

Summary of the Presbytery Meeting at Perth: St Matthew's Parish Church on Tuesday 11th June 2024

INSTALLATION OF MODERATOR

Rev Alan D Reid MA BD

Rev Alan Reid was installed as Moderator for 2024/25. Alan is the minister at Kinross Parish Church. The Rev Donna Hays, the outgoing Moderator, was warmly thanked by Alan for her distinguished service. Donna had undertaken an excellent job as the Presbytery of Perth's first Moderator.

ADMISSION OF MINISTERS

The following Ministers had transferred from another Presbytery and were admitted to membership of Perth Presbytery.:

Rev Ian McDonald

Rev Alistair Cowper

Rev John Murray

Rev Douglas Creighton

Rev David Devenney

The Moderator further welcomed the Rev Karlien Becker, an Admissions Candidate, who had begun a 12-month familiarisation placement on 1st June 2024 with the Rev Jim Stewart at Perth: Letham St Mark's Parish Church and to the Rev Peter Kaela who had begun a programme of Familiarisation with the Rev James McNeil at Alva Parish Church.

The Moderator noted all those Commissioned Elders who would be stepping down on 30th June 2024 and thanked them for their service.

VACANCY MATTERS

Two ministers who have already retired and one who is to retire shortly were warmly thanked by the Moderator on behalf of Presbytery.

Rev Jan Steyn had retired from Logie Kirk, Stirling, and Presbytery wished him well in his new congregation of Bethelkerk, Barendrecht in the Netherlands. Jan addressed Presbytery online and was thanked by the Moderator for his Ministry at Logie Kirk.

The Rev Drew Barrie had retired from St Serf's Tullibody and the Presbytery wished him well in his retirement. Drew Barrie addressed Presbytery and thanked his former congregation of Tullibody: St Serf's for their support and commitment. The Moderator added his thanks and prayers and forwarded greetings from the congregation of Rothesay Trinity, where Drew had served in the past.

Presbytery noted that the Rev Benjamin Abeledo would retire on August 14th 2024 and he was warmly thanked him for his services to Blairgowrie Parish Church and the Moderator wished him well in his retirement. Benjamin addressed Presbytery online and he thanked the members of Blairgowrie for their faithfulness and support. The Moderator thanked

Benjamin for his service to the Church which had included a period of Army Chaplaincy.

FAITH ACTION LEADERSHIP TEAM

Amy-Louise Scott, a member of the Faith Action Programme Leadership team (FAPLT), gave a presentation. FAPLT, a group of around 24 members, had been formed in 2023 and was a merger of the former Faith Nurture and Faith Impact Forums. Their principal remit was to oversee the key priorities of the Faith Action Programme over the next five years which included:

- a) Training and support of congregations.
- b) Issues concerning social justice and public life.
- c) Presbytery Mission planning.
- d) Pathways for Ministries.

A 'Vivid Vision' conference in January examined the hopes and dreams of a changing Church, and acknowledged the pain of change whilst being positive about the future. A joint roadshow was currently underway – with FAPLT and Seeds for Growth teaming up to provide space for lamenting as well as sharing good news stories from across the Church.

The Moderator mentioned that at an earlier meeting it was noted that Amy-Louise had been accepted as a candidate for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament. Later, Presbytery noted that Mrs. Susan Morrison had been accepted as a candidate for the Diaconate.

LOCAL AUTHORITY EDUCATION REPRESENTATIVES REPORT

The Rev Chris Hay explained that Local Authority education representatives were appointed as a statutory entitlement to Churches to serve the community and promote the common good. Within the Presbytery of Perth, there were 5 local authorities and 5 representatives:

- Angus** – Rev Christine Hay
- Clackmannanshire** – Rev Sang Cha
- Dundee City** – Margaret McVean
- Perth & Kinross** - Margaret Conroy
- Stirling** - Colin O'Brien

The remit for education representatives was wide and varied and it was a privilege to serve to assist with the care of young people in the community. At a time when society was rejecting church involvement in many areas of life, it was an opportunity to maintain a presence and a voice.

She further noted that across Scotland there had been a drive from various Secular and Humanist Societies to remove voting rights from Church representatives and in some areas voting rights had already been removed. This was robustly opposed by the Roman Catholic Church who still had a large number of primary and secondary schools throughout Scotland. The 2024 General Assembly debated this matter and affirmed the importance and unique contribution of representatives on committees and asked for an open discussion if voting rights were to be under threat from local authorities.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY REPORT

The Rev Grant Maclaughlan presented a report about the 2024 General Assembly. The challenges facing the Church were real and present, and despite serious efforts, a deficit of £8.1M was expected in 2025. Around 71% of Charges were unable to contribute enough to cover the costs of Ministry and were being supported financially by the remaining 29%. Further concern was expressed about the potential loss of Chaplaincy from the three services and there were currently gaps within the Reserves.

Whilst these gave cause for concern, he had been encouraged by the Rev Tommy McNeil, Convener of FAPLT, who had reminded the Assembly that “We are in a moment of crisis- God is not”, and that the Church required a fresh encounter with God and reminded us that “When God enters the occasions everything changes”.

The ‘Seeds for Growth’ fund was open for fresh applications from congregations that were seeking to bring about renewal within their current setting and not simply for those seeking to establish new worshipping communities, allowing congregations to potentially resource local mission, try new ideas, experiment, learn and grow.

He noted that in a devolvement of power, Presbytery Mission plans would require to be approved once every five years by the General Trustees and PMPIG with Presbyteries being trusted with annual reviews.

There was a new plan for training new Ministers, grounded in an apprenticeship pathway which would allow more people to undertake training and would better prepare and equip new Ministers for the challenges of the 21st Century.

GUILD REPORT

Christina Paterson, Convener of the Guilds Together (GT) of Stirlingshire & Clackmannanshire, brought the greetings of Guild members and presented her report.

The Session recently completed, saw the final year in the Guild’s three-year strategy under the overall title “Look Forward in Faith”. The theme for 2023-24 “**New wine, new wineskins**” was launched at the Annual Gathering held in September at the Assembly Hall. This had been an uplifting and inspiring day with Guild members from across Scotland joining together in worship and celebrating the life and witness of the Guild. It had inspired Guilds to think about ways in which they could reach out to people in new ways and had enabled them to look at different ways of being Guild, both locally and at a regional level. It had been encouraging to welcome over 400 new members to the Guild this year – many being anxious in the midst of church building closures.

In April, a National Conference was held in Perth to agree a new Regional structure that recognised the changes made to Presbyteries, but also responded to the particular needs of the Guild. This reorganisation would enable them to move forward with an enhanced governance structure, whilst at the same time maintaining their important links with

Presbyteries. The new Guilds Together structure would see 18 GT groups established across the country by April 2025 that loosely mirrored the new Presbytery boundaries but encompass additional groups where geography dictated.

The Guild continued to work with their current six Project Partners, *Beat; Home for Good; The Vine Trust; Unida; Pioneers and Starchild*, until the end of this year to compensate for the time when Guilds and churches were closed during the pandemic. Each of these projects were planting new seeds of hope, love and encouragement as well as challenging many social norms. To date over £459,000 had been raised for the projects - a testament to the outward facing nature of Guild members.

It was important to recognise that in the same period, Guilds had given a similar amount to local congregations and local charities who appreciated the support they received from the Guild both practically and financially.

The Young Adult Guild was progressing well and it was hoped that Presbytery would continue to encourage young people aged 18-30 to get involved.

Four new partner schemes with the theme 'Let us Build a House' would begin in September 2024:

- a) **CrossReach** – Building stronger families together – Playful beginnings.
- b) **Scottish Bible Society** – Bibles for Bairns.
- c) **Release International** – 'Operation Hope' – the voice of persecuted Christians.
- d) **Bear Necessities** - a 'Build my Church' programme for Bulgaria.

Appointments – Renee Riddell from Auchterarder Guild had been appointed as one of the four Guild National Vice-Conveners, and Christina Paterson had been appointed as the next National Convener. Both would take up their appointments at the annual gathering in September 2024.

DEATHS OF MINISTERS

Presbytery stood to hear the Moderator pay tribute to four ministers who had died since the last meeting. The sympathy of Presbytery was extended to the families of the Rev Bill Shannon, formerly of Pitlochry, who died on 9th February, the Rev Robbie Donald, formerly of Kilmodan and Colintrave, who died on 19th March, the Rev Douglas Main, formerly of Errol Parish Church, who died on 30th April and the Very Rev Dr James Simpson, former Moderator of the General Assembly and Minister of Dornoch Cathedral, who died on 30th May. The Moderator led Presbytery in prayer for those who had died and for their families.

ANNIVERSARIES OF ORDINATION

A large number of anniversaries of the Ordination of ministers within the Presbytery was marked. The Moderator paid tribute to them all, noting that the combined years of service was over 500 years! The ministers recognised were:

John Russell 65 years

Robin Stewart	65 years
Archibald Halliday	60 years
John Laidlaw	60 years
Helen Cook	50 years
Ian Gough	50 years
Fraser Penny	40 years
Jeff McCormick	40 years
Klaus Buwert	40 years
Ann Brennan	25 years
Brian Dingwall	25 years
Robert Milne	25 years
Catriona Ogilvie	25 years

MISSION FUND

The Presbytery Mission Fund Committee had awarded the following grants to congregations:

- Menzieshill Parish Church: £10,000 for the Connect Youth Project.
- Perth Letham St Marks: £8000 for Youth Outreach Worker, contingent on all further funding being secured.
- Stirling North Parish Church: £8000 for major outreach project.
- In Together (Perth North): Application for a grant of £10,000 per annum over three years. Agreed to award £8000 this year, £6000 in 2025 and £4000 in 2026.
- Arbroath and District Church: St Andrews: £8000 awarded to a project to support people with problems of addiction and associated mental health issues
- All Souls Church of Scotland: Request for £10,000 for a Mission Station and employment of part time Family Worker. It was agreed that more information regarding a Business Plan and how the £100,000 costs would be raised should be provided. A grant of £8000 would therefore be awarded contingent on the further information and the securing of the additional funding required.
- Invergowrie, Abernethy, and others: Request for £500 for the Heart and Soul Ensemble was agreed.
- Perth Kinnoull: Request for grant for Messy Church and Cafe Church, agreed to award £500.

CHURCH IN COMMUNITY

Missionary Partners - Thanks were given to Churches who extended an invitation to Mission Partners Keith and Ida Waddell to share the story of their work with the United Church of Zambia. They had expressed their thanks for the warm welcome and hospitality they received. Keith and Ida were interviewed whilst in Kinross, and an 8-minute video was available on the Presbytery's Facebook page and You Tube channel.

General Election – Marjorie commended the resources available from the Scottish Churches Parliamentary office which could be found on the Church of Scotland website. These included briefings about poverty and other justice issues, as well as prayer resources.

Scottish Refugee Festival – The attention of Presbyters was drawn to the festival which would run from the 14th – 23rd June. It was an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of refugees to our communities and further, to raise awareness of the refugees and asylum seekers in our midst, many of whom were concerned at the recent passing of the Bill, to enable asylum seekers to be sent to Rwanda. In Perth city, an ecumenical prayer vigil would be held in the North Church on the afternoon of Sunday 23rd June. Resources were available on the “Welcome Church” website.

Net Zero – It was hoped to organize, in the autumn, a conference around the “Path to Net Zero”, and the committee were consulting with staff at 121. A new Energy Footprint Tool was being produced, an online resource for congregations to record and monitor their energy use, and more information about this would be available in the autumn.

PLANNING MATTERS

Forfar: East, Old and Inverarity – Building Status - The Presbytery Mission Plan for Forfar called for the status of the buildings at Inverarity to be reviewed by the end of 2023. The congregation of East, Old and Inverarity had worked hard to increase the missional work within the rural community surrounding the village of Inverarity, which resulted in an increase in regular attendance, with a younger profile, and a great increase in the use of both hall and Church buildings. Further, there was the potential for the development of a District Rural farming Hub. The congregation intended to create a more flexible space within the Church building and had completed an application for Seeds for Growth Funding to employ a rural support worker to coordinate their many outreach projects. Both buildings had been inspected by the Presbytery Buildings Officer and found to be in good order, the committee recommended that they be recategorised to ‘A’ and this was agreed.

Aberfeldy Parish Church: Ministry Application - The congregation of Aberfeldy Parish Church had a thriving outreach program that had seen a considerable increase in community contacts and a regular increase in Church attendance. However, despite all of the activity, few were coming to faith. They were looking to resource, through giving, fundraising and grant funding, a Pioneer Ministry post and to appoint someone who could work alongside their Parish Minister, playing a key part in regular worship and the discipling of those who attend. This would not affect the Presbytery Ministry allocation and the Planning Committee are supportive of this initiative and it was agreed by Presbytery.

Approval of Bases of Adjustment – A large number of Bases of Adjustment relating to unions and linkages were approved. This is a positive sign that the implementation of the Presbytery Mission Plan is going well.

PROPERTY MATTERS

An application from Bridge of Allan for urgent repairs to the roof of the Chalmers Hall at a cost of £70,538, including VAT, was approved.

It was noted that the General Trustees had instructed all congregations to send copies of their Property Register and Manse Condition Schedule and other relevant property items for attestation by Presbytery by 30th June 2024.

CONGREGATIONAL SUPPORT MATTERS

Inspection of Congregational records - Thanks were expressed to the inspection of records team. It was evident that the expectation of what was required varied across each of the five former Presbyteries. In order to harmonise record keeping, minor points had been highlighted for congregations. The Convener recorded her thanks to the many office-bearers for their careful maintenance of records.

Five-Year Plans – The Convener suggested that congregations who were not having a Local Church Review, and which were stable and not envisaging any future readjustments, should seek to submit a Five-Year Plan to the committee. This would be voluntary. The committee would work with congregations to help them produce a Plan, which would follow the same pro forma that was being used in LCRs.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: The Presbytery would next meet for the conduct of ordinary business on Tuesday 10th September 2024 at 7.00pm at St Matthew's Parish church, Perth.