

## Melrose and Peebles Presbytery Plan – November 2019

Our Presbytery Plan with 13.7 ministries for Melrose and Peebles Presbytery was drawn up and approved in 2013.

At the General Assembly of 2018 the Ministries Council advised that there had been a 20% reduction in ministry numbers and, projecting forward, gave each Presbytery an advisory number of available ministries by 2023. A number which includes an allowance for 70 vacancies across Scotland. (We need vacancies to allow for movement.) The advisory number for Melrose and Peebles is 9.5

Since that time our Presbytery Plan has been sisted and every congregation has engaged with Presbytery Planning. We have held 3 well attended Presbytery Conferences to inform and envision our congregations. Congregations have been encouraged to 'talk to their neighbours' to help discern how we best serve the people of God in this place.

It soon became apparent that the Presbytery had divided into groupings around the High School catchment areas for Earlston High, Galashiels Academy, Selkirk High and Peebles High. Working within these groupings was strongly encouraged and forms the basis for the structure of the Presbytery Plan around clusters with a working together within the clusters to be developed. In the future this may lead to further alteration of the Presbytery Plan to reflect new ways of working such as Hub ministry or larger charges with multiple ministries.

The first phase of the Plan which we can implement now around vacant charges will see a union of the congregations in Galashiels and a linkage of the congregation of Caddonfoot with Stow and Heriot. This is the Galashiels cluster. There will be a coming together of Ashkirk and Selkirk with Ettrick and Yarrow in the Selkirk cluster. Within the Peebles cluster the congregations of Broughton, Glenholm and Killbucho lw Skirling lw Stobo and Drumelzier lw Tweedsmuir will link with Carlops lw Kirkurd and Newlands lw West Linton. Stobo and Drumelzier will possibly come out of that linkage to link with Peebles: Old lw Eddleston.

The minister of Channelkirk and Lauder has been signed off work due to ill health since the start of this process so we cannot progress that part of the Plan until she is back at work and we can speak with her. The intention is to link Channelkirk and Lauder with Earlston, within the Earlston cluster.

The intent for the future is for 3 ministries within the Peebles cluster. To that end the congregations of Peebles: Old lw Eddleston and Innerleithen, Traquair and Walkerburn will be given permission to call on the basis of a 5 year reviewable tenure.

At the General Assembly of 2019 the Ministries Council accepted a new section to their deliverance. 'Instruct the Council (or its successor body), when framing the new Vacancy Procedures Act and reviewing the Appraisal and Adjustment Act, to consider incorporating the following principle: that no charge should, in future, be granted leave to call a minister on an unrestricted basis, but that tenure should instead be granted on a reviewable basis of no more than 7 years and to report to the General Assembly of 2021.'

Presbytery is asked to consider making all vacant charges reviewable tenure.

Within each cluster the intention is that ministers and congregations work together in a supportive and imaginative way. A cluster forum for ministers and congregational representatives to meet, share, plan and support each other is strongly encouraged. Possible ways of working together would include: provision of worship; united services; sharing of resources; supporting events; shared school chaplaincy; shared outreach initiatives; pastoral cover. Funding for shared initiatives may be available from the new Growth Fund.