

The Presbytery of Melrose and Peebles

Mission and Service Committee Report to Presbytery – March 2019

1. Introduction

1.1 Members of the Mission and Service Committee, during the February meeting of Presbytery, met in groups to pursue the Deliverance as approved by Presbytery in November 2018. Discussion centred on raising awareness of the structure of the national Church and the need for nominations to Councils of the Church; engaging with young people, the design of a three year Education and Training Programme 2020-2023 for ministers, elders and others, and programme details for the June 2019 'Away Day' conference.

1.2 This report refers also to a celebration event for young people, schools use of 'The God Question' resource provided by Presbytery; the October 'Away Day' conference; the Worship Leaders' Course 2019; World Mission including the Zomba Partnership and a Study Leave application to visit Lebanon.

1.3 As approved in November, the Convener of the Governance Committee has been involved in early discussions on themes for the 'Away Day' conferences and the drafting of a three-year Education and Training Plan.

2. Developments

2.1 Raising Awareness of the Structures of the National Church

Committee suggests that this remit from the General Assembly be addressed during the June 'Away Day' and thereafter, be included in the three year Education and Training Programme.

2.2 Engaging with Young People

2.2.1 Whilst appreciating the difficulties in meaningful engagement with young people as highlighted during the 'Growing Young' conference in 2018, including active involvement during worship, the committee considered the possibility of seeking support from Scottish Borders Council for a Chaplains' Conference in 2020 on the theme 'Resilience and Respect'. Presbytery would be encouraged to identify elders/church members who have a background in education or working with young people to attend such a conference in addition to ministers who are school chaplains. Part of the programme could be devoted to examples of church/school links through the 'Serve Your Local School' website.

2.2.2 The Mission and Service Committee would welcome an indication from school chaplains of the use made, or to be made, of 'The God Question' resource provided to Secondary Schools, as requested informally during the December meeting of Presbytery.

2.2.3 By way of the December 2018 Deliverance Kirk Sessions were invited to consider a Presbytery 'celebration' event for young people around Easter 2019 and to forward ideas to the Convener. A suggestion has been received "to pick up on the inspirational lead of our young schoolchildren who are drawing attention to the catastrophic damage being done to the planet through intensive farming, over-use of pesticides, the problem of plastic waste and pollution generally - all contributing directly and indirectly to climate change".

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2.2.4 The suggestion includes “thank our young people and show we’re learning from the younger generation and going to take some effective action”.

2.3 A Three Year Education and Training Programme

2.3.1. Very early drafts of the proposed programme have been shared within the committee and with members of the Presbytery Planning Group. A draft of the proposed programme should be available for discussion during the June ‘Away Day’ with a view to presenting the final draft to the June meeting of Presbytery; this would allow detailed planning of the programme delivery to be discussed by members of the committee in October 2019 and presented to Presbytery for approval in November 2019. It is anticipated that the integrated programme would accommodate ‘Away Day’ conferences, locally-based and Presbytery – based courses, special topics with a learning theme, for example Climate Change, a School Chaplain’s Conference and opportunities to discuss and debate the management and governance of hub, network and cluster groupings should that emerge from the work of the Presbytery Planning Group.

2.3.2 Consideration was given to the inclusion of the following in the three year programme: Elder Training, including Discipleship and Local Mission; Pastoral Care; Bereavement Care; Conducting Funerals; Moderating the Kirk Session; Session Clerk Duties, including Church Law and Structure; Administration and Finance; Property and Fabric; Fund-Raising; World Mission; Local Church Review; Spiritual Care; Engagement with Young People; Briefing for Assessors and topic based sessions eg climate change/eco-congregations.

2.3.3 Methods of delivering the training programme are at an early stage of consideration and discussion. The use of video, webinars, social media, e-newsletters and blogs might each play a part in providing as much of the training at as local a level as possible, together with regional sessions where courses may be offered at more than one level. Training opportunities could be shared with neighbouring Presbyteries and would link with nationally recognised training and certification opportunities wherever possible.

2.3.4 How we measure the impact of the proposed programme across Presbytery is not only good practice but ensures provision meets expressed need and directs effort. Number of participants, nature of comments on course evaluation sheets might offer an indication of the reach of the programme but not necessarily whether or not provision was going in the right direction. Self - assessment by way of participant questionnaires, Kirk Sessions and Presbytery which relate to key indicators may be required. Further thought is required on the development of a monitoring and evaluation framework for the programme.

2.3.5 The Convener introduced Jedburgh and Duns Presbyteries to the drafting of the programme, met with staff from the Mission and Discipleship Council and with representatives from Edinburgh and Lothian Presbyteries to ascertain support in developing the integrated programme, identifying resources and course tutors.

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3. June 2019 'Away Day' Programme

3.1 On discussing the possible theme of 'Fresh Expressions' and the programme for the scheduled half day event with invitation to Duns and Jedburgh Presbyteries, the committee were of the opinion that the venue should be Innerleithen Church on Saturday June 1st and not Galashiels on this occasion given the small number from out with Presbytery who attend the conference. In addition, given the probability that 'Radical Change' may be 'delivered' at the General Assembly, the week before the date of the conference, perhaps 'managing change' should be the theme.

3.2 The Mission and Service Committee commented on the relatively short time available during Presbytery meetings for deliberation across the full remit of the committee but agreed that adding time would not accommodate the need for fuller involvement in discussion and decision taking. The suggestion of meeting over an afternoon was considered. It was recommended therefore, on this occasion, the conference might benefit from a whole day programme structured to allow delegates to attend for the whole day or indeed either the morning or afternoon sessions.

3.3 A draft, proposed 'Away Day' programme is appended to this report for the consideration and approval of presbyters. (Appendix A)

4. Worship Leaders Course 2019

4.1 There was an encouraging and positive response to attend courses for Worship Leaders; however a number found commitment to all three Saturdays impossible to accommodate. The Convener made the decision to postpone the publicised course until September so that an alternative course programme and revised arrangements for course delivery could be planned.

4.2 As a first step in planning this particular course(s) Ministers in Charges, interested course members and assessors from the 2018 Worship Leaders' Course will be invited to meet with members of the Mission and Service Committee before the end of March/early April. Presbyters are encouraged to seek any interest from within their own church in designing and/or delivering any of the proposed course programme (s) and to intimate names to the Convener before the May meeting of Presbytery..

5. October 'Away Day' Conference

5.1 A suggestion that 'The God Question' series might be a suitable theme for the October conference, with a view to using the material within churches as a study course, was pursued by the Convener. 'Grasping the Nettle', the charity developing access to the series, appointed the Rev George Lind recently as their Liaison Officer charged with promoting and facilitating discussion around 'The God Question'. It is suggested to Presbytery that the Rev. Lind be invited to lead our October conference with a view to facilitating further discussion, using the related study guide, across churches.

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6. World Mission and Zomba Partnership

6.1 In November 2018 Presbytery instructed the Mission and Service Committee to bring a draft revised Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to the March 2019 meeting with recommendations on how the revised Memorandum might be formally signed. To this end the World Mission Group organised a get together at the beginning of February for World Mission church representatives and anyone else interested. In all 9 charges were represented with 3 others sending apologies and suggestions. The World Mission Group is very keen to ensure that the next MoU contains deliverable objectives that address concerns and aspirations of individual churches. It has been indicated that our friends in Malawi share this desire.

6.2 The World Mission Group is of the opinion that there is sufficient interest and enthusiasm to enter into another 5 year Memorandum of Understanding. To take the process forward the meeting proposed that:

- We inform Zomba Presbytery that we would like to enter into another MoU and receive assurance that they are of the same opinion
- We share a summary of the full report (Appendix B) with Zomba and ask for their input to the next MoU, emphasising our desire to have a more local to local focus throughout the partnership. The Rev Bob Milne who is now in Zomba for the next 6+ months has undertaken to assist with this process.
- A draft MoU be presented at the September Presbytery meeting in Scotland and the equivalent in Zomba
- Assuming all accept the MoU, plans are made for a signing, probably in Zomba in October 2019.

6.3 The World Mission Group is conscious that time has been spent on the Zomba Partnership and not every congregation within Presbytery is involved in this process. The Group are committed to assisting congregations in whatever links they wish to pursue with the world church. In particular, the Group would like to explore the possibility of a partnership, formal or informal, with the Presbytery of Northern Lebanon, following on from visits last year from the Rev Rola Sleiman and later, Marina Altounain. The World Mission Chair is planning to join the visit by members of Earlston church in April and to use that opportunity to explore possible links.

6.4 Study Leave (Lebanon):

An application for funding (£575) through the Study Leave Scheme has been received from the Rev. Julie Rennick in order to join the Earlston Church twinning visit to Tripoli from 24 – 30 April 2019. This is a visit on behalf of both the Parish of Earlston and Melrose and Peebles Presbytery. The purpose of the visit is to develop the relationship begun with earlier visits from Rev Rola Sleiman (in 2017 and 2018), and from Miss Marina Altounain who was a guest in summer 2018 as part of the Presbytery Year of Young People International Exchange. Faithshare Grants have been applied for the four representatives of Earlston Parish and two from Presbytery. The application for funding through the Presbytery Study leave scheme would meet the costs of the Presbytery Moderator the Rev Julie Rennick.

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6.5 The Mission and Service Committee support this application and the Treasurer confirms that funds are available to meet the £575 costs. There is a desire at both a local and Presbytery level to extend our worldwide connections beyond the African continent and our Zomba Partnership, this is an excellent opportunity to visit the Presbyterian churches in Lebanon, who are doing extraordinary work with Syrian refugees. In November 2018 Presbytery endorsed the planned visit organised by Earlston to Lebanon and invited interest from across Presbytery to join the visit.

7. Communication

7.1 Given the amount of information shared through reports to Presbytery, much of which does not require Presbytery to make related decisions, it is recommended that Presbytery publish a regular E- Newsletter for circulation to those who request a copy, all Presbyters and Session Clerks for onward transmission to as many members of charges within the bounds as possible. It is further suggested that the E-News be included on the Presbytery website.

8. Deliverance

1. Presbytery receives the report.
2. Presbytery urges School Chaplains and Ministers to indicate to the Mission and Service Convener where schools are making use of 'The God Question' resource and thoughts on a celebratory event for young people associated with the church.
3. Presbytery welcomes progress on the preparation of a three year Education and Training Programme and encourages presbyters to seek out those interested in the planning or delivery of courses and make names known to the Convener.
4. Presbytery approves the content of the June 'Away Day' programme.
5. Presbytery notes that the Worship Leaders' Course has been postponed until September.
6. Presbytery invites Ministers in Charges, and interested members and assessors from the 2018 Worship Leaders' Course, to attend a meeting with the Mission and Service Committee to consider content and delivery of a Melrose and Peebles based Worship Leaders' course.
7. Presbytery approves the theme for the October Conference as 'The God Question'.
8. Presbytery agrees to enter into another 5 year Memorandum of Understanding with Zomba Presbytery.
9. In order to take the Memorandum of Understanding process forward Presbytery agrees that :-
 - o The Presbytery Clerk inform Zomba Presbytery that the Presbytery of Melrose and Peebles would like to enter into another Memorandum of Understanding and receive assurance that they are of the same opinion;
 - o The letter from the Clerk to include a copy of the full report (Appendix B), emphasising our desire to have a more local to local focus throughout the partnership, with a request that Zomba Presbytery send their input to drafting the next Memorandum of Understanding as soon as possible.

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- The Mission and Service Committee presents the final draft Memorandum to the September meeting of Presbytery in Scotland and the equivalent in Zomba.
 - In September 2019 Presbytery approves plans for signing the Memorandum of Understanding, probably in Zomba in October 2019.
10. Presbytery notes that the World Mission Group intends to explore the possibility of a partnership, formal or informal, with the Presbytery of Northern Lebanon.
 11. Presbytery approves the Study Leave application (£575) from Rev Julie Rennick to attend the Earlston Church twinning visit to Tripoli from 24 – 30 April 2019.
 12. Presbytery invites the Business Committee to consider the introduction of an E-Newsletter.

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Appendix A

JUNE 'AWAY DAY' PROGRAMME FRESH EXPRESSIONS/MANAGING CHANGE

Saturday 1st June 2019: Innerleithen Church: 1000 – 1500

TIME	PROGRAMME	SPEAKER
0930 – 1000	Arrival and Breakfast	
1000 – 1015	Welcome and Constitute	Rev Julie Rennick Worship Leader
1015 – 1025	Presbytery Planning: Where are we?	Rev. Rosie Frew
1030 – 1120	What are we up to?	Representatives from Clusters
1120 – 1140	Comfort Break	
1145 – 1215/30	Questions on Provisional Planning	Panel: RF + Reps.
1215/1230 – 1300	Lunch	
1315 – 1345	The Radical Plan	TBC
1345 – 1415	Questions	
1415 - 1445	Presbytery Training Programme	M and S Committee
1445 – 1500	Close	

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Appendix B

World Mission Group: Report to Presbytery March 2019

Since 2007, there have been two Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), between ourselves and Zomba Presbytery in Malawi. During this time several initiatives have been organised to develop links between the two Presbyteries. These have included

- Sending bibles to Zomba for distribution throughout the Presbytery
- A container of equipment being sent to Zomba
- Sponsorship of midwives to study at Malawi Institute of Health, Zomba Campus
- Links set up between several congregations, some successful, others not so
- Exchange of visitors which has included, ministers, congregation members and young people

It is now time to review the MoU and decide its future and, if there is to be another MoU, what should be included? To this end the WM group organised a get together for our WM church reps and anyone else interested at the beginning of February. In all 9 charges were represented with 3 others sending apologies and suggestions. The WM group are very keen to make sure that the next MoU contains deliverable objectives that address concerns and aspirations of the individual churches involved, ie local to local objectives. It has been indicated to the group that our friends in Malawi share this desire. Below is a summary of the responses received to a questionnaire about the future of the MoU with Zomba.

1) What has worked for the congregations and/or been of benefit

- The opportunity for personal contact between members of the congregations
- Email and 'whatsapp' contacts
- The opportunity for the congregation to learn more about Malawian life and living conditions
- Taking part in raising money for eg midwife project and bibles
- Having the young people with us last year
- Getting involved with Mary's meals
- Friendships made and sustained

2) What has not worked and/or been the biggest challenge?

- Communication has been a problem
- Relying on ministers (in both countries) who then move to another charge being the link between congregations
- Difficulty in drawing together a nucleus of enthusiastic members to sustain the link
- Difficulty in knowing best use of money and keeping track of how it is used

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- Keeping the on-going contact real and relevant for our congregations
- Understanding what the linkage is about and enabling a meaningful two-way dialogue with our partners
- The aging of our congregations

3) What would you like to see in the next MoA relevant to your own congregation?

- A willingness on both parts to continue partnership
- Plans for supporting our trained midwives
- Re-establishing lost links with twinned congregations
- Training and mentoring of church reps of the future, eg have a deputy Church rep
- Conversations on evangelism and how we can learn from each other
- Inter school links
- Steps to build links in the community, not just through the ministers
- Exchange visits involving the wider community
- Better reporting of use of money if this is part of the twinning
- Commitment to better communication eg supporting use of Whatsapp in both Presbyteries

4) How can the WM committee help sustain the links?

- Keep church reps informed of any forthcoming visits
- Assist in organising congregation visits to Zomba
- Use Presbytery website to resource church reps and congregations
- Explore possibility of assisting in school links
- Assist setting up WM group in congregations where appropriate

The WM Group would be very happy to receive any comments or suggestions from Presbytery that have not been included in the summary above.

A Presbytery-wide Project

Although the midwife project has been a success, with the probability of 2 midwives trained by the end of 2019, the problem in getting them into full time employment has forced a rethink by the committee on this strategy. About the same time The Zomba Presbytery Clerk, Rev Nellie Nyoni approached the group with a request to help fund a street children project in Zomba. In our discussions about this proposed project, we have made it clear that the project is theirs, we are merely assisting and that our finances are both finite and time limited. With these constraints in mind, we are exploring the possibility of raising funds to secure a plot of land on which the congregations in Zomba can grow crops to either feed the children or sell them to buy items for them. Being a predominantly rural Presbytery, we think that this project might be of interest to our congregations and the wider community. It also gives churches who are not directly linked with Zomba, the possibility of being involved with the partnership to a lesser or greater extent.

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The Next Steps

The group are of the opinion that there is sufficient interest and enthusiasm to enter into another 5 year MoA. To take the process forward it is proposed that

- 1) We inform Zomba Presbytery that we would like to enter into another MoA and receive assurance that they are of the same opinion
- 2) We share a summary of this report with Zomba and ask for their input to the next MoA, emphasising our desire to have a more local to local focus on the partnership. The Rev Bob Milne who is now in Zomba for the next 6+ months has undertaken to assist with this process.
- 3) A draft MoA be presented at the September Presbytery meeting in Scotland and the equivalent in Zomba
- 4) Assuming all accept the MoA, plans be made for a signing, probably in Zomba in October.

The rest of the World

The WM group are conscious that a lot of time has been spent on the Zomba partnership and not every congregation in the Presbytery is involved in this process. We are committed to assisting congregations in whatever links they wish to pursue with the world church. In particular, the group would like to explore the possibility of a partnership, formal or informal, with the Presbytery of Northern Lebanon, following on from visits last year from the Rev Rola Sleiman and later, Marina Altounain, as part of the young people's visit in August. The Chair is hoping to join the visit by members of Earlston church in April and use the opportunity to explore possible links.

Dr Fiona Burnett, Chair Presbytery WM Group, Feb 2019