

NOTICE OF MEETING OF PRESBYTERY

PRESBYTERY OF MELROSE AND PEEBLES

The Presbytery will meet **BY ZOOM** on Tuesday 7 September 2021 at 7 pm for Ordinary Business.

Peter Sandison, Assistant Clerk

BUSINESS

1. Constitute
2. Sederunt and Apologies
3. Minute of meetings on 22 June 2021 (pp126-127)
4. Welcome to New Member
5. Order of Business
6. Business Committee
7. Committee on Re-opening of Church Buildings
8. Standing Committee reports:
 - (a) Mission and Service (*to follow*)
 - (b) Property and Stewardship (p3)
9. Intimations
10. Adjournment

Business Committee

1. Presbytery Assembly Remits 2021 (link to Remits Booklet online:
https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/83210/Remits-22.7.21-with-cover.pdf):
 - (a) Overture under the Barrier Act – amending the Church Courts Act (pp 5 and 17 of the Remits Booklet). Presbytery appoints the required ballot to take place during the November meeting of Presbytery (a return of the votes has to be submitted to the Principal Clerk not later than 31 December 2021). If the Presbytery meeting is not to be held in person, the Business Committee will arrange for a postal ballot to be held following debate at the November meeting. Presbytery asks the Clerk to produce a guidance note on the Overture for the October meeting.
 - (b) Overture under the Barrier Act – Solemnisation of Same-Sex Marriage Overture (pp 6, 18-19 of the Remits Booklet). Presbytery appoints the required ballot to take place during the November meeting of Presbytery (a return of the votes has to be submitted to the Principal Clerk not later than 31 December 2021). If the Presbytery meeting is not to be held in person, the Business Committee will arrange for a postal ballot to be held following debate at the November meeting. Presbytery asks the Clerk to produce a guidance note on the Overture for the October meeting.
 - (c) Presbytery remits to its Governance Committee the instruction to Presbyteries to study the Report of the Special Commission on the Effectiveness of the Presbyterian Form of Church Governance (item 3 on page 5 of the Remits Booklet, Special Commission), the Governance Committee to report to Presbytery by the December meeting.
 - (d) Presbytery remits to a new Mission Plan Committee (see 2. below) the instruction to Presbyteries to consider in their planning the work being done on developing intergenerational church life (item 11 on page 6 of the Remits Booklet, Faith Nurture Forum), the Mission Plan Committee to report to Presbytery initially by the December meeting.
 - (e) Presbytery remits to a new Mission Plan Committee the instruction to Presbyteries to complete the process of developing and gaining final approval of their Presbytery Mission Plan by 31 December 2022 (item 26 on page 7 of the Remits Booklet, Faith Nurture Forum), the Mission Plan Committee to report to Presbytery initially by the December meeting.
 - (f) Presbytery remits to the Governance Committee the instruction to Presbyteries to co-operate with the Safeguarding Service in a compliance audit of Safeguarding date in readiness for the implementation of the Disclosure Act (item 10 on page 9 of the Remits Booklet, Safeguarding Committee), the Governance Committee to report to Presbytery by the December meeting.
 - (g) Presbytery instructs all Committees to study other remits and bring relevant matters to Presbytery.
 - (h) Presbytery instructs all ministers and elders to bring other relevant matters to the notice of their Kirk Sessions (see pages 3-10 of the Remits Booklet).

2. Presbytery agrees to form a temporary Mission Plan Committee, with Mr Graeme Donald as Convener and two members of each of the Governance, Mission and Service and Property and Stewardship Committees as its other members to carry out the remits in 1(d) and (e) above.
3. Presbytery approves the membership of its Committees for 2021/22 as set out in the Presbytery Year Book 2021/22 (attached).
4. Presbytery gives permission to congregations within a linking not to hold worship on a Sunday, on an occasional basis only, provided that Sunday worship is held elsewhere within the linked charge. The Kirk Session must notify the Clerk whenever Sunday worship is not held, and this permission will apply for the 2021/22 session of Presbytery.

Intimations

1. The Presbytery Prayer Diary for October/November/December 2021 is being finalised and will be circulated shortly.
2. Resources to support engagement in the National Giving Day during September/October are now available on the Church of Scotland website: <https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/worship/weekly-worship/monthly/2021-september/national-giving-day-resources>
3. Resources for congregations about Climate Sunday and COP26 are available here: <https://www.climatesunday.org>

Report of the Property and Stewardship Committee September 2021

Stow Church

Work on the dry rot outbreak at Stow Church was approved by the group set up to look at the position over the summer.

Galashiels Church

The Committee met on the 13th July 2021 by Zoom to discuss the newly united Kirk Session of Galashiels' minute re the future of their buildings. Two feasibility reports were also made available.

The committee regrettably agreed with the proposal to close and sell the St John's building at Langlee. Whether it made sense to develop the potential of the site pre-sale is for the Gala working party and the General Trustees. The committee felt that serious consideration should be given to using funds available to St John's from property sales to establish a new plant church with a smaller welcoming flexible multi-purpose building positioned to serve both the Langlee and Melrose Gait communities.

The comment that the two church buildings Trinity, and Old and St Paul's should be used for the foreseeable future was felt to be too vague, given that a 2-year time frame for a decision was set out in the basis of Union. The sharing of worship as suggested across the two sites for a period of two years should give sufficient time for the congregations to get to know each other and for detailed plans, models and costings to be drawn up envisaging a future use for the two buildings. This will enable an informed decision involving both church and town to be taken on the future use of the buildings, whether retaining both or just one. The possibility of an affordable new build or the repurposing of an existing other building within the town, was felt to be a remote one.

Good Ideas Fund

The Committee has received from Graeme Donald a full report on the Good Ideas Fund, detailing a range of ways in which the fund has been used. Others could be encouraged to apply to the Fund.

Deliverance:

1. Presbytery receives the report.
2. Presbytery notes that work on the dry rot outbreak at Stow Church was approved by the group set up to deal with this over the summer.
3. Presbytery notes that the Committee has considered the report from the Kirk Session of Galashiels Church regarding its buildings, a plan for which is to be agreed within a two-year timescale under the Basis of Union.
4. Presbytery notes the report on the Good Ideas Fund, applauds the innovative use of the Good Ideas fund to date and encourages others to apply.

22 JUNE 2021. On Tuesday the twenty-second day of June 2021, the Presbytery met by Zoom at 7 pm for Ordinary Business, and the Moderator, Rev. Malcolm Jefferson, constituted the last Presbytery meeting of the term in prayer and shared a reflection on joy. This included the screen-sharing of a dramatization of the miracle of the fish and the calling of Peter in Luke 5:1-11 from a series on YouTube, "The Chosen".

SEDERUNT AND APOLOGIES: There were present 13 ministers and 22 elders whose names were recorded by the Clerk in the attendance book. The names of corresponding members in attendance were also noted, as were apologies.

ELECTION OF MODERATOR: The Moderator called for the installation of the Moderator-Elect, Rev. Victoria Linford, who was duly elected as the next Moderator of Presbytery. The retiring Moderator was delighted to hand over the reins to Victoria and thanked her for keeping him right during his period of office. He added that he had enjoyed moderating the meetings online, which had proved to be quite informal and relaxed, and thanked the Business Committee and Presbytery for their support. After the Prayer of Consecration, Mrs Linford took the Chair and expressed thanks on behalf of Presbytery to Malcolm for his year as Moderator, highlighting his calm leadership and thoughtful style of opening worship. She also thanked Mr Peter Sandison, Assistant Clerk, for agreeing to take over clerking duties during Presbytery meetings for the period of her moderatorship.

MINUTES: The minutes of the meetings of 4 and 28 May 2021 (pp. 124-125) were submitted and approved as circulated.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER - REV. SCOTT GUY: The new Moderator warmly welcomed a new member, Rev. Scott Guy, recently retired from the Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland. He agreed to adhere to the vows of ordination and said he was looking forward to meeting members of Presbytery, some of whom he already knows.

ORDER OF BUSINESS: The Order of Business was approved as circulated, including one additional item, a Property and Stewardship Report.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2021: The Moderator thanked this year's commissioners for their attendance at the General Assembly, which she appreciated had been quite a challenge given its entirely online programme. Mrs Patsy Campbell kindly agreed to say a few words about her experience as a commissioner. She had enjoyed the Assembly, despite the odd technical hitch, and coped well with the online voting system. The Assembly had been quite thought-provoking and had a great sense of urgency, helped by a "fast track" process which meant that only those items selected for discussion by Commissioners were debated in full. She highlighted the contribution of Rev. Rosie Frew of this Presbytery, who, as Convener of the Faith Nurture Forum, showed tremendous stamina, forbearing and goodwill in seeing through a new Presbytery Mission Plan Act. The discussions on this stretched over three of the five afternoons, taking over seven hours. She added that our Presbytery is fortunate to have someone like Mrs Frew to lead and encourage local groundwork. The Moderator thanked Mrs Campbell for her thoughts on the General Assembly and invited those present to participate in a 15-minute period of discussion on the General Assembly in "Breakout Rooms" and added that she hoped Presbyters had taken the opportunity to look at the General Assembly Supplement published by Life and Work magazine. In the feedback from the Breakout Rooms Mrs Frew expressed her gratitude for the generally very positive response to the work of the Faith Nurture Forum, and Rev. Marion Dodd congratulated Mrs Frew on her tremendous contribution to the work of the Assembly.

BUSINESS COMMITTEE: Prof. Murray Campbell, Convener, presented the report of the Business Committee, which Presbytery received. Presbytery noted the re-appointment of Conveners to its Standing Committees for 2021/22 as follows: Prof. Murray Campbell - Business Committee; Mr David Brackenridge - Governance Committee; Dr Fiona Burnett - Mission and Service Committee; Mrs Isobel Hunter - Property and Stewardship Committee. Presbytery noted the following dates for its meetings in 2021/22, with venues to be confirmed: 7 September 2021, 5 October 2021, 2 November 2021, 7 December 2021, 1 February 2022, 1 March 2022, 3 May 2022, 28 June 2022. Presbytery noted that for 2021/22 the Business Committee will meet on the morning of the second Thursday before each Presbytery meeting. Presbytery noted that a Steering Group has been formed to take forward the proposal for our Presbytery to join a larger Presbytery of South-East Scotland and that Rev. Margaret Steele had indicated she wished to step down from the Steering Group. Mrs Fan Heafield and Rev. Sheila Moir had kindly offered to join the Moderator and Prof. Campbell in the Steering Group. This was agreed, with the Moderator adding that this would allow at least one elder and one minister from the Steering Group to represent our Presbytery in any future meetings with the other Presbyteries. Presbytery noted that an appeal was made against its decision on 3 September 2019 to accept the findings of the Special Committee appointed under the Protection Against Bullying Act 2007. Presbytery further noted that the appeal hearing has now been held and the Judicial Commission has unanimously decided to uphold the appeal and quash the previous decision in its entirety.

ACCOUNTS INSPECTION COMMITTEE: Mr Fraser Simm presented the report of the Accounts Inspection Committee. He invited Presbytery to reflect on the comments in the report on how congregations have risen to the challenges of the past year. He reported that advice was given to the treasurers of the two new unions in identifying which former congregations will be deemed as "ceasing" and which will be "continuing": this will affect how their accounts should be drawn up in the future, and it is hoped that the advice given, including how to deal with changing standing orders and direct debits, has been of help. Rev. Marion Dodds said she was unhappy about the use of the terms "ceasing" and "continuing" congregations, but Mr Simm responding by stating that these were the official terms used for charity accounting purposes. Rev. Sheila Moir asked if feedback on accounts given to treasurers is reported back to Kirk Sessions. Mr Simm responded by saying he would encourage treasurers to pass on any concerns they have to their respective Session. Presbytery received the report and approved the deliverances.

REGISTRATION OF MINISTRIES: The Assistant Clerk reported that an updated Register of Ministries document had been circulated to Presbytery and asked for any changes to contact details not included in the updated document to be reported to him. It was also agreed to add Rev. Scott Guy to Category “O” in the Register, and Presbytery approved the Register with this addition.

STATISTICAL RETURN: The Assistant Clerk explained that the Statistical Return for Melrose and Peebles circulated to members of Presbytery had included the statistics for the previous two years, 2018 and 2019, for purposes of comparison, which he hoped would be useful in interpreting the 2020 statistics. He added that the statistics reflected what had been a very difficult year in the light of closures of buildings due the Covid-19 restrictions. However, he noted one upward trend in the statistics: an increase in the reported number of elders. He also mentioned that the 2020 Return had included questions on online and offline worship and agreed to provide these statistics to Presbytery*. Rev. Miller Milloy highlighted with sadness the fact that only 22 people in our Presbytery had joined the church by public profession of faith over the past three years: the primary task of the church should be commending the Gospel to the current generation. Presbytery agreed with this sentiment and noted the Statistical Return.

COMMITTEE ON RE-OPENING OF CHURCH BUILDINGS: Mr Keith Simpson, Convener, reported that most churches in Presbytery have been open since May, with approval given in the last month for the reopening of Ettrick, Yarrow, Broughton and Tweedsmuir. This leaves only a handful of churches in Presbytery that have not yet been given permission to reopen. Maxton and Lyne do not have plans to reopen anytime soon, but Eddleston is actively preparing an application. Rev. Sheila Moir pointed out that because of its size it not practical to reopen Maxton due to current social distancing guidelines. Rev. Fraser Edwards reported that Traquair is about to apply to reopen, and the Convener apologised for omitting to mention Traquair in his report. The Convener gave Presbytery a reminder that risk assessments are live working documents and should be updated and amended as guidance changes. The discussion concluded on a positive note with Rev. Marion Dodd remarking how nice it was to see worshippers spread across the whole sanctuary because of social distancing, and the Moderator expressing her pleasure that singing was now permitted. The Moderator thanked the Committee for its ongoing work.

MISSION AND SERVICE: Dr Fiona Burnett, Convener, reported that as an “Away Day” would be difficult due to ongoing restrictions, she had arranged for the delivery of two pre-recorded lectures on the topic of Islamic Christian relations to be delivered by Zoom, followed by a live question and answer session. These will take place over two evenings in the week beginning 30th August. Details of the event were included in the report circulated to members of Presbytery prior to the meeting. The document included deliverances arising out of her report, which were received by Presbytery.

PROPERTY AND STEWARDSHIP: Mrs Isobel Hunter, Convener, asked Presbytery’s permission to delegate decision-making powers to a small group of Presbytery members to authorise work on dealing with the outbreak of dry rot in Stow Church. This would enable any urgent work to be approved over the summer break. She proposed that in addition to herself the group should include Mr Keith Simpson, Mr Peter Sandison, Prof. Murray Campbell and herself. This was approved by Presbytery.

INTIMATIONS: The digital version of the Presbytery Prayer Diary for June, July and August 2021 has now been circulated. Mr Sandison expressed his thanks to all the contributors. He added that the latest version of the Presbytery Yearbook had also been circulated and asked to be alerted about any additions, corrections, or updates.

APPRECIATION OF RETIRING MEMBERS: The Moderator, on behalf of Presbytery, thanked four retiring elders for their valuable contribution to the work of Presbytery over recent years: Mr Tom Fairbairn, Mr Sandy Milligan, Mrs Ann Smith and Mr Alistair Wilson. She also thanked Rev. Elspeth Harley for her contribution as Locum over the past year at Trinity and Caddonfoot following her retirement as Minister of those Churches.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, the Presbytery adjourned to meet on Tuesday 7 September 2021 for worship at 7 pm, followed by Ordinary Business - with the venue still to be agreed - and the sederunt was closed with the saying of the Grace.

* All congregations were able to offer online worship, with 2,288 the estimated number of online worshippers All but two congregations were able to offer alternative off-line worship, with 285 the estimated number of offline worshippers.

Moderator

Assistant Clerk