

Presbytery Meeting Tuesday 6th February 2018 Summary

Queen's Cross Parish Church was the venue for the first Presbytery meeting of 2018 and some of the business was as follows:

Presbytery Survey and Conference

At the December meeting all Presbyters were invited to complete and return by 13th January 2018 a questionnaire on how Presbytery currently undertakes its business and how this might be improved. 106 replies were submitted to the questionnaire, an excellent response rate of 75%.

The software used enabled the responses to be analysed by category of respondent, which revealed a number of differences between the views of ministers in post, retired ministers and elders, particularly as regards the frequency and format of Presbytery meetings. The question on possible changes to the format of meetings elicited a large response.

As part of a Presbytery Review pilot exercise, Presbytery had been invited by the Presbytery of Stirling to look ahead and set out aims for the next five years. A conference on the 20th of January met to consider the functions of Presbytery, the factors that should determine the number of meetings, changes that would make Presbytery and its committees more fit for purpose and a more satisfying use of members' time, pastoral care for those engaged in ministry, and collaboration with neighbouring Presbyteries.

Presbytery agreed with a proposal from the Business and Finance Committee to appoint an ad hoc group to reflect on the results of the survey, on the feedback from the Presbytery conference and to report back with recommendations.

Possible Union/Association with Presbytery of Shetland

As reported at the December Presbytery, at a consultation attended by Presbytery, Session Clerks and representatives from the Ministries Council and the Principal Clerk on 2nd September 2017, a consensus emerged for a radical reshaping of the church in Shetland. This would involve Shetland, over the next three to five years, becoming a single parish consisting of a cluster of congregations served by a team of Ordained Ministers and others; the Parish of Shetland would then become part of another Presbytery.

Presbytery noted that the Business and Finance Committee was briefed by the Principal Clerk on 22 January 2018 about the progress of discussions within the Presbytery of Shetland about a possible union or association with the Presbytery of Aberdeen. Having outlined the problems that had led Shetland to seek this, including the difficulty of filling the eight 5-year posts allocated to them and of maintaining the large number of places of worship currently in use, he advised that Aberdeen postpone any final decision about agreeing to incorporate Shetland as a single parish until such problems had been satisfactorily resolved by Shetland. The Committee then agreed, as a first step, to seek a meeting to be attended by four members from each Presbytery plus the Principal Clerk.

Meet the MPs and MSPs Event

The Church and Society Committee plan to host a "Meet the MPs and MSPs" event which will be an opportunity for congregational members to meet with MPs and MSPs with the view to showcasing the work of the church in Aberdeen. This will be an inter denominations and other Christian Agency event where each congregation or Christian agency will have a designated area to present their work, whether with banners, display board, or leaflets, and have a number of their people available to explain and encourage the interest of others.

The city centre venue for this event was still to be confirmed and further information will be shared in due course. Initial information may be sought direct from the Convener of the Committee, the

Rev Hugh Wallace at HWallace@churchofscotland.org.uk or telephone 01224 710318.

Presbytery encouraged all congregations to take part in the “Meet the MPs” event on Saturday 28th April from 10 am – 12.30 pm to showcase their work and witness into their parishes and noted that notification should be sent to the Presbytery Office by 28th February.

Organ and Tissue Donation

The Scottish Parliament is currently debating a change of policy in organ donation from the present “presumed opt-out” position unless registered to donate, to a “presumed consent” position unless registered not to donate. The Welsh Assembly voted in favour of this policy in December 2015, and the Scottish Government desires to change to that system too. The Church of Scotland has, through its Science, Religion and Technology Project engaged, with Parliament on this matter and has produced a leaflet entitled “Transplantation”. Whilst accepting and affirming the life-giving practice of organ transplantation, the Church has been pressing for assurances, concerned that a change in policy could be viewed as invasive to an individual’s rights and freedoms.

Presbytery welcomed the opportunity to discuss the issues of Organ and Tissue Donation and commended the leaflet “Transplantation” to all congregations.

2018 Year of Young People

The Presbytery Congregational Support Committee reported that details of all four Roadshow Events have now been made available - Dumbarton, 17th February; Dalkeith, 24th February; Dundee, 10th March; Inverness 17th March. The cost is £15. These events will look at worship with young people, faith formation, children and young people in the church, and contexts of ministry with young people and will include workshops and speakers. Booking for these events is available at: <https://www.resourcingmission.org.uk/year-young-people-2018-roadshows-encounter-and-celebration>

Presbytery commended the Year of Young People Roadshows and encouraged congregations to send a representative.

Weekend of Invitation

Michael Harvey, one of the founders of Back to Church Sunday, visited Aberdeen Presbytery last year as part of a national initiative with the Mission and Discipleship Council promoting a “Weekend of Invitation” programme aimed at inviting new people to church. This excellent presentation has now been made available online and Presbytery encouraged Kirk Sessions and congregational groups to view the video as a basis for discussion.

The video can be viewed and downloaded at:

<https://www.resourcingmission.org.uk/mission/weekend-invitation>

Retreat Centres

A request was made to the Congregational Support Committee for recommendations for a venue for a church to host a weekend event. The committee became aware that there is no list of suitable or recommended venues available. It would therefore like to compile such a list and ask for congregations who have used facilities that they would recommend to contact the Convener with the details.

Presbytery invited congregations and individuals to submit the names of recommended retreat centres which could be used for congregational retreats, Alpha weekends, leadership training events etc.

Presbytery Planning Kirk Session Consultation “Our Shared Future”

At the December 2017 meeting of Presbytery a deliverance was passed which instructed all Kirk Sessions to participate in discussions about “Our Shared Future” between January and May 2018 and to submit a response by the end of May. Presbytery noted that materials in support of the discussions had been prepared by the Convener and others from the Parish Deployment Committee and commended their use.

St George’s Tillydrone and Middlefield

At the November meeting of the Planning and Deployment Committee (PDC), an innovative proposal was presented by representatives of Middlefield and St George’s Tillydrone Kirk Sessions for consideration. Entitled “An Experiment in Ministry” it is a response to the need for a new and pioneering way of meeting the needs of the two Aberdeen Priority Area Parishes, building on current strengths and using the increasingly scarce resources available to Presbytery in more effective and strategic ways. PDC responded positively to the proposal.

It was also proposed that the current 0.5 Mission Development Staff (MDS) post at St George’s Tillydrone be increased to 1FTE in the Presbytery Plan with immediate effect, the job description of the post holder being adjusted in the interim to allow for developing involvement across the two parishes, focusing primarily on Priority Area imperatives, and identifying line management responsibility during the vacancy.

Presbytery approved in principle the proposal that a partnership arrangement called “An Experiment in Ministry” between Middlefield and St George’s Tillydrone be taken forward and approved the increase from 0.5 to 1FTE of the MDS post allocated to St George’s Tillydrone in the Presbytery Plan.

Schedule of Quinquennial and Local Inspections of Church Properties

The General Trustees of the Church of Scotland require Quinquennial Inspections by independent professional Surveyors, or Architects, to be carried out on all church properties within Presbytery bounds. These Inspections are undertaken at ten (10) yearly intervals. In the intervening fifth year local inspections, by competent persons are required to be undertaken and recorded. Copies of each of these reports must be made available to Presbytery, and to The General Trustees, within the appropriate calendar year.

In the case of the Quinquennial Inspections these will be arranged, with suitable organisations, by Presbytery. Intermediate Inspections will be arranged by individual churches and may be carried out by others who are suitably qualified to carry out an inspection with the appropriate thoroughness, and who can produce a clear and concise report.

Presbytery approved the issue of the Schedule of Quinquennial and Local Inspections, dated January 2018, to all congregations within Presbytery bounds for immediate implementation.

Due Diligence Audit of Property and Manse Condition Schedules

The General Trustees require that an annual due diligence audit be carried out on all property records which are required to be kept in respect of church buildings and properties. Conduct of these audits is the responsibility of local Presbyteries.

Presbytery noted that the annual Due Diligence Audit of Property Register and of Manse Condition Schedules will be undertaken on the evenings of Tuesday 13th and Wednesday 14th March and that on both evenings these will be held at Midstocket Church Centre, 35 Mid Stocket Road, between the hours of 7.00 pm and 8.30 pm.

Presbytery Also:

- Congratulated the Very Rev Professor Iain R Torrance on being awarded a knighthood in

the New Year's Honours for his service to the Church, theological education, interfaith dialogue, the British Army and work to combat homophobia.

- Noted that the Rev Alisa McDonald has been elected minister of Barnhill St Margaret's, Broughty Ferry, and approved her translation from Kingswells Church subject to the Call being sustained by the Presbytery of Dundee.
- Noted that a letter had been received from the Rev Jim Weir, seeking permission to demit from St George's Tillydrone on 30th April 2018 and granted him permission to demit his charge.
- Noted that an opportunity to thank Mrs McDonald and Mr Weir for their respective Ministries will be given at the March meeting of Presbytery.
- Welcomed the Rev Shuna M Dicks to her first meeting of Aberdeen Presbytery as minister of Cults Parish Church.
- Approved that the Rev Joe Somevi, Ordained Local Minister, be allocated to Bridge of Don Oldmachar, to work with the Fresh Expressions Team at Oldmachar and St Columba's, to be reviewed in January 2019
- Agreed to appoint the Rev Susan Sutherland as Convener of the World Mission and Partnership Committee.
- Noted that finding Interim Moderators is proving increasingly difficult and agreed with the proposal from the Business and Finance Committee to seek to recruit and train a team of Presbytery Elders to take on this important role.
- Noted that at a congregational meeting of St Mark's Parish Church held on 14th January 2018 it was unanimously agreed to sell the former Queen Street Church building and thereby approved the sale.
- Noted that the Kirk Session and congregation of Midstocket Parish Church have unanimously agreed to sell their building at No. 35 Mid Stocket Road and that the General Trustees have confirmed that the title is vested in local trustees and there is no General Assembly control clause and therefore granted permission to Midstocket Church to sell the said building.
- Received the report of the Local Church Review of Rubislaw Parish Church.
- Presented a book token each to the Rev Mary Whittaker and Mrs Ibidun Daramola from the Baird Trust for year four Probationary Placement Students.
- Reminded Presbyters that the annual Inspection of Congregational Records will take place on Wednesday 28th February 2018 in the Cowie Room at Mastrick Parish Church and that time slots had been issued to all congregations.

Intimations included:

- A final reminder with regards to the dementia workshop to be held on Saturday 24th February 2018 at South Holburn Church, from 9.30am – 3pm. The title of this interactive workshop is "In a Strange Land: Understanding and Enabling Christian Spirituality within Dementia". No experience or previous knowledge of the subject is required and all are invited to attend. Please register by contacting Mrs Anne Smith, Congregational Learning Facilitator at smithanneg@tiscali.co.uk alternatively please telephone the Presbytery Office on 01224 698119 no later than Sunday 11th February.

- A Christian Aid Gathering will be held on Thursday 1st March from 10 am to 1.00 pm at Holburn West Church. All are welcome to come and celebrate the work of our partners in Bolivia, and learn how they are transforming lives by standing up to climate change, overcoming inequality and tackling injustice. Hear from Ms Sally Foster-Fulton, Head of Christian Aid Scotland, and discover new ways to support Christian Aid's work. Be inspired to raise awareness, to raise money and to raise your voice. To confirm attendance, please contact the Christian Aid Office, Glasgow email address at glasgow@christian-aid.org alternatively, please telephone 0141 221 7475
- A series of talks on the theme of Aspects of the Reformation will be held as part of the Christian Education programme to be held in the Raven Room at Rubislaw Church Centre, 1 Beaconsfield Place, Aberdeen, commencing at 7.30pm. The dates for the talks and the speakers are as follows -
 - March 6th, The Reformation in Scottish Literature with Mr Derrick McClure*
 - March 13th, The Genevan 'Model': International Calvinism and the Scottish Reformation with Professor William Naphy*
 - March 20th, The Reformation in North-East Scotland with the Rev. James Stewart*
 Refreshments will be available at all sessions, and there will be opportunities for questions and discussion. Please contact the Rubislaw Church Centre on 01224 645477 or email rubislawcentre@btconnect.com with any queries or to register interest.
- A reminder is offered of the World Mission and Partnership Committee 'Twinning Day' event which will be held on Saturday 14th April at Rubislaw Church Centre. The committee encourages all congregations to consider attending and learning how to set up a twinning.