

Netherlee and Stamperland (Church of Scotland)

Elders' Conference at Netherlee

12.30 – 3.30pm on Sunday 8th March 2020

1 CONSTITUTION

Meeting constituted by Rev Scott Blythe with Prayer.

2 SEDERUNT & APOLOGIES

There were 52 Elders present with apologies from 10 Elders as per the Sederunt Sheet.

3 CONFIRMATION OF AGENDA

The draft Agenda was agreed with 3 additional items under AOCB.

4 DISCUSSION TOPIC(S) – *Some steps forward*

Prior to starting the conference Stuart Buchanan (Session Clerk) asked everyone to thank Barbara Cochrane and her team of helpers for the superb soup and sandwich lunch. Next we were asked to follow the coronavirus (COVID-19) advice and wash our hands to two verses of Happy Birthday!

Scott asked Allan Mathieson (Treasurer & Finance Convener) to set the scene by presenting the proposed **Budget for 2020** (copies circulated) for Netherlee and Stamperland (Church of Scotland).

Allan started by commenting that the Finance Committee had felt it prudent to budget for a slight drop in Members Givings (5%) as experience within the Church of Scotland pointed to this as a common impact in Unions. In contrast use of premises shows an uplift as Clarkston After School Care are starting to operate during holidays as well as term time. Ministry costs are interesting as the net result of Union is a figure lower than the addition of the previous two separate churches. Rent from the Stamperland manse is transferred to the General Trustees, but this can be called upon for repairs and maintenance of all our properties. Cleaning will rise by 6.2% in line with the National Living Wage. We are about to follow 99% of the Church of Scotland (CoS) with the latest renewal of contracts for energy – SSE for gas (4yrs) and Opus for electricity (3.5yrs). Allan had reviewed the market including brokers, and found the CoS negotiated contract offers the best deal. After transfers to the Fabric Reserve Fund the budget shows a surplus of £11,729. Our reserves between three funds are standing at £641,561. While there may be major expenditure in the future we are currently in a strong position.

Scott asked if the proposed budget was to be accepted. Those present agreed.

Next we revisited our discussions from the previous Kirk Session (03.02.2020), a summary of which had been circulated, to seek some steps forward.

Scott asked “**Where are we going?**” He noted that much of the feedback focussed on us serving our community. Those present agreed. Scott presented a **new Mission Statement** – “We are a church that seeks always to find new ways to love God and our neighbours.” Those present agreed.

Within this mission Scott suggested **we could aim to:**

1. Be a place providing regular worship to God
2. Provide a welcoming space for all who are isolated or alone in our parish
3. Provide a space for groups in the Community to meet
4. To identify projects that serve our community with love e.g. Monday Lunch Club, Heart for Art, etc

Dagmar Kerr felt that Point 4 should include a sense of us being “active” in projects. Joan Dunbar thought “safe” should be included in Point 2. Alistair Gow suggested “community and beyond” for Point 4. Marie Wilson wondered if “partnerships” could be included somewhere. Scott asked would the new mission statement and the aims be acceptable for us moving forward over the next few years, the amending comments being incorporated. Those present agreed.

Scott then turned our attention to forming a **new group/committee structure** to carry out our mission. Anything adopted would be reviewed in 12 months. Scott presented the following:

1. Finance
2. Fabric
3. Worship & Education*
4. Mission
5. Youth & Sunday School
6. Planning & Communication**
7. *Pastoral Care (added during meeting – see below)*

* Adult education groups including Advent, Lent and Study Groups

** Joint Events and Managing/Communicating both congregations

Scott commented that while some groups/committees are largely self-explanatory and have the same function in Union, others may be tough work and require many people (Kirk Session and beyond) to make a change in their mind set. One example could be not running two BB Coffee Mornings back to back in the same month. Better to space them apart, for supporters, for financial outcome. This will require change and everyone will not get what they want. Compromise will be necessary. Planning & Communication will be key to driving this forward. When planning a calendar of events certain things are a given, e.g. David Milligan Quiz, however, the aim should still be to avoid duplication, harmonise and spread events across the year. Those present agreed.

Allan Mathieson asked would existing Conveners be asked to recruit or prune to alter the current structure. Scott intimated we shall continue with the current structure up to May, but suggested the existing groups/committees might meet at least once in June to discuss any proposed changes we have by then. Alistair Gow asked would Elders be asked to state which two committees they would most like to be a member of, as Presbytery does. Scott thought that was a good idea, and asked Elders to nominate their 2 choices to Stuart & Scott. It was also suggested if someone would like a change this should also be intimated to their Convener, Stuart & Scott. Those present agreed.

Stuart proposed that once we have the new structure up and running, Conveners should be allowed to co-opt “non-Elders” to make use of peoples time and talents either full time, part-time or for a particular project. Those present agreed.

Norrie Bolton asked about Stewardship being part of the Finance remit as it also included the time and talent of our congregation. This was acknowledged. It was proposed that when Finance raised the issue of Stewardship a sub-committee including others would be created on an ad hoc basis. Those present agreed.

John Montgomery proposed that Conveners serve for 3 years. Those present agreed.

Dagmar Kerr felt we needed to do more to be seen as one church, e.g. one website and Facebook. Scott agreed and said this was already under review. It was added that we are relying on our volunteers, whom in this area are in full time employment. If the Kirk Session was to decide progress needed to be quicker this is possible, but would come at a cost, e.g. by employing a webmaster. Centralising the Order of Service was raised. Scott said the plan was to do this via Elspeth in the Church Office throughout the year. Currently Fraser Neilson (Editor – Connections) does this for Stamperland for part of the year.

Pastoral Care is exists in many ways – Elder’s Districts / Visiting Groups / Guilds / Care & Share / Heart For Art / Monday Lunch Club – and Marie Wilson our Pastoral Assistant. Scott has consulted with many of the participants and proposed that Pastoral Care would be dealt with via 6 monthly meetings between Minister, Pastoral Assistant and Visiting Groups. John Montgomery queried whether 6 months might be too long, suggesting every 3 or 4 months. Niall Illingworth agreed, and stated that as it is a key aim (No. 4) in our new mission we should have a group/committee to show its importance. The “concern for a person” section had been removed from the Order of Service quite some time ago as it had not been used in over 12 months. Marie Wilson suggested a card for any requirements.

Scott therefore proposed we add Pastoral Care Group to the list above. Those present agreed.

Norrie Bolton asked if consideration had been given to a Business Committee comprising of all Conveners plus Minister and Session Clerk. Scott intimated that he preferred to empower the groups/committees and use the Kirk Session as an “overseeing executive”. Those present agreed.

Scott concluded this section by reminding everyone that we have 3 umbrella topics that we have responsibility for as individuals and groups/committees:

1. Safeguarding
2. Health & Safety
3. ECO congregation

With the amendments discussed above Scott asked if the new structure could be adopted, with an understanding it would be reviewed in June 2121. Those present agreed.

Scott introduced the final topic with the reminder that the need to be **worshipping more together** emerged as an aim from our previous reflection process. As we move towards more joint worship it is important that whatever we decide must feel fair. Scott proposed a worship pattern to run until September 2022 that moves us in the direction we need to go. The Worship Committee would also look into further integration over the next couple of years.

1. September – November ~ Dual services
2. December – Second Sunday January ~ Joint services
3. End January – Ash Wednesday ~ Dual services
4. Lent – Second Sunday after Easter ~ Joint services
5. Mid April – June ~ Dual services
6. July – August ~ Joint services

Dual services – 10:00am – Netherlee / 11:30am Stamperland

Joint services – 10:30am – Alternating and 50:50 between Netherlee and Stamperland

Remembrance and Communion will remain joint services.

John Montgomery said he could support the proposal but that 2022 was too long. He suggested September 2021 instead; Alastair Graham, Pat McKenzie and Elaine Balfour agreed. Helen Illingworth suggested that those unhappy with this direction will never be, so perhaps we should press ahead more quickly; Craig Chirrey agreed.

Scott noted we have been looking at this for 5 years so we cannot be accused of rushing! Alastair Graham felt the pace of change was very important and thought this compromise was very good, Norrie Bolton agreed.

Dagmar Kerr asked would it be a good idea to provide Elders with set questions (to help gather reasonable data) as they speak to their District as the changes are implemented. Scott agreed this could be considered. Also suggested Duty Teams at Joint services should be “mixed” (N&S).

Several comments were made about ensuring communication was improved so that we all know where and when to worship. Scott supported this and said centralising (e.g. Order of Service) and simplifying (e.g. one website) should help. Banners on both buildings will be considered.

Scott proposed 10:00am for summer worship, those present agreed.

Scott proposed the above worship pattern to run until September 2021. Those present agreed.

5 ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

1. Presbytery Elders – confirmation that until June 30th 2020 Harvey Evans (Netherlee) and Alastair Graham (Stamperland) will both remain as Presbytery Elders. After that date Alastair Graham will become Presbytery Elder for Netherlee and Stamperland (Church of Scotland). Alistair Gow is currently an additional Presbytery Elder and will continue as such. It will be suggested to Presbytery that Harvey Evans also becomes an additional Presbytery Elder. We thank these gentlemen for their diligent service in these roles.
2. Associate Elders – former members of the Congregational Board in Stamperland who chose not to become Elders joined their Kirk Session as “Trustees”. In our new united church they will be known as Associate Elders, a term that has been used for many years.
3. Spring Fayre at Stamperland – this is scheduled for Saturday 2nd May. Kay Baird invited any interested helpers to attend an initial planning meeting at Stamperland at 7:30pm on Monday 16th March.

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING(S)

- Kirk Session at 7:30pm on Monday 20th April 2020 at Netherlee.
- Group and Committee meetings as per schedules issued.

7 CLOSE

The meeting was closed with all present saying the Grace.

Scott Blythe
Minister

Stuart Buchanan
Session Clerk