.17 Most faith communities have access to varying levels of support from a paid member of staff. However, the vast majority rely on volunteer time and skills. The Quakers proved to be the exception that highlights the rule.

"As Quakers we have no ministers and all take responsibility for the spiritual development and pastoral care of the meeting although we do have an elder who leads on the spiritual care and an overseer who leads on pastoral care. Our clerk does the administration. All these roles are voluntary." (survey respondent)

5.18 These quotes explore some of the volunteer roles taken by faith community members.

"People of faith have a desire to serve in some way – they may not be good at baking or fundraising but this is a use and a good match of the gifts they do have - to be with people and to listen to them." (Kinross)

"In terms of the involvement of volunteers, they have been the ones who both came up with the idea and then introduced and managed it. Now that it is established, the volunteers' main role is in organising the food – it's one person who does most of this." (Lochfyneside)

“For some it is an outworking of their faith but not all of the volunteers are from the church. Two people who have come to the group have however become church members – not that this is an aim of the project.” (Carluke)

5.19 Many older people don't consider themselves 'volunteers' (which can be perceived as containing a misleading power dynamic), preferring to use a less formal term such as 'helper'. This is seen in the important (but informal) role played by older members of faith communities in fostering intergenerational relationships.

“Lots of natural interactions happen. Everyone is a festival mood, The love is there, the trust is there, the care is there - 'Oh aunty do you mind looking after my little one?' You can see at the festivals the little one come and they think I am the granny. Our older generation are providing that kind of family. Especially when looking after young couples who don't have a family. They come to the older generation and ask for advice - like childcare when they want to dance” (Hindu Mandir Temple)

Working with other organisations

5.20 We wanted to understand the nature of the complex web of organisational relationships at local level. We asked respondents how often they worked with a range of possible partners.

Table 12: Working with other organisations

Please say how often you work with the following organisations (n = 171)					
	Never	Almost never	Occasionally/sometimes	Frequently	All the time
Other faith groups	5%	11%	53%	26%	5%
Local authority	14%	20%	46%	18%	1%
Health Board	27%	35%	29%	7%	1%
Local voluntary organisations	4%	7%	41%	38%	9%
The business community	21%	41%	28%	7%	1%

5.21 There was evidence of a fierce independence which meant that only 9% worked with an organisational partner 'all the time'. However, the main partners of choice were other faith groups (31% = 'frequently' or 'all the time'), and local voluntary organisations (47% = 'frequently' or 'all the time'). With regard to public sector organisations, almost half of respondents worked with them 'occasionally or 'sometimes', while the equivalent figure for health boards was 29%.

5.22 These examples demonstrate the range of partners who may be involved

“There are no formal partnerships but there are constructive relationships with a range of organisations. People are referred to the foodbank from the health centre and from the social work department and sometimes social workers collect bags of food for clients. There is sharing and exchanging of

food with another foodbank in Sighthill as well as some sharing of information which can relate to safety and fair running of the service." (Wester Hailes)

"We occasionally supply cash for fuel poverty, as well as toys for struggling families, both facilitated by local authority. The health authority use our hall for vaccination programmes. During our recent fundraiser for Ukraine, our business community provided prizes, food and helpers. We also liaise with local community council regarding our upcoming all age community drop in, where people of all ages have opportunities to connect with each other and share skills. Our local early years worker frequently visits our Baby and Toddler group." (survey respondent)

5.23 For some faith communities, their reach extended into the wider network of local churches.

"It's not just church members – it's the local community and the next village and the next town along." (Penicuik)

5.24 Shared project work also supported the development of interfaith work.

"The foodbank has also been a way to build positive interfaith relationships as many Muslim families are supported and have been very positive about the church's work." (Wester Hailes)

5.25 We asked respondents to describe any partnership agreements they had. These tended to be informal, but included ecumenical work between churches, venue use by community groups, faith communities linking with local charities.

"The church hall, toilets and car park are often offered to organisations beyond the worshipping community." (survey respondent)

"Worked with local councillors and then formed partnership with Ferrywell Youth Project (FYP) to provide monthly football activity for 11- 14 year olds locally. Formal agreement with the latter regarding safeguarding. NHS local mental health groups and Addiction Support regularly use our premises, so letting agreement. Also informal network of support built up with NHS, Pilton Community Health Project, FYP, Oasis counselling to increase knowledge of support services locally. Also network created between pastoral care coordinators of surrounding 6 churches." (survey respondent)

"We rapidly moved into the large hall because so many folk were coming - sometimes 50 or 60 people. We were well supported initially by the Dementia Adviser and also by the presence of a CPN from the Community Mental Health Team for Older People (CMHTOP) attending each month to offer support." (Carluke)

"It (support for people living with dementia) started off as complementary (to other services) but now we're 'it'. People come from all over Clydesdale because there isn't anything else and council day services have more or less disappeared. We've become the folk who are doing things." (Carluke)

5.26 There appeared to be few standard formal partnership agreements available. Most however shared the hope that these groups could work in greater collaboration.

- Ecumenical work between churches (there were few interfaith examples)
- Venue use by community groups
- Faith communities linking with local charities

5.27 Here are some examples of partnership working given by survey respondents:

- We have "Coldstream Churches Together" which represents an informal working agreement and whose events and services are widely recognised and supported.
- We're in an ecumenical partnership with one denomination, run a debt advice service in partnership with another, and collaborate with a local ecumenical charity.
- The members of Dunblane Churches Together have an understanding that we support each other and seek to work and worship together whenever we can.
- Working in close partnership - by means of a firm verbal agreement with local Citizen's Advice Bureaux.
- Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP), connection with homeless charities, connection with refugee charities, connection with eco-justice organisations
- The four churches in the area work together for the community in a joint dementia group

Encouraging and discouraging factors

5.28 We asked survey respondents to identify whether there were any factors in particular that either encouraged or discouraged their volunteers from playing an active role in the work. The answer to both questions needs to be set against the backdrop of an ageing population which has, in many cases, given a lifetime of service. This is reflected well in the following quote.

"The issue I find, and it has repeated in a number of organisations, is that older people do not wish to take on responsibility for being on committees, treasurer, president etc. Many have in their day taken on these leadership roles and offices more than once and have no desire to be re-elected to such committee / leadership roles. Organisations of 70 - 80 members in my own church have ceased to exist because of this." (survey respondent)

5.29 The positive factors in the volunteering equation are described in the table below. Volunteers felt encouraged when they could see the positive results of their work, when they had sufficient time, and when they received a warm welcome.

Table 13: Factors encouraging volunteering (n = 178)

Factors which encourage volunteering	%
Practical assistance with travel (including costs)	21
Access to the right kind of training	30
Being able to be flexible with their time	39
Support and encouragement from other older people	42
A good welcome from the organisation and a practical induction to the work	44
Having enough time to commit	47
Seeing the positive results of the work	48

5.30 Discouragement was usually the result of poor health or lack of confidence.

"A reluctance to be involved in leadership. They feel younger people should be in the lead, even though the younger people are very time-poor."

Seeing the impact

5.31 Any discussion about identifying impact and assessing outcomes in a 'community' context risk becoming somewhat esoteric, technical, and unhelpful. The main beneficiaries of the types of programme described in this report are the people being supported, and the volunteers themselves. We have selected a small number of instances where the value is the result of ordinary people doing ordinary things and achieving substantially more than ordinary results.

"A couple of people have said that it (foodbank) was a lifeline, and one was travelling quite a distance to use it." (Lochfyneside)

"Recently a large donation of food was received from an individual who had been helped some years before at a time when her marriage had broken down and life was a struggle. The support she had received in the few weeks she had used the service had enabled her to cope." (Wester Hailes)

"There is a positive impact on grandparents and parents overall. About 80% of the children are sent to do the language classes. Children connect to their heritage, to their families, to their history. It creates that community." (Glasgow Gurdwara)

"It provides an asset for the community – a place for people to go with affordable prices. Although it's not a commercial café we do make money from it, with profits split between the church and local, national and international charities which are nominated each year." (Cults)

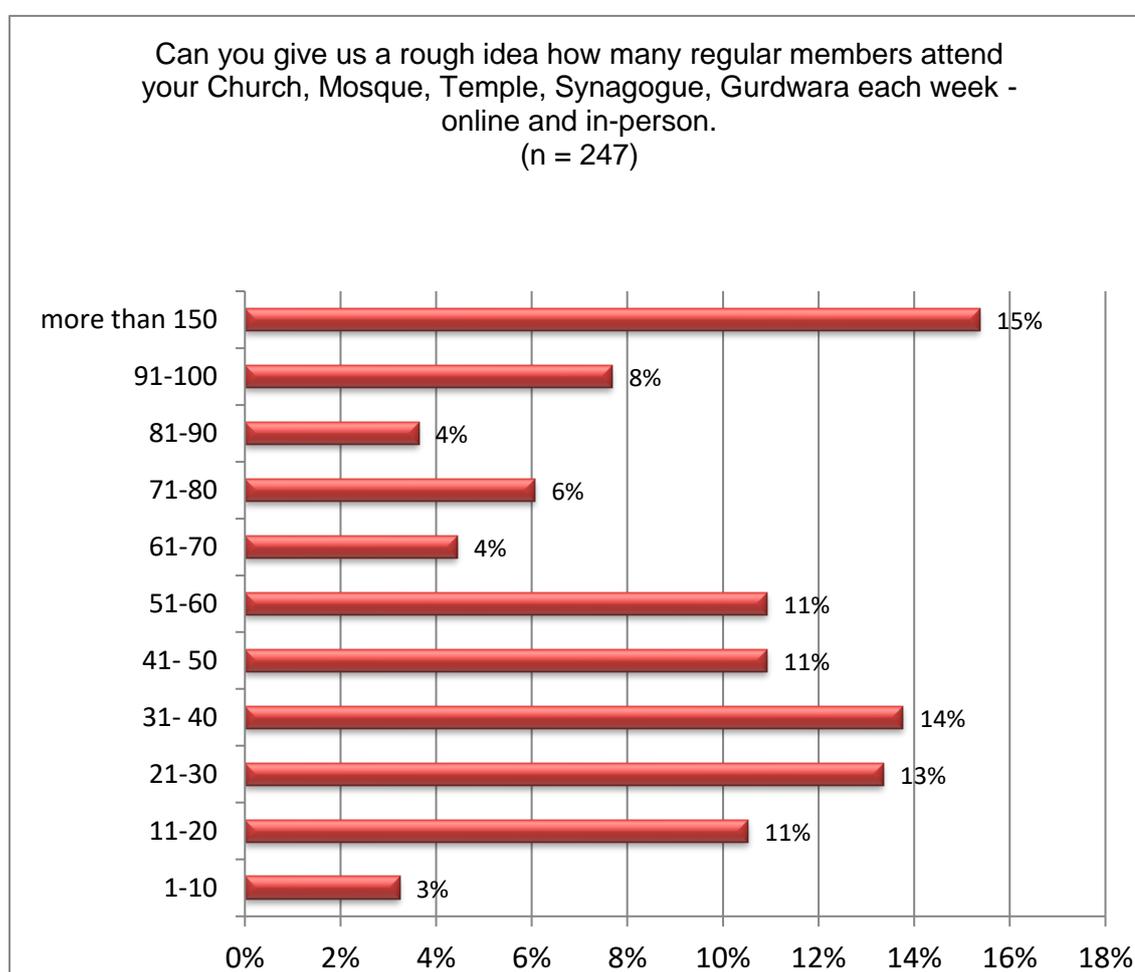
6 Findings: faith communities

6.1 In this chapter, we discuss the distinctive contribution that older people in faith communities make in providing support, assistance, advice, and volunteer time in local neighbourhoods.

Attendance

6.2 It is notoriously difficult to gather accurate data from faith communities on attendance at their regular gatherings for worship. Recognising this challenge, we asked them to estimate roughly how many regular members attend (including those making use of online resources such as Zoom). The chart below reflects the percentage of respondents choosing a particular age band.

Chart 14: Regular attendance of faith communities



6.3 The survey reflects a considerable range in the size of membership. Almost half (49%) of the respondents thought that their regular membership was between 21 and 60 years, with 15% saying their membership was more than 150. Accurate membership figures embracing all faith communities are difficult to find. However, the range of respondents to the survey (247) can be seen as providing both a useful overview of faith communities in Scotland, and recent examples of the development

and delivery of community based services. Underpinning this is a passionate reiteration of the role of faith in our society.

Faith into action

6.4 As we have seen in chapter 4, many older people in faith communities play an active role in responding to a range of social and community challenges within their local neighbourhoods. Few would claim unique expertise in this but would see 'service' as a core part of their faith commitment. This is captured in this comment from one of the case studies.

"This service comes from a recognition that a time of bereavement is a strong and disorientating experience. The volunteers involved include those who have experienced difficult bereavements and recognised that they needed help and now want to give something back. People of faith have a desire to serve in some way – they may not be good at baking or fundraising but this is a use and a good match of the gifts they do have to be with people and to listen to them." (Kinross)

Public profile and national policy

6.5 It is estimated that there are roughly 3,700 congregations in Scotland. Most communities will have one or more of these within their geographical boundaries. As we have seen, there will be variations in size, the actual religion to which they are affiliated, and the range of activities they undertake. It would be reasonable to expect that organisations with such a wide 'reach' into local communities would have a high public profile.

6.6 This isn't the case. Most survey respondents and case study participants maintained a relatively low profile with agencies and organisations which were not directly connected with them. They would run their activities and events primarily for their members' and 'clients' benefit. This would occur in a relatively closed world - not because they felt they were not deserving of publicity, but because they prioritised action over talk.

6.7 This would be of minor concern, were it not for the potential mutual gain for both parties, which is currently not being realised. One of the unintended results of this 'silo' approach was to effectively deter faith communities playing any significant role on the national stage. Current policy debates around volunteering and isolation and loneliness, for example, could benefit from the lived experience of those working at the 'coalface',

6.8 Relationships between faith communities (as we have seen), tend to be better than, for example, with Councils, Health Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships. This initiative from Glasgow Friends of Israel describes what happened when an initiative 'caught fire' and motivated people across the faith divide.

This effort showcased Glasgow and our community at its best. Without regard for religion or political views, ordinary people came together to help others. I learned that the Arabic word for charity is Sadaqa (similar of course to

Tzadakah) and was reminded that we are all children of Abraham. Many people of other faiths stopped by as well to see what was needed and how they could help.” (Glasgow Friends of Israel)

The gift of age - conceptualising the inconceivable

6.9 As part of the scoping process, we suggested to interviewees that there might be a different way of understanding the role of older people in faith communities. This led us to developing the 'gifts' model. This has been derived from the 'Volunteer Impact Assessment Toolkit', developed by the Institute for Volunteering Research, and published in 2004. The model is based on five forms of 'capital' that volunteering is able to generate:

- Human Capital e.g. increased self-esteem
- Social capital: e.g. increased access to social networks
- Economic Capital e.g. enhancing ability to increase income
- Cultural Capital e.g. increased awareness and understanding of experiences of others
- Physical Capital e.g. increased numbers of tangible resources

6.10 We took the 'core' model and adapted it for faith communities, using the concept of 'gift' rather than 'capital'. We aimed to explore whether the 'gifts' model provided a useful method for understanding the contribution made by faith community members in local communities.

6.11 As a way of 'testing the model' we asked survey respondents to comment on the extent to which older people bring each of these gifts to their faith community. The table below maps out their responses.

The five 'gifts of age'

6.12 There were many positive comments about the 'gifts of age' and the variety of life experience that older people brought to faith communities, notably in terms of wisdom, commitment, life experience and practical skills.

6.13 The table below suggests that most respondents felt that older people brought something of each of the gifts to their faith communities. Just over an average of 50% felt that this happened 'a great deal'. Only 2% felt this 'never' happened.

Table 15: Older people and the gifts of age

To what extent do older people bring each of these gifts to your faith community? (n = 162)					
	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	A moderate amount	A great deal
The human gift	1%	1%	10%	23%	64%
The social gift	0%	4%	4%	17%	75%
The economic gift	6%	12%	12%	27%	40%
The cultural gift	2%	7%	14%	22%	50%
The physical gift	2%	7%	17%	30%	41%

6.14 The following commentary from one of the case studies, focused on care for bereaved people, illustrates the importance of allowing people to 'give something back'.

"This service is primarily of us to prevent isolation. Bereavement brings a complex mix of emotions. Everyone reacts differently, from extreme sadness verging on depression, to anger or guilt they haven't experienced before and they don't know where to turn. This service comes from a recognition that a time of bereavement is a strong and disorientating experience. The volunteers involved include those who have experienced difficult bereavements and recognised that they needed help and now want to give something back. People of faith have a desire to serve in some way – they may not be good at baking or fundraising but this is a use and a good match of the gifts they do have to be with people and to listen to them." (Kinross)

The human gift

6.15 A shared humanity is an important starting point. Several respondents commented on this unspoken dimension of being a 'great influence'.

"The older members of our community bring love and great example of perseverance and willingness to be a part of this community, taking an active part in a variety of ways. Even their simple presence is a great influence, because of their own faith, wisdom, and dedication." (survey respondent)

6.16 Volunteers bring unique life experience.

"That's where the age thing comes in, where we make sure life experience means we are non-judgemental. It's very much a case of looking after one another. It's not an assembly line. It's a continuum of helping people." (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints)

The social gift

6.17 The social gift refers to the enhancing of social networks and supportive links between people and communities. This respondent describes a particular form of this gift where they are able to use their experience and skills to become kinship carers.

"In the absence of wider family, our older members can assume roles that replace those of absent or deceased grandparents to families - often from 'broken homes'." (survey respondent)

6.18 This respondent focuses on the effect on local high school pupils

"It allowed high school pupils to realise that church and faith was not about 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning. A church is a community where people care for each other." (Carluka)

6.19 Social connections within the faith community can also be important.

"What it did was hopefully help the church get to know each other much better. That's been very helpful post-COVID-19 when people are going back into the physical church space... Older people are able to give their wisdom and support to the younger generations." (Bruntsfield)

The economic gift

6.20 Sometimes less obviously visible, the economic gift can help a community to stand on its own two feet. In this community, the presence and contribution of volunteers is seen as making a real measurable contribution.

"It provides an asset for the community – a place for people to go with affordable prices. Although it's not a commercial café we do make money from it, with profits split between the church and local, national and international charities which are nominated each year." (Cults)

"They are an invaluable asset, bringing knowledge, wisdom and skills that enhance our community life together." (survey respondent)

"Even their simple presence is a great influence, because of their own faith, wisdom, and dedication." (survey respondent)

6.21 Within certain cultures, the economic gift can take a very tangible form.

"I came to this country in 1975 as a young bride and I saw people support me by letting the younger people have a good time. When I came, I brought wealth with me. I learnt from my elders and mastered myself and now I have the same mechanism for the younger generation now" (Hindu Mandir Temple, Leith)

The cultural gift

6.22 Several respondents spoke of the benefits of older people acting as informal guardians entrusted with preserving an area's culture, history and traditions.

"With experience comes wisdom and those who possess it are the tradition bearers that enrich our lives and provide continuity between generations and with our community." (survey respondent)

"Being a village community on the edge of a town the contribution of older people is vital in maintaining the identity of the community and its heritage. Our faith community would be much the poorer without the significant contribution that has been made and continues to be made by our older residents."

6.23 The value of creativity in helping children and young people to understand their faith tradition was described by this participant.

"Stories and the creative arts are so important in learning about your faith's teachings, your history, in creating a vibrant community." (Baha'i)

6.24 This can extend to other aspects of their culture.

"About 80% of the children are sent to do the language classes. Children connect to their heritage, to their families, to their history. It creates that community." (Glasgow Gurdwara)

The physical gift

6.25 A recurring theme in considering the 'gifts' was a gentle wisdom that older people develop over decades, and which they can apply in the faith community context.

"There is also the gift of wisdom, drawn from long experience and reflection on it. Also, through long years of relationship together, there is a deep well of understanding, support and belonging, which can offer much to younger members." (survey respondent)

6.26 The willingness (and time) to undertake practical tasks for the faith community was mentioned by several respondents.

"I do not know what I would do without the older people in our church they are the ones who are committed to a lot of things, they clean the church, bake and offer after service hospitality or if we have any events they are there to move furniture around." (survey respondent)

"One of the nice things come from it – so many of the older ones felt they weren't doing anything for anybody for any longer, or were no longer feeling needed, but helping with fundraising was one thing they could do – they feel they are doing something still within their community – that part of it has been really important." (Penicuik)

Where no community exists

6.27 Some respondents, however, felt that the model did not seem either necessary or possible.

"The Gifts of Age seem to orientate around the idea that community exists in some broader context. Where I live there is no community to talk of. People will highlight issues but expect that someone else will deal with their complaint. It is never their problem to solve. Church is the place where, for some, community happens, where social connections are sustained and mutual care is offered. Church appears to exist for itself and not the broader community but then, there is no broader community." (survey respondent)

7 Case study summaries

7.1 In this chapter we give a brief overview of the 16 case studies. Evidence has been taken from the case studies to inform and shape the overall findings in the three previous chapters. The full case studies can be found in the Appendix.

The Baha'i Faith

Main focus of activities	Children and young people
Local authority area	Dumfries & Galloway
Geographical setting	Rural
Contact	Contact FIOP – info@fiop.org.uk

7.2 In Dumfries, Scotland, a member of the Baha'i faith in her 80's has been writing books for children to help educate the next generation about the beginnings and teachings of their religion.

"These books are being shared all over the world. It gives a sense of purpose to young people. The history of the Baha'i faith is recorded accurately, and the author puts them in the language of children to make them more accessible."

7.3 The author began creating stories with her own children 40 years ago. These stories included prominent figures of the Baha'i faith, Baha'i beliefs, as well as traditions and the history around this - using an accessible narrative style with illustrations. The stories have been shared throughout Scotland, and internationally.

7.4 The author felt it was important to accept the idea of continuity and to give and receive guidance that has come before. Through their writings, and working collaboratively with other members of the faith (many of whom are over 60), she became the co-editor of a Baha'i magazine.

"The books and magazines allow children to see themselves as world citizens and everyone as their family."

7.5 By sharing these stories and seeing how popular they have become across the world, it is understood that the Baha'i community - both locally and internationally - value the wisdom and creativity of their older members.

7.6 Key features

- The value of the creative arts in sharing knowledge and understanding
- The power of storytelling to help bind a community together

(City centre) evangelical church

Main focus of activities	Social and Pastoral support
Local authority area	Edinburgh
Geographical setting	Urban
Contact	Contact FIOP – info@fiop.org.uk

7.7 This city centre evangelical church is exploring a new way of facilitating pastoral care for their congregation. Instead of one dedicated team, they have discussed the benefits of creating intergenerational groups from the whole congregation. They meet as determined by the group and see each other when they see fit. The group view themselves as a "family" within the church.

7.8 During COVID-19, the team used many 'models of care' to make sure people still felt connected within the congregation. For example they began with phone calls every day to each member of the church. For every baby that is born, a meal was taken to their homes for three weeks. Post-COVID-19, people were worried about going back to the physical space of the church, and half of the pastoral team left for different reasons - age, children, ability, different priorities.

7.9 The church has now decided to split the church's congregation into pastoral team groups (about 15 - 30) which include the entire church, and have an elder who will work with each one. In regard to the age demographics, this works out roughly as about five students, a couple of families, middle aged people, and three to four older people in each pastoral team group.

“What it did was hopefully help the church get to know each other much better. That’s been very helpful post-COVID when people are going back into the physical church space... Older people are able to give their wisdom and support to the younger generations.”

7.10 Key features

- They realised they needed a more holistic approach to pastoral care for the church community
- A willingness to try out new ideas
- Older people sometimes act as surrogate grandparents

Cults Parish Church of Scotland

Main focus of activities	Community cafe
Local authority area	Aberdeenshire
Geographical setting	Rural
Contact	Rev Shuna Dicks SDicks@churchofscotland.org.uk

7.11 The main impact which the café has seen is the sense of community it has built up. It has given the church a strong community presence and meant that more people are involved in church life even if that is not in Sunday morning worship.

“People know it’s the church – they are coming into a building that might not look like a church but it’s clear that it is. It provides an asset for the community – a place for people to go with affordable prices. Although it’s not a commercial café we do make money from it, with profits split between the church and local, national and international charities which are nominated each year.”

7.12 With its location next door to a retirement complex and with other sheltered housing nearby, many of the café’s customers are older, and within the wider Kirk Centre there are classes and groups running who will use the café socially alongside the group they attend.

7.13 Key features:

- Arose from a church merger, as way of building a shared community asset
- Practical delivery supported by ethos of openness
- Cafe as visible part of the community, transcending its church origins

Drylaw Parish Church of Scotland

Main focus of activities	Children and families
Local authority area	Edinburgh
Geographical setting	Urban
Contact	Contact FIOP – info@fiop.org.uk

7.14 As Drylaw Parish Church is a Transition Ministry, one of the main aims is to 'make contact with the local community'. There is a large demographic of young families and high numbers of children in Drylaw - illustrated by the local school and purpose built nursery. But this demographic is not seen in the church. In order to reach out to the local community, the church created 'Family Fridays' - an offer of lunch and games once a month for local families.

7.15 For Drylaw Church's Christmas 'Family Friday' a nativity trail was created outside - much like a treasure hunt; with a separate trail with physical activities to 'Follow the star'.

"The volunteers made this happen. They planned it all and structured it, as well as facilitating. The retired minister organised the 'Follow the star' and the children ended up getting a goody-bag at the end of it"

7.16 Three families (12 people) from the local community attended and really enjoyed it. 11 families came to the first of the two Easter events (25 people). This included two childminders with younger children. A number of these families were immigrant families.

"Immigrant families are often interested in our community events. We find they want to create community."

7.17 Key features

- The initiative arose from a desire to integrate the church into the community
- It is seen as an opportunity for immigrant families to meet local people
- Making sure older people feel valued but not overworked

Glasgow Friends of Israel

Main focus of activities	Asylum seekers and refugees
Local authority area	Glasgow
Geographical setting	Urban
Contact	Vicci Stein https://www.glasgowfoi.com/about/

7.18 In August 2021, one of the founders of the Glasgow Friends of Israel, wanted to do something for refugees making their homes in Scotland. With the support of Rabbi Rubin and the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, she secured storage space for donations in the Jewish Community Building in Giffnock. She worked with one of the leaders of the Afghan communities in Scotland who was able to make contact with families in need of donations.

7.19 Word soon spread on social media and through faith communities, and a team of volunteers let people know that donations could be dropped off on three separate days last September. They asked for toiletries, clothes, baby items - and for everything to be in good condition.

"Little did we know that our publicity via all forms of social media would lead to kind contributions of thousands of bags, boxes and van loads of clothes, toys, toiletries, electrical appliances, bedding, cots, prams and baby items. People had their suits dry cleaned so new arrivals could wear them to job interviews once they got settled."

7.20 The appeal resulted in a lot of Interfaith work and reached far beyond just the Jewish community in Glasgow. Many members of the Muslim community volunteered and secured warehousing for donations when they had to clear the rooms in the Jewish Community Building. A Muslim warehouse owner in Paisley gave storage in his cash and carry warehouse and the Bishop of Paisley praised the efforts of the many volunteers. Calderwood Jewish Primary school shares a campus with St Clare's Catholic school and an appeal was put out in both primary schools that resulted in a huge number of donations.

"This effort showcased Glasgow and our community at its best. Without regard for religion or political views, ordinary people came together to help others. I learned that the Arabic word for charity is Sadaqa (similar of course to Tzedakah) and was reminded that we are all children of Abraham."

7.21 Key features

- Relationships were built between different religious groups
- Afghan refugees benefitted from high quality donations of household goods
- The value of committed volunteers

Glasgow Gurdwara

Main focus of activities	Children and young people
Local authority area	Glasgow
Geographical setting	Urban
Contact	Prabhjot Kaur http://www.glasgowgurdwara.org/education/

7.22 The Punjabi School (part of the Glasgow Gurdwar community) teaches the Punjabi language to children and adults, as well as sports, yoga, tabla, kurta, gatka, and career days. It aims to improve reading, writing and speaking skills.

“With the children, they are grateful because they have one extra language to put on their CVs. The kids who reach the GCSE level are more confident than the other children because they come into the Gurdwara and are able to speak their own language. Some of these children come back and volunteer in the classes and other activities in Gurdwara.”

7.23 The SQA stated that there are not enough children in the Scottish school system to learn Punjabi in order to have it as an academic qualification. So the Glasgow Gurdwara go through AQA exams (in England). The Glasgow Gurdwara is now the official examination centre that facilitates training and exams. This is all done on a voluntary basis by volunteers.

7.24 Mrs Daljit (the voluntary 'head teacher') is involved in other charities too which creates other connections for the Gurdwara and the people who learn there. This contributes to long term knowledge being held and shared with the developing and expanding Sikh community - from someone who has known the community for a long time. A deeper understanding of culture and language is developed by having a dedicated space to learn Punjabi that children and adults can come to on a consistent weekly basis. The connections that are created within the Gurdwara Punjabi School - both by the many families who attend the classes, and the networks that are created by Mrs Dilber's additional volunteering - expand the community and positive impact that the Gurdwara has.

7.25 Key features

- The Punjabi School serves as a focus for knowledge and understanding about the Sikh faith
- The importance of having a dedicated space to learn Punjabi for children and adults on a regular basis

Hindu Mandir Temple, Leith

Main focus of activities	Young people
Local authority area	Edinburgh
Geographical setting	Urban
Contact	Contact FIOP – info@fiop.org.uk

7.26 New members of the Hindu community come to Scotland and are unfamiliar with life here. Older Hindu members see festivals as a 'brilliant ways to bring them in' to the community by introducing them to Scottish life whilst maintaining a sense of 'home' via religious ceremonies, and more specifically - festivals. The older generation in the Hindu Mandir Temple not only create a safe space for any new arrivals to feel at home in, they also provide education, childcare, social opportunities and a sense of 'family'.

“It can be confusing growing up between two cultures. We play an important part in making sure that people - especially the teenagers - don't lose their customs. The world is changing, what we learnt 50 years ago is different now.”

“[My older generation] supported me, they helped me, and now it's my turn. Keeping it alive! Those communities are very small. But still we provided that tradition and my children had that opportunity.”

7.27 Key features

- The temple creates a safe space in a familiar culture for new arrivals in Scotland
- The older generation provide education about the Hindu religion and culture in Scotland
- Older people create the 'family' in the temple, taking on the role of grandparents if needed

Holy Trinity, Wester Hailes, Edinburgh

Main focus of activities	Foodbank
Local authority area	Edinburgh
Geographical setting	Urban
Contact	Holy Trinity Wester Hailes rita@holytrinitywesterhailes.org.uk

7.28 The foodbank in an urban housing scheme has been in operation for around 14 years. It started because of the church's increasing awareness of a small number of people who were in desperate need of food. At a basic level, people in need are being fed, and this intervention can be part of stabilising people's lives.

7.29 People are referred to the foodbank from the health centre and from the social work department and sometimes social workers collect bags of food for clients. There is sharing and exchanging of food with another foodbank in Sighthill as well as some sharing of information which can relate to safety and fair running of the service.

7.30 The foodbank has supported asylum seekers and refugees, and has also proved to be a way of building interfaith relationships as many Muslim families are supported and have been very positive about the church's work.

"We have a heart for the lost, the last and the least. That's our motivation. We just don't want to see people suffering. We want to love people and care for them and give them respect, dignity and listen to them."

7.31 Key features:

- Responding to an emerging local need
- Strong active (but informal) relationships with partner organisations
- Their ethos goes beyond simple food distribution

Kinross Parish Church

Main focus of activities	Bereavement support
Local authority area	Fife
Geographical setting	Rural
Contact	Contact FIOF – info@fiop.org.uk

Bereavement Support

7.32 Kinross Parish Church has a bereavement support team mostly made up of older people. This has been running for well over 10 years and comes from a recognition that as a church, the support offered to people at the time of a funeral shouldn't just stop there.

“This service is primarily to prevent isolation. Bereavement brings a complex mix of emotions. Everyone reacts differently, from extreme sadness verging on depression, to anger or guilt they haven't experienced before, and they don't know where to turn. This service comes from a recognition that a time of bereavement it is a strong and disorientating experience.”

7.33 There are around seven mainly older volunteers on the team with one being allocated to an individual or family who have been bereaved.

Key features:

- Faith community members offer a loving response to bereavement
- Small scale activity becomes 'embedded' in wider community of interest

Support for adults with learning disabilities

7.34 Linked with <https://www.prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk/> Kinross Parish Church offers a once a month event for adults with learning disabilities. The group, called All Friends Together, has been running for around five years, formed by a family who have a daughter with learning disabilities, who herself is a long-standing member of the church family.

7.35 Some of those coming are active in their own churches, others are not and are looking for a way to be involved in a faith community – for others it's a journey of discovery.

“This is Christian outreach and ministry in action and is of benefit to people with learning disabilities, for the family supporters and carers and the volunteers themselves would also say they get a huge amount out of it.”

7.36 Key features

- Faith community members with experience of learning disability recognise a need and respond practically

Lochside Churches - Craigrownie, Garelochhead and Rosneath: St Modan's

Main focus of activities	Community cafe
Local authority area	Argyll & Bute
Geographical setting	Rural
Contact	Contact FIOP – info@fiop.org.uk

7.37 One of the main forms of community support identified in the area was the need to provide support for older people which emerged during COVID-19 lockdown.

“We realised the need...people were being so isolated. We did it because we are so rural and everyone is in their own little village and there was a need to break down that barrier and reconnect people.... We needed a connection even if it was digital.”

7.38 The response instigated by the churches' Family Worker was the 'afternoon tea project', where pre-made afternoon teas were purchased from a local supermarket and delivered to around 50 people with an option to meet on Zoom and share tea and conversation together. The opportunity was advertised through the church communities and word of mouth.

7.39 Key features

- Brought about as a response to older people's needs during Covid
- Older people have the gift of time
- Positive community work has broken down barriers

Penicuik North Kirk

Main focus of activities	Older people
Local authority area	Midlothian
Geographical setting	Rural
Contact	Contact FIOP – info@fiop.org.uk

7.40 In 2004 a member of the congregation was asked by a friend to temporarily take a fitness class, a new departure for her. She realised the potential of a class aimed at keeping older people active – with participants paying a small donation to support the fundraising.

7.41 18 years later this is a well-established part of the local community, and has raised in the region of £16,000. The group now runs independently from the church, and is linked in with Midlothian Council's Ageing Well activity programme. They support the group by paying the rent needed, as well as directing people to it. Funds raised by the class now go partly to the church and to chosen charities.

7.42 The group has a strong focus on wellbeing, specifically targeting older people and encouraging the over 60s to keep active.

“We’ve got people in their 60s, 70s and 80s and we’ve recently been celebrating some 90ths. Some people have come out of themselves tremendously. Some have formed friendships, meeting up for lunch, going away on a bus together, doing things they never would have done before.”

7.43 Key features

- It was a response to an emerging local need identified by a volunteer
- A 'visible' faith community response stimulated and coordinated a wider set of activities across the wider community
- It showed how a faith community can provide vital support through kindness and being available.

Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society

Main focus of activities	Families
Local authority area	Edinburgh
Geographical setting	Urban
Contact	Contact FIOP – info@fiop.org.uk

7.44 Older people play an important role within their families and help strengthen the home and community as a result. They have their own unique talents and skills to share with all. They play an important role in connecting people to each other. Some have great networks and are therefore always able to assist people to access the various different services. They also typically feel empowered to contribute to the activities that take place in a community. They do not let their own age become a hindrance to their participation.

“The advice and prayers of the elderly are invaluable. Having experienced the hardships of life, they are sensitive and empathetic to others’ sufferings. Their concern is sincere for all of prayers are made by older people as part of regular or informal meet-ups between families and members of the community. These occur regularly or on special occasions corresponding to the Islamic calendar, usually at people’s houses or sometimes in the course of outings - or even virtually.”

7.45 Older people also actively participate in The Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS) large interactive webinars for weekly activities where the community gets together over Zoom to pay tribute and comfort bereaved families with prayers and sermons.

7.46 The Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS) works in partnership with the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service (SNBTS), NHS National Services Scotland and the Imam Hussain Blood Donation Campaign Scotland. Their joint objective is to raise awareness of the need for blood donors in Scotland.

7.47 Older people are valued for their wisdom, guidance and spirituality, all of which have been shaped by their age and life experiences. The older generation are busy preparing themselves for their eternal life. Their loss is keenly felt when they eventually pass on.

7.48 Key features

- Older women encourage and mentor young women to develop and grow, in order to ensure our young girls are empowered to be active contributors of goodness in the public sphere.
- We further support this by providing children’s classes. This also happens organically at most events and programmes for the community.

St Aidan's RC Church, Johnstone

Main focus of activities	Older people / dementia
Local authority area	Renfrewshire
Geographical setting	Urban
Contact	Very Rev. Mgr. John Tormey StAidan@rcdop.org.uk

7.49 The St Aidan's Seniors Club originally started as a women's group and a way for people to meet and get to know each other when the church amalgamated with two other churches. The group now meets once a week in the afternoon and organises trips to the cinema, to cafes and restaurants, and to other places in the local community.

7.50 The pandemic was a major blow to activities, but the club re-opened in October 2021.

Most of those attending are parishioners, but there are members of other churches too and friends of friends, and with anyone in the community welcome, the group plays a wider role in offering social connection for older people in the area. There are community activities such as the parish summer fete - a big event which takes weeks to prepare and where older people are heavily involved in running different stalls and providing teas and coffees. Older people are also involved in the St Vincent De Paul group, dealing discreetly with requests for support from people who might need finance to help with bills or food parcels.

"All of my Sacristans are over 70, the Parish Council, the cleaners are all retired and take a pride and joy to clean the church. If there is a funeral, they are there providing support for the bereaved."

7.51 Key features

- It grew out of the need to form relationships when local churches merged
- A wide range of social support offered through the group
- Older people are integral to faith community life

St Andrew's Church of Scotland, Carluke

Main focus of activities	Older people / dementia
Local authority area	South Lanarkshire
Geographical setting	Urban
Contact	Rev Helen Jamieson hjamieson@churchofscotland.org.uk

“We were approached by VASLAN (Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire) about support for older people. Having expressed the view that perhaps we needed to offer support for people living with dementia, we were introduced to an Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Adviser. He also arranged a meeting with a member of the local Community Mental Health Team for Older People (CMHTOP) who ran small post-diagnostic support groups for people diagnosed with dementia.”

7.52 From small beginnings in 2012, the demand for support grew and the church developed its service.

“We rapidly moved into the large hall because so many folk were coming - sometimes 50 or 60 people. We were well supported initially by the Dementia Adviser and also by the presence of a CPN from the Community Mental Health Team for Older People (CMHTOP) attending each month to offer support.”

7.53 The project provides an example of being open to playing a part in addressing local need - particularly the need to support people living with dementia, being creative in growing and developing, resilient in challenging times, and ultimately showing how a faith community can provide vital support through kindness and being available.

7.54 Key features

- The value of small beginnings
- It was able to maintain a service during COVID-19
- Now an active part of the local response to older people living with dementia in the area

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Main focus of activities	Addiction
Local authority area	Highland
Geographical setting	Rural
Contact	Contact FIOP – info@fiop.org.uk

7.55 Addiction recovery programmes are run by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the north of Scotland. These are volunteer-led by facilitators, most of whom are over 65.

7.56 The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recognised that, both world-wide and in particular in Aberdeen and around the north of Scotland, there was a rise in addiction issues for people in their community - both in and outside the church. The church decided to adapt the 12 step programme that was started by Alcoholics Anonymous.

"We encourage each unit of our church to have someone there who can help. It usually is someone in their 60's with some life experience and who is non-judgemental."

"On the islands, we have a number of people who have serious alcohol problems. Some of them we have good success with, some slip back, but they will come back to our programme. These programmes are led by group advisors who are all volunteers. Housewives, businessmen, they can all be advisors. These people are usually all in the younger old age category who can give time up to meet every week - no matter how small - to give encouragement".

7.57 Key features

- The church identified a need for addiction support in their community, and found that older people could best aid those with issues with addiction because of their life experience
- Those with addiction issues also felt more comfortable speaking to older people

West Lochfyneside Church of Scotland

Main focus of activities	Foodbank
Local authority area	Argyll & Bute
Geographical setting	Rural
Contact	Dorothy Wallace Dorothy.wallace@churchofscotland.org.uk

7.58 West Lochfyneside Parish in Argyll have developed a simple foodshare initiative (The Food Surplice) – an activity which supports people who may need access to free food, but which serves the additional purpose of reducing food waste.

“It started off in the second lockdown with a local fishmonger who brought excess fruit and veg and anything else he had left. People were able to come to the church to pick up what they could use. They could leave a donation of money for this, but there was no expectation of that.”

7.59 From this simple beginning, over £500 was raised for local charities but it also led to some older members within the congregation recognising that there was an opportunity to provide a small foodbank to supplement the food sharing, for anyone needing this support.

7.60 Whilst some took the view of the idea of a foodbank that ‘we don’t need that here’, the reality is that rural poverty is recognised as an issue and yet can be hidden.

“A couple of people have said that it was a lifeline and one was travelling quite a distance to use it.”

7.61 It has been older volunteers in the congregation who originally came up with the idea and then implemented and managed it. Now that it is established, the volunteers’ main role is in organising the food, with one person taking the lead on this.

7.62 Key features

- Small but appropriate reponse highlighting a national issue in a rural context
- Strong informal partnerships with other local organisations
- A quiet presence - no big profile

8 Conclusions

8.1 In this chapter we draw conclusions about the contribution made by older people in faith communities. These overarching conclusions are followed by the more specific conclusions set out under our three central themes: older people; volunteering and community engagement: faith communities.

8.2 We conclude the chapter with a brief comment about the potential and actual intersection between faith communities and the current Scottish policy agenda.

Overarching conclusions

8.3 With an estimated 3,700 'congregations'⁹ across the country, the collective resource that is Scotland's faith communities represents a potentially powerful contribution to the country's civic as well as its spiritual life.

8.4 Through the online survey of faith communities, the 16 case studies, and the informal contact we have had with a wide range of stakeholders over the past year, we have managed to build up a picture of that contribution in the post COVID-19 period.

8.5 In many ways, this picture is a positive one - with older people in faith communities gifting significant amounts of time, expertise, knowledge, experience, enthusiasm, and wisdom to countless activities and initiatives across both rural and urban Scotland. These are typified by being:

:

- A quiet but committed response to identified need at local (ward) level
- Highly dependent on older volunteers for their design and delivery (although most would resist the language of volunteering)
- Effective in reaching target groups across the age spectrum which otherwise risk being left out on a limb
- Relatively modest in scope and, as a result, often 'invisible' to mainstream services
- Free from the constraints of time limited funding periods
- Based on informal partnerships - nurtured in local communities primarily with other faith communities and third sector organisations

8.6 Faith communities, however, are faced by challenges from the practical through to the political. COVID-19 has left a trail of destruction in its wake - for faith communities as for most health and social care services. This has been particularly hard for those organisations reliant on older people as volunteers. The prospect of passing on the leadership of faith communities to the next generation is a concern for most, with many older volunteers anxious to take more of a 'backseat' role.

⁹ British Religion in Numbers <http://www.brin.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Religious-Trends-UK-Membership-Churches-Clergy-by-Tradition-2000-2006.xlsx>

8.7 The five 'Gifts of Age' model offers one way of analysing and understanding the contribution made by volunteers. This may strengthen the sector's position in any discussions or negotiations with government local or national.

Older people

8.8 There are a growing number of older people in Scotland. In the last Census (2011), the over 65 year olds numbered just under 900,000 or 17% of the total population, with women in the majority - a trend that holds good for faith communities as well as the general population. This has become more evident in recent years. As many churches have approved the appointment of women to positions of authority and power, women in some faith communities have become more visible in a wider range of roles.

8.9 Faith community leaders in our survey reflected on the fact that they had spent a lifetime contributing to the life of their community, and there is some evidence that many now want to take a more 'backseat' role, making way for the next generation of leaders and powerbrokers. Unfortunately, too often we heard the voice of older people expressing concern about the absence of these younger people 'in the pews'. Despite this, many remain passionately engaged with their faith community.

8.10 The term 'older people' encompasses multiple gifts and challenges. They are far from being a homogenous group. In particular, we recognised that important differences existed between what could be described as 'younger' old people and 'older' old people, with the latter group being substantially more vulnerable, and often in need of more support. The recent pandemic has shown up some of the tensions between older people wishing to continue their involvement in their local faith community and others reluctant to leave the house for fear of catching COVID-19, or because Government policy advised against it. Many of this older group have given a life of service to their faith community.

Volunteering / community engagement

8.11 Every faith community relies on the work of volunteers in order to meet the requirements of their community. Further than that, volunteers form a core part of the non formal local workforce providing support services to groups and individuals. They may choose to use different terminology (preferring words such as 'service'), but they are indisputably volunteers, performing tasks in the interests of others for no remuneration. They constitute a significant and precious resource. Their sometimes awkward reluctance to engage with the more formal aspects of 21st century volunteering culture (including for example routine bureaucracy, training and compliance), can occlude their invaluable contribution to local communities.

8.12 Because most faith communities are located and are operational at a local level, they play a particular role in identifying and responding to local need. The development 'arc' tends to start with small beginnings in local neighbourhoods. Our research found many cases of highly developed foodbanks for example, which were

now quite sophisticated social enterprises. These had started life when a couple of members of that community became aware of a struggling family. A concern for people supersedes the more technical aspects of large scale programme development.

8.13 A wide range of services are on offer through this web of local social action. Activities are characterised by being:

- Very localised, serving specific local areas
- Broad based (ie not focused on one narrow target group)
- Very much 'under the radar' with a low public profile, and benefitting from little or no public funding
- Highly dependent on volunteer effort

8.14 We asked survey respondents to give an example of a 'community initiative' that their faith community currently had a role in. The 139 that we received ranged from informal social support for the recently bereaved to summer programmes for primary school children, from debt advice for people struggling to manage their finances to foodbanks for people who struggled to make ends meet, from dementia 'hubs' for people and relatives living with dementia to 'messy church' programmes for children. Having analysed the data on this, we found that these could be grouped into 14 categories of initiative - all involving volunteer effort and skill.

8.15 Most of the faith communities described a variety of co-working arrangements that involved many local actors with a responsibility for social care. However, these initiatives tended to rely on goodwill rather than formal partnerships. The most common bodies working with faith communities were other local third sector organisations and other faith communities.

8.16 As a result of this, there is often a lack of recognition by statutory authorities of the countless small, unobserved, yet vitally human activities going on in and around faith community spaces the length and breadth of the country and delivered by volunteers. These people have often spent a lifetime in the church, synagogue or mosque, and may be activists, supporters, or advisors.

8.17 The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted negatively on older people's ability to volunteer. Although some older people enjoy the benefits of technology for maintaining contact, others have lost confidence and are reluctant to leave their homes. Others remain encouraged by seeing the positive results of their work, have enough time to 'do the job properly'; and value receiving a warm welcome.

8.18 The over 75s, in particular have found it harder to volunteer in the post COVID-19 environment, and many have lost the confidence to leave their homes.

Faith communities

8.19 The role and contribution of faith communities to their local neighbourhoods can be understood through the presence of four key dimensions.

- Inclusion: the faith community as a place where all are welcomed and valued, irrespective of belief, political standpoint, or age. This is especially important in the context of local, often febrile, community politics
- Trust: faith communities as trusted community assets that are rooted in practical community action
- Longevity: the simple fact that faith communities are in it 'for the long run' means that solid relationships can be built, initiatives begun and developed at the pace of people, and a commitment made to the long term development of communities over generations rather than funding periods
- Hope: the net result of being inclusive, trusted, and present is that faith communities can offer hope to individuals and groups in local communities

8.20 This contribution from faith communities to the lifeblood of local neighbourhoods is often largely unheralded. It is only recognised in small measure, with attention more usually focused on internal politics or ecclesiastical scandal. The profile of faith communities in the public sphere is limited. When asked why this is (...and shouldn't they make more use of Twitter and Facebook?...), faith communities will often respond *'It's what we do', 'Our lives are messy'*.

8.21 A striking (but sometimes overlooked) feature of what faith communities bring to a neighbourhood is the practice of hospitality. This infuses most of their work and expresses itself not least through the informal sharing of food. It was striking to read the number of 'community initiatives' where this was the case.

8.22 In developing a shared language to describe their activities, the 'Gift of Age' model has potential for some faith communities to help promote a broader understanding of volunteering in local neighbourhoods. For others it is unnecessarily rigid, overly complex, and does not 'fit' the culture of faith and belief. It could, however:

- Help create and enrich communication and dialogue between faith communities, and with partner organisations in the public sector.
- Assist the understanding the work of volunteers operating in fluid environments
- Provide an approach to reflect on the wider impact of what they do.

8.23 Scotland's faith communities are currently facing multiple challenges - some widely recognised, some less so.

- The challenge of succession planning and sustainability as faith communities struggle to deal with an ageing membership, and to reach out to younger people.
- The tyranny of enforced timelines and specified outcomes, replacing the freedom of human contact - as dialogue with the public sector increases.

A local voice for the voiceless

8.24 In recent decades in Scotland, considerable energy has been expended on trying to understand the relationship between the citizen and the various structures of the state that purport to have their interests at heart. This began with discussion about subsidiarity, seeking to locate decision making more closely to local inhabitants of communities. The Christie Commission concerned itself with performance improvement which prevented negative social and economic outcomes. More recently, pundits have spoken of 'community anchor organisations' as a potential route into re-shaping local democracy and re-thinking public services.

8.25 Research carried out by What Works Scotland in 2018 defined community anchor organisations as multi-purpose, community-led and -based organisations such as community development trusts or community-controlled housing associations. These priorities lie fully within the ambit of faith communities.

8.26 At the heart of much community-based work which supports vulnerable individuals and groups lies the 'real' localism agenda. The Scottish Government's 'Fourth National Planning Framework: position statement'¹⁰ sees '20 minute neighbourhoods' as a vital method of connecting people with their local community, with all major public services, and recreational activities available within a 20 minute walk. Faith communities are ideally placed to contribute to this agenda and deserving of recognition of the extent to which they already play a quiet but vital role in it.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-fourth-national-planning-framework-position-statement/pages/2/>

Appendix

1 Case studies

- a) *Baha'i Community of Dumfries & Galloway*
- b) *Bruntsfield Evangelical Church*
- c) *Lochside Churches - Craigrownie, Garelochhead and Rosneath: St Modan's*
- d) *Cults Parish Church of Scotland*
- e) *Drylaw Parish Church of Scotland*
- f) *Glasgow Friends of Israel*
- g) *Glasgow Gurdwara*
- h) *Hindu Mandir Temple, Leith*
- i) *Holy Trinity Wester Hailes, Edinburgh*
- j) *Kinross Parish Church*
- k) *Penicuik North Kirk*
- l) *Scottish Alul Bayt Society (Shia Muslim)*
- m) *St Aidan's RC church, Johnstone*
- n) *St Andrew's Church of Scotland, Carluke*
- o) *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*
- p) *West Lochfyneside Church of Scotland*

2 Summary Literature Review

3 Research instruments

- a) *Scoping interview questions*
- b) *Online survey structure*
- c) *Case studies interview questions*

4 Summary of participant feedback from the FIOP conference of 15 September 2022 at which the research findings were launched and debated.

a) The Baha'i Faith

“Stories and the creative arts are so important in learning about your faith’s teachings, your history, in creating a vibrant community.”

In Dumfries, Scotland, a member of the Baha'i faith in her 80's has been writing books for children to help educate the next generation about the beginnings and teachings of their religion. They have been writing these books for 40 years and have subsequently been published all over the world in different languages.

“These books are being shared all over the world. It gives a sense of purpose to young people. The history of the Baha'i faith is recorded accurately, and the author puts them in the language of children to make them more accessible. They see the potential in children to grasp deep concepts, virtues and qualities - and the stories bring out these qualities”

Origins of the project

The author began creating stories with her own children 40 years ago. These stories included prominent figures of the Baha'i faith, Baha'i beliefs, as well as traditions and the history around this - using an accessible narrative style with illustrations. The author then made story books for friends and family to be shared around. As these grew more popular they began to publish the stories and share them throughout Scotland, and later internationally, being sold on the Baha'i Books website. They believed that *“it is an injustice if children don't have access to education.”* She felt that her contribution to her community and the spiritual world was made by writing these books.

The need for service

The author felt it was important to accept the idea of continuity and to give and receive guidance that has come before. Through their writings, and working collaboratively with other members of the faith (many of whom are over 60), she became the co-editor of a Baha'i magazine (The Day Spring magazine - <https://dayspring-magazine.org.uk/>) which is also shared internationally. Other members of the Baha'i faith have said that

“the books and magazines allow children to see themselves as world citizens and everyone as their family. I have also given these to my adult friends who are friends of the Baha'i, so that they can understand our religion in an accessible way”.

The volunteers role

In the Baha'i faith, people participate in local community building activities such as devotional gatherings (Soul in the City) with music and prayers; study groups (reflection gatherings); curriculum for nurturing children; junior youth. At these gatherings, the author will tell the community stories from memory as a way of sharing knowledge and bringing people together.

“We love her stories, we are so grateful, she is a great inspiration and keeps us inspired.”

Summary

By sharing these stories and seeing how popular they have become across the world, it is understood that this Baha'i community - both immediate and internationally - value the wisdom and creativity of their older members.

“Regard man as a mine, rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can alone cause you to reveal its treasures and benefit and enable mankind” (text from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh)

The case study is about a woman in her 80s who has been writing children's books about the Baha'i Faith for 40 years. These books have been published all over the world and in different languages. She also is the editor of a Baha'i magazine.

b) (City centre) Evangelical Church, Edinburgh

“It happens because you love each other, because of fellowship, because there’s a desire to be with people.”

This city centre Evangelical Church is exploring a new way of facilitating pastoral care for their congregation. Instead of one dedicated team, they have discussed the benefits of creating intergenerational groups from the whole congregation. They would meet as determined by the group and would see each other when they see fit. The group view themselves as a "family" within the church.

Origins of the project

This Church pastoral care team is an intergenerational group made up of those people who 'want to care' - from younger students in caring professions to those over 60. There are between 120 and 220 people in this church and as a result of this, the pastoral care team understand they have to be ever mindful of the changing needs of their congregation. This includes transitioning between different age groups (for example working age into retirement, younger old to older old).

The need for service

The pastoral care that has been offered for 30 years is 'ever evolving' within this church in order to serve its current needs. Pre-COVID-19, there were about 12 people on the team. During COVID-19, the team used many 'models of care' to make sure people still felt connected within the congregation. For example they began with phone calls every day to each member of the church. For every baby that is born, a meal was taken to their homes for three weeks. Another model was to match younger people with an older person whilst people were isolating in their homes. Younger people would phone this older person to check in and the older person would give the “*benefit of eldership*”. For example, an 84 year old lady who lived with her daughter missed the personal engagement of church. She was 'paired' with a young man who had lost his granny. They formed a really good relationship. The pastoral care team also facilitated letters between families to help them keep up to date.

Post-COVID-19, people were worried about going back to the physical space of the church, and half of the pastoral team left for different reasons - age, children, ability, different priorities. Through the matching system, and writing letters, the pastoral team saw that members of the church had got to know each other better. They then explored the questions - how do we best invest our time?; how we can engage with all members of the church, can we allow people to become a part of our church and not “sidelined” or feel 'beyond their usefulness'?

The role of volunteering

This Evangelical Church has now decided to split the church's congregation into pastoral team groups (about 15 - 30) which include the entire church and have an elder who will work with each one. In regard to age demographics, this works out roughly as about five students, a couple of families, middle aged people, and three to four older people in each pastoral team group. This group will meet as they see fit and organise social outings, bible study group, and work with each other - in the hope that the whole church will support each other holistically and in an intergenerational way. The original way of doing pastoral care felt quite 'paternalistic', and this newer model takes away the 'huge and overwhelming responsibility' for the pastoral care team.

“What it did was hopefully help the church get to know each other much better. That’s been very helpful post-COVID-19 when people are going back into the physical church space... Older people are able to give their wisdom and support to the younger generations.”

Summary

In creating church families as a way of maintaining and developing pastoral care, older people are able to have a more integrated and holistic role in supporting other members from their church, as every older person is part of a group and can contribute their knowledge and love.

“I think people are very appreciative of having that companionable friendship - that fellowship that exists in church life of brother and sister. The church family can often become more important than blood family.”

c) Lochside Churches - Craigrownie, Garelochhead and Rosneath: St Modan's

"It was a way of keeping people connected. There was a lot of loneliness – especially during lockdown it has been a big thing."

Origins

In the west of Scotland, Lochside Linkage is formed by three Church of Scotland churches. Craigrownie, Garelochhead and Rosneath: St Modan's. One of the main forms of community support identified in the area was the need to provide support for older people which emerged during COVID-19 lockdown.

"We realised the need...people were being so isolated"

"We did it because we are so rural and everyone is in their own little village and there was a need to break down that barrier and reconnect people....We needed a connection even if it was digital."

The response instigated by the churches' Family Worker was the 'afternoon tea project', where pre-made afternoon teas were purchased from a local supermarket and delivered to around 50 people with an option to meet on Zoom and share tea and conversation together. The opportunity was advertised through the church communities and word of mouth.

They are tight knit communities and word just spread. We also used social media and posters around in local shops."

Not everyone felt willing to connect in this way via Zoom but many did.

"Some people loved the idea but weren't comfortable with it. Others were fascinated by it – the fact that they could have a conversation and see and speak to other people. One person decided it wasn't too bad and did it with their grandchildren – volunteers were able to ease people into it, teaching them and making it less of a scary thing."

Now restrictions have eased there is a move to have in-person afternoon teas using one of the church halls. This now works with volunteers collecting people and bringing them in cars and once a quarter this gives people a chance to get together. These are open to anyone in the community, and efforts are made to target people who may be isolated.

Buying in the afternoon teas makes the activity less onerous, removing the burden from volunteers. Participants can donate towards it if they want it, but there are also options for internal and external funders.

"All of the volunteers are retired. Volunteer roles include transport, deliveries and being there in conversation with guests. Sometimes this puts people out of their comfort zone but it's about finding common interests – like 'Oh I go to the bowling club as well'."

There are clear benefits of people having the chance to reconnect with others. In some cases, friendships from years ago in the local community have been rekindled, and there

have been connections made where people now go out for a walk together, having become more than just acquaintances.

Older volunteers' involvement and impact

Older volunteers are actively involved in other aspects of church and community life from an annual week-long holiday club, to supporting reading groups in local schools, and groups like Messy Church and Who Let the Dads Out - a group for dads and their children based around a Saturday morning bacon butty. This latter group offers peer support and encouragement, and opportunities to model interaction – *“Pumpkin carving was a great example – so much of life is digital but this helped dads and kids do things together.”*

The churches have also developed a community garden during lockdown, which is now on its second harvest. This is another way for older people to be involved and to give back their skills, and schools and cubs and scouts have all been involved in the project. Older volunteers were described as being able to *“feed that gift and skill to the next generation and encourage life skills that have been lost.”* All of the vegetables harvested are given to the community and the local foodbank.

Older people see their contribution as a way of serving and of giving back to the community that has often given them so much, but they can sometimes downplay the value that they bring.

“Sometimes they think they are too old to interact with the children but they are wrong. What they bring that they don't realise is the granny and grandpa aspect – the adult you can look up to and respect who is there to listen and to care. Children can connect better with them as they are not as rushed and busy and stressed as the working generation. That gift of time is something we can take for granted.”

There should be limits to what older people are expected to do. *“But sometimes we can put too much on them, especially as churches are becoming more of an older generation.”*

One of the impacts of these activities was a re-connection between church and community.

“It's helped rebuild the trust between the community and the church through the events that we're doing. People might look fancy going to church on a Sunday but then you see them in shorts and a t-shirt having a laugh.”

d) Cults Parish Church of Scotland, Cults

“You’ll come in on your own and you’ll never be on your own.”

Ethos

The aim of the café is to offer a friendly and welcoming space where people can meet others. Creating a homely atmosphere where there is no expectation that people have to move on is an important part of how the café is run.

“There’s a gentleness about our café – people can nurse a coffee for as long as it takes.”

With its location next door to a retirement complex and with other sheltered housing nearby, many of the café’s customers are older, and within the wider Kirk Centre there are classes and groups running who will use the café socially alongside the group they attend.

“For example there’s a Bridge Group and a Scrabble Group and people might come to those and then stay for a coffee or lunch.”

The café’s openness to the community means that people enjoy the opportunity simply to meet.

“One beautiful illustration of that is a group of gentlemen come over from the sheltered housing most mornings and take up residence in one corner of the café with pals who live elsewhere. They meet and support each other.”

The value of the café in providing an important point of social contact has been felt recently with people keen for company and for friendly faces in the community.

“We especially found coming out of lockdown that we were immediately busy again.”

Volunteer roles

Older volunteers are involved across many roles and some volunteers are involved who are not church members.

“Volunteers are involved in the kitchen and front of house and there are folk who bake. Our older volunteers are giving their time and are less harried – they’re there because they want to be there and they do enjoy it – even after a busy session they are still smiling.”

“We have some incredibly active older people, with the café and across the church. We’ve got a youth café on a Friday and one of volunteers is in their 90s.”

For some, their faith is an important part of their volunteering.

“A number of our volunteers would say what the café is all about our mission, our outreach to the community - our faith in action - our church reaching out.”

Impact

The main impact which the café has seen is the sense of community it has built up. It has given the church a strong community presence and meant that more people are involved in church life even if that is not in Sunday morning worship.

“People know it’s the church – they are coming into a building that might not look like a church but it’s clear that it is.”

“It provides an asset for the community – a place for people to go with affordable prices. Although it’s not a commercial café we do make money from it, with profits split between the church and local, national and international charities which are nominated each year.”

e) Drylaw Parish Church of Scotland

Family Fridays “It’s about making contact with the local community and the young families in it”

Context

As Drylaw Parish Church is a Transition Ministry, one of the main aims is to 'make contact with the local community'. There is a large demographic of young families and high numbers of children in Drylaw - illustrated by the local school and purpose built nursery. But this demographic is not seen in the church. In order to reach out to the local community, the church created 'Family Fridays' - an offer of lunch and games once a month for local families.

“This is focused on making contact with people who aren’t already part of our church community”

Volunteers

'Family Fridays' began in March 2020 - 10 days before the lockdown. There were six volunteers involved - three of them were people over 65, one of whom is a retired deacon. The older members (late 70's and early 80's) played a primarily supportive role, both during the planning process and in the event itself. This included guidance and ideas. The younger ones created the structure and activities. The older people's role was in both preparing, serving, and clearing up food, as well as being a supportive presence in chatting and engaging with parents and children. Around 30 people joined, games were played, lunch had, cress was planted, and a story (the seed and the sower) was told by a partnership group - "Godly Play" from Cramond Kirk.

The plan was to facilitate 'Family Fridays' monthly, but when the COVID-19 Pandemic began, this had to be put on hold. However, after the success of this initial day, three events took place towards the end of the pandemic - one for Christmas 2021, and two for Easter 2022. New older volunteers (including a retired deacon, retired minister and a music teacher) within Drylaw church were driving forces in these events, as they had worked in schools and wanted to make things happen within the community.

For Drylaw Church's Christmas 'Family Friday' a nativity trail was created outside - much like a treasure hunt; with a separate trail with physical activities to 'Follow the star'.

“The volunteers made this happen. They planned it all and structured it, as well as facilitating. The retired minister organised the 'Follow the star' and the children ended up getting a goody-bag at the end of it”

Three families (12 people) from the local community attended and “really enjoyed it”. 11 families came to the first of the two Easter events (25 people). This included two childminders with younger children. A number of these families were immigrant families.

“Immigrant families are often interested in our community events. We find they want to create community.”

This 'Family Friday' included making Easter cards, Easter baskets and putting together an Easter garden with goody bags at the end. Five families came to the next event, the following week, which was about resurrection stories.

In the more recent events - the older members (late 60's - mid 70's) were initiators of thinking through the whole event including structure and activities. They coordinated and led the craft activities and are now involved in taking the project forwards towards offering a regular monthly family engagement.

Partnerships

Separate to this is the hope to start a 'Stay and Play' - a programme for local young parents, where Drylaw Parish Church will partner with one of the workers at Pilton Community Health Project to give support in PEEP (Parents as Early Education Partners) sessions, as well as a series of 'Bookbugs' with the library. The hope is that this will also feed into 'Family Fridays' and grow the community outreach.

Within the church there is an awareness that older people need to know that they're not being relied upon constantly as "they are all struggling with health conditions, especially in times of COVID-19." Now, only one of the initial 3 older volunteers from the initial 'Family Fridays' are able to help. When we reconvened, some of the older volunteers were too frail, having stepped back from other responsibilities because of health. They're not being relied upon as central volunteers.

"It seems to me, as a minister, that this is an increasing issue in pastoral care. How do we support our older members to feel valued when they become more frail and they notice what they cannot do, rather than their value in terms of simply 'being'."

f) Glasgow Friends of Israel

"I've always felt it's important to do this, I just hope I can make a positive difference in some people's lives. I enjoy helping others, it gives me a sense of purpose."

Origins

A donation drive was set up by the founders of the Glasgow Friends of Israel for Afghan refugees which resulted in interfaith and intergenerational work across Glasgow.

In August 2021, Vicci Stein - a woman in her 70s who is one of the founders of the Glasgow Friends of Israel - saw the Jewish community in Hertfordshire start a donations initiative for Afghan refugees who were moving to the UK to escape the Taliban. Vicci wanted to do something similar for refugees making their homes in Scotland. With the support of Rabbi Rubin and the Glasgow Jewish Representative Council, Vicci was able to secure storage space for donations in the Jewish Community Building in Giffnock. Vicci worked with Abdul Bostani, one of the leaders of the Afghan communities in Scotland who was able to make contact with families who were in need of donations.

The need for service

Word soon spread on social media and through faith communities, and Vicci and a team of volunteers let people know that donations could be dropped off on three separate days last September. They asked for toiletries, clothes, baby items - and for everything to be in good condition.

"Little did we know that our publicity via all forms of social media would lead to kind contributions of thousands of bags, boxes and van loads of clothes, toys, toiletries, electrical appliances, bedding, cots, prams and baby items. But these were not cast offs or worn-out items. Adorable children broke open their piggy banks to buy toys for their new buddies. People had their suits dry cleaned so new arrivals could wear them to job interviews once they got settled. Schools took up collections and brought big containers of shampoo, soap, nappies and sanitary products. Clothing still had tags attached, new shoes arrived, along with warm coats, wellies and handbags. Everything that people who were fleeing persecution and who had with NOTHING but the clothes they were wearing would need."

The role of volunteers

The appeal resulted in a lot of interfaith work and reached far beyond just the Jewish community in Glasgow. Many members of the Muslim community volunteered and secured warehousing for donations when they had to clear the rooms in the Jewish Community Building. A Muslim warehouse owner in Paisley gave storage in his cash and carry warehouse and the Bishop of Paisley praised the efforts of the many volunteers. Calderwood Jewish Primary school shares a campus with St Clare's Catholic school and an appeal was put out in both primary schools that resulted in a huge number of donations.

"The response was completely overwhelming - the queue of cars waiting for doors to be opened, donations flooded in all day, way beyond the 2pm deadline! Calls were made for donations to be picked up from people who could not bring them to us. Three rooms in the Maccabi and Jewish Care building were stacked full and yet still the donations kept coming"

The appeal was so successful that Vicci and all involved had an enormous surplus of donations. She then spoke to various charities within Glasgow including homeless charities, women's shelters, charities for refugees to see if they could take some of the donations. *"There are so many people in Glasgow that could use these donations."*

Some of the charities she spoke to included the Salvation Army, Barnado's, Turning Point Tradeston, Islamic centre, Simon Community, Space in Govanhill, Merry-go-round, Sisters of Mercy and Glasgow City Mission. Sadly, most of the charities, due to lack of storage facilities, could not accept donations of clothing, so a company that offered cash for clothes was contacted and Vicci received £1500 from them that was then donated to Homeless Project Scotland in Glasgow, a charity that both Vicci and her husband now volunteer with.

"Volunteers can learn so much from these people, they have such fabulous stories to tell."

This effort showcased Glasgow and our community at its best. Without regard for religion or political views, ordinary people came together to help others. I learned that the Arabic word for charity is Sadaqa (similar of course to Tzadakah) and was reminded that we are all children of Abraham. Many people of other faiths stopped by as well to see what was needed and how they could help."

Summary

Through the initiative of one person who was able to make connections between various groups in Glasgow, 100's of people benefitted from donations of clothing, toiletries and money. Furthermore, relationships were created between interfaith communities creating a shared sense of *"family"* and relatedness. Vicci herself felt that she gained perspective, learned new skills, and developed a sense of joy and purpose.

"I've got time to connect, but really I don't have any time left - this is what I now do with my time. I've met so many people, it's just wonderful. There are so many people and organisations in Glasgow that help and reach out to people in need. It's incredible - what I've learnt and what I know and how much joy it gives me to be able to help!"

g) Glasgow Gurdwara

“She is respected, we look up to her, she has done so much”

Origins of the Project

Part of what makes up the Glasgow Gurdwara community is the Punjabi School. This has been run by the same woman, Mrs Daljit Dilber (who is now 68 years old) for 30 years. Most of the people in the Glasgow Gurdwar community are over 60. This school teaches Punjabi for free to children and adults, as well as sports, yoga, tabla, kurta, gatka, and career days.

The need for service

Punjabi language is taught in this school to improve reading, writing and speaking skills. The SQA stated that there aren't enough children in the Scottish school system to learn Punjabi in order to have it as an academic qualification. So the Glasgow Gurdwara go through AQA exams (in England). Currently, all the activities happen on a Sunday within two sessions: 10.30 – 12.00; 12.30 - 14.00 and before lockdown it was also held on a Wednesday evening (throughout COVID-19 online sessions continued to take place).

“With the children, they are grateful because they have one extra language to put on their CVs. The kids who reach the GCSE level are more confident than the other children because they come into the Gurdwara and are able to speak their own language. Some of these children come back and volunteer in the classes and other activities in Gurdwara.”

The role of volunteering

The Glasgow Gurdwara is now the official examination centre that facilitates training and exams. Mrs Dilber is the head of centre and has been for the last 5 years - *“we call her the headteacher”*. This is all done on a voluntary basis.

“She looks after all of the volunteer teachers by bringing them in and guiding them about the classes, as well as doing the registrations, expenses, and talks to the committee.”

Mrs Daljit is involved in other charities too which creates other connections for the Gurdwara and the people who learn there.

“There is a positive impact on grandparents and parents overall. About 80% of the children are sent to do the language classes. Children connect to their heritage, to their families, to their history. It creates that community”.

Summary

By having Mrs Dilber in the position of 'headteacher', the Gurdwara space allows for long term knowledge to be held and shared with the developing and expanding Sikh community - from someone who has known the community for a long time. A deeper understanding of culture and language is developed by having a dedicated space to learn Punjabi that children and adults can come to on a consistent weekly basis. The connections that are created within the Gurdwara Punjabi School - both by the many families who attend the classes, and the networks that are created by Mrs Dilber's additional volunteering - expand the community and positive impact that the Gurdwara has.

h) Hindu Mandir Temple, Leith

“The festivals are an opportunity to show the community as an extended family.”

Origins of the project

New members of the Hindu community come to Scotland and are unfamiliar with life here. Older Hindu members see festivals as a *'brilliant ways to bring them in'* to the community by introducing them to Scottish life whilst maintaining a sense of *'home'* via religious ceremonies, and more specifically - festivals.

“I came to this country in 1975 as a young bride and I saw people support me by letting the younger people have a good time. When I came, I brought wealth with me. I learnt from my elders and mastered myself and now I have the same mechanism for the younger generation now”

The need for service

“It can be confusing growing up between two cultures. We play an important part in making sure that people - especially the teenagers - don't lose their customs. The world is changing, what we learnt 50 years ago is different now.”

The elders of the Hindu Mandir Temple give advice for worship, as well as teaching the practicalities of being in the temple and what is respectful. It can also be isolating for young people and families who have moved from other parts of the world to Scotland. The culture and customs can be unfamiliar and *'uncomfortable'* at times.

“If you're in your mother country the situation is different because you're brought up in that environment and it is constantly there. But living in Western society you are away from buildings, religion, celebration etc. The older generation are important in keeping that tradition.”

The role of volunteers

There are many festivals in the Hindu calendar, one that is of particular importance and enjoyment is the nine day Festival at the end of September/beginning of October. The older Hindu generation provide informal support within festival especially at this time.

“Lots of natural interactions happen. Everyone is a festival mood, The love is there, the trust is there, the care is there - 'Oh aunty do you mind looking after my little one?' You can see at the festivals the little one come and they think I am the granny. Our older generation are providing that kind of family. Especially when looking after young couples who don't have a family. They come to the older generation and ask for advice - like childcare when they want to dance”

The older generation, as well as creating a safe space, provide education about their religion.

“I do special prayers for them. I have an important role to play as I am a priest and can provide special prayers and blessings to new born babies. After the prayers, I lead the offerings to the goddess.”

“Today's generation - they have us and they have ‘Google’ to share knowledge. They get accurate knowledge - about values: you only have a right to do your karma, but not to know the outcome, vedas, traditions, customs. We want to share our understanding has been taught by our parents.”

Summary

The older generation in the Hindu Mandir Temple not only create a safe space for any new arrivals to feel at home in; they also provide education, childcare, social opportunities and a sense of 'family'.

“[My older generation] supported me, they helped me, and now it's my turn. Keeping it alive! Those communities are very small. But still we provided that tradition and my children had that opportunity.”

i) Holy Trinity Wester Hailes, Edinburgh

“It’s about showing people that they are loved and that there is hope.”

Once a week for an hour, Holy Trinity Wester Hailes (Church of Scotland) provides a foodbank – a practical service that offers much more than food.

Origins and growth

The foodbank has been in operation for around 14 years, and started because of the church’s increasing awareness of a small number of people who were in desperate need of food.

The service began in a low-key way, managed by two people distributing a few groceries from the church office - this resource evolved into a cupboard, and then to a bigger space. As well as food being offered to people in need who were around the church, it was also used by the minister during pastoral visits.

As the need for this form of support became more apparent, a once-a-week distribution point was set up, operating for an hour and run by a team of volunteers. People coming to this are offered a basic bag of food and are also able to choose certain items, a deliberate approach to ensure a greater level of dignity.

Crucial to the service is the ability for people to self-refer. People can come up to ten times and then their involvement is reviewed with the aim of ensuring that people don’t become foodbank-dependent.

The support offered goes beyond simply distributing food. “It’s a very important feature that people aren’t simply given food.” People are given a warm welcome and the church’s café cook and a volunteer prepare a fresh, healthy, nutritious and tasty meal on Tuesday morning which is also distributed to clients. The menu was developed after customer research with clients and around 150 portions are given out each Tuesday afternoon.

In terms of those using the foodbank, the need varies from individual to individual – some may come on a Tuesday to get some support before they receive benefits on Friday while others simply come once for support as they arrive and settle into the area.

At times the service can link to other support as the church is also to offer additional support because of its involvement with Christians Against Poverty, debt counselling, its Christian Counselling service, and through prayers for healing.

Partnerships

There are no formal partnerships but there are constructive relationships with a range of organisations. People are referred to the foodbank from the health centre and from the social work department and sometimes social workers collect bags of food for clients. There is sharing and exchanging of food with another foodbank in Sighthill as well as some sharing of information which can relate to safety and fair running of the service.

“We pass on good news and help but keep an eye out for each other as well.”

Involvement of older people

The volunteers involved in running the foodbank are mostly people who work part time or are retired. Mainly it is volunteers who are Christians and who are members of Holy Trinity church or St Mungo's church in Balerno.

"It's a Christian calling but fundamentally we want to help people."

Before the foodbank opens each week there is a time of prayer.

"We ask for God's presence and blessing - we ask that the Holy Spirit brings peace and that we would have wisdom and insight and be able to bless the people coming."

In terms of tasks, some of the volunteers have specific roles:

"One does our online shop ordering – she likes to find bargain. One couple were fantastic throughout lockdown because they were able to work in a confined space packing all the bags. Another volunteer has a passion for providing fresh fruit for people and she bags that up every week."

Some of the volunteers having local knowledge.

"We have a volunteer who has local knowledge and knows families and this helps with the distribution."

Impact on the local community

At a basic level, people in need are being fed, and this intervention can be part of stabilising people's lives. The foodbank has supported asylum seekers and refugees; the service has also proved to be a way of building interfaith relationships as many Muslim families are supported and have been very positive about the church's work.

Recently a large donation of food was received from an individual who had been helped some years before at a time when her marriage had broken down and life was a struggle. The support she had received in the few weeks she had used the service had enabled her to cope. This illustrates the foodbank's ethos and approach – it is there to support people in a time of need, whatever that need is.

"We have a heart for the lost, the last and the least. That's our motivation. We just don't want to see people suffering. We want to love people and care for them and give them respect, dignity and listen to them."

j) Kinross Parish Church

Bereavement Support

“This service comes from a recognition that a time of bereavement is a strong and disorientating experience”

Kinross Parish Church have a bereavement support team mostly made up of older people. This has been running for well over 10 years and comes from a recognition that as a church, the support offered to people at the time of a funeral shouldn't just stop there.

“Bereavement can be a complete change of life for some and we recognise that many people need some ongoing support.”

There are around seven mainly older volunteers on the team with one being allocated to an individual or family who have been bereaved.

“The volunteers involved include those who have experienced difficult bereavements and recognised that they needed help and now want to give something back.”

“They make contact 4 to 6 weeks after the funeral – taking round some flowers or a pot of jam as an ice-breaker, and really just to say that the we are still thinking of people and want to make sure people are managing ok. This can be a time when the rest of society has moved on, and can be a point where people are at their lowest ebb.”

From that point, some people might say they'd appreciate a chat on the phone or further visits, with the level of support and involvement offered being on an individual basis. At any one time the Bereavement Team can have two or three people they are “*walking with*” and they schedule further check-in points at six months and then at Christmas and Easter.

“Some of these times can be triggers for people. We also invite those for whom we've conducted a funeral in the last two years to a quiet reflective memorial service just before Christmas.”

The role offered

“This service is primarily to prevent isolation. Bereavement brings a complex mix of emotions. Everyone reacts differently, from extreme sadness verging on depression, to anger or guilt they haven't experienced before, and they don't know where to turn. This service comes from a recognition that a time of bereavement it is a strong and disorientating experience.”

“People of faith have a desire to serve in some way – they may not be good at baking or fundraising but this is a use and a good match of the gifts they do have - to be with people and to listen to them.”

Support for adults with learning disabilities

“It offers an opportunity for people with learning disabilities and their carers to come together for company.”

Linked with <https://www.prospectsacrossscotland.org.uk/> Kinross Parish Church offers a once a month event for adults with learning disabilities. The group called All Friends Together, has been running for around five years, formed by a family who have a daughter with learning disabilities, who herself is a long-standing member of the church family.

Meetings are always based around food (a tea or lunch) and with the context of worship, with music, Bible story and drama and craft activities. Older people are amongst the volunteers actively involved in this.

“The aim is sharing all of this in a way where adults with learning disabilities can engage.”

“The group comes from a recognition that church is for all and that nobody should be prevented from engaging in a celebration of the Christian faith.”

Some of those coming are active in their own churches, others are not and are looking for a way to be involved in a faith community – for others it’s a journey of discovery.

“This is Christian outreach and ministry in action and is of benefit to people with learning disabilities, for the family supporters and carers and the volunteers themselves would also say they get a huge amount out of it.”

k) Penicuik North Kirk

“I love it – I walk in on a Thursday and it doesn’t matter how I feel, I come out like a different person.”

Origins

In 2004, after extensive refurbishment work, Penicuik North Kirk was looking for fundraising ideas to support the finances of the project. One member of the congregation was Marjory, a movement therapist working with people with disabilities and people recovering from strokes. At the time she couldn’t see where she could fit in with the need for fundraising “I’m not arty craft – I thought ‘what can I do?’” However after being asked by a friend to temporarily take a fitness class, a new departure for her to work like this with music, she realised the potential of a class aimed at keeping older people active – with participants paying a small donation to support the fundraising.

“We put it on our community newsletter, and I was overwhelmed by the response.”

A core part of the community

18 years later this is a well-established part of the local community, and has raised in the region of £16,000, and now aged 80, Marjory is still going strong. The group now runs independently from the church and is linked in with Midlothian Council’s Ageing Well activity programme. They support the group by paying the rent needed, as well as directing people to it. Funds raised by the class now go partly to the church and to chosen charities.

The group has a strong focus on wellbeing, specifically targeting older people and encouraging the over 60s to keep active.

“We’ve got people in their 60s, 70s and 80s and we’ve recently been celebrating some 90ths!”

“In some cases, doctors suggest that people join us for ‘prehab’ – getting fit prior to a knee or hip operation. And we also have a focus on fall prevention and greater safety in the home.”

“It’s not just church members – it’s the local community and the next village and the next town along.”

Older people and wider benefits

The class has become much more than a way of keeping active. It has its own community of participants and volunteers who have different roles.

“We now have a team of older people who are my secretaries, who promote it and welcome people.”

“One of the nice things come from it – so many of the older ones felt they weren’t doing anything for anybody for any longer, or were no longer feeling needed, but helping with fundraising was one thing they could do – they feel they are doing something still within their community – that part of it has been really important.”

Lockdown presented challenges, but the group proved to be as important as ever, enabling activity and socialising to take place - a particularly important provision for some people, for example those who had no families in the area.

“During lockdown we couldn’t get the premises so we exercised in my garden. My husband was in the garage with the music. The dustbin men joined in on a Monday!”

Being part of the group has been of great benefit for many.

“Some people have come out of themselves tremendously. Some have formed friendships, meeting up for lunch, going away on a bus together, doing things they never would have done before.”

Gift of Age

Reflecting on the fact that she leads the group and has the skills and experience to do so, Marjory feels that she received just enough of a prompt to try something out.

“I’ve been given that – you’re not supposed to keep these gifts to yourself. When I’m unsure of anything I say to the Lord ‘give me a clue’. I’ve just always been led to what I’ve to do. I didn’t have the vision that it was going to be so important to somebody else.”

“When I come in I feel the warmth. I’m the teacher but I get great benefit – it keeps me fit and I’ve made friends.”

I) Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (Shia Muslim)

“I don't think there are any areas where the elderly don't get involved. They have a strong passion to serve humanity as this is a means of gaining God's pleasure.”

The older generation contribute immensely to the Shia Muslim community and society in general. This includes activities run by the elderly in the community.

“I don't think there are any areas where the elderly don't get involved. They have a strong passion to serve humanity as this is a means of gaining God's pleasure.”

Shoulders to lean on

Members of the Shia faith community have expressed how the elderly members offer wisdom and guidance for values within the community:

“The advice and prayers of the elderly are invaluable. Having experienced the hardships of life, they are sensitive and empathetic to others' sufferings. Their concern is sincere for all of prayers are made by the elderly as part of regular or informal meet-ups between families and members of the community. These occur regularly or on special occasions corresponding to the Islamic calendar, usually at people's houses or sometimes in the course of outings - or even virtually.”

Inspiration from Muharram on teaching and mentoring young people

Muharram is the first month of the new Muslim lunar calendar. For Shia Muslims this month is of great significance as it is the month of commemoration of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, grandson of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), which took place in Karbala in Iraq in 680 CE.

“Young and old, men and women, revive their souls with lessons from Karbala which show the distinction between good and evil. These help them recognise tyranny and oppression and stand up against it, even if it is at the cost of sacrificing some of their comforts.

The mourning for the fallen was started by Lady Zainab, sister of Imam Hussain, who stood up against Imam Hussain's opponents as a prisoner of war, showing her resilience and power. She used her passion and love for her family as fuel for her heroic stand and fought for what is right. Her leadership led her to establish an education system to better educate the people who followed her.

It is these values that the older women instil in the younger women. They encourage and mentor them to develop and grow, in order to ensure our young girls are empowered to be active contributors of goodness in the public sphere. We further support this by providing children's classes. This also happens organically at most events and programmes for the community.”

Excellent cooks

Efforts are made in every way possible to serve humanity in the name of Imam Hussain:

“Most of the older ladies and men have experience in making food in bulk (cultivated from cooking for tens or hundreds of people before emigration to the UK). They serve their community by providing this. They also exercise this ability in order to cater for the needs of the poor and whoever might require food provision and assistance as a result of deprivation or disadvantage.”

The need for service

The elderly also contribute a range of provision over and above food, they are also active in clothes donation drives. These allow them to give to the less fortunate, including refugees as part of the international charitable aid efforts which we administer.

“Additionally, now that people have been returning to the public space after COVID, the older generation’s particular support is needed more than ever. They provide guidance to the younger generation around the necessities of communal activity, including how to organise and prepare for events and by teaching everything related to looking after the Mosques and Community Centres.”

The elderly do not want their experience and learning to be lost with the next generation, and contribute publicly and privately.

“That is part of why we provide the lectures. For example, the older women prefer not to be too much in the public eye, but like to feel a part of the community by holding separate women's activities. Here, they are freely able to deliver the lectures, partake in communal worship, lamentations, eulogies and hymns.”

The Scottish Ahlul Bayt Society (SABS) works in partnership with the Scottish National Blood Transfusion Service (SNBTS), NHS National Services Scotland and the Imam Hussain Blood Donation Campaign Scotland. Their joint objective is to raise awareness of the need for blood donors in Scotland.

“Old and young partake in the blood drives. However not all are successful. This can be due to people having returned from certain countries or due to some medication they are taking. This however is the case for everyone. Some elderly members have passed the cut off age for donating. Nevertheless, they try.”

Elderly members also help create bridges with communities outside the Shia Faith.

“The elderly members enjoy partaking in SABS Interfaith events. Not only does it increase their understanding of the diversity of cultures and faiths, but they feel a sense of happiness that everyone has come together with mutual respect for the common good.”

Summary

The elderly play an important role within their families and help strengthen the home and community as a result. They have their own unique talents and skills to share with all. They play an important role in connecting people to each other. Some have great networks and are therefore always able to assist people to access the various different services. They also typically feel empowered to contribute to the activities that take place in a community. They do not let their own age become a hindrance to their participation.

The elderly also actively participate in SABS' large interactive webinars for weekly activities where the community gets together over Zoom to pay tribute and comfort bereaved families with prayers and sermons.

The elderly are valued for their wisdom, guidance and spirituality, all of which have been shaped by their age and life experiences. The older generation are busy preparing themselves for their eternal life. Their loss is keenly felt when they eventually pass on.

m) St Aidan's RC Church, Johnstone

“They are a seam that runs through the church – their enthusiasm and their ability to be there.”

Background

One of the things that both involves and supports older people in the congregation at St Aidan's RC Church in Johnstone is the St Aidan's Seniors Club. The club originally started as a women's group and a way for people to meet and get to know each other when the church amalgamated with two other churches.

The group now meets once a week in the afternoon and organises trips to the cinema, to cafes and restaurants, and to other places in the local community. Its strapline is 'Let's Live a Little'.

The pandemic was a major blow to activities, but the club re-opened in October 2021 and with the experience of being unable to meet, and people having to isolate, they are more committed than ever to offering opportunities for social time together and with its caring atmosphere it's also a check-in to see if everyone is doing ok.

“For many people this is a real lifeline and way of being connected with others”

Impact on the community

Most of those attending are parishioners, but there are members of other churches too and friends of friends, and with anyone in the community welcome, the group plays a wider role in offering social connection for older people in the area.

Whilst the Seniors Club is an important way for older people to be together, it's the whole life of the church which older people are contributing to.

“My parish wouldn't be what it is without my elderly parishioners”

Older volunteers

There are community activities such as the parish summer fete - a big event which takes weeks to prepare and where older people are heavily involved in running different stalls and providing teas and coffees. Older people are also involved in the St Vincent De Paul group, dealing discreetly with requests for support from people who might need finance to help with bills or food parcels.

“All of my Sacristans are over 70, the Parish Council, the cleaners are all retired and take a pride and joy to clean the church. If there is a funeral, they are there providing support for the bereaved. Then there's the great home baking – all these talents that they have. It's not just that they are doing things - their own wee personalities are like a beautiful tapestry. Some of them probably aren't aware of their gifts - there's one who says 'I'm useless now – I'm not good at anything' - but together they are a seam that runs through the church with their enthusiasm and just their ability to be there.”

n) St Andrew's Church, Carlisle

"We offered what we had. Space to welcome people, tea, coffee, friendship, and cake."

Origins

"We were approached by VASLAN (Voluntary Action South Lanarkshire) about support for older people. Having expressed the view that perhaps we needed to offer support for people living with dementia, we were introduced to an Alzheimer Scotland Dementia Adviser. He also arranged a meeting with a member of the local Community Mental Health Team for Older People (CMHTOP) who ran small post-diagnostic support groups for people diagnosed with dementia."

"With their support, and an evening training session they led for a few church members, our first monthly 'Drop-in Support' was held in September 2012 with six folk attending."

From these small beginnings in 2012, the demand for support grew and the church developed its service.

"We rapidly moved into the large hall because so many folk were coming - sometimes 50 or 60 people. We were well supported initially by the Dementia Adviser and also by the presence of a CPN from the Community Mental Health Team for Older People (CMHTOP) attending each month to offer support."

As time went on, more activities were added, and the group grew in numbers and support was provided to more people.

"Over time we offered twice monthly support (running every month of the year) – Drop in Support and Drop in Activities (where we had planned activities – many of which used volunteers' skills). We organised trips, and added Heart for Art (an art class for people with dementia) by buying in the service from CrossReach. We applied for funding and employed a full-time co-ordinator and then added in a group called Mainly Men Reminiscing – providing transport for this group and Heart for Art, by working with Larkhall & District Volunteer Group – we had met representatives at an Age Scotland forum."

Unfortunately in 2020 the project faced significant disruption when everything closed because of the pandemic and the Project Coordinator was made redundant. However, the church provided whatever activities were possible at each stage of the restrictions.

"Heart for Art moved online, offering 1:1 sessions and small group gatherings. We began a weekly Playlist Party (we had previously linked closely with Playlist for Life) and shared music together – watching You Tube clips and reminiscing too."

"When we were allowed to meet outdoors, we used the skills of two former carers who had become volunteers and had trained as Health Walk Leaders with Get Walking Lanarkshire and began to offer a half hour dementia friendly walk each Friday afternoon. We purchased two gazebos and used them to develop what we could offer to meeting three times a week."

“We realised that there was such a need. Carers were relieved to be back and be able to speak to people again. They described it as a lifeline – even if that was outside with a hot water bottle in gazebos that was fine.”

“The ‘Dementia Hub’ as we now call it, continues three times a week and we have a Development Team comprising people living with dementia, unpaid carers and volunteers (some of whom are Church members). They consider how the project should be run and how it might develop in the future.”

“We also offer a monthly ‘Carers Catch up’ online – which allows carers to participate and find support without having to arrange for someone else to care for their loved one when they go out.”

The role of older volunteers

“Most of our volunteers are in the older age bracket. A number of our volunteers have been former carers and some attended the Drop in before their loved one died.”

The atmosphere created has been very important, with no division between volunteers and carers.

“Carers and people living with dementia say ‘it’s just like a family - we’re all together”

“Volunteers support the people living with dementia while their carers go to a different room. The carers do music and songwriting and Heart for Art. Meanwhile volunteers will be doing different activities, playing games, music, dementia friendly jigsaws, supporting things by giving out lunch and teas and coffees - welcoming people - chatting to people and building relationships.”

“For some it is an outworking of their faith but not all of the volunteers are from the church. Two people who have come to the group have however become church members – not that this is an aim of the project.”

“Many of our volunteers have lived experience of dementia which is really helpful. There is an understanding which means that carers are willing to share things with volunteers.”

“Some volunteers would say they are trying to show Christ’s love – not in a pushy overt way but that’s the basis for what they do.”

“We’ve had people coming back to give because they received. The Minister has provided pastoral support and conducted funerals, and the Drop in has received funds through funeral donations. Often our Kirk Session are quite humbled by the way people respond. We’ve also had some additional funding in order to develop our garden area. Our main supporters have been Go For It and Life Changes Trust.

“The main impact of the work is that we see ‘the person’ not dementia – and encourage people living with dementia to live as well as possible for as long as possible. The focus is on getting to know them as people, treating them as whole people, listening when they have had a tough day or tough week.”

Support within the community – a key role

The early partnerships which supported the project to start are no longer as active although there is still a strong link with the Community Mental Health Team.

“It started off as complementary (to other services) but now we’re ‘it’. People come from all over Clydesdale because there isn’t anything else and council day services have more or less disappeared. We’ve become the folk who are doing things.”

“We were approached by Christ Church in Lanark, who after visiting us, set up Memory Lane [support for people living with dementia] – pre-COVID-19 they were bursting at the seams and now they’ve just restarted.”

What’s next

“We may soon explore links we had established pre-COVID-19 for example with a nursing home (where we held Messy Vintage and some of their residents joined us on a trip) and also links with an additional support needs primary school whose choir came to sing for us. We also hope to link again with the High School where young people volunteered with us as part of the Saltire Awards Schemes, develop our church garden, offer more music sessions and begin to offer trips again.”

“It allowed high school pupils to realise that church and faith was not about 11 o’clock on a Sunday morning. A church is a community where people care for each other.”

Summary

The project provides an example of being open to playing a part in addressing local need, being creative in growing and developing, resilient in challenging times, and ultimately showing how a faith community can provide vital support through kindness and being available.

“We offered what we had to God and amazing things have happened.”

o) The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

"Because we are a church, we are encouraging people through their recovery that Jesus Christ loves them and can heal them if they want."

Summary

Addiction recovery programmes are run by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the north of Scotland. These are volunteer-led, mostly by people over 65 as the facilitators.

Origins of the project

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints found that, world-wide and in particular in Aberdeen and around the north of Scotland, they were seeing a rise in addiction issues for people in their community - both in and outside the church. The church decided to adapt the 12 step programme that was started by AA which is open to everyone. People on this programme meet in a group and each unit has its own addiction recovery advisor. Participants are usually referred to them by other people.

"We sit in a group and go through the 12 steps. We have a bishop. They meet with people who generally have a problem and tell them that they are struggling and need help. The bishop would then refer them to a local group and we invite them to come along. Otherwise it's word of mouth and just seeing it working (for example in Stornaway). Each unit will normally have someone there who will come back and speak with an advisor. We spend a week on each step and give them an action that will help them progress to the final step of awareness of the addiction."

The need for the service

Adam Ware is one of the advisors - *"we encourage each unit of our church to have someone there who can help. It usually is someone in their 60's with some life experience and who is non-judgemental."*

"These addiction recovery programmes cover anything and everything - pornography, alcohol, smoking, drugs etc. We find that following these steps we have successes as well as some failures. We do not judge. We encourage them to do their best in their own interests. One woman was trying so hard to give up cigarette smoking and she had bad health. This numbed her pain. We gave her goals and encouraged her along, and after two years she gave up. On the islands, we have a number of people who have serious alcohol problems. Some of them we have good success with, some slip back, but they will come back to our programme. We have some people with self-worth issues and we assist them to believe in themselves. We give them an opportunity to work out the feelings that they're experiencing."

When participants come to these classes, they don't specify their addiction because *"everyone has different needs."* Each of them is given a book so they can understand the addiction.

"We don't talk about addictions outside the room, we don't talk about other people. Although most doctors' surgeries up here do deal with addictions, people don't want to be seen admitting to an addiction. We never use the main door - we are respectful"

The role of volunteers

These programmes are led by group advisors who are all volunteers.

"Housewives, businessmen, they can all be advisors. These people are usually all in the younger old age category who can give time up to meet every week - no matter how small - to give encouragement"

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints found that people were more open to talking to someone older than themselves.

"You feel a lot more comfortable talking to an older person - they're much more open. It's presented in a loving, respectful and caring way."

"That's where the age thing comes in, where we make sure life experience means we are non-judgemental. It's very much a case of looking after one another. It's not an assembly line. It's a continuum of helping people."

"Because we are in the older age group, we have more time on our hands. When you reach retirement age, you have a bit of time on your hands to devote to that unpaid work. Everything is volunteered."

Summary

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints saw that there was a need for support in their community and found that not only was it older people who could best aid those with issues with addiction because of their life experience, but those with addiction issues felt more comfortable speaking to an older person.

"We don't promise miracles, we get a few(!), but we don't promise them. Whatever your religion, people have a fundamental belief that there is a 'being'. But even with people who believe there is no god, it still works."

<https://addictionrecovery.churchofjesuschrist.org/?lang=eng&showMap=true&meetingTypes=inPerson&genders=menAndWomen,menOnly,womenOnly,ysaMenAndWomen,ysaMenOnly,ysaWomenOnly,couples,wives&groupTypes=individual&page=1&lat=57.15275714809227&lng=-2.1822840440037723&clientTimezone=Europe/London>

p) West Lochfyneside Parish Church

“We’re not just feeding the hungry but this is avoiding food going to landfill – both are very valid.”

West Lochfyneside Parish in Argyll have developed a simple foodshare initiative (The Food Surplice) – an activity which supports people who may need access to free food, but which serves the additional purpose of reducing food waste.

Origins of the community project

“It started off in the second lockdown with a local fishmonger who brought excess fruit and veg and anything else he had left. People were able to come to the church to pick up what they could use. They could leave a donation of money for this, but there was no expectation of that.”

From this simple beginning, over £500 was raised for local charities but it also led to some older members within the congregation recognising that there was an opportunity to provide a small foodbank to supplement the food sharing, for anyone needing this support.

Linking with the local Co-op, it was arranged that a basket could be placed in the store for people to donate items such as tinned goods and dried food when they were doing their shopping. Members of the congregation could then collect these and make them available at the pick-up point in the church. This was normally open two days in the week, but over the summer it is available each day when the church building is in use for other community activities.

The need for the service

Whilst some took the view of the idea of a foodbank that ‘we don’t need that here’, the reality is that rural poverty is recognised as an issue and yet can be hidden.

“It shouldn’t be needed but it is - the sad thing about rural poverty is that you would have to go a long way to get somewhere that sells really cheap food” (in contrast with cities where budget supermarkets could be relatively close).

“A couple of people have said that it was a lifeline and one was travelling quite a distance to use it.”

The volunteers’ role

It has been older volunteers in the congregation who originally came up with the idea and then implemented and managed it. Now that it is established, the volunteers’ main role is in organising the food, with one person taking the lead on this.

“They check the stock rotation, especially the fresh products, and occasionally collect items donated at the Co-op, helped by some other members of the congregation.”

A discreet service with a profile in the community

The ethos has been to offer this as a discrete service, and not one that people have to be referred to. It is simply available for people to use if they need it. This has worked well

without any sense of the system being abused – people might dip and use it occasionally at times of need, or more frequently over a period of difficulty.

“We’ve tried as much as possible to have no contact with people. We felt that the discretion was important. However, sometimes people will knock and then have a chat with one of the volunteers. They make the first move.”

Whilst there are no referrals to this service, the church has ensured that it has good relationships with the local social work team, the school and with early year practitioners – recognising the connections that these professionals have in the local area. *“They can promote it to the people they are in touch with.”* Over the summer the church will also become an alternative pick up point for excess fruit and veg from the Co-op, to one usually provided in the school.

Summary

There are no major results that this project collects or reports on. It is a discreet offering - one which is quietly there in the community. It’s known to be appreciated and that is enough for those organising it. *“We hear ‘Thank you very much for this’ - that’s all it needs -we’re not looking for great accolades.”*

Summary Literature Review

November 2021

Introduction

The Gift of Age research focuses on three social demographics within Scotland: volunteers, older people, those within a faith community. We wanted to look at a range of literature that included these demographics and helped us explore the questions:

1. What are the individual's mental, emotional, and physical benefits when volunteering?
2. What impact does volunteering have on community and societal wellbeing?
3. How does spirituality and faith come into play?
4. What was the impact of Covid19?
5. How is the role of a volunteer understood (including discussion on 'volunteer' as a term, and their motivations for volunteering)?

This review draws on the following sources:

- Reports and presentations regarding volunteering generally, and its effect on health and wellbeing in particular
- Academic journals that focus on volunteering in regard to faith communities
- Reports from faith-based charities
- Reports from charities that work with older people
- Reports/media that included information about volunteering and Covid19

This review found eight emerging themes from the resources above:

1. Language and preferred words/descriptions used when describing and understanding
 - a) Volunteering (both informal and formal)
 - b) The concept of 'service' in different religions
 - c) How to describe the demographic of people over the age of 65 years
2. Motivations for volunteering
3. The societal necessity of volunteering due to the ageing population
4. Older people delivering vs receiving the 'gift' of volunteering
5. Collaboration between faith groups and non-faith groups
6. Technology and online volunteering
7. The negative impacts of volunteering
8. Methodological approaches relevant to the current research
 - a) Logistics/ideas for data collection in research
 - b) Examples and data on the value of the role of older people in society

1. Language and definitions

In regard to the first theme, **Language and preferred words/descriptions when describing and understanding volunteering**, it is useful to know how the term 'volunteer' is defined. The Scottish Government's *Framework For Volunteering* (2019) discusses what they mean by the term 'volunteer': 'In developing this Framework, the term volunteering is

used to describe the wide range of ways in which people help out, get involved, volunteer and participate in their communities (both communities of interest and communities of place).'

They present their 'volunteering spectrum' which begins with neighbourliness, moves through informal/semi-formal approaches, to more formal methods.

The Volunteering spectrum

This section describes what we mean by the term 'Volunteering'. It is used to describe the wide range of ways in which people help out, get involved, volunteer and participate in their communities (both communities of interest and communities of place).

Volunteering is a choice. A choice to give time or energy, a choice undertaken of one's own free will and a choice not motivated for financial gain or for a wage or salary.



- Formal volunteering - through a charity, formally organised group, club or an organisation. The key distinguishing feature is that the volunteering is provided through formally constituted groups, including *registered* charities, employers, clubs and societies.
- Informal - through an informal group set up by people in an area to support and help others in a local community. The key distinguishing feature is that the volunteering is provided through non-constituted groups without legal/charitable status. This category refers specifically to groups on Facebook, WhatsApp, etc. set up to support communities or issues in society.
- Neighbourliness - where an individual helps other people outside their family or supports their local community. The key distinguishing feature is that the volunteering is provided directly by the individual to the beneficiary/local community/environment and not through any form of group.

Rutherford *et al* explain that informal volunteering is especially dependent on social network resources over 'human capital' (individual) resources. Interestingly, attachment to community and church attendance are strongest indicators of informal volunteering.

An example of 'neighbourliness' can be found in Age Scotland's *Big Survey* (2021).

'Respondents had primarily kept in touch with others during the pandemic via the phone (90%) and 64% had used text messaging. 56% of respondents had enjoyed seeing people

but at a distance when restrictions permitted them to do so. 46% of respondents had received offers of help from neighbours during the pandemic and 19% had received offers from others in their local community. Clearly neighbours had looked out for older people, with 66% and 74% of respondents in their 70s and 80s citing neighbours offering help.'

By understanding the term 'volunteer', we can begin to quantify the benefit that volunteering can give to the individual, and the benefit that individual gives to society. Within *Volunteering, Health, and Wellbeing* (2018), the findings showed that volunteering has a beneficial impact on mental health, physical health and community wellbeing. Although it looks as though volunteering is generally beneficial for individuals, organisations and society, 'the extent of wellbeing benefits are dependent on the characteristics of the volunteer'. They found that the benefits of volunteering were stronger for those who had a greater level of disadvantage. The Scottish Government's *Framework For Volunteering* (2019) was created to set out a clear and compelling narrative for volunteering ('the annual value of volunteering in Scotland is estimated to be £2.26 billion.')

The concept of 'service' is varied across different religions. For example *Khidmat* in the Muslim faith - '...Muslims can work towards accumulating spiritual merit by doing good deeds and piety through volunteering (e.g., death ritual care, food bank donations), involvement in social welfare support to Muslims and non-Muslims alike, spiritual and emotional guidance, helping with household chores, and through charitable donations.' (Edelman *et al* 2021) In *Effectively engaging Faith-based Volunteers* (2010), Unruh touches upon this too, in regard to the Jewish tradition - 'every community member has a responsibility to support those in need through commandments to support justice and provide charity (*tzedakah*) and engage in acts of loving kindness (*chesed*)'. *Seva* in the Sikh tradition describes the highest form of service which is seen as the service of mankind. 'Seva in Sikhism means selfless and voluntary service for the benefit of humanity without any personal gain.' (Sikh Missionary Society 2021) In many traditions, helping others is part of a religious culture, a foundational way of living out and deepening one's religious beliefs. Volunteering can be an embodied declaration of faithfulness, of gratitude to God, even of worship.

It is important to accurately and respectfully describe the demographic of people over the age of 65 years when conducting this research. The Big Survey (2021) featured a series of words/phrases commonly used to describe older people. Respondents were asked which of these they preferred. Preferred options were senior citizens (36%), older adults (21%) and older people (20%). Elders and elderly people were less popular (selected by 7% of respondents). In *Volunteering, Health and Wellbeing* (2018), Linning and Jackson make a distinction between 'younger old' (ages 65 - 74) and 'older old' (ages 76+), Linning and Maltman (2019) then go into greater detail about how this large factor impacts on people's wellbeing:

- 'Younger old' (aged 65 – 74) have:
 - The second highest volunteering participation rate
 - The highest volunteering hours of any age group
 - More available time for volunteering
 - Increasing physical ill-health
 - A projected 15% increase in population to 650,000 by 2041

- 'Older old' (aged 75+) have:
 - the worst health and wellbeing indicators of any age group: 56% of this age group have limiting long-term health conditions - by far the highest of any age group
 - The highest proportion of people who experience loneliness and the second most socially isolated age group
 - An absence of role identities such as not having a job, partner dying, no parental responsibilities in the household, etc
 - A projected 76% increase in population to 790,000 by 2041, an additional 342,000 people

The Big Survey (2021) found a difference in responses between the 'younger old' and 'older old'.

'Of particular note is that respondents in their 50s and 60s were more likely to disagree that they felt more mentally and physically prepared as they entered lockdown in January 2021 compared to those aged 70+. They were also more likely to agree that they felt more anxious entering another lockdown. Respondents in their 50s and 60s were less likely to describe their mental health as good and more likely to state that it had got worse over the past five years. This particular demographic is more likely to be part of the 'sandwich generation' juggling children, caring for older family members and still in employment."

2. Motivations for volunteering

Alongside religious concepts like *khidmat*, *tzedakah*, and *seva*, the research found other **motivations for individuals to volunteer** their time, skills, and efforts. *Volunteering, Health, and Wellbeing (2018)* looked at the conditions in which the wellbeing benefits of volunteering were maximised; they called this the 'facilitators'. This included the frequency and intensity of volunteering, the concept of altruism vs. self-interest, and the recognition of volunteers' contribution. They also explained that one of the reasons why older volunteers benefit and choose to give their time disproportionately relates to their changed personal and social circumstances in later life. In particular, the research highlights the adverse impacts of 'role identity absences' such as not being in paid employment, losing a partner and lack of parenting responsibilities. 'Results suggest that volunteering serves as a protective factor against the psychological wellbeing disadvantage of a reduced sense of purpose in life that accompanies a greater number of role-identity absences.' This contribution of volunteering to the wellbeing of older people has been referred to as the 'inoculation effect'.

Rutherford *et al* in *Volunteering For All (2019)* discuss the Volunteering Functions Inventory (VFI) which is a tool to assess people's motivations for volunteering. This builds on six aspects:

- a) Values relating to altruistic and humanitarian concerns
- b) Understanding e.g. new learning experiences or practicing skills or knowledge
- c) Social e.g. interacting with others
- d) Career - relating specifically to career development
- e) Protective e.g. eliminating negative feelings to protect the ego
- f) Enhancement e.g. increasing positive strivings of the ego

In their research they found that motivations to volunteering varies according to age group. With younger people it is more likely to be linked to career or employment-related issues. With older people, it tends to be linked to more altruistic motivations. Interestingly, studies that looked at more under-represented groups highlighted that values-driven motivations became more important.

In *Faith-Outcomes for Older Adult Volunteers in Religious Congregations* (2013), Myers *et al* make frequent reference to the *Faith Maturity Scale*. The Faith Maturity Scale (FMS) uses indicators of faith to determine 'the degree to which a person embodies the priorities, commitments, and perspectives characteristic of vibrant and life-transforming faith'. Like many of the other studies, this research found that volunteering within one's community had multiple and various benefits to the individual, one of these benefits being around faith. 'Our older volunteers were rewarded with enriched faith maturity and more frequent engagement in faith practices for their willingness to get and stay involved in community ministry'. They found that by 'viewing community ministry as a faith wellness center', faith organisations can utilise the fact that people derive a lot of benefits (faith and personal) whilst volunteering so as to get them to be a part of the church's outreach.

Garland *et al* explain that 'one of the roles of those who work with volunteers, then, is helping them to articulate their motives in language that resonates with their beliefs and values' (2008). They described the activities - referred to as 'practices of faith' - that collectively constitute a life of faith - for Christians, for example. These behaviors include worship, studying scripture, prayer and meditation, forgiving others, and giving financially. Some practices also are related directly to volunteer service: providing hospitality and care to strangers, suffering with and for one another and neighbors, specific acts of service, and activities that promote social justice. 87% of those surveyed agreed that the best way to share the gospel is through 'what I do more than what I say'. 77% described working for social change as a way to share the gospel.

3. Volunteering and an ageing population

Much of the research also describes the **necessity of volunteering because of our ageing population**. Linning and Maltman (2019) begin by discussing various challenges for health and wellbeing in our society: the demographic and labour market challenges; the health and wellbeing factors; and community engagement. Specific mention is made of how these challenges directly affect the older generation. In regard to demographic and labour market challenges, the following issues are commented on:

- 'Our economy: a vibrant economy depends on a growing and skilled workforce. Scotland is projected to have fewer people of working age, which may act as a constraint for our future growth. Furthermore, the increased proportion of retired people will act as a fiscal constraint on Government, due to lower tax revenues and increased costs.
- Our health sector: an ageing population which is living longer, combined with advances in medicine and science, will exacerbate the unrelenting upward trend of increasing demands on the very hard-pressed NHS.
- Our society: the change in age structure will have implications both for our older people and the challenges they face relating to their health and wellbeing, and for intergenerational engagement across our society.'

The Scottish Government's *Framework For Volunteering* (2019) mentions our aging population and the need for reliance on the 'civil core'. There is 'no room for complacency': By 2041 there will be 428,000 more adults 65+ but 144,000 fewer working age adults. More people will be living with long term conditions.'

4. Delivering and receiving volunteering

With it being clear that people over the ages of 65 volunteer so much of their time to the benefit of our wider society, as well as being aided themselves by volunteers, it is interesting to try to better understand the differences between **older people delivering and receiving volunteering**.

Referring back to the age of the volunteers, and the concept of 'younger old and 'older old"', Linning and Jackson found that 'age matters' and that there is a large body of evidence focused on the health and wellbeing benefits of volunteering for older people (2019). The strongest evidence relates to those in older age (c. 60+). The main benefits found for older people when volunteering were: mental health benefits; combating social isolation and loneliness; physical health benefits; life expectancy.

In regard to 'delivering' the gift of volunteering, academic literature suggests that those who are higher on the *Faith Maturity Scale* (FMS) are likely to contribute more to their community. The surveys and publications show that it is the older generation who are higher on the FMS scale. 'The longer attenders are involved in congregational life, the greater the probability that they will volunteer in community social services; the culture of congregations effectively encourages volunteerism' (Garland *et al* 2008). However, Linning and Maltman explain that 'there is relatively little longitudinal data on volunteering, which means that patterns of participation within the life-course are not that well studied at a population level.' (2019)

The *Evidence Clinic - lifelong engagement* survey, conducted by Volunteer Scotland in 2020, found that 25% of adults aged 60-74, and 20% of adults aged 75+ engage in 'formal volunteering'. With regard to 'informal volunteering', 36% of adults aged 60 - 74 participated, and gave on average the highest amount of hours to their volunteering out of all age groups - 15.3 hours. For formal volunteering the percentage of volunteers out of all age groups, was highest in the 'local community or neighbourhood' for people aged 60-74 (30%) and was highest in 'religion and belief' for 75+ (34%). Both of these categories were highest for those two age groups out of all other age groups. For informal volunteering - the highest percentage of volunteers for 'keeping in touch with someone who is at risk of being lonely' was the age group 60 - 74 (21%).

Approximately a fifth of respondents (21%) in Age Scotland's *Big Survey* (2021) considered that older people were valued for their contribution to society; whereas a third of respondents (36%) felt that older people are made to feel a burden to society and 34% felt that life is getting worse for older people in Scotland. Overall, 21% of respondents felt optimistic about their future.

The Cinnamon Faith Action Audit (2016) aimed to provide evidence of the social impact and the economic value of all that churches and other faith groups do in communities across the UK. In their research they approached '6,537 local churches and other faith groups. 3,007

responded saying that they were actively working to support their local community. These 3,007 groups were generating 197,634 volunteers' roles and 12,789 paid staff activities to support 5,100,770 beneficiary interactions each year. The time given by churches and other faith groups alone in our survey was worth over £319 billion. Nationally this puts the time given by churches and other faith groups into their communities through social action projects at more than £3 billion a year.'

The *Impact of COVID-19 on volunteer participation in Scotland* study found that because of lockdown and restrictions, formal volunteering came to 13% of the total volunteering participation, informal at 16%, and 'neighbourliness' with the highest engagement at 35%. The survey also quantified 'non-assigned' who are respondents who did not identify with any of the above categories but undertook one or more volunteering activities (32%). By far, the most common volunteering activity in COVID19 was 'befriending or keeping in touch with someone who is at risk of being lonely', with 68% of volunteers surveyed saying they had done this. After COVID-19 younger volunteers have stated more of an intention to continue to volunteer than any other age group, while older age groups (65+) are least likely to state an intention to continue volunteering. 'A lower intention to volunteer in the future from the older age groups needs further analysis to understand if there is a short-term influence from the mental and physical health impacts of COVID-19. 11% of adults aged 65+ intend to devote less time to volunteering compared to only 4% of 16-24 year olds. This is concerning as previous research has shown that there are important health and wellbeing benefits from volunteering for older volunteers. However, this may be reflective of older adults' reluctance to re-engage with activities immediately following Covid-19 and a number were still shielding at the time of survey.

In one case study within the *British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19 (2021)* report, a congregation member whose professional job is a TV and audio engineer, mentioned the concept of 'gifts'. He explains that he was glad to share his gift of technological expertise and was grateful for the other gifts that the rest of the congregation gave: "I think what this has done for me is that I feel thankful for being in a church where we have gifts – people are gifted in doing lots of things. People whose oratory is excellent, amazing intercessions, stuff that I can't do but I can do the other bit."

5. Collaboration between faith and non-faith groups

When individuals and groups from religious organisations provide services to their local communities, there is frequently a **collaboration between faith groups and non-faith groups**. Rutherford *et al* in their paper *Volunteering For All (2019)* created a 'picture of volunteering' which sets out helpful graphs to understand 'who, what and where', as well as which type of groups and organisations are using volunteers. 'Religion and Belief' are one of the most evidenced groups in their literature with 10 out of 51 papers including information about this demographic. Rutherford *et al* then look at what volunteer activities include. They found that activities related to working with charities and faith-based organisations were a common theme in the publications. *Volunteering For All* also found that the majority of 'informal volunteering' was found within communities of similar demographics (e.g. geography, interest) which builds social capital.

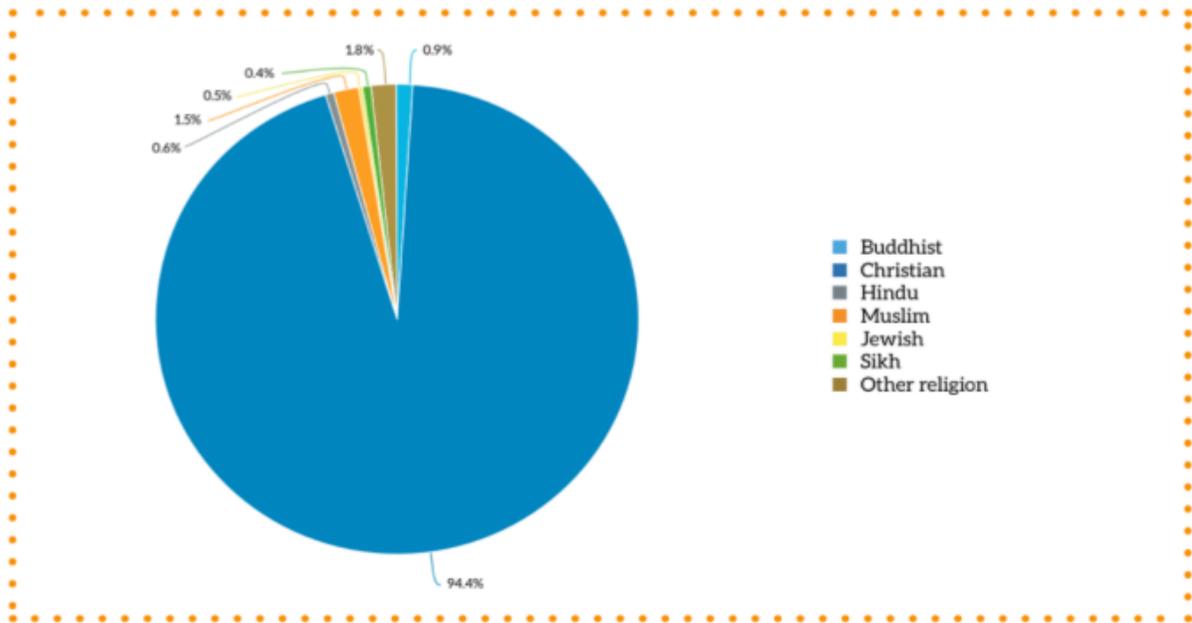
Goldsmiths University conducted a survey throughout the UK over the Summer of 2020 to explore the changing contours of partnership between local authorities and faith groups and faith-based organisations in the context of responses to COVID-19. This resulted in the APPG Faith and Society's *Keeping the Faith Partnerships between faith groups and local authorities during and beyond the pandemic* report. This research not only aimed to research the collaboration between various faith communities but looked how this networking could change the relationship and perceptions between religious groups and local authorities, and what this might mean for future partnership. The report showed an overwhelming endorsement and appreciation of the role that faith communities had to play in civic service. It saw that relationships grew and collaboration increased between local authorities and faith communities, creating a 'new normal' of working together: 'a civic and policy space characterised by relationships of trust, collaboration and innovation in which local authorities function more as enablers towards faith communities'.

The four main findings were:

1. The effects of the pandemic has meant that the partnerships between local faith organisations and the benefits that come with this have been more clearly demonstrated. 'The often hidden or unnoticed contributions that faith groups make to the resilience of local communities have become much more visible. Local authorities say they have discovered a new appreciation of the agility, flexibility and professionalism of faith groups and faith-based organisations in their responses to the pandemic'
2. Local authorities see faith based organisations as 'essential' to building, developing, and nourishing civil society, especially in times of the pandemic. For example their deployment of buildings, food banks, networks, information sharing, befriending, collecting, cooking and delivering food, and providing volunteers for local authority programmes.
3. Local authorities report their working relationship with faith communities overwhelmingly positive
4. Almost every local authority in the study endorses a commitment to build on this and to deepen relationships

60% of local authorities who participated in this research involved food banks operated by a faith group or faith-based organisation as part of their response to the pandemic. 91% of local authorities described their experience of partnership with faith groups as 'very positive' or 'positive'.

63% of those who were surveyed in *The Cinnamon Faith Action Audit* (2016) wanted a closer relationship with other organisations. This links to data found in the Big Survey by Age Scotland (2021). The audit wanted to get a range of responses from different religious groups. In the event the vast majority were Christian:



The audit found that the beneficiaries of the work carried out by faith groups covered a wide age range (66+ being the third largest) and were almost equally men and women. The projects that were found in this audit came under the following categories:

- Enabling young people and children to flourish
- Supporting safer, stronger families
- Building safer, stronger communities
- Fighting poverty

Social Work with Religious Volunteers: Activating and Sustaining Community Involvement (2008) provides insights into how religious Christian individuals begin and continue to volunteer in service settings and how congregations promote high levels of community service among their members. In the face of this decline in volunteering with specific groups like those that include people who are marginalized, such as intravenous drug users and people with chronic mental illness, religious congregations continue to incubate and offer significant volunteer resources to their communities. This research studied congregation volunteerism that contributed directly to the array of formal services available in the community.

6. Technology and online volunteering

Because of the impact of Covid19, and an ever more online society as we move through the 21st Century, **technology and online volunteering** became a large factor in how faith organisations serve their communities:

'All this change comes at a time when new technology poses both huge opportunities and *different* challenges for volunteering practice. Digital volunteering is growing but many smaller organisations have neither the resources nor infrastructure to support new ways of working. And there will be an ongoing need to balance the benefits of digital help with the face-to-face engagement that is so critical to so much of volunteering practice.' (*Volunteering For All 2019*)

Age Scotland found that 'By February 2021, 48% of respondents in the Big Survey agreed that they now had the right technology/software/expertise, suggesting that these skills had developed over the pandemic year.' APPG Faith and Society (2021) discovered this also and saw that faith groups were pioneering 'inclusive digitally based outreach to communities that could help local authorities address wider issues of inclusion, participation and belonging for the most isolated, vulnerable and socially marginalised.'

The *British Ritual Innovation under COVID-19* (2021) report found that 'Human connection' seems more important to congregants than technical quality or spectacle. 'Worshippers tend to prefer forms of online worship that are more interactive (such as those done as conference call software) over those that deliver a 'better' audio and visual quality (such as streaming video).' The ability of worshippers to join communities far from their homes has been perceived as a significant positive development that is likely to continue. This is especially for 'people with disabilities, for those who do not have a local congregation that serves their religious needs, or for members of faiths whose numbers in the UK are relatively small.' Some form of online-offline hybrid seems likely to be the way forward.

7. Negative aspects of volunteering

Throughout some of the research, the **negative impacts of volunteering** were highlighted. Linning and Jackson (2018) also researched the adverse impacts of volunteering on wellbeing, finding that aspects such as role strain, burnout, challenging roles, unemployment support, and physical health – particularly for older people - could mean a reduction in general wellbeing.

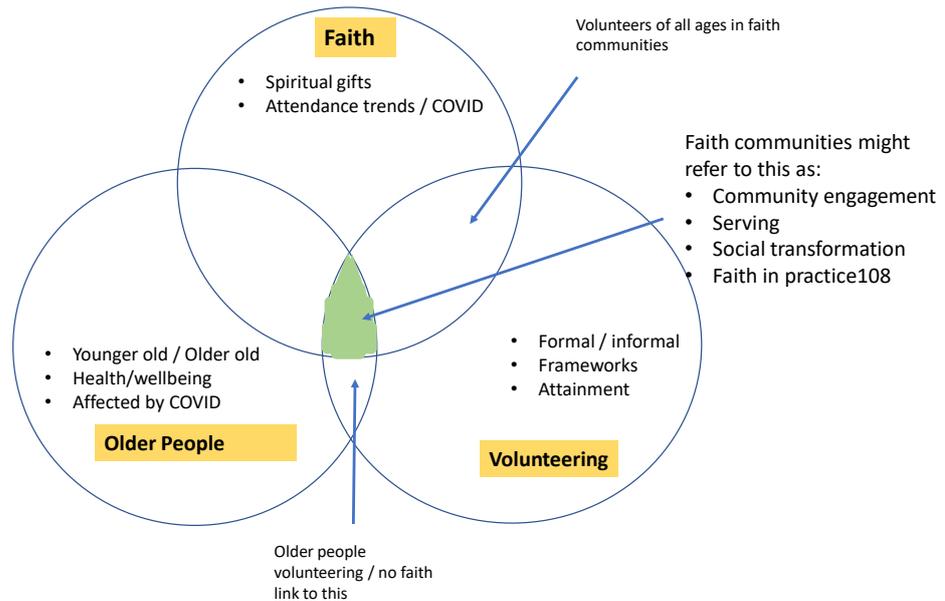
Mutating faces of the state? Austerity, migration and faith-based volunteers in a UK downscaled urban Context (2019) by Humphris looked at the role in which faith-based volunteers become an important part of the welcoming and looking after of new migrants in cities. It was researched in Luton between 2013 and 2014 and argues that austerity, welfare conditionality and the hostile environment combined to mutate the 'faces of the state' from trained advisors to (often faith) volunteers. The need for experienced local-level support services has increased, while there have been national level budget cuts reducing these services. This article found a negative impact on having faith-based volunteers taking up this role however as Humphris found that through 'diffusing power to volunteers becomes a means through which to extend uncertainty further and increase reliance on individual values and behaviours. Volunteers, in an effort to prove their own moral worth as citizens (and Christians), take up these roles and in a very real sense reproduce the state. Moreover, they do the dirty work of border enforcement by refusing to help those who they believe will not be able to work and be self-sufficient, using intimate knowledge gained from their relationships with new migrants in their homes.'

There is a multitude of research looking at the benefits to the individual and society of volunteering, of what faith organisations give to their community, and the wellbeing of older people. However there is limited information on how these three factors intersect.

The Gift of Age

Mapping showing where research literature links with our study's three themes.

Highlighting emerging trends and ideas from early stages of our research



8. Shaping the methodology

For this reason it is good to note in the literature review the **methodology appropriate to FIOP/SJCS research**. Linning and Jackson (2019) identified important evidence gaps which should be considered in assessing the potential contribution of volunteering:

- Informal volunteering: with a couple of exceptions the research evidence focused on formal not informal volunteering.
- Community wellbeing: the vast majority of the evidence focused on individual rather than wider community wellbeing.
- Youth and mid-life volunteering: there was an extensive evidence base relating to volunteering and health and wellbeing impacts on older people, but much less on the young and particularly those in mid-life.
- Volunteering roles: the extent to which wellbeing impacts vary according to the type of volunteering role being fulfilled was very limited.
- Volunteer management: the impact of volunteer management on the health and wellbeing of volunteers was completely ignored in the papers we reviewed.
- Causal mechanisms: it is not clear in a lot of the research we reviewed how the positive impacts of voluntary organisation: teering on final outcomes impacted on volunteers' wellbeing. This includes mental health, physical health, life expectancy, social isolation and loneliness, and employment and career outcomes.
- Social isolation & loneliness: a lot of the research on volunteering, health and wellbeing referenced important social capital and social connectedness benefits but failed to make overt linkages to potential beneficial impacts on social isolation and loneliness.

Conclusions and recommendations

There are 10 recommendations that are made by Linning and Jackson (2019) to enhance the contribution of volunteering to Scotland's health and wellbeing. The recommendations that are significant to this research include:

- **Understand health and wellbeing by age:** target and customise volunteering to address the health and wellbeing needs of different age groups.
- **Facilitate community engagement:** 81% of volunteering is locally based in Scotland and the evidence shows that volunteering is good for community wellbeing and communities are good for volunteers' wellbeing. It is important that people feel that they belong to their community, feel valued, and where they can influence decisions in their community. Volunteer engagers and community organisations have a key role to play in facilitating this community engagement process through social clubs, associations, religious groups and community groups.
- **'Influencers' to provide leadership in policy and practice:** this includes national and local government, national bodies (such as SCVO, Volunteer Scotland, Voluntary Health Scotland, etc), NHS Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships, Scottish Volunteering Forum members, Cross Party Group on Volunteering members, the Third Sector Interfaces (TSIs) and others with a vested interest in collaborating to maximise the contribution of volunteering for the benefit of Scotland. Guidance for these influencers is presented in an accompanying resource:
- **The contribution of volunteering to a healthier and happier Scotland:** How organisations can help to influence policy and practice in Scotland.

This is also discussed in *Social Work with Religious Volunteers: Activating and Sustaining Community Involvement* (2008). 'Congregation leaders can provide opportunities to make the connections of service with faith overt in informal discussions, in volunteer support and debriefing groups, and in training activities. This study suggests that both social workers and congregation leaders need to learn from volunteers about what motivates and sustains their service and the connections of that service with their faith - and how those connections can be strengthened.'

3 Research instruments

a) *Scoping interview questions*

The content of the online survey

- The **people**: who is in the over 65 age group in this faith community? How do they give their time, energy, and skills in helping others? What effect does it have on them and on the community more widely? Why do they do it?
- The **programmes**: what does this human resource (the 'volunteers') enable churches to offer by way of programmes, services, activities, and support?
- The **partners**: which organisations do churches work with in order to offer these programmes, services, activities, and support?

Publicising and promoting the survey

- The best way to get a good response?

What we need to have in place at the start of the survey to ensure a good return

- Agreement that all the faith communities in Scotland will take part in the survey
- A good understanding of the current issues faced by the main faith communities (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats)
- A key contact / champion for each faith community who will distribute the survey to its local 'units'
- An understanding of its local 'membership' structure, including how many local 'units' there are, and contact details for each local 'unit'
- Evidence and ideas from the workshop in January
- A rough idea of the number of potential respondents

b) *Online survey structure*

Demography / The Sample

1. Which faith community are you part of? (Please choose one)
2. In which local authority area is your Church, Mosque, Temple, Synagogue, Gurdwara based? (Please choose one from the drop-down list)
3. Can you give us a rough idea how many regular members attend your Church, Mosque, Temple, Synagogue, Gurdwara each week - online and in-person. (Please choose one)
4. Approximately, what percentage of your membership is aged over 65. (Please choose one)
5. Approximately, what percentage of your membership over 65 is female? (Please choose one).

Activities Undertaken

6. We're interested in the activities that faith communities have been or are currently involved in, and the contribution that older people make to them. Which of the following activities / services have been either created or supported by your own

faith community, with older people involved in running them? (Please choose as many as apply)

7. Older people often provide practical 'behind the scenes' support and assistance for activities in your faith community. Which of the following do older people help with? (Choose one per line)

Encouraging Participation

8. We want to understand what encourages (and discourages) older people from getting involved. Please say how important the following factors are. As someone in a leadership role we'd like you to answer to the best of your knowledge. (Please choose one per line)
9. Is there anything you feel discourages older people from getting involved in community activities?

Examples of Community Initiatives

10. Please give an example of one of your community initiatives where older people (over 65 years) from your faith community are involved. Please describe it in no more than 200 words. Say who it is for, what is offered, who benefits from it, and how older people are involved.

Case Studies

11. Case studies of community initiatives you've described. If you would be interested in discussing the possibility of having your faith community used as an illustrative case study in the research, please enter your contact details below. These details will only be used for this purpose and will be deleted at report publication.

Partnerships

12. Many faith communities work closely with other organisations in order to improve their local community. Please say how often you work with the following organisations. (Please choose one per row)
13. Which types of partnerships do you have? (Please choose as many as apply)
14. Please give any examples of the agreements you have

The Gift of Age

15. The 'Gift of Age' which older people can bring to others can be described in five ways:
 - The Human gift - developing confidence, knowledge, skills, and attitudes in individuals
 - The Social gift - building a sense of community, social networks, trust, and citizenship in and between different groups and organisations in the community
 - The Economic gift - strengthening the local economy by providing volunteering opportunities and supporting local employability initiatives

- The Cultural gift - developing a shared understanding of the culture and heritage of the local community
- The Physical gift - undertaking practical work in the home and the locality

To what extent do older people bring each of these gifts to your faith community.
(Please choose one per line)

16. What reflections do you have on the "Gifts of Age"?

The COVID Pandemic

17. The Covid pandemic has affected everyone. Please say whether you agree with the following statements. As someone in a leadership role we'd like you to answer to the best of your knowledge. (Choose one per row)

Other

18. Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?

Copy of Report

19. Would you like a copy of our report? If so please provide your email address. This will only be used for this purpose and will be destroyed afterwards.

c) Case studies interview questions

Purpose

Taken together the case studies will aim to describe the variety of programmes, activities, and projects being contributed in faith communities by older people.

The case studies will provide brief, vivid, practical examples of what takes place in local areas across Scotland. They will help to show how you make a difference to people's lives with the work you do, illustrating the main themes which have emerged in the research to date. These include addressing challenges associated with:

- Loss & bereavement
- Foodbanks
- Children
- Homelessness
- Community cafes
- Asylum seekers & refugees
- Debt
- Employability
- Addiction
- Social & pastoral support
- Young people
- Families
- Environment & sustainability
- Older people (including people living with dementia)

The case study

In general terms, the case study should focus on the distinctive role played by older people in running the activity or service.

We would like to use your story to illustrate one or two of the above themes. Ideally we will be producing a brief account (approximately 500 words or one page of A4) that describes:

- Which of the above themes your service / project / activity addresses
- How the need for the project / activity was identified, and by who
- Who the activity was mainly aimed at
- What actually happened, and what it looked like (places, dates, participants, activities)
- Who your partner organisations were, and what their roles were
- The distinctive role played by older people in running the activity
- Any significant changes in the local community that have been brought about by the work
- Why you feel it is important to do this for your community
- Contact details (including social media) for anyone interested in learning more about your project / activity

We would like to include some quotes from participants, volunteers, and staff in order to bring the case study to life.

4 Summary of participant feedback from the FIOF conference of 15 September 2022 at which the research findings were launched and debated

(Comments taken from break out groups and from the Zoom chat function)

What do you think are the three most important findings of the research?

- The mutual value of inter-generational responses for both younger and older people, and a recognition that faith communities are a natural 'home' for these activities.
- The issue of age definitions (older old, younger old and even middling old), and how understanding these nuances can improve the ways in which faith communities conceptualise the needs and the gifts of their older members.
- The need to 'love' your local geographic community as well as the faith communities residing there.
- Young people are often more involved in practical activities than the 'spiritual' aspects of the faith. This has implications for succession planning and being confident that the next generation will emerge with the requisite 'backroom' experience to take on the running of the faith community.
- Community based activities tend to be 'under the radar' of public sector bodies such as local authorities and health boards.
- The genuinely broad range of activities provided by faith communities in local communities.
- Particular areas of need experienced by older people in faith communities include: mental health support; a growing absence of men; the short and long term effects of COVID-19.

"I think many churches are missing generations from Generation X onwards...and part of the problem has traditionally been reluctance to pass on control to the point where people have been fed up waiting and dropped away...the answer to it I think is looking at church being different and seeing that your 'congregation' will not just be those who come on a Sunday...I think too making communities aware of the work faith communities do is vital..."

"Pre-covid we were able to engage much more effectively with schools including our local high school - and we had some young folk volunteering - hopefully that will build again as we try to re-connect."

1. What should happen as a result of the research? Suggest three practical action points.

- Disseminate the report and executive summary widely to practitioners and policy makers, including all Church of Scotland churches, as a way of both broadening the debate and valuing the work of older people.

- Promote the 'Gift of Age' model as one way of analysing and understanding what older people bring to the life of faith communities.
- Explore the theoretical value and practical use of alternative language to describe the volunteering role (mutual aid - informal volunteering - volunteering). Ensure it is sufficiently flexible to embrace the subtle depth of life experience brought by older people, their varied skill sets, and the stage of life at which they find themselves.
- Consider the need for succession planning in faith communities - especially by 'planting the seeds' for this with young people.
- Highlight the current policy areas where older people's experiences afford an especially helpful contribution to the policy debate. This includes loneliness and isolation.

"We must value older people and be careful that our discussions about seeking younger generations who are missing don't make older people feel like they don't matter..."

"Capturing the generation in their 50's; reaching and involving those who don't identify with 'the church' but have the same concerns and issues as their church-attending neighbours and friends."

"I think there's amazing lessons from what's working in faith communities that could be applied much wider."

2. Who needs to be involved? Suggest three stakeholder groups.

- There is a long list of potential candidates, but four key categories would be:
 - a) **FIOP** - through its existing networks
 - b) **Scottish Government** - through the 'Volunteering Action Plan', and 'A Connected Scotland: our strategy for tackling social isolation and loneliness and building stronger social connections
 - c) **Faith** communities - through existing networks
 - d) The **TOR Christian Foundation** - through supportive funding of the dissemination process

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