

## **Presbytery Meeting Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016 Summary**

The November Presbytery meeting was at Queen's Cross Parish Church. The business included the following:

### **Aberdeen Crematorium**

Prior to the introduction of the manager of Aberdeen Crematorium, Mr Angus Beacom, the Rev Keith Blackwood, Convener of the Presbytery Business and Finance Committee, spoke of how efforts had been made in recent years to engage in conversations with Funeral Directors and open dialogue had been established. Keith had been buoyed up by favourable comments made about ministers at the North East Scotland Funeral Directors Annual Dinner which had also been attended by Angus Beacom and where Keith had said that most Funeral Directors "go the extra mile".

Angus Beacom was from Paisley originally but grew up in the 1960's in Fraserburgh. After 25 years in various positions in the retail industry he moved to local government to become an Environmental Officer with Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council. Two years ago he was appointed manager of Aberdeen Crematorium to become involved with making progress after the baby ashes furore. Matters were continuing to improve through communications with people and staff were committed to what they do. The future was looking brighter with refurbishments to take place in the chapels, car parks and access routes. An Open Day was held in 2015. Timings were not suitable in 2016 but it was hoped that another Open Day would be held in 2017.

A 6 months trial was underway of extended funeral timings from 20 to 25 minutes but 10% of funerals were still going over the allotted time slot. A higher proportion of funerals, 60 to 70% are now non religious with 30 to 40% religious.

The Rev Markus Aufferman, minister at Woodside Parish Church, thanked the Aberdeen Crematorium staff for their helpfulness and friendliness.

### **Registration of Ministries Overture**

The Overture was sent down to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act by the 2016 General Assembly. The 1697 Act is a measure which compels the General Assembly to consult the wider Church before innovating in the areas of worship, doctrine, discipline or church government. Under the terms of the Barrier Act a Presbytery may either accept or reject an Act but cannot amend it although it can send comments along with the decision. A majority of Presbyteries have to ratify an Act before being returned to the General Assembly of the following year.

The Registration of Ministries Overture proposes the creation of a single Register of Ministry ("the Register"), which will record details of all individuals who hold status as Ministers of Word and Sacrament, or as Deacons, within the Church. This unified approach will help to overcome the administrative confusion which was reported to the Assembly of 2013.

Through a system of categorisation, the Register will specify the context in which an individual is authorised to perform the functions of the ministry or of the diaconate. The various categories are designated by a system of 'lettering', which deliberately avoids any implication of hierarchy. In the first instance each Presbytery shall be responsible for compiling its own section of the Register, allocating individuals within its jurisdiction to the relevant categories. Once the Register has been initially compiled, the Ministries Council shall maintain the Register, with the assistance of Presbyteries.

Also proposed in the Overture is the establishment of a Registration of Ministries Committee, which would receive applications from individuals applying for certain Categories of registration. The Registration of Ministries Committee ("the Committee") shall be appointed by the General

Assembly as a Standing Committee, in terms of the Standing Orders of the General Assembly.

The Presbytery Ministries Committee had been asked to consider the Overture. It recommended approval of the Overture although it believed that there are may be unintended consequences from the proposed legislation.

The Committee was greatly helped in its discussions by Rev George Cowie, Minister at South Holburn Parish Church, who presented the Overture at the General Assembly and who, at the behest of the Legal Questions Committee, was the substantial author of the legislation. The Presbytery committee was grateful to him for his time and hospitality.

When it came to the vote, 64 members of Presbytery approved the legislation and 2 did not approve. After the vote Presbytery agreed the following comment:

Presbytery wishes to affirm and welcome the enriched skills and experience of those who have served a vocation outside the parish ministry.

The Presbytery Clerk was instructed to transmit the comment from Presbytery to the Committee on Returns to Overtures regarding the Registration of Ministries Overture.

### **Torry St Fittick's, Kincorth and Cove**

In recognition of the dissolution of Cove New Charge Development (NCD), Presbytery approved the redrawing of boundaries to the south of the Dee to include the area formerly covered by the parish of Cove in the parishes of Torry St Fittick's and South St Nicholas Kincorth.

The staffing allocated in the Presbytery Plan as 4FTE to the geographical area would not change, being shared equally between the two larger parishes. The intention is to develop new ways of working within the team and across the parish boundaries as endorsed by Ministries Council.

### **Syrian Refugees**

Presbytery received an update regarding the Syrian refugees. The second group was currently arriving in Aberdeen with some still to come to bring the total to 67 plus there had been 2 births in recent weeks amongst the first group that arrived in March. Volunteers from churches and other community groups continued to support and help their integration into the city, and congregations were encouraged to consider ways in which they might welcome them.

According to a Lancaster University study about impressions from the refugees arriving in Aberdeen the refugees had remarked about the love they had received and the beautiful smiles of the Aberdonians.

### **Living Well Cafes**

The Rev Hugh Wallace, Convener of the Presbytery Church, Society and World Mission Committee, spoke of the continuing success of the Living Well Cafes for helping those with dementia and memory loss which could be seen in the stories told and the participation of many in song, chat, games and reflection. The Committee was grateful to the volunteers from the north of the city churches who bring their time and care to the cafes currently running at Newhills and Old Machar Churches. Conversations were taking place with representatives from Ferryhill, South Holburn and High Hilton Churches in the possibility of expanding the ministry.

### **Ministries and Mission Contributions**

Presbytery noted that Congregations have reported that they will not have any difficulties in paying 2016 Ministry and Mission contributions, but that some have expressed concern about the level of Ministry and Mission contributions proposed for 2017.

It was agreed that the proposed Ministry and Mission allocation for St George's Tillydrone be

reduced by £6,000 from the outset by using Presbytery's 2017 Discretionary Allowance. The revised 2017 Ministry and Mission Allocations totalling £1,674,131 were approved and the Presbytery Discretionary Allowance in 2017 will stand at £66,329, as of 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017.

The Conveners of Business and Finance, Planning and Deployment, Congregational Support and Congregational Stewardship, along with the Presbytery Clerk will meet to provide an agreed framework of priorities within which decisions about the use of the Presbytery's Ministry and Mission allowance are made.

### **Empowering Local Leadership**

The Presbytery Congregational Support Committee considered the remit from the Panel on Review and Reform "Instruct Presbyteries to consider the section of the Panel's report on 'Empowering local leadership' and to send their reflections to the Panel by 31 December 2016."

This section of the Panel's report contains a review of previous reports which have been presented to the General Assembly on Leadership in particular the Ministers of the Gospel Report and the Church without Walls report. The Panel concludes that it is not more reports which are required but discernment about how to implement what has already been written about and agreed. The Panel commits to work further with Mission and Discipleship and Ministries Council in an effort to ascertain the 'levers of change' which could be used to bring the desired changes to models of leadership that are adopted across the church.

The Congregational Support Committee response to the section included:

- They agreed with the report that Kirk Sessions are generally not well placed to provide the empowering leadership that the report believes is required.
- They recognised that some ministers of word and sacrament will find the transition from a predominantly pastor-teacher model challenging and, perhaps, threatening.
- Developing a strongly missional focus within congregations' work would be important to maintain momentum for development of aspects of leadership beyond pastoral and teaching models.

Presbytery instructed the Congregational Support Committee to forward their responses to the Empowering Local Leadership report to the Panel on Review and Reform.

### **Intimation**

The Church of Scotland Panel on Review & Reform: Survey on administrative burdens which was forwarded to Session Clerk's direct by the Panel on Review & Reform Committee at the Church of Scotland may be accessed at the following link -<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/AdminBurden>

The Purpose of the questionnaire is in response to the 2016 General Assembly deliverance which urged Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions to discuss and make suggestions about how to alleviate the administrative burden on local congregations and instructed the Panel to gather these suggestions and report to the Council of Assembly by December 2016. Response to this survey is required by the 25th November 2016.

### **Presbytery Also:**

- Agreed to recommend to the Education Committee of the Church and Society Council the Rev Hutton Steel as Presbytery's new representative on the Aberdeen City Council Education and Children's Services Committee.

- Noted that the Rev James Stewart was standing down as Presbytery representative on the Aberdeen Endowments Trust after 41 years and warmly thanked him for his service.
- Noted that the Rev Louis Kinsey was standing down from his role as Chaplain within the Prison Service and warmly thanked him for his ministry in this sector.
- Welcomed the ministry candidates Phil Gunn, Ibidun Daramola and Mary Whittaker to Presbytery.