

**7 SEPTEMBER 2021.** On Tuesday the seventh day of September 2021, the Presbytery met by Zoom at 7 pm for Ordinary Business. The meeting began with a reading, Genesis 1:26-31, and the Moderator, Rev. Victoria Linford, reflected on the wonder of creation, screen-sharing some famous paintings, then constituting 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.

**MINUTES:** The minutes of the meeting of 22 June 2021 (pp. 126-127) were submitted and approved as circulated.

**WELCOME TO NEW MEMBER - KAREN RITCHIE:** The Moderator warmly welcomed a new member, Mrs Karen Ritchie, the new Presbytery Elder for Peebles Old, and welcomed back Mrs Fran Selkirk, a returning Reader who is a Corresponding Member.

**ORDER OF BUSINESS:** The Order of Business was approved as circulated, including one additional item, an informal verbal report by Rev. Margaret Steele, Convener of the Vacancy Procedure Committee.

**BUSINESS COMMITTEE:** Prof. Murray Campbell, Convener, presented the Report of the Business Committee, which Presbytery received. Regarding membership of Presbytery Committees (item 3 of the Business Committee Report), he invited those Presbyters who are not on a committee to join one by contacting the relevant Committee Convener.

#### 1. Presbytery Assembly Remits 2021

Overtures under the Barrier Act:

(a) Amending the Church Courts Act (pp 5 and 17 of the **Remits Booklet**)

(b) Solemnisation of Same-Sex Marriage Overture (pp 6, 18-19 of the **Remits Booklet**)

Presbytery appointed the required ballots 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 asked the Clerk to produce a guidance note on the Overtures for the October meeting.

(c) Presbytery remitted 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 is to report to Presbytery by the December meeting.

(d) Presbytery remitted 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 is to report to Presbytery initially by the December meeting.

(e) Presbytery remitted 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 is to report to Presbytery initially by the December meeting.

(f) Presbytery remitted to the Governance Committee the instruction to Presbyteries to co-operate with the Safeguarding Service in a compliance audit of Safeguarding data in readiness for the implementation of the Disclosure Act (item 10 on page 9 of the **Remits Booklet**, Safeguarding Committee): the Governance Committee is to report to Presbytery by the December meeting.

(g) Presbytery instructed all Committees to study other remits and bring relevant matters to Presbytery.

(h) Presbytery instructed 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 agreed 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 approved the membership of its committees for 2021/22 as set out in the Presbytery Yearbook 2021/2022 (attached).

4. Presbytery gave 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 Presbytery Clerk whenever Sunday worship is not held, and this permission will apply for the 2021/22 session of Presbytery.

**COMMITTEE ON RE-OPENING OF CHURCH BUILDINGS:** Keith Simpson, Convener, reported that since the last Presbytery meeting there had been two applications to re-open, from Traquair and Eddleston, and these had been approved; this left only Lyne and Maxton still closed. Regarding the latest Covid guidelines, which relaxed physical distancing rules in churches, he nevertheless recommended remaining vigilant and to consider maintaining an element of physical distancing. He added that masks must still be worn, but was pleased to confirm that tea and coffee could now be served subject to the relevant guidelines.

#### STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS:

**Mission and Service:** Dr Fiona Burnett, Convener, presented the Report, which was circulated before the meeting.

1. Presbytery received the report.

2. Presbytery agreed to Mr Tim Linford transferring to Edinburgh Presbytery for his final placement, which is with the Rev. Donald Scott at Priestfield Church, Edinburgh.

3. Presbytery approved the provision of an Introduction to Leading Worship course in the Autumn/Winter period and encouraged Kirk Sessions to submit names of applicants for the course.

4. Presbytery approved the provision of a Video Editing for On-line Services Course and encouraged Kirk Sessions to submit names of applicants for the course.
5. Presbytery thanked Dr Peter Ford from the Near East School of Theology for his Zoom lectures on the subject of Understanding Islam and Christian-Muslim relations.
6. Presbytery encouraged the World Mission Group to continue their exploration of links with the Near East School of Theology and how best we can learn from and help each other in our faith journey.
7. Presbytery instructed the Mission and Service Committee to bring to the December 2021 meeting costed plans for a conference marking the end of Melrose and Peebles Presbytery and looking forward to the future.
8. Presbytery received the deliverances as a whole.

Following the report, a long discussion took place regarding Presbytery restructuring, focussing on whether Melrose and Peebles should unite with the adjacent Border Presbyteries of Duns and Jedburgh and Lothian Presbytery, or become part of a larger Presbytery including Edinburgh and West Lothian as well. The Moderator agreed that it would be helpful to share information and documents with members of Presbytery on the progress of Presbytery restructuring.

**Property and Stewardship:** Mrs Isobel Hunter, Convener, presented the Report.

In advance of the deliverances, Rev. Dr David Donaldson gave an update on the situation of the Galashiels church buildings, reporting that the Kirk Session of Galashiels Church of Scotland has decided against a new Church building, one of the original options discussed.

1. Presbytery received the report.
2. Presbytery noted 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 noted 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 noted the report on the Good Ideas Fund, applauded the innovative use of the Good Ideas fund to date and encouraged others to apply.

**VACANCY PROCEDURE COMMITTEE:** Rev. Margaret Steele, Convener, was very happy to report that Rev. Tony Foley had preached as Sole Nominee for West Tweeddale Churches, with an overwhelming vote in favour. Presbytery was asked to note that the date of Monday 25th October is being proposed as the date of his induction.

#### **INTIMATIONS:**

1. The digital version of the Presbytery Prayer Diary for October/November/December 2021 has now been circulated.
2. Resources to support engagement in the National Giving Day during September/October are now available in a **dedicated section** on the Church of Scotland website.
3. Resources for congregations about Climate Sunday and COP26 are also available **online**.

**ADJOURNMENT:** There being no further business, the Presbytery adjourned to meet for Ordinary Business on Tuesday 5 October 2021, of which public intimation was made, with the format and venue still to be agreed, and the *sederunt* was closed with the saying of the Grace.

Moderator

Assistant Clerk