

## **NOTICE OF MEETING OF PRESBYTERY**

### **PRESBYTERY OF MELROSE AND PEBBLES**

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

Peter Sandison, Assistant Clerk

### **BUSINESS**

1. Constitute
2. Sederunt and Apologies
3. Minutes of meeting on 2 November 2021 (pp133-134)
4. Tribute to Mr Tom Fairbairn
5. Admission of new member - Rev. George Shand
6. Presentation by Prof. Peter Ford, Near East School of Theology
7. Presentation of Candidates and Reader
8. Order of Business
9. Business Committee (pp1-2)
10. Vacancy Procedure Committee (p3)
11. Committee on Re-opening of Church Buildings (verbal report)
12. Standing Committee Reports
  - (a) Governance (Presbyterian governance – pp4-5; Safeguarding compliance audit – p6)
  - (b) Mission and Service (Presbytery Conference – p7; World Mission – pp8-9)
  - (c) Property and Stewardship (p10)
13. Treasurer and Property Convener (p11)
14. Presbytery Mission Plan Committee (p12)
15. Presbytery Reform Steering Group (verbal report)
16. Intimations (p2)
17. Adjournment

### **Business Committee**

1. Overture on Church Courts Act. Presbytery notes the results of the ballot as follows: For the Overture 27; Against the Overture 2. Presbytery instructs the Clerk to make the required return of the ballot to the Principal Clerk by 31 December 2021. Presbytery notes that one comment was made on a ballot paper: “Will there be an equal number of ministers and elders at the General Assembly if five elders are not appointed to balance the five former Moderators?”.
2. Overture on Same-sex Marriage. Presbytery notes the results of the ballot as follows: For the Overture 19; Against the Overture 11. Presbytery instructs the Clerk to make the required return of the ballot to the Principal Clerk by 31 December 2021. Presbytery notes that one comment was made on a ballot paper: “What protection is there for church officers and organists who do not wish to participate in same-sex marriage services?”.

3. Presbytery agrees that, subject to technological capacity, weather limitations and ongoing Covid regulations, the Business Committee should seek to arrange hybrid meetings of Presbytery with effect from February 2022, i.e. an in-person meeting in Innerleithen Church with the option for members of Presbytery to join online.
4. Presbytery thanks the Committee on the Re-opening of Church Buildings for all its work over the last 18 months and discharges the Committee with effect from 31 December 2021.
5. Noting that Commissioners to the General Assembly of 2022 (to be held from 21-26 May 2022) should be appointed by the end of January 2022, but that the format of the General Assembly has not yet been finalised, Presbytery remits to the Business Committee the task of appointing commissioners to the General Assembly, as far as possible in accordance with the rota previously drawn up.
6. Presbytery thanks Rev. Pamela Strachan for her work in the Presbytery as an ordained local minister, locum and interim moderator over recent years, and agrees not to appoint her to any ordained local ministry duties within the Presbytery for a period of one year.
7. Presbytery notes that Rev. Margaret Steele has intimated her intention to retire as minister of Ashkirk l/w Ettrick and Yarrow l/w Selkirk at the end of February 2022.
8. Presbytery appoints [ ] to be the new convener of the Vacancy Procedure Committee with effect from 1 January 2022.
9. Presbytery thanks Rev. Sheila Moir for her work as interim moderator of Channelkirk and Lauder since August 2018. Presbytery appoints [ ] to be the interim moderator for Channelkirk and Lauder with effect from [ ].
10. Presbytery notes that the PMPIG (as part of Faith Nurture Forum) has approved the making of an application by Presbytery for an interim minister to be appointed to the charge of Channelkirk and Lauder; Presbytery remits to the Clerk the task of submitting the application for interim ministry along with the required information, in conjunction with the congregation, as soon as possible.
11. Presbytery notes that the PMPIG (as part of Faith Nurture Forum) has refused to grant an extension to the permission to call a minister previously granted to Galashiels Church of Scotland; the decision was based on the fact that the future of the buildings has not yet been decided.

### **Intimations**

1. Presbytery notes that the Presbytery website ([melrosepeeblespresbytery.org.uk](http://melrosepeeblespresbytery.org.uk)) has now been restored and thanks Mr Peter Sandison for his work on this.

## **Vacancy Procedure Committee Report**

- a) The Committee, satisfied that the all necessary steps have been taken in the search for a new minister for Eddleston 1/w Peebles: Old 1/w Stobo and Drumelzier and noting that all relevant documents are with the Presbytery Clerk, that the Ministries and Mission Contribution is up to date, and that work needed on the manse is being undertaken, intimate that the Reverend Aftab Gohar, Minister of Abbotsgrange Parish Church, Grangemouth, is the choice of the majority of people (104 voting for, with 1 voting against) and therefore sustains the call. Service of Induction will take place on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> December at 2 pm with the Reverend Andrew Anderson being invited to preach. This is a departure from the normal practice of inviting the last person inducted into a charge within the Presbytery to preach but, following consideration, one which the VPC commends. Presbytery will meet at 1.45 pm.
- b) The Committee appoints the Rev. Malcolm Jefferson as Interim Moderator of Galashiels Church of Scotland from 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 for as long as the Rev. Dr David Donaldson is on sick leave.

### **Deliverance**

1. Presbytery notes the VPC's decision to sustain the call to the Rev. Aftab Gohar of Abbotsgrange Parish Church, Grangemouth.
2. Presbytery notes the Service of Induction will be held on Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> December at 2 pm in Peebles Old Parish Church with the Reverend Andrew Anderson being invited to preach. Presbytery will meet at 1.45 pm.
3. Presbytery notes the appointment of the Rev. Malcolm Jefferson as Interim Moderator of Galashiels Church of Scotland from 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 for as long as the Rev. Dr David Donaldson is on sick leave.

## Presbytery of Melrose and Peebles

### Report from Governance Committee on the Special Commission on the Effectiveness of the Presbyterian Form of Church Governance

#### Background

The report from the Special Commission is an interesting read and as it states in the opening section it is not a blueprint for action but a report outlining some of the issues and raising the questions that need to be addressed when considering these issues. The initial section sets the scene and reflects on various aspects of church governance. The main body of the report considers the issues in three dimensions:

1. What is the purpose of local church?
2. What is the purpose of regional church, that is the Presbyteries?
3. What is the purpose of the national Church?

Our remit asks us to consider the issues around the regional church and uses a series of questions that require to be addressed. The following lists these questions and comments on them.

#### Questions relevant to the regional Church

- **How do we handle our professional needs in Presbyteries?**  
There is a need to balance the requirement for a degree of professionalism in an organisation that is largely run and influenced by those who are often serving in an amateur capacity. There is a requirement for professional business practice whilst also being aware of our theology and the purposes of the Church. This also applies at local and national levels.
- **What will be the role of the Moderator in the new larger Presbyteries?**  
Leadership within Presbytery remains crucial. Given the greater areas to be covered and the need to provide pastoral and organisational cohesion during their term of office it will be important to consider the impact on the Moderator's role. Similar questions could be raised regarding the role of Presbytery Clerk. More emphasis will be placed on the accountability of these roles and the decision-making processes in general. This will require robust processes to allow the appropriate level of scrutiny.
- **How much consistency must there be between national and regional Church?**  
There is a question over how much a Presbytery should reflect organisational structure within the national church. There is a suggestion that some form of a Presbytery Trustees body accountable to the Presbytery and performing a similar role to that of the Assembly Trustees at a national level. This could be taken further and include the setting up of Presbytery bodies to address the regional perspectives of the national bodies.
- **What does "operating with an ecumenical mindset" mean for Presbyteries?**  
The General assembly in 2020 passed a deliverance which stated: "The Church should operate with an ecumenical mindset". This will fit with many aspects of the Presbytery Mission Plan where Presbyteries will be tasked with ensuring the Mission Plan is effectively delivered including ecumenical aspects.
- **How should Presbyteries address the challenge of strategic thinking and planning?**  
It is recognised that in the past and today Presbyteries have struggled with making hard decisions and have, in particular, been challenged with aspects of strategic thinking and planning. This need is likely to increase, and Presbyteries will be faced with questions over how best to address these challenges especially with them having a significant bearing on the appropriate level of resource at Presbytery level.
- **Should Presbyteries report annually to the General Assembly?**  
At present, the Presbytery level in the Church of Scotland governance structure appears to be largely unaccountable to anyone other than itself. There have been pilot forms of Presbytery review. One suggestion is that there should be an annual reporting to the General Assembly to handle the need for increased accountability that comes with greater resource.

- **How should Presbyteries be resourced?**

There is a major drive to move some of the central resource into Presbytery level. A major consideration will be how the level of resource and associated funding is calculated given the variations in population and geography. There will be additional questions over the level of freedom Presbyteries will have in allocating resource and the additional costs incurred at Presbytery level in the day-to-day management of these resources.

- **What lessons can be learned from our experiences to date?**

To enable mission at a regional and local level, it will be important to consider what lessons can be learned from various approaches presently initiated from the centre. These include the work, for example, in different chaplaincies, Interim Ministry, Pioneer Ministry, and Transition Ministry as well as the work of Ministries Development Staff and the Diaconate.

**Summary**

These are challenging questions and as can be seen are not distinct but have considerable overlap. One suggestion as to how best to consider these could be that Presbytery spend some time in general discussion on specific aspects such as how best to handle regional resource. It may also be appropriate to set up short life working groups to address specific issues and report back to the Presbytery sometime over the next 12 months. The time spent on these needs to be balanced with the time needed for other areas of Presbytery activity.

**David Brackenridge**

**Catriona Bird**

**Governance Committee**

**December 2021**

## **Presbytery of Melrose and Peebles**

### **Report from Governance Committee on Compliance Audit of Safeguarding Data**

The Governance Committee have undertaken a compliance audit of Safeguarding data in its congregations. The approach adopted was to request copies of congregations' safeguarding forms namely Form SG7 Safeguarding Congregational Register and Form SG11. Safeguarding Audit Checklist. These had been requested earlier this year as part of the "virtual" Inspection of Records and nine congregations had sent in copies of these forms to me. I must apologise to both Earlston and St Boswells for not mentioning them in the list I included in my November Report to Presbytery.

With the two unions now complete we have 22 congregations in Presbytery. To date I have now received reports from 17 of the congregations including the safeguarding forms where appropriate. This is a 77% return. The remaining 5 congregations are due to send me their forms in the near future. Many thanks to all who sent in forms.

In addition to the compliance audit and the completion of the appropriate forms which includes ensuring that the appropriate training is in place, it is important that the relevant action is taken when a safeguarding incident occurs. The required actions are agreed between the Safeguarding Department at 121 and the congregation. Presbytery is not involved and this has been quite deliberately included in the protocol. It is important however that all parties involved in any incident have the appropriate pastoral support.

Safeguarding is an important aspect of Church Life and it is vital that safeguarding information is kept up-to-date.

**David Brackenridge**

**Convener, Governance Committee**

**December 2021**

## MELROSE AND PEEBLES PRESBYTERY - MISSION AND SERVICE COMMITTEE 2022 PRESBYTERY CONFERENCE

### INTRODUCTION

Following Presbytery agreement to stage a conference in September/October 2022 the Committee established a small Conference Group to draft a conference programme and to consider related organisational matters. Presbytery is asked to consider the following thoughts.

### CONFERENCE THEME

Given current work within Presbytery and across churches the proposed theme would be "Growing Our Church" with the missional church and local mission at the centre of the programme.

### CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

Pre-Conference: Through early publicity and invitations for kirk sessions to consider prayerfully, the possible impact on their congregations of the conference, we hope to build some excitement and expectation around the event. A digest/celebration of 'Good News Stories' / 'New Ideas' from examples from all churches within the bounds to be published in advance of the conference. Churches to be invited to display their Good News Stories / Good Ideas at the conference venue.

Conference Programme: Lively worship, perhaps with a praise band and/or choir gathered from around the Presbytery, to open the conference. This is a time to celebrate God's work in the Presbytery over the years so giving us the foundations on which to build the next phase of being the church in this area.

This to be followed by an uplifting/inspiring keynote speaker on the topic of outreach work/local mission offering practical/practiced ideas on local mission. During the lunch break informal follow up on the ideas suggested would be staged. Group activity to follow lunch focussing on aspects of ministry, for example, buildings; pastoral work; online worship; the work of Acorn; attracting and retaining young people – all on the theme of local mission. Congregations to be asked to name their representative to each group. The final session would focus on the Presbytery Mission Plan within the national framework. Possibly something also about how the new Presbytery will work.

Conference Follow-Up: Members of the Conference Planning Group consider it important to offer follow up learning opportunities and specifically designed tool kits as a follow up to the ideas demonstrated during the conference.

Conference Venue: The conference is about encouraging participants to think about growing the church beyond their building and therefore the group recommends using a hotel facility in this instance. We would like to invite congregations to send up to 6 people to the conference and together with visitors from neighbouring presbyteries, we are planning for 75-100 attendees. At present the only venue in the Melrose and Peebles area that has indicated that they can accommodate our requirements is the Macdonald Cardrona Hotel, but we continue to investigate other possibilities.

Conference Costs: Costs will depend on the venue and the programme. For information, Cardrona are quoting £39 per person for the day. It is anticipated that costs will be contained within funds already set aside for Mission and Service activities. Congregations may also wish to contribute, but this should not be a prerequisite for attending the conference.

### DELIVERANCE:

- 1) Presbytery receives the report.
- 2) Presbytery agrees to hold a conference in October 2022 as outlined in the report and directs the committee to bring an update on plans to the February Presbytery meeting.
- 3) Presbytery encourages kirk sessions and congregations to begin planning for the conference through prayer and discussion.

## MELROSE AND PEBBLES PRESBYTERY - MISSION AND SERVICE COMMITTEE WORLD MISSION REPORT

Our partners are an inspiration to us, representing Christ through their praise and prayers. We receive strength through listening to our partnership churches as we share our own challenges with them.

### Celebration of Partnership

The service of celebration of the Malawi partnership was held in Innerleithen Church on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2021, hosted by ITW and the invitation was sent out through Presbytery to participate: either in person, online or by viewing the service through the ITW website (<http://itwcos.org/category/online-worship>). It was an opportunity to learn from the many projects that ITW share with their partners in Thondwe, Malawi – and to hear of the way these have connected with other partnership initiatives across Presbytery. Eve Hartswood (Chairperson of the World Mission Group) presented a reflection and explored some of the principles of partnership in the sermon: to love one another and to manifest Christ and His Kingdom to God's glory.

### Midwife Fund – sponsorship of nine midwives in Zomba Presbytery

Letters of congratulation, from our Presbytery Moderator, Rev. Victoria Linford, were written to the two midwives that have been sponsored throughout their training; these were handed to partnership lead Denis Robson to present to Geoffrey and Limbikani, who have now both graduated as nurse-midwives and have been supported to use their skills in health centres in Zomba Presbytery.

Final funding is being collected to allow other midwives to complete their training at the Malawi College of Health Sciences, Zomba, and graduates to use their training within Zomba Presbytery (a further seven midwives). Contributions can be made to the Presbytery account (80-09-33 00729124, ref: midwives); the final payment will go out to Malawi in the New Year. Our partners in Zomba Presbytery will facilitate the project and provide additional support to the midwives.

This has been a great encouragement to the Presbytery-to-Presbytery partnership as God's love is manifest in our care and concern for our neighbours. Thank you to all those who have helped in the delivery of this project.



Limbikani Poolokera: graduation in Nurse-Midwife diploma; sponsored by Melrose and Peebles Presbytery. Currently sponsored to work at Matawale Health Centre, Zomba Area, Maternity Ward.

## Lebanon partnership and Presbytery link

We look forward to welcoming Prof. Ford to the meeting of Presbytery on 7<sup>th</sup> Dec. 2021 and take the opportunity to find out about Christian ministry in Lebanon - in amongst the political and economic crisis. We reach out in prayer to the Christian Church, Near East School of Theology in Beirut, and our partnership church in Tripoli, Northern Lebanon. The World Mission Group ask that prayer go out throughout this Presbytery for Christians in Lebanon:

Lord, you destined us to all be your children in Jesus Christ.

Arise in your majesty and bring relief to our brothers and sisters in Lebanon and the Near East.

Through your generous Grace sustain all the necessities of life; food, warmth, transport, medication and electricity; and bring your Holy counsel to those in political power.

May we see opportunities for witness and partnership together: thus to manifest your glory and mercy to one another.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Please include this prayer in your services and personal prayers. There is also a prayer service sheet with links to music and prayers written in Lebanon.

There is still the opportunity to contribute to the work at NEST and partners in Lebanon through <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/next-partnership>.

### Home Mission

We gain great assurance from sharing in the praise and faith of our partner churches across the world. Let us share the challenges that we face with our partners, asking for their prayers and strength. By learning from our partners may we be inspired by their acts of mission and add them to our own.

For more information on World Mission projects, prayer links and praise with our World Mission Partners please contact Eve Hartswood ([ehartswood@gmail.com](mailto:ehartswood@gmail.com)).



Geoffrey Matthias: Graduate nurse-midwife in Zomba Presbytery

Last month was the best for my midwifery experience. I met a mother who said that I was the one admitting, monitoring and conducting delivery for her first child, Princess. "Meet the first person to see you in this world!", said the mother to the child. Princess was born on 11th March 2018. This was the first voluntary work placement you sponsored me at Machinga District Hospital before I joined Malaria Alert Centre. Princess' grandmother visited me with her and said, Am invited to the birthday party on 11 of this month. I had a chance to take a picture with the baby and will share with you to appreciate how happy we were.

## **Melrose & Peebles Property & Stewardship Note re 2022 Ministry and Mission (M&M) Contributions**

Members of Presbytery will remember that the General Assembly of 2020 voted to reduce the amount required from M&M for 2021 by 18%. This was funded by cuts in the budgets for central services and from reserves. Ministers' stipends and numbers were not affected although there was a voluntary redundancy package offered at 121.

It is proposed that contributions for 2022 return to scale, although as is normal the maximum increase is held at 12%.

**Table One** (PDF attached) illustrates how contributions compare in 2022 versus the 2021 level. Possibly a lesson in how helpful it is to organise standing orders for weekly giving! Please also note that this is the gross amount of contribution: stipend endowment income, glebe rent and vacancy allowance - where any of these are applicable - will all reduce this figure.

You will see that the reduction in our contribution was 15% overall, not the 18% quoted above: there is an explanation for this to do with being calculated on a case-by-case basis, but I would refer you to the Stewardship Department if you wish to delve further into the figures.

Included at the foot of the table are the figures for the 5% Presbytery Rebate; the 5% has reduced as the overall contribution has reduced, plus we quite correctly used a significant amount last year to help with arrears. This along with four commitments to employment means that there is a much smaller pool of money available for 2022. So, if you have a case for a rebate, fill in a form sooner rather than later is the message.

**Table Two** (PDF attached) shows the contribution in the context of Assessable Income. This is always calculated on a rolling three-year basis and the figures shown already exclude the non-assessable income such as a portion of rental income and any income from restricted as opposed to designated funds.

Finally, I have attached the **Full Table** (PDF attached) that is sent to Presbytery. Remember that a new system is to be introduced from, we think, 2023, which will be based on charges rather than parishes. So, for instance, a linking will be treated as one unit just as if it were a Union. There are other changes in the way the contribution will be calculated which we will review once we know when this new system will be put in place. If you have any general queries, my email address is in the Yearbook, though you may have to refer to the stewardship department for specific queries.

### **Deliverances**

1. Presbytery receives the Report.
2. Presbytery agrees M&M Contributions for 2022.
3. Presbytery confirms an M&M rebate of £8,000 in 2022 for ministerial assistance in West Tweeddale.
4. Presbytery confirms an M&M rebate of £8,100 in 2022 for ministerial assistance in Selkirk and the Valleys.
5. Presbytery confirms an M&M rebate of £5,000 in 2022 for a youth worker in Selkirk and the Valleys.
6. Presbytery confirms an M&M rebate of £5,500 in 2022 for a reader in Dryburgh District Churches.
7. Members are pointed to Stewardship resources to help with finances in the current environment.
8. Approval of the Deliverance as a whole.

## **Report from Presbytery Treasurer and Property Convener**

### **Independent Examiner**

One of the many tasks carried out by Tom Fairbairn was that of Independent Examiner of Presbytery's accounts. Suggestions of persons who might be willing to fill this role are urgently invited and Presbytery is asked to delegate the approval of any potential candidate to the Business Committee. The Treasurer will be pleased to provide any information required about the tasks involved.

### **Property Surveys**

An important part of Presbytery's work is the commissioning and approval of regular surveys of buildings within its boundary. This work is approved on an annual basis, taking advice from Presbytery's Property Convener; and the sums required for are allowed for in Presbytery's budget. Sums allowed have been between £3,800 and £5,600 each year and account for 33% to 40% of Presbytery's budget (the charge for 2021 was heavily discounted by £2,000; it is not clear if this would be repeated).

Over the past five years (2017-2021) all buildings have undergone surveys except: Bowden and Melrose; Maxton and Mertoun linked with Newtown and St Boswells (these were presumably covered in 2016). Note: no allowance was made in 2020 on account of lockdown – which allowed for a reduced level of Presbytery dues to help congregations in difficult times.

The suggestion was made at Presbytery that as no surveys were carried out in 2020, double the number could be provided for in 2021; this was remitted to the Treasurer and Property Convener to consider the matter and report back.

Matters to consider include:

- a) All surveys are funded by annual Presbytery dues. While not a major factor in congregational finance, they are not negligible – and in 2022 congregations are very likely to be hit by significant increases in M&M (following the removal of the 2021 rebate) and this could well be a major financial challenge across the board.
- b) The congregations at the top of the list for surveys will be Melrose & Bowden, Dryburgh Group (St Boswells, etc.) and Lyne & Manor; these are suggested for 2022. To double up the surveys, those carried out in 2017 would be next on the list, which are Galashiels St John's, Galashiels Old Parish & St Paul's, IWT, Peebles Old & Eddleston. There has been considerable discussion within Galashiels regarding buildings and it would be premature to go ahead with surveys at the two buildings there. It is suggested that the sum of £5,000 - which is more than the discounted charge for 2021 (£3,622) but less than 2019 (£5,622) - is considered. This may or may not be sufficient to cover Melrose – Dryburgh – Lyne/Manor; if the discount of 2021 is repeated it may be possible to add IWT or Peebles Old.
- c) Over the long-term it may be that a review of properties may have to be undertaken; there already appears to be a diminution in the number of manses required: it would appear that a focussed review of all properties should be considered.
- d) The coming merger of presbyteries could impact on our own procedures, amongst which could be properties and the means through which they are managed and reviewed.
- e) The Business Committee has considered this matter and, noting the pressures on congregational finance from other commitments, supports a sum in the region of £5,000 being set aside in the 2022 budget. It is hoped that Presbytery will concur with this view.

FMS/KS

24/11/21

## **MISSION PLAN COMMITTEE: INTERIM REPORT: December 2021**

Members of the Committee have been sharing thoughts on the content of the Presbytery Mission Plan (PMP) in the light of contributions received from Presbytery groups invited to comment. The final set of consultations will include an invitation to Kirk Sessions/Congregations to offer their views on the format and the content of the Five-Year Presbytery Mission Plan.

The task is proving to be quite challenging! Committee members seek to avoid simply rehashing all that has been said so often before (the 'nuts and bolts' of church life and work) preferring to seek to stimulate actions which will ignite ideas into sparking practice; for example, the establishment of a Consultative Group made up of young people with and without church connection. This suggestion could lead to inter – generational activities as highlighted by the 2021 General Assembly.

Whilst mission lies at the heart of the PMP some cognisance of structures and resources must be considered if only in direct support of local mission. However, the allocation of the central resource – Ministers of Word and Sacrament and Ministry Development Staff – has been intimated already, indeed confirmed as immovable!! This allocation would leave us one Minister of Word and Sacrament short according to our current Presbytery Plan. In addition, Presbytery recently agreed to seek the appointment of a transitional minister to assist the one vacant charge. Is there, therefore, any point to arguing a case for ministerial resources in support of a revised plan or do we simply accept the current allocation? It is our opinion at this stage that we accept the current allocation for Ministers of Word and Sacrament but with an eye to an allocation of Ministry Development Staff.

Buildings as a resource should not be the cause of concern currently portrayed due to the ongoing cost of maintenance. There is already a spark of endeavour to bring certain ecclesiastical buildings into the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an element of a missional approach. Our draft Mission Plan may place specific demands for Building Development planning (not closures) over the first five years of the initial plan.

A close supportive eye on congregational finances available for core costs, as well as in support of building development and other missional projects, seems a realistic proposal to place before our Property and Stewardship Committee.

Meanwhile we assume that three neighbouring Presbyteries will be considering their own Mission Plans - in isolation, yet it is anticipated by our Presbytery that four neighbouring Presbyteries will become one - just as each individual Mission Plan is published in accordance with the timing of the requirements of The Act. However, we know the limitations and the challenges, so we are planning accordingly. We continue to seek comment through consultation and will, before the end of the year, send to each Session Clerk a prompt sheet to aid discussion within congregations.

The Mission plan is a Five-Year Plan to be reviewed annually, so the temptation is to say - 'in five years' time the following will be in place' - only to take another five years to achieve 'the following'!! We have an aging and a reducing membership to lead mission; many of the examples of outreach work currently in place have ensured the retention of current membership but failed to attract others to the work of the church. 8/9 tenths of recorded membership remain inactive and non-attenders, simply on a list. Yes! Drafting an enterprising Mission Plan for Presbytery is a challenge!!

### **DELIVERANCE:**

1. Presbytery receives the report.
2. Presbytery urges all Kirk Sessions and congregations to respond to the Committee's request for their views on the Mission Plan by March 2022.

2 NOVEMBER 2021. On Tuesday the second day of November 2021, the Presbytery met by Zoom at 7 pm for Ordinary Business. The meeting began with a reading, Isaiah 2:2-4, given by Karen Ritchie. The Moderator, Rev. Victoria Linford, then screen-shared an image of a bronze sculpture "Let Us Beat Our Swords into Ploughshares", a gift of the Soviet Union to the United Nations which was installed in the grounds of the United Nations HQ in New York in 1959. The sculpture was inspired by the words in the reading from Isaiah, which helps turn our thoughts, as we approach the season of Remembrance, to all those who have served us, and hope that their sacrifice was not in vain. And we think also of the United Nations as Scotland hosts the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, and reflect on the hope that greater peace between humanity and the world of God's creation will follow from deliberations there. She reminded us that the passage from Isaiah speaks of a vision that peace will only be realised perfectly when our Lord comes again, then constituted the meeting in prayer.

**SEDERUNT AND APOLOGIES:** There were present 13 ministers and 23 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. The Moderator welcomed Rev. Dr Tony Foley to his first meeting of Presbytery following his induction.

**MINUTES:** The minutes of the meeting of 5 October 2021 and 25 October 2021 (pp130-132) were submitted and approved as circulated. The Moderator then announced the sad news of the death of a long-standing and very active member of Presbytery, Tom Fairbairn, who was Moderator from 2011 to 2012 and to whom tribute would be paid at a future meeting.

**TRIBUTE TO COL. ANDREW CAMPBELL:** Rev. Calum Macdougall thanked Julian Birchall, an elder at Stobo and Drumelzier, for writing a warm tribute to Col. Campbell, who passed away on 28 September 2021. Andrew studied divinity at New College and had a distinguished and varied military service in many parts of the world with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. After retirement from the Army, he was a popular and successful Secretary of the New Club in Edinburgh. In 1996 he settled in Stobo, serving as an elder of the Kirk, a member of the Worship Workshop, and taking services regularly in Stobo and other churches. He was a Presbytery Elder and most diligent Treasurer at Stobo and Drumelzier for many years. He was a fine singer, Secretary of the Community Council, and actively involved in many other organisations. Despite failing health, he managed to continue participating in Church life until just over a week before his death. He will be remembered for his charm, kindness, efficiency and great sense of humour, and was much loved and respected. Our sympathies are extended to his wife, Fiona, and children.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS:** The Order of Business was approved as circulated.

**ORDER OF THE DAY 1 – OVERTURE UNDER THE BARRIER ACT ON CHURCH COURTS ACT:** The Moderator reminded Presbyters about the Guidance Note that had been included in the Agenda and Papers for the Presbytery Meeting of 5 October 2021. The Guidance Note included the procedure for postal voting by any full members of Presbytery present at this meeting. She explained that the Overtures were adopted by the General Assembly of 2021 and are now coming to Presbyteries under the Barrier Act. An Overture will only become law if it is approved by a majority of Presbyteries and then by the General Assembly of 2022. She set out the background to the Overture on the Church Courts Act and invited comment and discussion. One Presbyter pointed out that there would be far fewer commissioners representing the Borders at the 2023 General Assembly if the Overture was approved at the 2022 General Assembly and the proposed amalgamation of Presbyteries took place at the start of 2023. Another wondered why there would be no equalising elder or minister appointed in the event that Moderators from the last five years are appointed as commissioners. The Moderator commented that there was nothing to stop Presbytery adding comments to the result of the votes when reporting them to "121" in December.

**ORDER OF THE DAY 2 – OVERTURE UNDER THE BARRIER ACT ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE:** The Moderator explained that the General Assembly instructed the Legal Questions Committee to prepare legislation enabling ministers who wished to be nominated to lead same-sex weddings to do so, while providing safeguards to protect those ministers who do not wish to do so. The General Assembly of 2021 remitted this legislation to Presbyteries as an Overture under the Barrier Act. In the discussion that followed various concerns were expressed. Firstly, that as previous legislation on whether congregations would accept ministers in same-sex relationships had divided churches, this risks dividing the clergy at a time they are already under a lot of stress. Secondly, that ministers may be put under pressure to conform with prevailing secular trends. Thirdly, a lot of time, effort and money have been expended on the Overture at a time the Church of Scotland should be addressing the core issue of the loss of members and congregations. These concerns were not shared by all Presbyters who expressed an opinion.

**BUSINESS COMMITTEE:** Prof. Murray Campbell, Convener, presented the Report of the Business Committee, which Presbytery received. Congregations of Channelkirk and Lauder and Earlston - The Convener, followed by the Moderator, outlined the background and options relating to a proposal to help these congregations: namely that an application is made by the Clerk to the Faith Nurture Forum for permission to call a minister (whether interim, transition or other) to Channelkirk and Lauder, or to both Channelkirk and Lauder and Earlston. If this application was approved by the Faith Nurture Forum the congregations might get a minister much sooner than would otherwise be the case. A member of one of the congregations was concerned that the Permission to Call Protocol requires that the ministry post must be compatible with the ministry numbers in the Presbytery Mission Plan, and this could mean the loss of one full-time equivalent post. He stressed that the lack of a minister was having an impact on the spiritual well-being of his congregation, which relied on a small and dwindling number of elders to maintain worship. Prof. Campbell accepted that this argument should be included in the application for permission to call, with which Presbytery agreed to

proceed. Future shape of the General Assembly - Presbytery noted that an invitation has been received from the Assembly Business Committee to take part in a consultation on the future shape of the General Assembly. No arrangements have yet been put in place. In the meantime, Presbytery welcomed the opportunity to take part in the consultation and instructed the Clerk to respond accordingly to the Assembly Business Committee.

**VACANCY PROCEDURE COMMITTEE** Rev. Margaret Steele, Convener, presented a verbal report. She was pleased to report that the Rev. Aftab Gohar, currently Minister of Abbotsgrange Parish Church, Grangemouth, was the choice of the overwhelming majority of the congregation of Eddleston linked with Peebles Old linked with Stobo & Drumelzier. He preached as sole nominee, with 104 votes for and only 1 against. Once the paperwork has been completed, a formal written report will be presented. The proposed induction date is Tuesday 28th December 2021 at 2 pm, with Rev. Andrew Anderson preaching.

**COMMITTEE ON RE-OPENING OF CHURCH BUILDINGS / QUINQUENNIAL REPORTS:** Mr Keith Simpson, Convener, reported that the only Church not yet open is Maxton. At a recent meeting of the Kirk Session of Dryburgh District Churches moderated by Rev. Rosie Frew it was agreed to keep the Church closed until Rev. Sheila Moir resumes her duties. The Convener also reported that the Quinquennial Reports which should have been done in 2020 have now been completed this year and issued to the various churches. Invoices from the surveyors, Adams Napier Partnership, have been received and passed on to Mr Fraser Simm, Presbytery Treasurer, for payment. Given the importance of these reports, the Convener wondered if it would be financially feasible to carry out two years of Quinquennial Reports in 2022. The Treasurer suggested liaising over this and reporting to Presbytery on possible options to cover the backlog.

**GOVERNANCE:** Mr David Brackenridge, Convener, referred to his paper on the remit from the May 2021 General Assembly that Presbyteries co-operate with The Safeguarding Service in a compliance audit of Safeguarding data in readiness for the implementation of the Disclosure Act. He stressed that it is important that PVG certificates, which now only last for 5 years, be kept up-to-date, and reminded congregations to return their completed SG7 and SG11 forms to him if they have not already done so. Presbytery received the report and approved the deliverances.

**MISSION AND SERVICE:** Dr Fiona Burnett, Convener, reported that the World Mission Group asked Presbytery to continue remembering Lebanon in their prayers, such is the dire situation there. It is hoped to organise a prayer service in the near future: anyone interested in being involved or who would like to attend should let the Convener know, and she would pass this on to Eve Hartswood. There is also a proposal to invite Peter Ford, who did the lectures at the end of August, to give an update in December on what the current situation is in Lebanon and with the Near East School of Theology (NEST). Dr Burnett intimated an event happening the next evening at 7 pm, the screening in Innerleithen Parish Church of an inspiring documentary film, 'The Ants and the Grasshopper', which explores the impact of climate change in Malawi. The Assistant Clerk would email out to Presbyters a time-limited link to view the film on their personal digital devices. Dr Burnett further intimated an annual service at 10.30 on Sunday 21st November 2021 in Innerleithen Parish Church to celebrate our Presbytery and Parish Partnerships. The service will be streamed live on the Innerleithen Traquair & Walkerburn Parish Church YouTube channel and available to watch afterwards. Rev. Margaret Steele reported that the Moderator had been enjoying her study leave and had passed all the courses to date, which were proving very relevant to ministry in Scotland. The next block of study leave would start in January 2022, but it is as yet unclear whether this will be online or take place in the United States. Miss Steele wished the Moderator well in her continuing studies.

**PROPERTY AND STEWARDSHIP:** Mrs Isobel Hunter, Convener, reported that Presbytery is due to approve Ministry and Mission contributions for the coming year. She screen-shared a series of slides with details of the proposed contributions, and asked the Assistant Clerk to circulate the documents so they could be viewed before approval at the December meeting of Presbytery.

**PRESBYTERY REFORM STEERING GROUP:** Prof. Murray Campbell reported that a get-together was planned with two new Presbyteries, Fife and Clyde, as well as with Northampton Methodist District, to gauge how relationships between the centre and constituent parts are faring. It is also hoped that the various Mission Plan Committees of the existing Presbyteries will liaise.

**INTIMATIONS** 1. Presbytery noted that the Church of Scotland's Nomination Committee is seeking nominations for the Church's various Forums and Committees by the end of November 2021 2. From Galashiels Church of Scotland: We are hosting Tearfund's Big Quiz Night on Saturday 20 November 2021, to take the charity's fundraising efforts past the £1 million mark, helping their work in some of the world's poorest countries. 3. The Assistant Clerk reported that progress was being made on the reinstatement of the Presbytery website. 4. Rev. Rosie Frew asked if a Minister could volunteer to lead a Sacrament of Communion for Dryburgh District Churches; one of our Readers, Mrs Fran Selkirk, has kindly offered to provide supply for anyone willing to do a swap. The Moderator added that Presbytery is actively seeking volunteers for various roles, such as Interim Moderatorship, which urgently need to be covered.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, the Presbytery adjourned to meet at 7pm on 7 December 2021 for Ordinary Business, of which public intimation was made, the venue to be agreed, and the sederunt was closed with the saying of the Grace.

Moderator

Assistant Clerk