



Communications Strategy

2021-2023

Foreword

On 1st June 2020 the Presbytery of Aberdeen and the Presbytery of Shetland united to form the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland (with Shetland reducing its parishes to one). An ongoing consultation process will progress further unions to form the North East and Northern Isles Presbytery by 2023.

The Presbytery of Aberdeen in 2020 had the foresight to create the role of Communications Officer to manage the need for effective communications during a time of unprecedented change. The purpose of the post is to engage with internal and external audiences to support the work of the Church in developing a sustaining Christian presence in every community and to assist in the delivery of a step change in our approach to communications.

The relationships between the Church and its people need to be nurtured, pursuing multiple avenues, both external and internal to the usual relationships. Through the forming of these relationships, it will be possible to build a dynamic network that allows people to identify and share their communication issues. The Communications Officer and others in Presbytery can act as facilitators for the resolution of these issues.

Developing this strategy has involved taking the time to listen, building friendships and relationships and reaching out to explore people's perspectives of the Church, Presbytery and communities.

The Church in 2021 faces many ongoing challenges. We should not be afraid to address the challenges and be open and honest with our internal and external communication, including media outlets. We need to enable the media to be signposted to the key issues and work together with us as a team.

The heart of the message we wish to communicate stems from the vision of the Church of Scotland and is central to the development of this strategy:

'To inspire the people of Scotland and beyond with the Good News of Jesus Christ through enthusiastic worshipping, witnessing, nurturing and serving communities'

This Communication Strategy strives to communicate who we are as a Church and reflect the true nature of God and underpinned with its theological basis. To focus on the key issues and the core dynamics we need to ask the question: What are we wanting to do? We want to proclaim the love of Christ and allow His love to work through us to meet the needs of the communities we serve. So how can the church have a voice in community? I believe this is a two way and a multi-dimensional process, whereby there is a need to scope how Presbytery and parishes communicate with the community but also to understand how the community can be heard by the church.

The Communications Strategy has adopted a phased development involving: Consultation, Planning, Implementation, Monitoring & Evaluation. These were fluid and flexible phases strengthened with the clear message of working under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to encourage and enable congregations to re-

imagine and renew their lives and work for Presbytery's mission in the 21st century.

If we keep returning to the act of listening to our community; our brothers and sisters in the Church community and engaging with the real issues, we will ensure that Presbytery's mission is enriched in Aberdeen, Shetland and beyond.

This particular verse has had a significance for me as I have thought through the development of this strategy.

'Are your ears awake? Listen to the wind words, the spirit blowing through the churches' Revelation Ch2 v29 The Message

We need to prayerfully keep our ears awake and keep listening to the wind words, the spirit of God moving through the churches.

This Communications Strategy builds on the firm foundations of effective communication practised by the Presbytery since its formation.

- It focuses on core principles of openness, flexibility, inclusivity, and engagement with current plans;
- It recognises the wider community and the change and development that is ongoing;
- It is about building relationships to ensure a positive culture of communication.

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1. Purpose and Aims

This Communication Strategy builds on the work undertaken by many in the Presbytery to ensure that all Presbyters and the wider community are informed and guided on communication matters.

The aims of this strategy are to:

- Outline current practices that have enabled effective communication to promote, protect and enrich the Presbytery's Mission.
- Provide guidance on how communication can be facilitated with consistency across all Church practices.
- Illuminate the way forward for congregations' communication plans during the changes envisaged for the next 2 years.

It is essential to underpin any enhancement to future communications with the beliefs and values of the Church of Scotland and the Presbytery's vision.

1.1 Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland's 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 Aberdeen and the Shetland Islands, served and led by ministry teams, with the knowledge and skills needed to inspire and equip our members for service and discipleship.

1.2 Communicating during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Since March 2020, as a consequence of Government restrictions on our movements due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Presbytery and congregations have had to adapt their communication practices in a phenomenal manner. Restrictions on face-to-face communication and in person meetings with colleagues, Presbyters and parishioners proved to be immensely challenging for everyone. Large scale, in person Presbytery meetings and in person committee meetings ceased by March 2020. However, the Church has risen to these challenges and speedily developed new and innovative ways to keep it alive and congregations together.

This strategy focuses on many of these developments as it describes communication practices in the current climate and the ways in which we continue to fulfil Presbytery's vision:

*'to enable our congregations to **re-imagine** and **renew** their life and work for mission in the 21st century'*

2. Internal Communications

2.1 Presbytery and congregations

Presbytery

There are Ordinary Meetings that are convened four times per year. Special meetings can be called by Presbytery or by the Moderator. Meetings follow formal communications practices as outlined in the 'conduct of business section' of the Presbytery Yearbook.

<https://www.aberdeenshetlandpresbytery.org.uk/minutes/>

Committees

The committee structure is an important part of the work of Presbytery and is efficient at ensuring that all matters are addressed in accordance with the Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland.

There are 7 committees:

- Business and Finance
- Church and Society and International Relations
- Congregational and Stewardship (Finance and Property)
- Ministries and Resourcing Mission and Discipleship
- Planning and Deployment
- Vacancy Procedure
- Visitation and Oversight

The frequency and scheduling of meetings is determined by the Conveners of each committee in consultation with their members. Any major proposals from these committees are passed through the Business and Finance Committee prior to submitting to Presbytery Meetings.

2.2 Communication between Presbytery and Congregations

The Presbytery Clerk and Depute Clerk (The Presbytery Office) undertake regular communication to all the congregations within the Presbytery. This is primarily achieved via ministers and Session Clerks and also involves direct communication with Congregational Office Bearers. This communication has included minutes of meetings; preparation of documents for discussion at Presbytery meetings and any dissemination of information to keep Presbyters up to date. The Presbytery Office ensures that Office Bearers receive clear and timely information which is relevant to their role and of benefit to all in the congregation.

2.2.1 Engaging with Electronic Communications

Email is the primary mode of regular communication between the Presbytery Office and Congregations for daily communications, the use of hard copy can be shared with office bearers as required. The Presbytery Office ensures that

relevant email communication is shared with Ministers, Ministry Development Staff (MDS), Readers, Retired Ministers, Chaplains, Corresponding members of Presbytery and Candidates for the Ministry.

In advance of Presbytery meetings, documents are stored in the cloud using Microsoft Teams OneDrive. A link is sent from the Presbytery Office via Email. The link does not allow for the editing of documentation and all documents shared are converted to Adobe (PDF) format for additional security. Presbyters are encouraged to download documents prior to meetings and may refer to them online at any time afterwards. In advance of Presbytery meetings, to ensure clear access to documentation, emails also include Adobe attachments of Presbytery Papers. When Presbytery meets in person, a number of Presbytery papers are available in paper format for Presbyters to collect on arrival at the meeting, otherwise the use of electronic documents is encouraged.

The Church of Scotland has advocated the use of Microsoft Teams and has invested in newer versions of Teams to facilitate electronic communication. Church of Scotland Ministers, MDS and Candidates are in receipt of a Church of Scotland email address hence access to Teams should be easy for regular communication, organising and scheduling meetings and the storage of shared files. Office Bearers and Presbyters without a Church of Scotland email address can be added to Teams calls as 'guests', however they have limited functionality as guests.

Presbytery and many congregations have adopted Zoom as their platform for communicating electronically for meetings and regular contact. This platform was freely available at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and superseded the access to Microsoft Teams for many Presbyters. Presbytery Zoom meetings have worked very well with an emphasis on all participants following the etiquette required. Pre-registration is a requirement and due process for all matters has been successful on Zoom including identifying voting members and conducting votes. Presbytery staff ensure that those eligible to speak may do so, furthermore the message facility is enabled, though group chat is discouraged. An accurate Sederunt is collated and this is reflected within the Presbytery Minute.

While in-person Presbytery meetings have always been open to members of the public, the streaming of Presbytery meetings on the Presbytery Facebook page has resulted in the engagement of the wider community. Church members and the public can watch the live meetings in their entirety, apart from items taken in private.

Presbyters without Electronic Communication

The Presbytery Office is in regular contact with members of Presbytery and ensures that those not on email will receive relevant information via Royal Mail during and out with times of Presbytery meetings so that these members are kept as fully informed as possible. The Presbytery Office is also able to supply large print documentation. During Presbytery meetings, to be inclusive of all Presbyters, there has been opportunity for those who are unable or do not wish to utilise electronic forms of communications to engage verbally on the telephone. Zoom provides the opportunity for phone calls, however the visual

element of the Zoom call is not available for the caller. The majority of people can engage with Zoom events online and this phone call service has only involved one or two Presbyters.

2.2.2 Presbytery of Aberdeen & Shetland Website

The website is kept up to date by the Presbytery Clerk, Depute Clerk and Communications Officer. The webmaster assists with the website design and ensures it remains current and practical for easier updating. The website enhances internal and external communication for everyone.

<https://www.aberdeenshetlandpresbytery.org.uk/>

The Facebook and Twitter feeds from the Church of Scotland and the Presbytery Facebook page are located on the homepage. This provides an opportunity for those visiting the site to appreciate the rich communication occurring via these social media routes. For those who do not engage with social media it provides a vehicle where they can be more aware of the type of information being shared using these platforms.

The website is a valuable storage space for files to be shared in a password protected space. This provides secure access to Minutes from Presbytery meetings and the Yearbook.

For members of the public, the website provides valuable information including up to date contact information for congregations and worship information during the pandemic. For Office Bearers there are Covid-19 updates and access to resources to support the Kirk Session.

The resources tab on the website has two options- Congregational Resources and Communication Resources. Under the Communication Resources, documents developed by the Church of Scotland have been added. These include: Church Website Checklist; How to create daily prayers for Social Media; Preparing a Press Release; Social Media Guidelines and the Church of Scotland's Policies and Procedures of the Communications Department.

<https://www.aberdeenshetlandpresbytery.org.uk/communications-resources/>

2.2.3 Communication Teams within Congregations

A number of congregations have adopted 'communication teams'. These comprise members of the congregation with an interest in church matters. They are often responsible for the development of newsletters, church magazines, webpages and Facebook posts. They work with ministers to ensure that internal and external communications are accurate and informative for all concerned. In congregations where there is no communication team, there are members who take on this role and may be part of an 'outreach' committee or other such committee. In a small number of congregations the role of Facebook admin, updating of the webpage and all technical aspects of communication is performed solely by the minister. Some congregations create a recorded version

of worship which is shared via a CD/DVD and delivered to those members unable to access church or the internet.

Newsletters and Magazines

Regular newsletters and church magazines have been the mainstay of many congregations for passing on congregational news, service information and prayer requests. These newsletters have adopted innovative means to cater for all ages and are often distributed widely to the whole parish and not just to church members. They have been especially meaningful to those who are no longer able to attend church in person and who have no email access. During the Covid-19 pandemic, many congregations have increased the frequency of their newsletters to remain in closer contact with members and attempt to alleviate loneliness and isolation.

Letters to the Deaf Community

During the pandemic, to assist with inclusivity for those within the deaf community, the minister at St John's Church for the Deaf has posted letters to each member in Aberdeen and the North East of Scotland. These letters are written in 'sign language' style rather than general prose and illustrated with a great deal of care and attention. Replies to these letters from members to the minister have been received, therefore strengthening the personal aspects of this communication.

Significant Occasions

When the Presbytery Office is alerted, cards are sent and telephone calls are made by the Moderator, the Presbytery Clerk or Depute Clerk to offer condolences or congratulations when major life events occur.

Facebook

Most congregations have adopted a Facebook page. Some have this as a public page with a private group created for their members to discuss matters pertaining to their congregation and offer items for prayer. Others have adopted a public page only. There is regular content shared across the congregations on Facebook. This can be a daily prayer or some items of interest for the church. Many churches also have a video presentation streamed live at a certain time of day or recorded and posted daily or weekly. The content of these is usually a reflection on the Word of God and a short message/sermon with prayer time.

The Church of Scotland Facebook page is displayed as a continuous feed on the Presbytery website and posts occur daily.

The Presbytery Facebook page is also well used and updated daily by the Presbytery Clerk, Depute Clerk and Communications Officer. It is a useful mode of communication to inform Presbyters and others with up to date messages often celebrating good news and providing Presbytery or Church of Scotland information.

Twitter

Currently there is no Twitter account for the Presbytery, although some congregations and ministers use Twitter. The Church of Scotland Twitter account is displayed on the Presbytery website as a continuous feed. Twitter is a useful medium to replicate news that is carried on Facebook as well as providing a platform for general discussion and debate on issues facing society and the Church. It is also a medium preferred by some who do not wish to use Facebook.

Zoom

During the pandemic, Zoom has become the medium of choice for face-to-face Presbytery communication. Many ministers are opting for Zoom to host their Kirk Session meetings. Its user-friendly functionality has enabled people to adapt to it quickly and engage in visual and audio communication. Documents can be shared easily for discussion and debate using the screen share facility. Breakout rooms have been used for smaller group discussions. Attendance at meetings has remained at pre-pandemic level and using this medium has enabled the Church to continue to operate, despite travel and in-person meeting restrictions during the pandemic.

Online Services

Online for all church services has become the main way to sustain congregational worship during the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been a positive experience for families to see each other and celebrate and worship together during live streaming of services on Facebook or Zoom. Other congregations have opted for recorded services and many have their own YouTube channel and encourage members to subscribe to them.

When limited in person worship was allowed, some congregations streamed their services live on Facebook.

A small number of congregations have purchased drones to film their productions and purchased streaming licenses. The scenic views shown during the online services have captured local landscapes and closed church buildings enabling congregations to enjoy a sense of belonging and continuity despite the pandemic restrictions. These services have been forwarded on to friends and families far and wide enabling church attendance on a scale not experienced in many generations.

Social Media Policy

The Presbytery's Social Media Policy has been updated and is located in Appendix 1.

2.2.4 Communication with the Church of Scotland's Communications Team

The Communications Team in Edinburgh comprises communications officers, designers and a web team managed by the Head of Communications and Communications Manager. The media team handles media relations for the

Church of Scotland. Their backgrounds in communications and journalism are an asset to the important work in which they engage and they can provide advice and guidance to all presbyteries and congregations on matters pertaining to communication, use of the Church of Scotland brand and on communicating with the media. The communications officer for the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland has opted to work closely with the Edinburgh Communications Team whilst maintaining the autonomy to cover media interests relating to this geographical area. This working relationship provides safe assurance of media insights from a knowledgeable team and the ability to promote our own news stories with positive outcomes. The media team provides an out-of-hours service 365 days a year and can cover for media enquires in our area when the Communications Officer is out of office.

3 External Communication

3.1 Working with other Denominations and Faiths

The Presbytery's ecumenical communication with other churches in the area occurs through representation at Presbytery meetings from representatives of other denominations. Currently there has been representation from the Episcopal Church, Baptist and the United Reformed Church. Representation from further denominations should be sought to strengthen future ecumenical working. There is also work undertaken by 'Aberdeen Churches Together'. The Convener of the Presbytery Committee - Church, Society and International Relations - is the Presbytery's representative on this group. They meet 4-5 times per year and have annual diary events that include: A Wedding Fair in January, A Walk of Witness on Good Friday and Christmas events.

The interfaith group is a virtual group, representing over 10 different religions and Faith communities living and working in Aberdeen. They are funded by Interfaith Scotland and have 100 members on the mailing list. It is coordinated by a member of the Church of Scotland. They meet regularly and have been working through Zoom and communicate through Facebook and the Multicultural Centre in Aberdeen. They are seeking a representative from Presbytery to be part of this group.

There is also representation at Presbytery from the University of Aberdeen, Robert Gordon's College, Church of Scotland Guilds Together and Chaplaincies, including the Oil and Gas, NHS and Port Chaplaincy.

At a local level, many congregations engage with other denominations and faiths in their regular activities. In some communities they have developed supportive relationships, which embody the need to work together collectively and bring about spiritual connections to those who are seeking a relationship with God.

3.2 Working with Communities

The congregations in Aberdeen and Shetland have forged strong links with their local communities. Some ministers and congregational members are active in Community Councils and other community groups and charities, therefore fulfilling the Presbytery Vision to

'renew their life and work for mission in the 21st century, worshipping and witnessing in a sustainable and mutually supportive network of Christian communities

This relationship with congregations and their local communities has been very important during the Covid-19 pandemic and has seen congregations reaching out to provide food, comfort and spiritual solace to many who are isolated and in need. Communication has been electronic and postal for those who do not have internet access. In person coffee chats and cafes have been taken over by Zoom coffee chats and social meetings. Members of Presbytery also hold office on many local boards and Trusts, including the Local Councils.

3.3 Working with Media Outlets

Presbytery and congregational contact with the media is moving from being reactionary to proactive. The newspapers in Aberdeen and Shetland have run many stories on recent plans for church closures. Our response to this has to be seen as promoting the interests of the Church of Scotland and the investment to create 'well equipped spaces in the right places' and Presbytery's vision to '*re-imagine and renew*'. Relationships with media outlets have to be enabled, creating a positive culture of communication and the fostering of teamwork.

The Communications Officer needs to become familiar with all the media outlets and be able to secure good contacts as each has a distinct voice, method of communication and field of interest. To ensure Press Releases and emails to media outlets are read with interest by journalists they need to be written in a targeted manner for that specific media outlet and extrapolate the key messages that are important for viewers and readers.

Presbytery and congregations should consult with their local Communications Officer (or the Communications Team in Edinburgh during out of hours) prior to submitting direct information to media outlets. There may be some exceptions to this for example: publicity for a church or community event. When the Communications Officer is absent, discussions should occur with the Presbytery Clerk and Depute Clerk regarding contact with and from the Press.

See Appendix 2- Emergency Protocol: Responding to Media

4. Looking forward to the next 2 years: 2021-2023

4.1 Presbytery Plan 2020-2030

The Presbytery Plan for the next decade takes into consideration the National Church's 'Radical Action Plan' and the report on 'Well Equipped Spaces' in the Right Places (<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/radical-action-plan>). These were agreed by the General Assembly in 2019 to enable congregations to spend less time and energy on land and buildings and more time on worship and mission. The Presbytery Plan was agreed in 2020.

The Presbytery Plan for Aberdeen and Shetland aims to reshape the church estate to allow for the renewal and revitalisation of the national Church in these areas. It will result in some new churches being built over time, others redeveloped, and some sold or demolished where the building no longer serves the needs of a modern church and its community. The changes will allow ministers to work more effectively in teams across the city and to develop the skills of clergy and lay people to re-engage in the life of Aberdeen and Shetland through effective mission work.

(<https://www.aberdeenshetlandpresbytery.org.uk/latest-news/presbytery-plan/>)

Congregations will be formed into Area Groupings as below:

Brimmond; North Aberdeen; Aberdeen West; Riverside; South Aberdeen; Donside; Old Aberdeen; City Centre & West End; Shetland.

The first of these occurred on 1st Feb 2021 as the congregations of Mastrick, Northfield and Summerhill became one congregation, now called the Aberdeen North Parish Church. The sales of these three buildings will enable the building of a new church facility in the area.

It is important for the communication around the formation of these groupings to be effective, sensitive and considerate concerning all the issues that can arise and mindful of the emotions such changes can evoke. It is imperative that news releases to media outlets are timely and accurate as far as the Church of Scotland is concerned. Building good relationships with the media will be paramount for the Communications Officer to ensure that news of church closures and new builds are portrayed in a positive manner, enhancing the Church's mission and values. All Presbyters will need to work together to develop a sense of belonging to new church communities and develop newer ways of communicating and 'being Church' as the Presbytery plan is implemented.

4.2 A Presbytery of the North East and Northern Isles 2023

The Radical Action Plan agreed at the General Assembly of 2019 introduced new regional Presbytery structures to provide leadership and focus alongside practical support for local congregations, freeing them for mission and ministry.

https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/58399/Report_of_the_Council_of_Assembly_2019_including_Radical_Action_Plan.pdf

The Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland will cease to exist and the North East and Northern Isles Presbytery will be formed with the union of six Presbyteries by 2023. These are Aberdeen & Shetland; Buchan; Gordon; Kincardine & Deeside; Moray and Orkney.

The implications for communication across the newly formed Presbytery are huge and will need to be planned effectively. The sense of belonging to this wider network of congregations will require a great deal of work for all concerned.

The North East and Northern Isles Presbytery Steering group have set out these value statements as a positive starting point demonstrating their commitment to move forward together.

North East & Northern Isles Presbytery, as part of the body of Christ, aspire to these values:

Communication

We will be open and informative; striving to include people and communicating in a graceful way using all appropriate means.

Teamwork

We will draw on our talents and resources, building relationships, sharing together and working collaboratively.

Respect

We are a diverse Presbytery serving urban, rural, coastal and island communities. We will show respect by listening to and learning from each other.

Integrity

We will be honest and transparent in word and action; building trust throughout Presbytery.

Nurturing

We strive to be affirming, generous, welcoming and supportive of each other, recognising the need for mutual encouragement, challenge and development.

Outward looking

We are missional and have broad horizons, serving the purposes of Christ through engagement with our communities and wider world. We will do this in partnership with others wherever possible.

Effectiveness

We aim to be professional and timely in decision-making and action, continually developing and adapting the resources, systems and skills that lead to good governance.

5. Summary

This strategy has outlined the practices that have enabled effective communication to date. It has focused on the experiences of Presbytery and church communication during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2021. This overview of our current practices is a record of how adaptable and flexible congregations have become to continue the work of God and communicate in ways that would have been unimaginable a few years ago. In this way Presbytery's mission is continuing to be achieved, protected and enriched.

The strategy aims to provide guidance on communication practices within congregations both internally and externally. It serves to illuminate the way forward for the next two years when the changes envisaged for the Presbytery Plan 2020 and the union of Presbyteries will be actioned. Effective communication and the building of positive relationships will be essential. A 'Communication Plan for 2021-2023' (as detailed below) can help Presbyters to move forward with renewed motivation and clarity of communication that encourages the achievement of specific aims and objectives. The plan will be revised and evaluated in future years.

The proposed new Presbytery's communication statement:

'We will be open and informative; striving to include people and communicating in a graceful way using all appropriate means',

and the vision of the current Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland will propel us into the future, overcoming the challenges along the way, as we walk through new pathways with our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. Communication Plan for 2021-2023

| Aim | Objective | Summary Actions | Actioned by |
|--|--|--|---|
| <p>Presbytery Continue to strengthen current practices that have enabled effective communication to promote, protect and enrich the Presbytery's Mission.</p> | <p>Until Covid-19 restrictions ease continue to use electronic communication for dissemination of Presbytery communication</p> <p>Ensure online resources are accessible to people with visual and audio impairments and additional support needs.</p> <p>Communication should reflect inclusivity and celebrate equality and diversity.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meetings continue on Zoom/Teams • Email and telephone calls remain the choice mode of communication for office bearers • Facebook and Website updates to provide news for Presbyters • Introduction of a Presbytery Ezine to convey news to congregations • Introduce Presbytery Twitter account • Appointment of a Presbytery Representative on the Interfaith Group • Encourage and strengthen ecumenical links with denominations not currently represented within Presbytery | <p>PC/DC</p> <p>PC/DC/CO</p> <p>PC/DC/CO</p> <p>CO</p> <p>CO</p> <p>PC/Presbytery</p> <p>PC/Presbytery</p> |
| <p>Congregations Continue to strengthen current practices that have enabled effective communication to promote, protect and enrich the Church's Mission.</p> | <p>Until Covid-19 restrictions ease continue to use electronic communication for dissemination of Church communication. Ensure online resources are accessible to people with visual and audio impairments and additional support needs.</p> <p>Communication should reflect inclusivity and celebrate</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure continuation of Zoom/Teams meetings/ emails/online services/telephone calls/newsletters and church magazines • Facebook and Website updates to provide news for members/ parishioners • Contribute to Presbytery news/Ezine • Consult with CO for the development of news stories for media outlets | <p>Ministers/ Session Clerks/ Members</p> <p>Ministers/ Session Clerks/ Members</p> <p>All Presbyters</p> <p>All Presbyters</p> |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| | equality and diversity. | | |
| Presbytery Plan 2020-2030 Facilitate smooth and effective communication as the plan is implemented | Plan and implement effective, sensitive and considerate external communication working with the timelines identified | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with ministers and congregations to develop positive news stories for media outlets • Submit press releases proactively and respond to media reactions in a timely manner | CO Ministers PC CO/ Comms Team Edinburgh |
| Presbytery Union Work collaboratively with the North East & Northern Isles Presbytery Steering Group to ensure smooth transition for the union | Develop new communication strategies as Presbyteries come together and form the NE & Northern Isles Presbytery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate the development of a Communication Plan for the new Presbytery • Review the remit of the Communications Officer role | CO/PC/Steering Group CO/ PC/ Edinburgh |
| Communicating during times of unprecedented change Work collaboratively to maintain flexible, inclusive dialogue with all concerned to ensure information regarding change is clear, constructive and effective and promotes a positive culture of communication | Keep people informed about ongoing changes in working practices: > during and after the Covid-19 pandemic; > throughout the implementation of the Presbytery Plan > and in the lead up to the formation of the new Presbytery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan new channels of communication as change is implemented and different organisational structures emerge • Develop new and innovative ways of sustaining good working relationships with diverse church communities • Create good communication practices with different geographical areas within the new Presbytery | All Presbyters Office bearers CO/PC/DC All Presbyters Office bearers CO/PC/DC All Presbyters Office bearers CO/PC/DC |

Abbreviations: PC- Presbytery Clerk; DC- Depute Clerk; CO- Communications Officer

Appendix 1

Social Media Policy



Registered as a Charity in Scotland: SC013064

Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland

Guidelines for Presbyters

The Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland welcomes the use of social media as it provides easier ways for congregations to:

- communicate instantly with members, keeping them informed and updated
- signpost involvement with the local community
- forge relationships with individuals and the wider community that build trust and understanding

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and any online communication have the ability to achieve these outcomes but it is necessary to outline a few issues Presbyters should bear in mind when communicating online.

Websites and Social media pages should be up to date and current.

The Church of Scotland has produced detailed guidelines for Social Media use focussing on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This can be found by clicking this link:

<https://www.aberdeenshetlandpresbytery.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Social-Media-Guidelines.pdf>

Choosing the right social media platform is important and involves consideration of who you are trying to reach and what you are trying to achieve.

Once you have chosen your platform you can start to create your congregational account.

Always ensure that there are two or more people who hold the login details and passwords for your social media accounts. If not, you will have to start from scratch when someone leaves.

Images

Ensure you use high quality, eye catching, non-watermarked images which fit the optimum size for each social media platform.

Facebook is the most popular social networking site worldwide. Facebook offers three options; a profile, a page, or a group.

A profile represents a single individual and is for non-commercial use.

A page is a timeline for organisations and businesses.

Groups are effective in connecting family, peers, colleagues or people with a shared interest.

A Facebook page is recommended. A page will enable people to find you and explore the life of your congregation. This page can be used to advertise events and to share prayers, images, videos, thoughts and quotes.

You must already have a personal Facebook account that you can use to create a page. You will then become the admin of the page. You should then assign other people as admins and editors. You can remove yourself as an admin for the page later if you no longer wish your Profile to be attached to the church page.

Twitter is often the first place news stories appear online. People also use Twitter to hold global conversations, make friends and build support for campaigns. Yet Twitter is one of the most difficult social platforms for congregations to maintain. Tweets fly so fast and furiously, that on average they have a lifespan of around 10 minutes. So how do congregations use Twitter effectively? If you want to keep up a Twitter profile, you will need to sustain a steady flow of tweets. This may seem overwhelming, but your congregation is potentially already producing enough content to be used.

When choosing your twitter username (also known as your handle), you are limited to 15 characters. It should be something relevant, unique and easy to remember. Usernames are preceded by the @ symbol (@ChurchScotland). If you are planning on setting up an Instagram account as well, you will want to check that the username is available on both platforms. Your display name (note: different from username) can be up to 50 characters and therefore you should be able to include your congregation's full name.

Instagram, users can connect with a global community which shares millions of photos and videos every day. This social platform works best on your mobile phone, and it is a wonderful place to explore the world and find like-minded individuals. Instagram has become an indispensable social media outlet,

particularly for engaging with young people.

Safeguarding

Adults should think twice and consider speaking to a parent before adding/following children under 16 on social media. Always obtain consent from parents before using images of children on social media. Congregations address this in different ways. Some have a blanket consent form which parents sign before their children take part in activities. Other congregations choose not to include photographs of children on their social media accounts at all. Consult the Church of Scotland safeguarding resources for further guidance.

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/safeguarding-service>

Personal View Sharing to the local news and on Social Media Platforms

Church of Scotland personnel are to be mindful of their status as a Minister, Deacon, Parish Worker or Elder of the Church of Scotland and for such reasons should consider carefully before engaging with local news agencies and on social media platforms ensuring that they consider that what they are sharing is appropriate.

Confidentiality

Be sensitive about confidentiality and the risk of intrusion. Social media does not change our fundamental understanding about confidentiality across the whole life of the Church. When telling a story about a situation which involves someone else, always ask yourself: is this my story to tell? Would it cause distress, inconvenience, upset or embarrassment to others if they found out you had shared in this way? If in any doubt, do not share it online.

Privacy and Security

Be mindful of your own security. Be careful about the personal details you share online. Assume anything you share about yourself is in the public domain. Do not assume anything electronic is secure. You might be able to delete or recall an email but there's no guarantee the recipient will. Equally, your privacy settings on your social media tools might mean only your accepted "friends" or "followers" can see the things you say, but there is no guarantee that they will not pass them on outside your trusted circles.

Appendix 2

Emergency Protocol- Responding to Media

If a major story breaks e.g. related to safeguarding or church closures and this is during usual working hours advice can be obtained from the Communications Officer, Presbytery Clerk and Depute Clerk as to how to communicate with the media regarding the news.

It is important to consider these steps when contacted directly by the media:

- Be friendly and respectful
- Avoid a reply such as 'no comment'. It implies that the church has rejected its right to reply
- A better response is 'Enquiries are being handled by the Church's Communication Team - please contact them' You can provide phone numbers and emails for your Communications Officer and the Presbytery Office.

Detailed information on handling media interest is provided by the Church of Scotland's Communication Team in this document:

<https://www.aberdeenshetlandpresbytery.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Policies-and-Procedures-of-the-Communications-Department.pdf>

Appendix 3

Etiquette for Electronic Communication

Zoom/Team Meetings

- Arrive 5 mins before the meeting is due to start
- Turn the camera on - off if there are connection problems
- Avoid background light from windows
- Have good lighting so your face can be seen easily
- Position your camera to be at eye level
- Mute your microphone when not speaking
- Avoid talking at the same time as others
- Be aware that you are on camera

Emails/ Written Online Communication

- Clearly identify the person with whom you are communicating
- Write clearly using paragraph spacing to separate lines
- Review what is written before submitting
- Respect privacy and confidentiality
- Note what is written below your message before sharing
- Avoid the overuse of capitals as it can be interpreted as shouting
- Remember Facebook posts etc. are public
- Read what others have written before offering your post
- Be aware of sharing copyrighted material
- Be kind and professional.