



The Church of Scotland  
The Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland

The Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland  
Plan for the Presbytery 2020-2030

Approved Unanimously on July 4th 2020

Aberdeen and Shetland Presbytery Office

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# Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland

July 2020

## Plan for the Presbytery 2020-2030

Key for abbreviations:

UT – Unrestricted Tenure

V - Vacant

TM – Transition Minister

IEM – International Exchange Minister

I Min – Interim Minister

MDS – Ministry Development Staff

RT - Reviewable Tenure

### Presbytery:

1. Received the Plan for the period 2020-2030 and accompanying Report.

2. Approved the plan for the Bridge of Don Area Grouping:

Name of Congregation	2018 Congregational Membership	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Structure of staffing required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
Bridge of Don Oldmachar	187	11,263	9,845	V	Team Ministry, 1	RT	2 Ministers,	3	A	
Bridge of Don St Columba's	219	11,253	9,835	UT	Kirk Session, 2 Buildings		1 MDS		A	

19,680

- 2.1 By the end of the Plan, the aim is to have one congregation with two centres of worship in the existing buildings with three full time staff including two Ministers of Word and Sacrament working in a team.
- 2.2 Oldmachar may call a minister on Reviewable Tenure for a seven-year period, after which progress towards Union will take place. If, in the meantime, if there is a change in the status of St Columba's, progress towards Union will begin before the end of the seven-year period.
  - 2.2.1 Meanwhile, a Parish Grouping (as defined in the Report) should be formed within one year of the Plan being approved, to continue the encouraging work on mission in both congregations that is already underway.
- 2.3 It is acknowledged that the future creation of a North East Presbytery might facilitate the inclusion in the Parish Grouping/Union of congregation(s) currently outside the City Presbytery boundary.

### 3. Approved the plan for the Brimmond area grouping:

Name of Congregation	2018 Congregational Membership	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Structure of staffing required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
Bucksburn Stoneywood	391	4,321	3,854	UT	Team Ministry, 1 Kirk Session, 2 Buildings		2 Ministers, 1 MDS	3	B	
Dyce	905	5,908	5,262	UT		B				
Newhills	379	3,684	3,312	UT		A				

12,428

- 3.1 By the end of the Plan, the aim is to have one congregation with two centres of worship and other activity, with three full time staff including two ministers of Word and Sacrament working in a team.
- 3.2 One of these centres will be the current church and halls at Newhills. The other may be a new build for mission and ministry in the Dyce area or other location agreed by Presbytery, funded from the sale of the current buildings.
- 3.3 Meanwhile, a Parish Grouping (as defined in the Report) should be formed within one year of the Plan being approved, with the intention of moving at a later date to Union.

### 4. Approved the plan for the North Aberdeen Area Grouping:

Name of Congregation	2018 Congregational Membership	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Structure of staffing required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
Mastrick	214	11,066	9,647	UT	Team Ministry, 1 Kirk Session, 1 Building with Satellite Worship		3 Ministers, 1 MDS	4	B	Continued Community Worship in Stockethill
Northfield	144	6,625	5,756	UT		B				
Stockethill	88	4,062	3,360	UT						
Summerhill	122	5,026	4,083	UT		C				

22,846

- 4.1 By the end of the Plan, the aim is to have one congregation with one centre of worship supporting satellite worship groups, with four full time staff including three Ministers of Word and Sacrament (subject to 4.5 below)
- 4.2 Mastrick and Summerhill are already in a Deferred Union, to which Northfield will be added as soon as practicable, thereby creating the basis for a future team ministry. In the meantime, a Parish Grouping (as defined in the Report) of these three should be formed within one year of the Plan being approved to facilitate progress towards the planned union.
- 4.3 The Parish Grouping referred to in 4.2 may utilise Stockethill's experience of creating community facility based forms of church, with a view to offering worship opportunities and other activities elsewhere in the Grouping/enlarged Parish.
- 4.4 The Northfield, Mastrick and Summerhill buildings will be disposed of and worship and other activities moved to a single location in the area, either a new site or a new build on the Mastrick site.
- 4.5 Stockethill will use the year following approval of the Plan to continue discussions and agree which of the North Aberdeen or Donside Parish Groupings is the most

appropriate for their congregation. At the end of this process they should join the agreed Parish Grouping, staffing allocations being adjusted accordingly.

## 5. Approved the Plan for the Aberdeen West Area Grouping:

Name of Congregation	2018 Congregational Membership	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Structure of staffing required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
Craigiebuckler	715	6,248	5,162	UT	Team Ministry, 1 or 2 Kirk Sessions, multi-site		3 Ministers, 1 MDS	4	A	Investigation of possible further development of Kingswells buildings.
Cults	694	9,059	6,948	UT					A	
Kingswells	308	4,915	3,877	UT					D	
Mannofield	912	4,951	4,169	UT					A	
Peterculter	523	5,639	4,731	UT					A	

24,923

- 5.1 By the end of the Plan, the aim is to have either one or two congregations working together with four full time staff including three Ministers of Word and Sacrament. The five Kirk Sessions have already agreed a way of moving towards this aim, beginning with a Parish Grouping (as defined in the Report) to be formed within one year of the Plan being approved.
- 5.2 Kingswells, with the help of other members of the Grouping, will investigate how best to serve the communities of Kingswells whether using the existing Kingswells buildings or otherwise. The Parish Grouping will investigate how best to serve new developments at Countesswells. A report on progress will be made to Presbytery within 2 years of the approval of the Plan.

## 6. Approved the Plan for the Riverside Area Grouping:

Name of Congregation	2018 Congregational Membership	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Structure of staffing required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
Ferryhill	307	6,915	5,271	UT	Team Ministry, 1 Kirk Session, 2 Buildings		2 Ministers, 1 MDS	3	A	South Holburn includes former Parish of Garthdee
South Holburn	591	10,019	8,052	UT					A	
Ruthrieston West	301	4,578	3,858	UT					B	

17,181

- 6.1 By the end of the Plan, the aim is to have one congregation with two centres of worship and 3 full time members of staff including two Ministers of Word and Sacrament.
- 6.2 Confirms the position of Ruthrieston West under the existing Plan, namely that whenever a vacancy occurs, the charge will be united with another in the Riverside Area Grouping.
- 6.3 In the meantime, a Parish Grouping (as defined in the Report) should be formed within one year of approval of the Plan, with a view to moving towards eventual union.

- 6.4 The Parish Grouping will have responsibility for undertaking and sustaining a new form of mission focussed on the Garthdee community.

## 7. Approved the Plan for the South Aberdeen Area Grouping:

	2018 Congregational Membership	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Structure of staffing required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
South St Nicholas Kincorth	317	14,359	11,747	UT	Team Ministry, 1 Kirk Session, 2 Buildings		2 Ministers, 1 MDS	3	B	
Torry St Fittick's	306	11,803	8,596	UT		A				

20,343

- 7.1 The aim by the end of the Plan is to have one congregation with three full time staff including two Ministers of Word and Sacrament with 2 buildings.
- 7.2 In the meantime, a Parish Grouping (as defined in the Report) should be formed within one year of approval of the Plan with a view to progressing towards Union.
- 7.3 Over the two years following the approval of the Plan, South St Nicholas Kincorth with their Parish Grouping partner will investigate whether to rebuild their church on its present site or on some other site, and will report their conclusions to Presbytery at the end of that period. The assistance of the Presbytery Buildings Officer will be available for this task.

## 8. Approved the Plan for the Donside Area Grouping:

Name of Congregation	2018 Congregational Membership	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Structure of staffing required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
High Hilton	392	12,027	9,628	UT	Team Ministry, 1 Kirk Session, 1 Building with Satellite Worship		2 Ministers, 1 MDS	3	A	Middlefield united with High Hilton March 2020.
Woodside	235	7,468	5,731	UT		D				

15,359

- 8.1 By the end of the Plan, the aim is to have one congregation with three full time staff including two Ministers of Word and Sacrament. A union has already taken place between High Hilton and Middlefield. Should Stockethill choose to join the Donside Area Grouping (under 4.5), the staffing allocation will be adjusted accordingly.
- 8.2 Over the year after the approval of the Plan, Woodside will undertake a feasibility study/community audit under the Chance to Thrive Programme for which funding has already been offered. A Report will be made to Presbytery at the end of this process and further plans for the Area Grouping will be developed at that stage.

## 9. Approved the Plan for the Old Aberdeen Area:

Name of Congregation	2018 Congregational Membership	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Structure of staffing required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
St Machar's Cathedral	467	5,134	3,557	V	Team Ministry, 2 Kirk Sessions, 3 Buildings		3 Ministers, 1 MDS	4	A	Mission at SGT to become a project of the Grouping.
St Mary's	291	6,794	4,995	UT					A	
St Stephen's	147	7,369	5,060	UT					B	
St George's Tillydrone	122	5,026	4,083	V					A	

16,365

- 9.1 By the end of the Plan, the aim is to have two congregations in a Parish Grouping, with four full time staff, including three Ministers of Word and Sacrament with 3 church buildings working together and in partnership.
- 9.2 On approval of the Plan, the congregations of St Mary's and St George's Tillydrone will begin talks on Union, with ministry planned on the St George's site to be sponsored not only by the new Union but the entire Parish Grouping.
- 9.3 The Parish Grouping (as defined in the Report) will be formed within one year of the Union specified in 9.2, building on the existing partnership working between St Mary's and St Stephen's.
- 9.4 Upon vacancy at St Stephen's, a Union with the united congregations specified in 9.2 will take place with a focus on maintaining a suitable physical presence in the current St Stephen's Parish.
- 9.5 The site of St Mary's is to be retained with investigation by the Grouping into the possibility for future redevelopment explored.
- 9.6 Granted permission to St Machar's Cathedral to begin the process of calling a minister, subject to the Commission of Assembly meeting on July 7th approving the arrangements for vacancies during Lockdown, with the following conditions: (a) The Kirk Sessions of St Machar's Cathedral, St Stephen's, St George's and St Mary's all agree in principle to begin working towards forming a Parish Grouping as described above; (b) The Nominating Committee includes one representative from each of St Stephen's, St George's and St Mary's; and (c) The intention to form a Parish Grouping is made clear in the Parish profile and other appropriate documentation.

## 10. Approved the Plan for the City Centre and West End Area Grouping.

Name of Congregation	2018 Congregational Membership	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Structure of staffing required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
Holburn West	317	4,022	3,130	UT	Team Ministry		3 Ministers, 1 MDS	4	B	*see 10.3
Midsocket	423	7,473	5,828	UT					A	
Queen's Cross	403	6,815	5,112	UT					A	
Rubislaw	398	1,970	1,529	UT					A-Centre B-Church	

Kirk of St Nicholas Unit	305	3,422	2,371	V					A*	
St Mark's	422	14,177	10,355	V					D	
City Centre Initiative										

28,352

- 10.1 By the end of the Plan, the aim is to have one congregation, with four full time staff, including three Ministers of Word and Sacrament with 3 or 4 buildings, sponsoring and staffing the new City Centre Initiative.
- 10.2 The Parish Grouping (as defined in the Report) should be formed within one year of approval of the Plan.
- 10.3 Presbytery and the General Assembly's Ecumenical Relations Committee have already formally agreed, along with the URC, that the Local Ecumenical Partnership at the Kirk of St Nicholas Uniting should be dissolved. Presbytery therefore agreed the following process and timetable for the Kirk of St Nicholas Uniting:
- i. The Church of Scotland elders at the Kirk of St Nicholas Uniting shall commence discussions with another congregation in regard to union as soon as possible.
  - ii. The Presbytery confirmed that the Local Ecumenical Partnership must be dissolved by October 31st 2020.
  - iii. On Dissolution of the LEP, the former Church of Scotland congregation within the LEP shall be re-erected and granted charitable status.
  - iv. If negotiations are successful, the congregations of the Kirk of St Nicholas Church of Scotland and another congregation shall form a Basis of Union, which shall state that the building and the assets of the Kirk of St Nicholas Church of Scotland shall be transferred to the General Trustees, with the exception of the St Nicholas Trust Fund, a charitable fund which shall be transferred to Presbytery for city centre mission. Sunday worship may continue in the Kirk of St Nicholas building until Easter 2021 and after Easter 2021, occasional worship, such as for Civic Occasions, may still take place with any form of occasional ministry including the wider Parish Grouping.
  - v. If it is not possible to agree to a union with another congregation, the re-erected Kirk of St Nicholas congregation shall be dissolved by December 31st 2020 and the building and assets transferred to the General Trustees, with the exception of the St Nicholas Trust Fund, which shall be transferred to Presbytery.
- 10.4 At St Mark's, in the first instance, a period of Interim Ministry Accompaniment should be undertaken with the congregation there, and in the context of the wider Parish Group, will discern whether there is a long-term future for ministry in the building. Following the discernment of the Congregation and Presbytery in this matter, a period of transition ministry with an appointed Transition Minister would take place.
- 10.5 The Parish Grouping has the task of sponsoring the new City Centre Initiative and discerning its shape for the future.

## 11. Approved the Plan for Shetland:

Name of Congregation	Congregational Membership	2011 Gross Pop'n	2011 Net Pop'n	Current Status	Plan for congregations by end of Plan	Interim steps required	Structure of staffing required	Total staffing in Plan	Building Classification	Notes
Burra Isle (Bridge end Church)	31	23,167 (Entire Parish)	977 Inc Trondra	<u>Team Ministry</u> 1 UT 1 TM 1 IEM 1 I Min 3 MDS	<u>Team Ministry</u> 1 Kirk Session (achieved 01/01/20) With 12 Church		<u>Team Ministry</u> 3 UT 3 MDS	6	A	Plans for renovation and redevelopment including creating a further meeting space utilising part of the adjacent Manse.



Tingwall			1477	“	“	<b>Buildings.</b>					B	Closure and Disposal 2021/2022	
Scalloway	48		inc above	“	“							A	Possible renovation And development of the building.
Weisdale			inc above	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2020/2021
Brae	77		1787	“	“							A	
Voe			871	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2021/2022
Sullom			Inc above	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2020/2021
Hillswick			Inc above	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2021/2022
Ollaberry	45		Inc above	“	“							A	
Dunrossness			1484	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2021/2022
Bigton			Inc above	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2020/2021
Fair Isle			68	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2020/2021
Sandwick	92		970	“	“							A	
Cunningsburgh			694	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2021/2022
Quarff			332	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2020/2021
Lerwick St Columbas	320		7296 inc Bressay	“	“							A	
Gulberwick			495	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2021/2022
Lunna			624	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2021/2022
Whalsay			1061	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2021/2022
Whalsay Church Hall	195											A	Retain as the place of worship for Whalsay
Skerries			74	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2021/2022 – possible community purchase
Sand			831	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2020/2021
Aith	22		Inc above	“	“							A	
Walls	29		923	“	“							A	
Sandness			Inc above	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2021/2022 – possible community purchase
Foula			38	“	“							B	Closure and Disposal 2021/2022
Unst St Johns	75		632	“	“							A	
Fetlar			61	“	“						B	Closure and Disposal 2020/2021	
Yell Hamnivoie			966	“	“						B	Closure and Disposal 2020/2021 – possible community purchase	
Yell Cullivoie	42		Inc above	“	“						A		
	976	23,167	21,661										

- 11.1 Following the Ministries Council Report to the 2017 General Assembly which highlighted concerns regarding current and future realities of Ministries' Provision, combined with the longstanding concern that Shetland has more churches per head of population than anywhere else in Scotland, many of which were in poor condition, a burden to maintain, and fall short of meeting today's requirements and standards, it was recognised that drastic measures were required to ensure a sustainable future for the Church of Scotland in Shetland.
- 11.2 The process saw the appointment of 3 Assessor Ministers from the Interim Ministry Team who carried out an audit throughout Shetland, exploring issues of challenge, concern and difficulty as well as discovering pockets of hope, vision, energy and new life. Their findings were presented at the Presbyter Conference in the Autumn of 2017, and contributed to the subsequent process of drawing up a new Presbytery Plan. At the Shetland Presbytery Conference on the 13th October 2018, the Plan, which offered a realistic and sustainable model of mission, worship and pastoral care throughout Shetland based around a single parish, 11 places of worship and a team of 3 f/t ministers of word and sacrament and 3 f/t MDS posts was agreed. Following two appeals, the PPTG formally approved the Presbytery Plan on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2019, and the Amended Basis of Union on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2020.
- 11.3 Agreed the following in regard to Shetland manses:
- a) The North Isles Manse, Yell, shall be retained for accommodation for a Minister of Word and Sacrament.
  - b) The Whalsay manse shall be disposed of under adjustment such as the Demission of the current serving minister.
  - c) The Burra Isle Manse, Bridgend, shall be partly redeveloped for a meeting place for Bridgend Church, with the remainder possibly being let.
  - d) The St Columba's Manse will be retained for accommodation for visiting ministers and office space for the Shetland Parish.

## **12. Approved the following Staffing provision:**

- 12.1 Under the terms of the Union of the Presbyteries of Aberdeen and Shetland an extra 1 FTE post was granted to the Presbytery by the Ministries Council for which Presbytery intends to use 0.5FTE for a Communications Officer and 0.5FTE for Pastoral Assistance to the Presbytery Clerk.
- 12.2 The total number of posts in the Plan is then 38 FTE, a reduction from combined total of 46 (Aberdeen - 38) and (Shetland - 8) in the last round of Presbytery Planning.

## **13. Approves the following provisions for Property Expenditure and Inspections:**

- 13.1 For Buildings categorised as B ("that the building is expected to be closed during the lifetime of the current Plan, under an adjustment contained therein or otherwise"), C ("that the building is expected to be disposed of as soon as possible under an adjustment or otherwise") and D ("that Presbytery is unable to make a determination"), these should be kept wind and watertight. All expenditure on such buildings in excess of £5,000 per annum will require to be approved by Presbytery before the instruction or commencement of these works.
- 13.2 For buildings categorised as A ("expected to remain in use beyond the life of the Plan"), any work proposed will now require the input and agreement of the other congregations in the Parish Grouping from the initial stages of planning and costing, and will be subject to existing limits on annual expenditure without specific Presbytery consent.

- 13.3 The requirement for all buildings to be inspected every five years (Quinquennial Survey and Report) will continue in respect of all buildings while they remain in use, whatever their category in the Plan. Where Quinquennial Surveys are overdue, these will be carried out as soon as possible.

#### **14. Approved the following provisions for Vacancies:**

- 14.1 Where a vacancy arises within a Parish Grouping, the opportunity must be taken to progress towards the aims set out in the Plan, relative to staffing complements and buildings.
- 14.2 Where a vacancy is to be filled in progressing the aims of the Plan, all congregations in the Parish Grouping must have representation on the Nominating Committee.

#### **15. Approved the following regarding Consents**

- 15.1 Noted that where readjustment is proposed for congregations with a sitting minister (eg. setting up a Parish Grouping) that the consent of that minister to commence discussions with office bearers is required in accordance with section 9.2 (ii) (b) of Act VII (2003) and consent from the sitting minister is required before presenting a Basis of Parish Grouping, in accordance with 9.2 9 (iv) (b) of Act VII (2003).

#### **16. Instruction to Clerk:**

- 16.1 Instructed the Clerk to send a copy of the Plan and Report to the Faith Nurture Forum and the General Trustees.

On a vote being taken, the Plan was approved unanimously.

## **REPORT**

### Foreword

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”<sup>a</sup>, comments the writer of Hebrews. The writer’s sentiments seem an appropriate place to begin as we prepare, in faith, for the future of the mission and ministry of the Church of Scotland in our Presbytery areas. Not only do we look forward to the vision of the Kingdom of God to which Jesus encourages us but also to a renewal of our Church as we seek to share the good news of the gospel in our Presbytery areas and their varied communities.

The purpose of the Presbytery Plan is to help all of us in our shared future to find a shape and structure which will help us be most fruitful in sharing that good news we have in our Presbytery, recognising that our congregations are varied both in their character and location. That diversity is, we believe, a strength rather than a weakness. The Plan is a tool to help us

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<sup>a</sup> Hebrews 11.1 (NRSV)

renew our life, to regroup our strength, and to go out into our communities reinvigorated to share the gospel in new and innovative ways.

The Plan as you receive it is what we believe to be a faithful attempt to build on the foundation of years of work in praying, reflecting on, and imagining what it means to be church in our time.

We seek to build on the work of Aberdeen Presbytery's Planning and Deployment Committee (PDC) over a number of years in its 'Our Shared Future' dialogue with Aberdeen Presbytery and the city congregations, and most recently on the foundational VISTA Committee Report presented to Aberdeen Presbytery in March 2019 at a Conference Session, and approved at the June 2019 meeting of Aberdeen Presbytery as the basis for the new Plan.

Over the last number of years it has been exciting for us in PDC to have many congregations within the Presbytery's bounds come to us looking for resources to work together on new initiatives for mission together, and to see how in some areas of Presbytery congregations have naturally, and without any prompting by PDC, envisaged a future together, both in ministry and mission. All of this evolving change also laid the foundation for this Plan.

Of course, the national context of the Radical Action Plan and the acceptance of the need to radically move our resources from buildings to investing more in people also provided a helpful backdrop to the Plan contained in this document. We feel that the Spirit has been gently guiding us to this point. We are gratified that so many of you in Presbytery have already been journeying along the direction of travel which the Plan seeks to embed in our shared life for the next 10 years in the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland.

We, as a Committee offer this Plan as our best endeavour to be faithful to the principles set by both Presbytery in its VISTA Committee Report, and by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. It provides a shape and structure for the future, and we commend it to you.

## A Vision for the Future of Aberdeen and Shetland Presbytery<sup>b</sup>

### *Context*

*The Church is wherever God's people are praising, Knowing they're wanted and loved by their Lord.*

*The Church is wherever Christ's followers are trying  
To live and to share out the good news of God.*

Carol Ikeler

This Vision Statement should be read in the following context: the instruction to the Council of Assembly "to return to the General Assembly of 2019 with a radical action plan for 2019-2022 to achieve much needed reform within our Church"; the instruction to Presbyteries "to

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<sup>b</sup> Approved as a basis for the Presbytery Plan by Presbytery on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019

challenge themselves in their Presbytery Plans to be robust, imaginative and courageous in reducing the number of charges, creating ministry hubs, and enabling new pioneer and new church planting opportunities”; the instruction to Kirk Sessions “to meet in conference, to reflect on the state of decline of the national Church and in particular how that affects the Church locally and determine what their vision and mission is for the next three years in collaboration with Presbytery Planning teams;”<sup>c</sup> and the forthcoming consultation by the General Trustees on their vision of a church estate as “well-equipped spaces in the right places.” Like other Presbyteries, Aberdeen and Shetland Presbytery faces the challenge of responding to a continuing decline in nominal church membership (in Aberdeen Presbytery down by nearly 12% between 2014 and 2017) as well as attendance; a reducing and aging cohort of active volunteers; a shortage of office-bearers with expertise in finance and property matters; fewer Ministers of Word and Sacrament (only eight of our current parish ministers were ordained this century); a national commitment to maintaining a territorial ministry; and a secular society that regards the Christian Church as irrelevant or even harmful. While half of our congregations in Aberdeen still contribute more than is needed to meet the costs of providing a parish minister, one third are unable to generate enough income to do so.

This is all the more challenging for Presbytery in its role as an effective agent for change, since the primary allegiance of many of us is, understandably, to our own congregational family (however small, elderly or poorly resourced); to our own church building (however much in need of major repair or refurbishment), where our friends and family attended Sunday School and were baptised or married; or to our local parish (which is part of our identity as citizens even if we now live elsewhere). Overcoming such emotional and social barriers to change is not an easy undertaking, requiring as it does an acceptance that the status quo is not a viable option.

### *Vision*

Our vision is a Presbytery which, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, encourages and enables our congregations to re-imagine and renew their life and work for mission in the 21st century, worshipping and witnessing in a sustainable and mutually supportive network of Christian communities, using well-equipped spaces strategically located across the city, served and led by ministry teams, with the knowledge and skills needed to inspire and equip our members for service and discipleship.

In practice this will mean that Presbytery:

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<sup>c</sup> General Assembly 2018 Remits Booklet p. 31

- Seeks always to discern God’s will for us through prayerful reflection
- Focuses on our mission: to worship, to serve and to make disciples
- Agrees a plan for getting from where we are now to where we want to be, together with a series of short- and medium-term targets for measuring progress
- Supports our congregations to re-imagine what it means to be “church” in 21st century Aberdeen; encourages them to commit to reshaping our physical presence in the city; and facilitates discussions as to how they might contribute to this reshaping
- Encourages new forms of church born out of mission among those on whom existing forms have little or no impact
- Fosters in our congregations a strong sense of mutual responsibility and a commitment to sharing resources, in furtherance of the General Assembly’s “priority to the poor”
- Works with the General Trustees to identify and redevelop or dispose of those church buildings that are either no longer fit for purpose or in the right place; and re-invests the proceeds of sale in a number (yet to be agreed) of strategically placed and well-resourced church centres, each serving a defined area of the city and supporting a network of local expressions of church to worship and witness in their particular community
- Ensures that these church centres and the networks they support are appropriately resourced and are staffed by teams with a variety of roles and gifts; and invests in the training and development of our members for leadership, mission and service.

*“They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40: 31)*

31 December 2018

### Principles of Presbytery Planning

This Presbytery Plan seeks to be faithful to the Vision for Presbytery, agreed by Aberdeen Presbytery in June 2019, as well as the direction of the General Assembly of the Church which set Mission as the primary principle for Presbytery. In addition, General Assembly has provided eight secondary principles: Communities, Ecumenism, The Poor, the Whole People of God, Congregations, a Mixed Economy, Financial Responsibility and Buildings. The new Plan also seeks to take seriously the looming shortage of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and the need to lose seven posts from the current Plan which has a total of 38 posts in it.

*Mission* Mission remains the primary principle for planning. This Plan is not about decline, although it is shaped by that reality, and that of an ever more secular environment. The Plan seeks to bring us together that we might draw strength from our faith, fellowship and shared resources to go back out into the mission field of our city and communities. We believe the future can be bright for the Kirk and this Plan is not in any way presented despondently. It is an active plan.

Each part of the Presbytery Plan is deliberately structured to resource localities with Ministers and full-time equivalents in order to lead and train the whole people of God in mission and outreach, in worship and service. Each locality has been given a goal to do a new thing in their area. We have tried in every area to set a goal and some direction. Yet, at the same time, we have no desire to take away autonomy from these localities but rather to leave to their discretion and imagination the working out of how these initiatives may be carried forward. The Plan does aim to ask much of us, but not to be overly prescriptive about how we might all respond to the challenge it sets us over the next ten years. Critical to the plan in each locality is the creation of new worshipping communities across Presbytery. The Joint Emerging Church Group Report to the 2019 General Assembly set the Church a target of 100 new worshipping communities in a decade's time. The union of charges to form larger, team-based units, is not meant to encourage retreat. The opposite is true. We hope these units will then use their resources to explore and plant new worshipping communities across the city. We believe there is the resource, experience and expertise across Presbytery to make this an achievable goal.

*Communities* We have tried as best as we are able to shape the Presbytery Plan along the lines of current and future geographical patterns within the Presbytery areas, including taking in to account areas earmarked for development in the recent Local Area Plan by the City Council. This is also reflected in the balance of resourcing between localities in the Plan.

*Ecumenism* Previous attempts to engage with partner churches and denominations have had mixed results. Sometimes our denominational structures can get in the way of formal ecumenical partnership or overcomplicate relationships. On the other hand, many congregational ecumenical relationships (and most recently cross-Presbytery working in areas of social concern, such as support for the New Scots Refugees) have provided a significant context for collaborative working across denominations. The Monthly Prayer Gatherings, held in churches of different denominations, have over the past three years also provided opportunities for meaningful engagement. Some congregations have also shared their worship spaces with other denominations. While this Plan does not contain any formal new ecumenical structures, we believe that local congregations should be encouraged to collaborate with ecumenical partners wherever possible.

*The Poor* In this Plan we continue to support poorer communities with resources for ministry: through the provision of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and indeed by pooling resources for the future in localities to better support mission and ministry in these

communities. We do not believe ministry should be confused with the presence of a building, and certainly not buildings which are neither fit for purpose nor which impose an impossible burden on a congregation. This burden inevitably ends up distracting from rather than enabling mission in these communities. The balance of resources allocated to localities in the Plan seeks to embed this principle.

*Whole People of God* The emphasis on the provision of full time Ministers of Word and Sacrament continues to recognise the need to support and enable ministry to the whole people of God. We believe that a primary function of Ministers of Word and Sacrament is to build up the ministry of the whole people of God. Although not specifically dealt with in this document, PDC believe Presbytery must urgently consider how to organise and invest in training of lay people in our churches to share in the leadership and task of mission and ministry, and organise such training at a local level rather than depend on the national agencies of the Church.

People are the greatest resource Presbytery has, and we must set aside the resources and mechanisms for investing in people locally if we are to meet future challenges.

*Congregations* Recent encouragement and support for congregations to be increasingly outward looking, engaging with communities and the wider church, and building on these strengths is the basis for the future envisioned in our Presbytery Plan.

*Mixed Economy* “For the Church to find its place in the modern world, it will have to create new spaces for new communities and different opportunities for differentiated niche groups.”<sup>d</sup> Our Plan addresses this principle by encouraging and supporting the establishment of new initiatives in a number of the localities within Presbytery, whilst leaving to each locality the working out of how to form that Fresh Expression of a worshipping and serving community or initiative. The Plan seeks to be ambitious but not burdensome.

*Financial Responsibility* This has been a principle in all our considerations – we must take financial sustainability into consideration as we plan for the future. Financial responsibility does not mean that we abandon our principle of sharing resources across the Presbytery, but rather take seriously the need to be responsible with our resources. That financial responsibility will mean church life is not marked by constant scrabbling to make ends meet,

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<sup>d</sup> Martin Percy, quoted in the Report of the Special Commission on the Third Article Declaratory 2010, and subsequently in the Ministries Council’s paper on the Principles for Planning.



eating up investment income to fund day to day expenses, or building up unsustainable deficits in order to try to maintain the status quo.

*Buildings* The future of our buildings is integrally caught up with the future of our congregations. A joint Committee of Aberdeen Presbytery's Property Committee and PDC with the assistance of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland undertook consultation and then visitation of each and every church building within Aberdeen Presbytery, and then through thoughtful consideration produced for PDC a report with recommendations. We are grateful to the Committee and to the General Trustees for completing this considerable and challenging task. We were greatly reassured by the unanimity of their findings as a committee and we accept their recommendations overwhelmingly, although some modifications have been made in the Plan. The Report is annexed to this Plan, with our gratitude.

## **Conclusions**

### **Necessary Buildings**

The Plan specifies which buildings are to be retained and which divested of, in each locality. Most buildings in the Plan which are not classified necessary going forward are now categorised B (definition shown in the Deliverance 12.1) This makes clear that they should be disposed when a form of readjustment takes place and until then be kept in good order. Clearly if a major structural issue or extensive bill were to arise in one of these, Presbytery would need to move to a more rapid closure and disposal. Until then all buildings should be kept wind and watertight. All expenditure on buildings over £5,000 on buildings not categorised as necessary going forward, will require to first be approved by Presbytery, before any expenditure is made.

For buildings deemed to be necessary, any work will now need the input and agreement of the Parish Grouping for which they are to be a future resource, so that expenditure is not made without regard to the future strategy and purpose of the Parish Grouping as a whole. For the avoidance of doubt, in any work on a building the Grouping should be involved in the investigation and planning stage of any works, rather than approval sought at the end of a congregational process.

### **Definitions of Parish Grouping**

The definition of a Parish Grouping is set out in Act VII, Appraisal And Adjustment Act (Act VII 2003) (As amended by Acts VIII 2004, III 2006, III 2008, VI 2011, VII 2014, VI 2015, VIII 2016, XI 2017 and VII 2019):

“The Presbytery may declare that two or more charges shall have responsibility for a single area. The Basis of such an adjustment shall determine the extent to which the charges shall operate as a Parish Grouping, for instance in the sharing of worship, personnel, education resources, mission initiatives, congregational organisations etc.”

Within the context of the overall strategic Plan for Presbytery, it is proposed that congregations draw up a Basis of Parish Grouping which suits the shape and structure of their area and that this will be put to Presbytery for approval within one year of the Plan being agreed. We expect these Bases to be varied, but always to be vehicles for close working relationships and ambitious collaboration. This will help us all in the transition to the final outcomes envisaged in the Plan. It is hoped that Parish Groupings can be formed well within the one year timescale, where practicable. The written consent of the sitting minister is required in all cases, both to begin discussions about a Parish Grouping and to agree that a Basis can be drawn up.

## **Steps to Change**

Parish Grouping: Within one year of the approval of the 2020 Presbytery Plan, Parish Groupings will be formed among congregations as outlined in the Deliverance. As the Plan evolves, following further investigation and consultation envisaged in the Plan, other congregations will join these Parish Groupings. The Groupings will enable congregations to work together in areas of shared mission and objectives while providing continuity in individual congregational relationships. They will also help provide a foundation for team ministries when the structures for these come along, as well as encouraging Kirk Sessions and congregations to consider the new structures necessary for and financial implications of union.

Support for Groupings: As the Plan progresses, it is anticipated that PDC's role will transform into one of helping local areas to access help and support within and outwith Presbytery to turn the Plan into reality. To that end, Presbytery will set up a Facilitation Group to help Parish Groupings navigate fiscal and legislative issues as they seek to build their common future. Both the Facilitation Group and those appointed by Presbytery to work with individual Groupings will be drawn from the breadth of Presbytery, rather than from PDC itself.

## **Vacancy Procedure**

As per the Plan, vacancies provide the opportunity for adjustment and change. When a vacancy occurs, Presbytery will take such steps as appropriate and within its control to

progress towards the staffing numbers shown in the aims of the Plan, subject to the overall allocation of resources within the national Church. In addition, in the setting of Parish Groupings, all congregations in a grouping must have some representation on the Nominating Committee for any vacancy arising within their locality.

### **Flexibility and Annual Review**

The Presbytery Plan, once agreed, is a working agreement which should be reviewed annually by Presbytery to check on progress towards its goals, and after five years a more comprehensive progress analysis ought to be undertaken, and any necessary changes to major parts of the strategy made. We understand that the next annual review will take into account the changes and new directives to be introduced at national Church level in response to the Covid 19 pandemic.

Rev Scott M. Rennie, Convenor.

## **Building Classification under the Presbytery Plan**

The Church of Scotland's Appraisal and Adjustment Act (Act VII 2003) states that "In respect of every ecclesiastical building in every charge in the Presbytery (except manses and houses occupied by retired ministers and/or their spouses) the Plan shall contain one of the following declarations:

1. (a) That the building is expected to remain in use beyond the lifetime of the Plan;
2. (b) That the building is expected to be closed during the lifetime of the current Plan, under an adjustment contained therein or otherwise;
3. (c) That the building is expected to be disposed of as soon as possible under an adjustment contained in the Plan or otherwise;
4. (d) That the Presbytery is unable to make a determination in relation to a building; and in cases (b), (c) and (d) the General Trustees shall be empowered, at their discretion and in consultation with the Assembly's Committee, to refuse any application made in respect of that building in terms of Regulations I 1998 regarding Work at Ecclesiastical Buildings (as amended by 2000 Regulations VII)."