



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

Mastrick Parish Church of Scotland

Greenfern Road

Aberdeen

ABI6 6TR

Telephone – 01224 698119

Email - aberdeenshetland@churchofscotland.org.uk

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

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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:
- 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.
 - The Presbytery confirmed that the Local Ecumenical Partnership must be dissolved by October 31st 2020.
 - On Dissolution of the LEP, the former Church of Scotland congregation within the LEP shall be re-erected and granted charitable status.
 - 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.
 - 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	“	“	Buildings.					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 26th November 2019, and the Amended Basis of Union on 6th 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”^a, 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

^a 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^b

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

^b Approved as a basis for the Presbytery Plan by Presbytery on 25th 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;”^c 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:

^c 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.”^d 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,

^d 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.

‘Well equipped spaces in the right places’

The Report of the Necessary Buildings Group to the Planning and Deployment Committee of Presbytery - August 2019

Methodology

In January 2019 Presbytery tasked a joint task group composed of members of both PDC and Property Committee to undertake a necessary buildings survey and assessment in order to inform and shape the Presbytery Plan to be presented in the autumn of this year.

The Necessary Buildings Group (NBG) prepared a survey for all congregations to submit to NBG to inform the group of a) the sense of the place of their buildings in the mission of the congregation, b) the condition of their buildings as well as upkeep and costs, and c) the utilisation of their buildings. The responses received by the NBG were helpful and informative, and gave us a great deal of helpful data to feed into our conclusions.

Following receipt and study of the surveys, the NBG then went on to visit each and every building currently listed for retention, or where a determination has not been made, in Presbytery.

Critical to the completion of our task was the involvement of Ian Townsend (Vice Chair of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland). He brought to our task not only his skills and experience as a surveyor, but his wider appreciation of the comparable state of the Church of Scotland’s wider estate. We would like to put on record our appreciation of the significant time and effort he has given in coming to the city over a sustained period of time to help us with our work.

Following each group of visits, we took time to discuss our impressions and findings, in the context of the survey replies received. We then followed this with further meeting time to prepare our final report and recommendations to PDC and Presbytery.

Apart from Ian Townsend, all of us on the Necessary Buildings Group belong to one congregation or another in Presbytery. In order to be fair and impartial in our decision making we recused ourselves from discussion and debate when discussion was focused on our local area and buildings, and from decision making on our local area. Presbytery can have the comfort of knowing that each and every situation was dealt with fairly, and with complete impartiality. We hope that this practice of declared interest and recusing ourselves from decision making on our own congregation’s buildings will give Presbytery confidence in the robust character of our thinking and methodology, and therefore the integrity of the proposals contained in this report.

Criteria

Decisions about buildings in the history of our Church can prove some of the most difficult and disputed, and so the NBG felt it important to agree a set of Criteria by which we would make our judgements on buildings.

Firstly, we direct you to the report of the General Trustees to this year’s General Assembly and its emphases on ‘well equipped spaces in the right places’. We were

fortunate to have the opportunity to read, study, and reflect on this report in its draft form and before it had been printed in the Blue Book for Commissioners. It very much guided our thinking, and framed the subsequent lens we used when visiting all of Presbytery's buildings.

Our minds were not only on location, but on issues such as condition, accessibility, health and safety features, toilet and kitchen facilities, suitability for a variety of uses and also sustainability. Furthermore, all these factors had to be considered with the changing geography of our city in mind, and to that end, we found the current Local Plan a helpful tool in our deliberations.

We are aware that a number of buildings within the bounds are listed by Historic Environment Scotland as having special or historic architectural merit. On this point we were guided by the General Trustees who stated at the 2019 General Assembly "While the Church values the land and buildings that it has inherited, these have to be suitable to achieve the Church's primary purpose of worship and mission, recognising the tension between buildings as missional assets as well as items of cultural, architectural and historical importance. The Church's charitable purpose is not the conservation of buildings"

Broader themes emerging from our exercise

There are a number of broader themes which arose from our visits, and as well as our determinations for individual buildings. We believe it would be helpful to set the scene for Presbytery with some general remarks which raise common themes arising from our exercise and visits.

A story of movement and Translation

On our visits one of the joys was to become acquainted of the particular historical stories of many of our congregations. Very few indeed, apart from St Machar, had not been built in their current form before 1850. As we travelled round Presbytery, we learned the stories of how current congregations and buildings had arisen as plants from mother churches or indeed had arisen through congregations translating (leaving their current buildings to build another in an expanding and growing part of the city).

It seems to us that the Kirk has a tradition of following the prompting of the Spirit when it comes to growth and development, and that in our relatively recent past congregations have uprooted and moved for the sake of mission and growth. We believe that we as Presbytery and as congregations need to embrace the same sense of adventure and mission, with a corresponding light connection to our current crop of buildings.

As the geography of our city continues to change, so must ours - in terms of location and styles of building for mission and ministry. We ask the question: have we developed an unhealthy attachment for our current stock buildings or are we willing to see them for what they are – simply a tool for ministry and mission in our communities? It is our belief that Presbytery, depending on local geography and development, will require a mixed economy of buildings for future mission and ministry. There will of course always be a place for traditional style sanctuaries which offer a degree of flexibility, but we may need other types of spaces too – shops, meeting rooms, alternative spaces for fresh expressions of church. And we need not own all of them ourselves to utilise such helpful spaces.

A story of Death and Resurrection

One of the dangers inherent in our work and in the purposing of a Presbytery Plan is that it can be viewed simply as the management of decline. To be absolutely clear, this is the very opposite of how we viewed our Necessary Buildings Exercise. Our focus was entirely positive and forward looking in faith.

It is because we have faith in God and in Jesus Christ, that we believe the Holy Spirit will lead us into a new and blessed future as a Presbytery, and we believe the Spirit will guide us into a new understanding of our call to be the presence of the national Church across our city and its communities.

One would think that in the church it would be stating the obvious to say that at the heart of the church's story is a narrative of death and resurrection. Yet, it is our view that we as a body have been singularly unable to recognise when buildings have come to the end of their lifespan, and when the forms of church which they exist to hold and support have come to a natural end.

It is difficult to express to Presbytery the extent to which we felt our exercise has revealed something to us about the state and condition of the Church in our Presbytery. It has been for all of us a challenging and sometimes moving revelation.

There are facilities which we will recommend disposal of, which we should never have had to visit because they were unsuitable, and on one occasion unsafe. Yet these 'facilities' have been allowed to endure in the life of our Presbytery's witness with piecemeal care and attention, for fear of causing offence or asking difficult questions of individuals or congregations. In the future we have to make the culture change of recognising when things have outlived their useful purpose and come to terms with death in the life of the church, as the natural and God given process of reform and renewal, by which energies are then released for doing a new thing.

In addition to recommending some sites and buildings for disposal we also want to propose to Presbytery a plan for development and new birth across the city, and in some communities the death of traditional style church buildings and the exploration of different styles of accommodation for new expressions of church.

However, it is unrealistic in terms of both financial and personnel resources to believe that the latter can take place without the former. We believe Presbytery needs to honestly face the truth that there has to be an end to some things in its life, in order for new things to come to fruition. This reality is at the centre of our Christian Story and we should not fear it, for the risen Lord will accompany us as we journey together into the future, he has for us.

A story of mixed expectations and Stewardship

Whilst quite a number of buildings within the Presbytery bounds have clearly benefited from investment, are well maintained and offer a warm and welcoming experience relevant to mission in today's world, on reviewing our visits we came to ask ourselves how it is that so many of Presbytery's buildings are tired, drab, and dreary? Too often we encountered buildings which had been through lack of ambition, resources or standards, in a deleterious state with reference to decoration, repair and refurbishment?

We have to be honest and say that in some sites and buildings we have been shocked at the condition of buildings, and at the low levels of expectation concerning what the church offers its congregations, and in turn congregations offer their wider local communities.

We believe there is an issue around low expectations when it comes to some buildings and facilities in Presbytery. This is evidenced in different ways, and by lots of small indicators – clutter in sanctuaries, balconies and hall spaces, rather than steps being taken to throw items out in order to keep passageways clear and light, fire safe and clean. Too often we saw a lack of any evidence of sustained care and maintenance plan in buildings - revealed by anything from worn flooring decades old, to ill-fitting and miscellaneous furnishings across buildings; as well a lack of regular and routine decoration and maintenance.

On their own these kinds of details may seem immaterial or nit picking, but across the suite of buildings in Presbytery's care they reveal a pattern of low expectations in terms of the standard of accommodation we offer to our congregations and communities. There were buildings which quite frankly depressed us, and into which we could never imagine newcomers feeling a sense of anticipation or welcome.

These, we know, are difficult realities for all of us to hear, but they are the reality of much of our stock of accommodation. This needs to be contrasted with the standard of accommodation offered by many other charities or civic bodies who as good stewards understand the need to be good stewards of their property – investing in them and developing them. We should aim in Presbytery to offer the best of resources to our communities which local people desire to come into and make use of. That is why even where we recommend retention in the Plan of necessary buildings, we usually do so with proposals about how those retained should be improved and made better fit for purpose.

We believe Presbytery needs a culture change in how we look at and look after our buildings. No matter which area of the city we live in, local communities deserve high quality spaces. If we have congregations which struggle to maintain buildings to a high standard over a period of time then this indicates a structural problem in terms of stewardship, and sustainability. In which case the answer lies not in having too many buildings which we cannot maintain at a good standard, but in better stewardship of buildings together in Presbytery. We must not allow ourselves over the coming years to allow a pattern of short-term expediency to become a narrative of decay and decline in our building's estate.

In this regard, to support and affirm congregations in their stewardship of buildings, we believe that as Presbytery reform takes shape, any new Presbytery of which we are part needs to look seriously at professional support for congregations in the care and planned maintenance of their buildings, as well as helping Presbytery to maintain a common standard of accommodation across its bounds.

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)."

Following careful and prayerful consideration of Presbytery's buildings and their capacity in the future as tools for ministry and mission we recommend the classification of each building in Presbytery as follows:

Charge	Building	Designation in new Plan
Bridge of Don Oldmachar	Sanctuary and Halls	A*
Craigiebuckler	Sanctuary	C
	Halls	C
Ferryhill	Sanctuary and Halls	A*
Garthdee	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Ruthrieston West	Sanctuary and Halls	C
High Hilton	Sanctuary and Halls	A*
Holburn West	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Mannofield	Sanctuary and Halls	A
Mastrick	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Middlefield	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Midsocket	Sanctuary and Halls	A
Newhills	Sanctuary and Halls	A
Northfield	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Queen's Cross	Sanctuary and Halls	A*
Rubislaw	Sanctuary and Halls	C
	Centre	A
St Columba's Bridge of Don	Sanctuary and Halls	A*
St George's Tillydrone	Sanctuary and Halls	A*
St Machar's Cathedral	Sanctuary	A
	Dunbar Hall	C
St Mark's	Sanctuary	A (subject to redevelopment)
St Mary's	Sanctuary and Halls	C
St Nicholas Uniting	West Church and Drum Ailse	D
St Stephen's	Sanctuary and Halls	C
South Holburn	Sanctuary and Halls	A*
South of St Nicholas Kincorth	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Stockethill	N/A	N/A
Summerhill	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Torry: St Fittick's	Sanctuary and Halls	A*

Woodside	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Bucksburn Stoneywood	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Cults	Sanctuary	A
	Centre	A
Dyce	Sanctuary	C
	Halls	C
Kingswells	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Peterculter	Sanctuary and Halls	A*
* with investment required in the short term on this building.		

From the date on which the Plan begins only essential and urgent repairs should be undertaken within any buildings categorised as b, c or d; and all proposed works over £1000 in buildings categorised b, c or d; be subject to the agreement of Presbytery's Property Committee.

Recommendations for building investment and disposal by Local Area

Bridge of Don

Charge	Building	Designation in new Plan
Oldmachar	Sanctuary and Halls	A
St Columba's Bridge of Don	Sanctuary and Halls	A

Additional Comments:

We consider Oldmachar to be necessary and it should be retained with disabled access being made possible on the first, as well as ground floor. We believe the Oldmachar Kirk Session should pursue a feasibility study into the installation of a lift within a year of the commencement of the Plan.

Due to its location the St. Columba's building should be retained, recognising it requires significant investment to take place during the currency of the new Plan.

Whilst we recognise that the landward area of Bridge of Don will be a focus for house building and expansion it is our view that these two buildings should be the focus for the life of the Church of Scotland during the new plan, and any other building needs for outreach to new areas of building should be serviced by the usage of other community facilities as they develop.

Brimmond

Charge	Building	Designation in new Plan
Bucksburn Stoneywood	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Dyce	Sanctuary	C
	Halls	C
Newhills	Sanctuary and Halls	A
	The Stables	A

Additional Comments:

It is our view that the Bucksburn Stoneywood building, and both Dyce buildings are no longer fit for purpose for the Church's work, and this community and growing part of the city deserves investment from the Church. Therefore we propose that all buildings be disposed of, and that the congregations of Bucksburn Stoneywood and Dyce be assisted by Presbytery (with the aid of the General Trustees) to find a site in the Bucksburn to Dyce Corridor on which to develop a new community centred multi-use church facility, and return with a firm proposal for Presbytery's consideration within 12 months of the beginning of the Presbytery Plan.

The Group were persuaded by the contents of the Aberdeen City's Local Plan that with the land scheduled for residential development to the East and south of Newhills Church, that the Church and Halls should be retained in this next ten-year plan. However, we recommend retention be subject to investment in the sanctuary (the condition of which gave us cause for concern) as well as a feasibility study into the installation of a lift for disabled access to the first floor of the Halls. We suggest too to that Newhills investigate the moving of their "Disabled" toilet to the same area as the other toilets (perhaps to the room which currently houses their photocopier) rather than have it in isolation from the other facilities. We consider The Stables to be a real asset to the Brimmond grouping and recommend its retention as a Necessary Building.

North West Aberdeen

Charge	Building	Designation in new Plan
Mastrick	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Middlefield	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Northfield	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Summerhill	Sanctuary and Halls	C

Additional Comments:

Presbytery should dispose of all four buildings in this area, none of which offer the standard of accommodation the community around them deserve, and some of which offer real challenges when it comes to questions of disabled accessibility. We believe Presbytery should invest in this part of Aberdeen as a matter of priority and urgency.

Presbytery should assist the congregations to plan for a future in one new community centred multi-use church facility, and through discussion, investigation and community consultation, instruct the congregations within 12 months of the beginning of this Plan return to Presbytery with the necessary costed proposals for approval. It is our view that such a facility should be built on either an entirely new site chosen by the congregations or following the demolition of the current inadequate Mastrick building, on the vacant site there. Funding of the new facility should be in part from the likely proceeds of sale of most of the sites for development.

Charge	Building	Designation in new Plan
Cults	Sanctuary	A
	Halls	A
Craigiebuckler	Sanctuary	C
	Halls	C
Kingswells	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Mannofield	Sanctuary and Halls	A
Peterculter	Sanctuary and Halls	A

Additional Comments:

In some sense this part of the Plan presents the greatest challenge and opportunity when it comes to buildings. Given the forthcoming development of Countesswells (which is already underway) it is our view that in the pattern of previous generations Presbytery needs to invest in an area of future growth (an argument that has often been made at Presbytery already).

Having surveyed all the sites in the surrounding group, it is the strong and unanimous view of the Group that rather than investing more valuable resources in the current site at Craigiebuckler through refurbishment, given the current condition of the Halls and the limited value of the current Sanctuary the site at Craigiebuckler should be disposed of, and the congregation translated to Countesswells in order to develop a new community centred multi-use church facility there. Proceeds of the disposal of the Craigiebuckler site could be reinvested at the congregation's new location.

We believe the Craigiebuckler congregation has both the people and financial resources within it to facilitate such a translation, along with the backing of a well-resourced and collaborative partner congregations in their group and we encourage Presbytery to help facilitate such a bold and pioneering move.

Related to Countesswells, we see little value in continued investment in the current Kingswells building, and would encourage the congregation there to see their future as part of a tie up with Craigiebuckler on the Countesswells site, with the continued possibility of other forms of ministry and mission to the Kingswells community through use of the school, community centre or other buildings in the longer term.

While we recommend the Peterculter is retained as a necessary building given the distinct identity of that community, it is our view this should be subject to immediate investment to the refurbishment of the sanctuary there with lighter paint and décor and improved lighting. In addition, an architect should be engaged to oversee investment in the site that would result in a much better flow around the facility as a whole.

At Cults although the buildings are in excellent condition there are definite areas for improvement in the Church Sanctuary complex. There is a need for improved lighting, projection facilities, and improved disabled access. There should also be an investigation into the feasibility of toilets, and upgrading of the Hall facilities at the rear to the same standard of Cults other buildings.

The Cults Centre building as well as that at Mannofield in this grouping are the standard which should be used as a guide in all future development.

Aberdeen South

Charge	Building	Designation in new Plan
South of St Nicholas Kincorth	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Torry St Fittick's	Sanctuary and Halls	A

Additional Comments:

The Kincorth building has reached the end of its useful life and the site should be disposed of, with the possibility of a sale for development on the site.

The Torry St Fittick's Sanctuary is in excellent condition, however the buildings there should be retained subject to investment in the Halls with need a reordering and upgrade to an acceptable and modern standard, with an architect appointed to investigate and the congregation/grouping to report to Presbytery within one year of commencement of the Plan.

As in the case of Countesswells it is the view of the Group that along with the disposal of the Kincorth site, a new site as close as possible to Lochside Academy and the Cove conurbation be found on which to develop a new community centred multi-use church facility. We recommend this process be undertaken without delay, with the support of Presbytery, the General Trustees and any requisite professionals. Again, Presbytery should receive a report not less than one year following the beginning of the Plan, following congregational, community and professional consultations.

Riverside

Charge	Building	Designation in new Plan
Ferryhill	Sanctuary and Halls	A
Ruthrieston West	Sanctuary and Halls	C
South Holburn	Sanctuary and Halls	A
Garthdee		

Additional Comments:

Both Ferryhill and South Holburn buildings should be retained as Necessary Buildings, but both require investment in the near term.

The current entrance to Ferryhill's Halls is not welcoming and needs reconfiguration, as well as some thought given to the rear of the Halls.

At South Holburn the congregation should remove the coloured glass windows in the Sanctuary to let in more natural light and consider renovation of the Sanctuary to make it more modern and flexible for the future.

In addition, significant investment is required to create a welcoming area to the older suite of Halls as well as to upgrade their extremely dated aesthetic. The look and utility of the Jubilee Halls in the South Holburn Suite is the standard the congregation should set as their benchmark for future work. Again, within one year of the Plan, Presbytery should be in

receipt of an investment and business plan to consider from both congregations, a task which they could consider undertaking together in recognition of their shared future.

The building at Ruthrieston West is already listed as having a uncertain future. We are agreed and certain that with its very dated sanctuary and halls, which would require a very great deal of upgrading, as well as its location, the building is unnecessary for the future mission and ministry of the Church of Scotland in Aberdeen.

Pending the result of their appeal, any proceeds from the disposal of the current Garthdee site should be utilised in this grouping, with its commitment to continued ministry and mission in the Garthdee area.

West End

Charge	Building	Designation in new Plan
Holburn West	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Midstocket	Sanctuary and Halls	A
Queen's Cross	Sanctuary and Halls	A
Rubislaw	Sanctuary and Hall	C
	Centre	A

Additional Comments:

In this area, three out of the five buildings should be retained. Queen's Cross Church and its Halls and the Rubislaw Centre offer great potential for a hub for the grouping, along with the excellent but under utilised accommodation on the Midstocket site.

At Midstocket, we recognise there are always going to be issues about metered parking due to proximity to the Foresterhill hospital site. Nevertheless, whatever the shape on ministry and mission for this area in the new Plan there is a challenge to increase utilisation of the Midstocket building by church and community groups in the West End cluster, if Midstocket has a future beyond the life of the new plan.

Although the Sanctuary at Holburn West is a good space the adjoining halls require significant refurbishment and upgrading and as a whole we believe this building should be made redundant. The Rubislaw Centre is of great value and potential for the future of the Church of Scotland in the West End and should therefore be retained. The Rubislaw Sanctuary is very much of its time and style and simply does not offer the flexibility and versatility required in a future worship space, and therefore again we recommend Rubislaw Church along with the adjoining hall is no longer required for the future.

Along with the disposal of both Holburn West and Rubislaw Church and Halls, we recommend investment in the Sanctuary at Queen's Cross, namely decoration and work to the rear of the Sanctuary and Vestibule to visibly open up the Sanctuary to the Community through the use of glass. These improvements would build on what is already an excellent, lively and busy facility. Presbytery should be in receipt of proposals for the above works within one year of the beginning of the Presbytery Plan.

City Centre

Charge	Building	Designation in new Plan
Kirk of St Nicholas Uniting	West Church and Drum Aisle	D
St Mark's	Sanctuary and Halls	A

Additional Comments:

We recommend that the status of the Kirk of St Nicholas should be as yet to be determined. There needs to be significant investigation as to how the Church of Scotland could dispose sympathetically of the West church and Central Aisle given the importance of the site and building to the City of Aberdeen. We of course acknowledge that the building has special status in the civic life of the city, and recognise that a reflective space is required in the city centre, not least for the Oil Industry Chapel. Nevertheless, we do not consider the West church a fit home for modern worship, and we are not in the business of preserving ancient buildings for their own sake. Therefore, it is our recommendation that negotiations should begin with the OpenSpace Trust, the City of Aberdeen, and the General Trustees to take this matter forward with some urgency.

There is the possibility of great future potential at the St Mark's building, but only with complete redevelopment and reordering of the space, and likely shared ownership between the current congregation and the Presbytery. It is on this basis alone that we recommend St Mark's be categorised as a Necessary Building.

Following some definition by Presbytery on the shape of future city centre mission and ministry, if it proves impossible to plan and conceive and fund a realistic plan for the future of the building within two years of the implementation of the Plan, the status should be amended to C in our view, as the building has little future as it currently is.

Donside and University

Charge	Building	Designation in new Plan
High Hilton	Sanctuary and Halls	A
St George's	Sanctuary and Halls	A
St Machar	Cathedral Church and Gatehouses	A
	Dunbar Hall	D
St Mary's	Sanctuary and Halls	C
St Stephen's	Sanctuary and Halls	C
Woodside	Sanctuary and Halls	C

Additional Comments:

High Hilton should be retained as necessary, with some work to help the flow within the building between different rooms as well as to create a more obvious Monday to Saturday entrance to the building for the wider community. This piece of work should start as soon as possible and proposal be with Presbytery for approval within one year of the commencement of the ten-year Plan.

Woodside Church and Halls would require major investment to bring it in any sense up to an acceptable standard for modern accommodation, and even were the resources available the congregation would retain a building with significant and unaffordable retention costs in

the future. We believe it should be disposed of and placed on the market as soon as is possible under the Plan. It may be that it is important for the Woodside congregation or its successor to retain a worship space in the Woodside Community, in which case we recommend the letting of space in one of the modern community facilities in the Woodside area, and the use of St George's Tillydrone for ancillary activities and church life.

At St George's Tillydrone we recommend some work be done to create a more obvious way into the building directly across from the entrance of the new Community Hub, with whom St George's already have a collaborative arrangement.

We recommend that the Building at St George's also becomes a resource and ancillary accommodation for the congregation at St Machar, and that the Dunbar Hall site be disposed of.

The Cathedral, together with others within the Church of Scotland, has a special place in ecclesiastical, cultural and historical terms, and presents a unique opportunity for Christian witness to the many visitors throughout the week. In conjunction with HES (Historic Environment Scotland) and relevant grant awarding bodies, urgent investigation on the installation of toilets (probably in the area of the shop at the rear of the sanctuary) is required. Further development / upgrading of the Gatehouses is worthy of investigation, but linked to the future of Dunbar Hall. We recommend it should be considered for disposal dependent on the final solution on ancillary accommodation for the Cathedral, after negotiation with St George's.

We consider that neither St Mary's nor St Stephen's buildings have a long-term future, and they should therefore be disposed of. We recommend that both Kirk Sessions be assisted in a community audit and consultation, which might help them to identify a new location for a united charge somewhere between their two present locations. The St Mary's site is potentially a very valuable development site which could greatly help in generating the funds for a new community centred multi-use church facility. Some research might also be undertaken as to whether with its proximity to the University it may be worthwhile for the Church of Scotland to maintain a foothold presence in a new development on the St Mary's site for student outreach work. This of course has to be balanced with the possible effect of this decision on the receipt of monies for the site, which would otherwise be used to develop a brand new facility for the united charge.

We believe there is a need to provide facilities close to the areas that both churches are currently failing to engage with. While this is the important across the city, it is essential in some of the poorer areas where access to transport is not always available (and public transport can be expensive on short journeys, especially for young families). There is a real need for research work to be done here – perhaps a community audit – to help discern the future shape of building needs in this community.

As in other cases, we suggest this research work, with the assistance of other parties, be completed within one year of the Plan, in order for Presbytery to consider a proposal.

In Conclusion

Having completed our thorough analysis of the Presbytery's estate, we hope and pray our work and its conclusions will provide Presbytery with a basis for honing its buildings as a resource for mission and ministry in all parts of our city. We believe Presbytery would be best served by the decisions we recommend in our report. We present them with

unanimous agreement after much deliberation and prayerful consideration. As a group there is no dissent whatsoever as to our final decision and recommendations.

We wish to formally thank congregations for the welcome and hospitality they showed to us on our visits.

Rev Scott M Rennie, Joint Convenor, Minister at Queen's Cross Ronnie
Johnstone, Joint Convenor, Elder at South Holburn
Pauline Alexander, Elder at Woodside
Rev Keith Blackwood, Minister at Mannofield
Donald Brown, Elder at Cults
Rev Phil Lightbody, MDS for Presbytery Planning
Bill Falconer, Elder at Cults
Bill Mitchell, Elder and MDS at St George's Tillydrone
Ian Townsend, Vice Chair of the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland
Rev Maggie Whyte, Minister at St Stephen's