

Presbytery Planning

Members of Kirk Session will already be aware that the entire Church of Scotland is now planning for an overall reduction in the number of full-time ministers of Word and Sacrament, dropping to 600 in total. Within the Presbytery of Stirling, this means a reduction from 34 to 20 full-time ministers, deacons and Ministry Development staff, with no part of the Presbytery being unaffected. It has now been proposed that an area grouping made up of Dunblane Cathedral, Dunblane: St Blane's linked with Lecropt and Kilmadock (Doune) linked with Kincardine on Menteith, be served by two full-time ministers of Word and Sacrament. The existing linkage between Gargunnoch, Kincardine on Menteith and Kilmadock would be severed, thereby removing Gargunnoch from the local equation. These proposed groupings only deal with full-time ministry posts, and there exists the possibility that an Ordained Local Minister (part-time and non-stipendiary), and/or a Reader might also be part of our local grouping, depending on the availability of OLMs and Readers.

This is largely consistent with what our response to the Presbytery's three questions with regard to planning. The overall view, nationally, and at a local level, is that simply creating more linkages is neither helpful nor sustainable in the long-term. The preference is for one Kirk Session per charge. That being the case, the options the Presbytery's Committee on planning are as follows:

1. **A Team ministry** in which two or more people are jointly responsible for a larger charge that contains two or more centres of worship. This would include, at least, one full-time minister of word and sacrament, other paid ministries, and may include non-stipendiary staff if they are available.
2. **Mission Churches** – in line with legislation introduced at this year's General Assembly, this is where a small congregation enters full union with their larger neighbour but continues as an independent worshipping community in which the local community plays a significant part in leading worship.
3. **Single Charges** – This would look like a traditional union, with one Kirk Session. However, this may initially have more than one worship centre. Lay worship-leading would be required, and non-stipendiary staff might be involved if they are available. There would also be an expectation of co-operation with neighbouring charges.

Those of us who are able to meet in person over a packed lunch on Sunday 12th December, can discuss this more fully then.

Kirk Sessions will be invited to facilitated discussions (probably via Zoom) with the first round of discussions on the 25th/26th January and the second on the 9th/10th February.

Church Buildings – The General Trustees of the Church of Scotland have already indicated that the Church of Scotland, as a whole, currently has far more buildings than it can justify or afford to maintain. An approximate reduction of 40% in the number of buildings is envisaged, with an inspection of all buildings, working to an agreed national template, will begin in spring 2022. It has already been intimated to us that the Cathedral itself, being owned by the Crown and maintained by HES, will not be part of this inspection. However, our halls will be.

Kilmadock – Elders will already be aware that discussions had already commenced with Kilmadock with a view to some form of partnership. However, despite Kilmadock's willingness to take this further, discussions have stopped for a time, largely because of the sudden death of their Session Clerk and the retirement of Dorothy Anderson at the end of June. I would hope that, during our discussion on the 12th December, we might explore how we might resume these discussions.

Local Worship Leadership. It was agreed at the 2021 General Assembly that a national programme of training for local worship leadership would be produced. I have enquired about the progress on this and believe that nothing will be forthcoming until early 2022. However, I wonder if, early in the New Year, we might consider a small working group on how we take this forward, both identifying members who might be approached with a view to becoming involved, and also in making some tentative start should there be a significant delay in the production of a national programme.

Brief Summary on Presbytery Meetings

4th November 2021

The Presbytery of Stirling:

1. agreed that Alastair Munro be made a corresponding member of the Presbytery;
2. noted the visit of the Moderator of the General Assembly, Baron Wallace of Tankerness, to the Presbytery
3. noted the report of group negotiating the formation of the new Presbytery of Perth, (a union of the Presbyteries of Stirling, Perth, Dunkeld and Meigle, Dundee and Angus), proposed for 2023
4. agreed that the Rev Tony Foley be released from Dollar, Glendevon and Muckart in order to take up another charge.
5. sustained the call to the Rev Alison Grainger to Fallin Church;
6. noted the election of Rev Mike Goodison as minister at Menstrie (in deferred linkage with Alva)
7. appointed the Rev Colin Renwick as Moderator.

25th November

The Rev Alison Grainger was inducted as minister at Fallin.

2nd December 2021

The Presbytery of Stirling:

Voted to two Acts of the General Assembly under the Barrier Act of 1697

1. The Church Courts Act (intended to reduce the size of the General Assembly by changing from a one in four year rota to one in five).
2. The solemnisation of same-sex marriages act, whereby a minister would be entitled to apply for a licence to conduct same-sex marriages.

Both Acts were approved by Presbytery – the first following virtually no debate and with only one vote against, and the second after considerable debate, with the 60% voting for and 40% against. A number of ministers and elders recorded their dissent.

Note: If the majority of Presbyteries approves these two acts, they will be considered at the General Assembly of 2023, with a further vote being taken. If a majority of Presbyteries votes against either of these Acts, they simply fall.

The Presbytery also noted that the five Presbyteries were on course to unite on the 1st January 2023, and that each of the Presbyteries would meet, separately, on the 10th March 2021 vote on the matter.

Colin C. Renwick